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THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1998

CONNECTIONS

Edward Rothstein

Culture Rears Its Head in the Public-Private Debate

The image last week was too painful to watch, the President, shrunken by the camera's high-aimed frame, his forehead pocked with sweat, responding to questions one wished one hadn't heard. Germany's Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, anticipating the broadcast, said, "It makes me vomit." "We are all German Chancellors now," wrote a columnist in *Le Monde*, "All of this is worthy of vomiting."

The sentiment, widely expressed abroad and by local critics, was that something disturbing in American culture was revealed in that broadcast, a brash immaturity mixed with a ruthless Puritanism, a variety of sexual McCarthyism mixed with a perverted prurience.

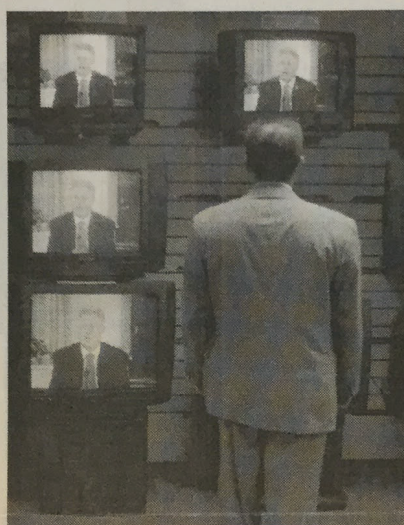
And there was indeed more than enough shame and humiliation to go around. It was as if one had inadvertently walked into the wrong privy or seen the poise of a colleague undone by an open fly. One didn't know whether to be embarrassed for the man stripped of his Presidential persona, or embarrassed by him as he wrestled with various legalisms in an attempt to patch together a plausible alternative; embarrassed for the Government that was confronted with the weaknesses and violations of its chief executive, or embarrassed by its compulsions to strip everything bare. The private and public had become hopelessly intertwined, all distinctions gone.

What has not yet been pointed out is that this is a cultural matter, not just a political one, because to a great extent the relationship between the private and the public is culture's terrain. Culture may even be credited with having created distinctions between public and private in the first place, creating manners and expectations about what is proper in public and what is improper even in private, and communicating the secrets of each realm to the other.

These are great themes in Western art. What, after all, is a novel, but a private story made public? So many stories are accounts of intimate thoughts and sensations, chronicles of secret urges and subtle musings, attempts to articulate the vast mysteries of interior life. Music participates in that realm as well, giving voice to the inchoate. Painting and sculpture give it color and body. If such sensations were easy to express and readily viewable — if they were already public — we would hardly need art and its subtleties.

But culture is not just the display of the private. It also delineates the ways in which these private worlds collide and collude to create a social universe. This is one reason why so many novels are actually stories about the interaction of private and public. Anna Karenina commits adultery and is publicly shunned; the Mayor of Casterbridge sells his wife and scorns his daughter until he too is publicly humiliated. Herzog, trying to account for his private shamings by an adulterous wife, writes imaginary letters to public figures about humankind's parlous state.

Adultery is a major preoccupation of literature: the violation of the public rules by private desire. So, too, is betrayal: the violation of a private fact by public disclosure.



Reuters

A London television salesman watched, along with the rest of the world.

So the Clinton mess has a distinguished artistic heritage. But there is something raw — almost uncultured — about it, as if a delicate balance between public and private had been upset by multiple villains, leaving nothing unaffected.

Much is at stake. If culture is skewed toward private preoccupations, art becomes weighed down with pornography or confession, and politics becomes gossip. If skewed toward public demands, art leans toward bombast or jingoism, and politics becomes ideology. And when all distinctions disappear, all public roles become meaningless poses and all moral assertions mere assertions of preference and taste.

We seem to be on the verge of fulfilling all of these possibilities at once. In a much-discussed essay in *The Times Literary Supplement* last month, the philosopher Thomas Nagel argued that the "disastrous erosion of the precious but fragile conventions of personal privacy in the United States" is at the heart of the Clinton mess. Last week, in the on-line magazine *Slate*, he discussed these issues with the editor of *Slate*, Michael Kinsley. "Perhaps you wouldn't trust someone who lied about his sex life," Mr. Nagel writes, defending the private realm. "I wouldn't trust someone who didn't, some of the time."

But the Clinton mess is about more than a struggle to keep a private life from becoming public; the Europeans are vomiting at a small part of the story. The problem is that we are no longer certain about what public or private life really is. Private life has become politicized; public life has become suffused with private passions. Is sexual discrimination or sexual difference or

sexual preference or sexual education or safe sex a public or a private matter? Is there a difference between the legal status of cohabiting partners, once a private relationship, and that of married partners, a public one? Accusations of sexual harassment, the origins of this mess, assert violations of public-private boundaries. But they also shred those boundaries, as private interactions become subject to public review.

Meanwhile, the argument is that Mr. Clinton has gone even further in blurring boundaries, first by using public power for private ends, then apparently violating public law in an attempt to protect his private dealings.

So the transgressions of the private realm ascribed to the Starr report are part of a larger cultural trauma. In fact, one reason why the mess has deepened so quickly and why the report has come to seem its extension rather than its resolution is that while the private is weakened, the public is no stronger. What authority can it claim? What transcendent vision? What allegiance does it command?

The public voice seems so ruthless now partly because it is so uncertain of its authority. (Indeed, a good portion of the public is uncertain about whether it should even possess authority.) And this weakness, too, is bound up in the Clinton Presidency. While Mr. Nagel points out the "precious but fragile conventions" of the private realm, Mr. Clinton, from the very first, wanted to undo some of the "precious but fragile conventions" of the public realm.

This was what was happening when Clinton the candidate donned sunglasses and played "Heartbreak Hotel" on Arsenio Hall's show or when, as President, he talked about his underwear. The conventions of the Presidency were made to seem pretentious, arbitrary, a matter of whimsy. And this did, of course, reflect itself in cultural life.

During the televised inaugural concert in 1993 Mr. Clinton clapped and nodded and swayed along with the rock and pop singers, sang along with "We Are the World," thrilled to a serenade from Bob Dylan and was hailed as "Big Bill" in a rap by L. L. Cool J. The image of Presidential authority was replaced by a celebration of counter-cultural homogenization. The television and movie stars there, like Oprah Winfrey or Jack Nicholson, only seemed to be paying homage to Mr. Clinton and his office; actually, he was paying tribute to them as the only American elite.

The pain in watching Mr. Clinton last week recalled the milder embarrassment caused by this earlier display, partly for similar reasons: Where, in all of this, was the Presidency or governance? Public life is partly a life of personas and roles, of law and hierarchies, of trust and bonds. The embarrassment of the concert was at seeing a President reluctant to take on that public mantle; the embarrassment last week was at seeing a President unable to remove his private one. And the embarrassment in both is that we, the people, have established a culture in which neither has a place or seems particularly worth preserving.

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Philip Greenberg for The New York Times

A "Poetry in Motion" poster of an excerpt of Sir Walter Raleigh's "Passionate Man's Pilgrimage," on the IRT.

Poems Coming Up On the Subway

In theory, "Poetry in Motion" puts up two new poems every month throughout New York City's buses and subway trains. In practice, the schedule may vary. Posters are also stolen, particularly in the subway. If you wish to own a poster, the Metropolitan Transit Authority prefers that you buy one. Sets of posters from the last year may be bought at the Transit Museum gift shop in the Main Concourse of Grand Central Terminal or at the Transit Museum at Boerum and Schermerhorn Streets in downtown Brooklyn. Each poster is \$4.

Beginning in November, "Poetry in Motion" will have a star turn on television, three times a day. Poems from the series are to be broadcast to New Yorkers in the five boroughs over the Crosswalks Television Network, Channel 72, the New York City municipal education and employment channel, which is available on basic cable.

The year-old network was established to help New Yorkers learn to read English, and the poems will be produced in concert with that mission. Poets are being asked to read their own poems aloud as the texts unroll on the screen. Recordings of deceased poets reading their own work and commissioned readings by actors are also planned.

The program is to open with Galway Kinnell reading his poem "Blackberry Eating" and Nina Cassian reading her poem "Please Give This Seat."

Here are the poems coming up next on New York subways and buses:

This Month

"RIDING ON A RAILROAD TRAIN," excerpt, by Ogden Nash.

"LOVE IS A PLACE," E. E. Cummings.

November

"UNFORTUNATE COINCIDENCE," Dorothy Parker.

"HAPPY," Marsha Bender Ammar (Daily News contest winner, adult category).

December

"THE TRANSFER," Bernice Fleisher (Daily News contest winner, senior category).

"FOR FRIENDSHIP," Robert Creeley.

January

"LISTEN TO THE MUSTN'TS," Shel Silverstein.

"ASPECTS OF EVE," Linda Pastan.

February

"THANK YOU, MY DEAR," Sappho.

"TRANSIT," Richard Wilbur.

March

"I STOP WRITING THE POEM," Tess Gallagher.

"THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD," excerpt, by Wallace Stevens.

April

"BACK ON TIMES SQUARE, DREAMING OF TIMES SQUARE," excerpt, by Allen Ginsberg.

"FIRST MEMORY," Louise Gluck.

May

"HEDGEHOG," Chu Chen Po.

"SUSPENDED," Denise Levertov.

June

"THE QUESTION," Karla Kuskin.

"SANDINISTA AVIONCITOS," Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

MINDY ALOFF

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BY JONATHAN KANDELL

OARLO GINZBURG'S BOOK-LINED apartment overlooks the medieval towers of Bologna and the fortress-thick walls of its university, the oldest in Europe. Florence lies only an hour away by train, and Venice isn't much farther. It's hard to imagine a more orthodox setting for a man acclaimed as one of the world's premier historians, with strong expertise in the Italian Renaissance and late Middle Ages.

But ambiance aside, there is nothing conventional about Ginzburg's career or scholarship. His work ignores the powerful Venetian doges and Florentine princes, as well as the other great patrons responsible for the cultural treasures that draw millions of visitors eager to witness the grandeur of Italy's golden age. Instead, Ginzburg has fashioned his lofty reputation by pursuing topics that at first glance might seem arcane, occultist, eccentric. He himself labels his subjects "peripheral phenomena," though he's quick to assert they are as relevant to the course of Western civilization as a biography of Machiavelli or an analysis of Luther's rebellion against the Vatican.

Ginzburg spent six years figuring out what a 16th-century miller meant when he said the world was created from rotting cheese. He devoted even more time unraveling the beliefs of peasants who were denounced by the Inquisition as witches and werewolves. One of Ginzburg's more recent efforts was to link Oedipus' swollen foot and Cinderella's missing slipper to ancient myths about journeying to the afterworld. "I received a letter from a classical scholar a few days ago — he loved that one and agreed with me completely," Ginzburg says.

This is history? you may well ask. Only a generation ago, history was mainly about great events and leaders marching forward in chronological fashion: 1776, the Declaration of Independence, Washington and Jefferson; 1815, Waterloo, Napoleon and Wellington; 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky. If we could recite the dates, describe the cataclysms, memorize the names, we could confidently assume to have mastered the outlines we had of the past.

But in recent years, growing numbers of historians, particularly in Europe, have shifted their inquiries to the mass of humanity who existed outside the political and social mainstream. What did peasants and artisans think about centuries ago? How were their beliefs disseminated, and how did they differ from notions that prevailed in more affluent, literate society?

"The historian's task is just the opposite of what most of us were taught to believe," says Ginzburg, who holds professorships at the University of Bologna and the University of California at Los Angeles. "He must destroy our false sense of proximity to people of the past because they came from societies very different from our own. The more we discover about these people's 'mental universe,' the more we should be shocked by the cultural distance that separates us from them."

Clearly this sort of history is not the "distant mirror" that Barbara W. Tuchman suggested the past should be for contemporary humanity. There is no room here either for the old pragmatic view of history as a guide for the present.

In their pursuit of a different vision of the past, scholars like Ginzburg have stretched the bounds of history into anthropology and psychology, literary analysis and linguistics. Occasionally, their work reaches a public far beyond academia. The French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's "Montaillou" — a study of sex and heresy in a 14th-century Languedoc village — became a best seller in his country. On this side of the Atlantic, Robert Darnton did almost as well with "The Great Cat Massacre," whose title essay tried to explain why apprentices at an 18th-century Paris printing shop thought it great

WAS THE WORLD MADE OUT OF CHEESE?

"peripheral phenomena"
as
relevant to course of
Western civilization
as W. of Machiavelli
for eg.



HISTORIAN CARLO
GINZBURG IS
FASCINATED BY THE
QUESTIONS THAT
OTHERS IGNORE.

Jonathan Kandell, a former Times correspondent, is the author of "La Capital," a history of Mexico City.

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fun to slaughter their bosses' pets. And "The Return of Martin Guerre" by Darnton's Princeton colleague, the historian Natalie Zemon Davis, was made into a popular movie, starring Gérard Depardieu as a peasant who assumed another person's identity so successfully that he managed to fool the man's wife, parents and friends.

Within this school — called the "history of mentalities" — nobody has gained more renown among his peers over the last decade than Carlo Ginzburg. Writing about Ginzburg a few years ago, J. H. Elliot, a leading British historian, hailed him as a scholar with "an insatiable curiosity who pursues even the faintest clues with all the zest of a born detective." For Princeton's Darnton, what is most valuable about Ginzburg is his insistence that "common people of the past were not as passive as they are traditionally portrayed. He shows them actively engaged in constructing a mental or cultural world of their own that was often at odds with literate society."

To be sure, there are plenty of scholars who complain that this sort of approach to history is too dismissive of the drama of great events, the influence of political leaders and the power of ideologies. "What was once at the center of the profession is now at the periphery," Gertrude Himmelfarb, recently retired Distinguished Professor of History

at the City University of New York, writes in her collection of essays titled "The New History and the Old." "What once defined history is now a footnote to history."

THE 52-YEAR-OLD GINZBURG is a tall, animated man with a shock of dark hair, bushy brows and a penetrating gaze. Caught by a flashbulb blast, he can look as zealous as the heretics described so vividly in his eight books and dozens of essays. There is much about Ginzburg's personal history that draws him to people of the past who were persecuted for their heretical notions.

Because of his father's anti-Fascism, the Ginzburgs were uprooted from their Turin home and confined by Mussolini's police to an isolated village in the Abruzzi. Then in 1943, the father was arrested for publishing an underground newspaper and beaten to death by the Nazis. "My earliest memories were of people being rounded up and beaten in the square in front of our home," Carlo Ginzburg says. He lived out the remainder of the war hidden under the protection of his maternal grandmother in another rural village. "She was my only non-Jewish relative and to protect me she made me use her maiden name," Ginzburg recalls. "I became Carlo Tanzi. She wrote it on the front page of my very first book. Yes, I still remember the title: 'The Happiest Child in the World.'"

Strangely, for a man acclaimed as a born detective, Ginzburg says he failed to perceive the link between these family traumas and his choice of hidden heretics and witches as prime subjects of his research, until it was pointed out by a fellow historian some 20 years ago. "Freud would have said the fact that I overlooked the connection indicates how deep and important it really was," he says with a laugh.

Another obvious family legacy was Ginzburg's early bent for scholarship. His father, Leone Ginzburg, was a professor of Russian literature. His mother, Natalia Ginzburg, who died last month, was one of Italy's leading fiction writers. His grandfather was an eminent biologist whose pupils won three Nobel Prizes. "There was never any question that I would become an intellectual of some sort," Ginzburg says. "It was like a cobbler's son joining his father's shoe shop."

In the late 1950's, when Ginzburg enrolled in the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, one of Italy's most prestigious secondary schools, he was undecided about studying art history, literary criticism, philosophy or linguistics. (All these disciplines weave their way through his eclectic works.) "I didn't even consider history because I found it so boring," he says. What changed his mind was a seminar in which he was asked to spend an entire week analyzing

only 10 lines of a book written by a leading 19th-century historian.

"It was the slowness that fascinated me," Ginzburg says. "Every phrase, every word had to be dissected for their possible implications. I came to understand that texts can have hidden, invisible meanings. It was not an easy lesson. In my speech, my writing, my judgments about people, I tend to be very quick. I learned the importance of reading and rereading one page, even a single passage, for days, weeks."

Ever since, Ginzburg says, there has been a constant tension between speed and lentitude in his work. Quick instinct and sudden emotional response point him to a subject, and then excruciatingly slow analysis — what he calls "squeezing the evidence" — takes over.

His first book, "The Night Battles," published in 1966, put this method on display. A few years earlier, Ginzburg had visited the huge Inquisition archives in Venice. "I knew I wanted to write about witchcraft, but I had no particular subject in mind," he recalls. "I decided to guide myself completely by chance, like a gambler at a roulette table. So I picked out volumes at random."

Eventually, Ginzburg came across the trial of a 16th-century shepherd from a village north of Venice. The man said he belonged to a sect called the "benandanti" or "good walkers." And he claimed that on certain nights of the year the benandanti — either in their dreams or in a trancelike state — rode wild animals to an isolated field, where armed with fennel sticks they battled the devil's witches for the fertility of the village's farmland.

"The case was so reminiscent of a fairy tale, and I suppose that's why I reacted immediately to it," Ginzburg says. "It was like the Sicilian fables my mother read to me as a child. Those fairy tales molded my mind and emotions. I'm very conscious that my attraction for witches and werewolves goes back to those first books. That's why I'm against the idea of protecting children from scary tales. Horror stories can unlock the imagination. I read them to my own daughters when they were very young."

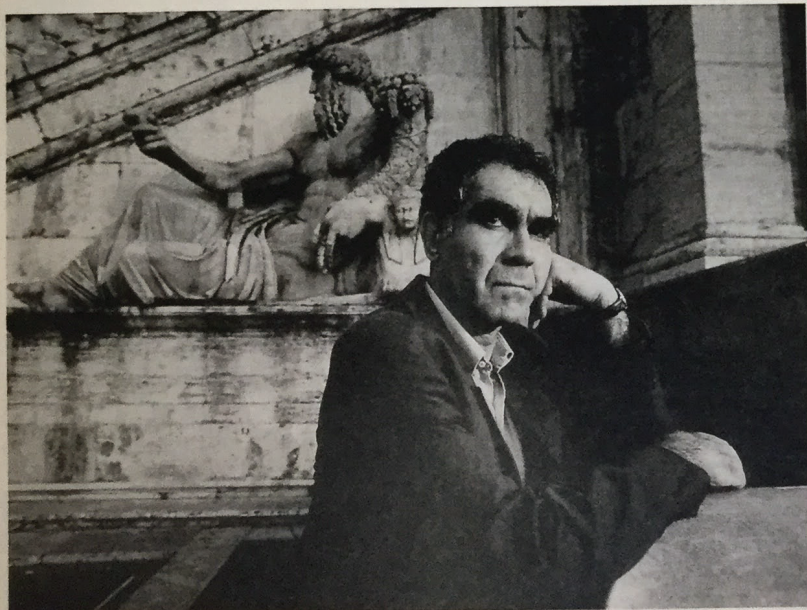
In another Inquisition archive, Ginzburg found numerous other trials of benandanti, all of them repeating the essential details of the shepherd's story. The Roman Catholic Church was baffled by these peasants who, in their trances or dreams, asserted practicing what sounded like black magic for benevolent ends. And so the Inquisitors bullied the benandanti into making their confessions conform to conventional accounts of witches' sabbaths: night gatherings with the devil, marked by orgies, desecration of Christian rituals, and dire plots against local communities.

With painstaking slowness, Ginzburg traced the non-Christian elements in the benandanti's accounts until he could reconstruct what was obviously a popular, pagan cult that drew upon myths predating Christianity. He then showed the step-by-step process by which the Inquisitors chipped away these pagan elements and pressured the benandanti to accept in their place the Church's orthodox version of devil worship. In the end, the benandanti came to believe they had unknowingly been guilty of practicing — or at least fantasizing about — witchcraft.

For Ginzburg, the benandanti trials point out the way ideology and politics are imposed on ordinary people. "You have to dare to ask questions like, how can power shape people's thoughts or even their dreams? Traditional historians just say someone ordered something and it happened. Well yes, but how?"

Few other scholars were addressing these issues in the 1960's, when Ginzburg embarked on his research. Witchcraft and heretical cults weren't viewed as serious historical subjects. There was little interest in discovering what peasants of centuries past actually thought and believed. Ginzburg was operating on the margins of his profession, "out on a limb," as he says.

At the University of Rome, where he was assigned to teach modern Italian history, he was viewed as an eccentric aloof to the intellectual radicalism sweeping the classrooms. His students were eager to learn about the labor unrest that paralleled the rise of Fascism in Italy during the



Ginzburg at City Hall Square in Rome. He has tenure on both sides of the Atlantic.

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1920's, and what lessons it held for the mass worker strikes of the late 60's. "It was a terribly frustrating time for me," Ginzburg recalls. "I shared my students' political concerns. But I had to admit that my professional interests had nothing to do with the turmoil around me. I learned in a painful way that history must be studied even when it has no visible relation to contemporary issues."

By the 1970's, though, history-writing shifted directions. There was a growing emphasis on powerless social groups of the past: women, ethnic minorities, peasants. Academic presses churned out accounts of isolated rural revolts in pre-Revolutionary France, 19th-century bandits in southern Italy and witchcraft throughout pre-industrial Europe. This cult of the underdog aroused serious reservations among some scholars. One exasperated British historian, J.H. Plumb, felt it necessary to remind his colleagues that "the life of Sir Isaac Newton is more important than a description of all the witch trials of 17th-century England."

Some scholarly attempts to measure or quantify social attitudes bordered on the bizarre. For instance, one notable French historian suggested that changing popular views toward death in 18th-century France could be demonstrated by the number and size of votive candles offered for the repose of the dead. The fact that fewer and smaller votive candles were burned in the latter part of the century presumably indicated milder feelings of bereavement or declining faith in the afterlife. Skeptics also chortled over the efforts of some historians to explain the slowness of population growth in 18th-century France compared with that of England by theorizing that coitus interruptus was more prevalent among the French peasantry.

But it was this obsession with popular culture of the past that gave rise to the so-called history of mentalities. Ginzburg's main contribution to the genre was "The Cheese and the Worms," the story of Menocchio, an obscure miller burned at the stake by the Inquisition for his insistence that God and the universe were created from rot. As poignant as a tragic novel, it was also a landmark study on the im-

Ginzburg's topics may seem arcane. But to him, the fringe is central.

pact that the introduction of books had on villagers who had always lived within the oral culture of folklore and church sermons.

Ginzburg tracked down the dozen volumes that Menocchio told the Inquisitors he had read before forming his heretical beliefs. But the historian discovered that Menocchio's ideas greatly distorted the material contained in the books. For example, in a text by an Augustinian monk, Menocchio had read that the universe began as "a great and inchoate matter." But in his confessions to the Inquisitors, he embellished this concept beyond recognition: "All was chaos... and out of that bulk a mass formed — just as cheese is made out of milk — and worms appeared in it, and these were the angels... and among that number of angels, there was also God, he too having been created out of that mass at the same time."

Ginzburg wondered where Menocchio had come up with these images, and why he had cited the monk's book as the source. The missing piece in the puzzle, according to Ginzburg, might have been an ancient myth that spoke of the world first rising from a milky, curdling sea. "It was not the book as such, but the encounter between the printed page and oral culture that formed an explosive mixture in Menocchio's head," Ginzburg explains. What Menocchio may have absorbed from folklore somehow found confirmation in the writings of men he considered much more learned than himself — and led the miller to amalgamize a cosmology all his own.

It was Menocchio's great misfortune that he expanded his mind and loosened his tongue at a time when the

Catholic Church was in panic over the spread of Luther's Reformation. That the miller's beliefs had nothing in common with Protestantism mattered little to the Inquisitors. They declared Menocchio guilty of voicing heretical opinions "not only with men of religion, but also with simple and ignorant people," thus undermining their faith and loyalty to the church.

And so, it turns out that a miller — the sort of "peripheral phenomenon" that fascinates Ginzburg — helps elucidate the central turmoil of his age. Menocchio, asserts Ginzburg, was expressing notions in his insular rural world that were every bit as subversive to religious authority as the essays of his famous contemporary, the French philosopher Montaigne, that circulated in cosmopolitan Paris. Or as Menocchio himself said it more pungently to a fellow villager who entreated him to keep silent: "Can't you understand, the Inquisitors don't want us to know what they know!"

His book "The Cheese and the Worms" placed Ginzburg in the mainstream of his profession. It was not a comfortable vantage point for someone who prefers to think of himself as a maverick. "The bad thing about success is that you're under great pressure to repeat what brought it about," he explains. "I could have gone on writing several more books like 'The Cheese and the Worms.' But I was more attracted by the idea of risking a heroic failure."

What resulted is his latest book, "Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath," a controversial work that has returned Ginzburg to the cutting edge of history-writing. It asserts that a hidden, popular culture, rooted in Central Asian myths, flourished throughout Europe for thousands of years until it was denounced as witchcraft and ultimately repressed by the Inquisition. Underlying this culture, Ginzburg maintains, was the belief that certain "chosen" people — shamans, witches, werewolves — were able to journey back and forth between this world and the hereafter.

"Ecstasies" stretched to the limit even Ginzburg's generous criteria of what the province of historians should be. The book's time

frame, reaching back thousands of years, seemed overly ambitious for any scholar. And the evidence appeared to be too veiled, too unorthodox for historical analysis. "There were many constraints," Ginzburg says, adding with bravura, "but if there are no constraints, then there is no game."

GINZBURG ISN'T EMBARRASSED to discuss some of the wild hunches and mental connections that led him on whenever the book stalled: "I started with very vague ideas: in ancient cultures, a shaman traveled to the beyond to seek out the places where his people could find wild game.... Then came the image of hunters looking for traces or footprints of these animals.... Next, I had the idea of hunting as a metaphor for history — like a hunter, the historian looks at traces to locate a prey that isn't yet visible."

Out of these conjectures, Ginzburg arrived at the novel notion of using human and animal anatomy to piece together evidence for his theory of a hidden popular culture. He began to decipher myths, fables and witches' tales in Europe and Asia by focusing on images of animals and body parts that re-occurred in these accounts. He was struck by the fact that people who claimed to travel to the afterworld seemed to have physical abnormalities.

"There is a sign in the body which betrays that extraordinary feat," Ginzburg says. "Abnormalities were considered proof of the journey to the beyond."

Many of these "chosen" ones were born with a caul, or fetal membrane. Others suffered from lameness or foot problems of some sort. Still others temporarily metamorphosed into animals, especially wolves. And in some cases, the chosen exhibited all these physical elements. To cite just one of Ginzburg's examples: In the late 17th century, Baltic peasants, who were born with the caul, claimed to transform themselves into werewolves and be led by a lame child into hell to battle with the devil for the fertility of their fields.

Given the mixed reviews "Ecstasies" has received among historians — their comments range from "big,

bold, brilliant" to "entirely subjective" — Ginzburg concedes it is too early to judge whether the book is the crowning intellectual success he hoped for, or the heroic failure he was prepared to risk. Ginzburg insists he doesn't mind negative critiques of his work. "Pleasing everyone is a disaster," he says. Yet he was peeved enough at a recent article panning "Ecstasies" in The New York Review of Books to write an angry letter. "He's as thin-skinned as the rest of us," says a historian who considers himself as a friend.

A reputation for controversy certainly hasn't harmed Ginzburg's stature in the academic world. He is among a handful of elite scholars who hold tenure in universities on both sides of the Atlantic. Ginzburg and his second wife, Luisa Ciammitti, divide the year between Bologna and Los Angeles. In Italy, she is a curator at the National Museum of Art in Bologna, and in California, she works as a research associate for 18th-century Italian documents in the Getty Center's collection. Though he is a full professor at the University of Bologna, Ginzburg has no teaching responsibilities there and can spend his time entirely engaged in research. "The archives are among the best in Europe," says Ginzburg, adding that should be no surprise given the university's 900 years in existence.

At U.C.L.A., where he spends the winter and spring terms teaching a graduate course on the Italian Renaissance, Ginzburg lives a few blocks from campus. "He must be the only professor who walks to work," Ciammitti says over a bowl of spaghetti-with-clams prepared by her husband.

"Next year, I'm hoping to bring some of my U.C.L.A. students over to Bologna to do research," Ginzburg says. But first, he intends to guide them through the same sort of exercise that spawned his own enthusiasm for history more than 30 years ago. "I'll have them spend the term analyzing just one work, perhaps a brief essay by Montaigne," he says. Maybe squeezing the evidence can be taught. But intuition, boldness, creativity? His students are definitely on their own. ■

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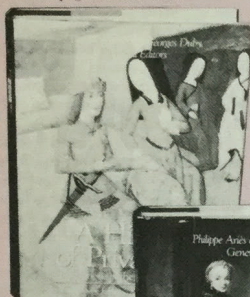
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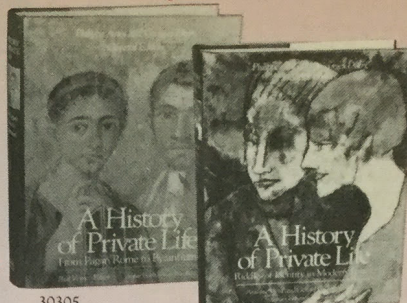
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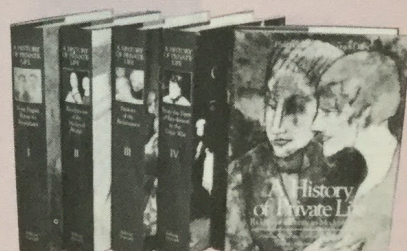
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Harvard. 39.95

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This fifth and final volume in this series charts the remarkable inner history of our times from the tumult of World War I to the present day, when personal identity was released from its moorings in gender, family, social class, religion, politics, and nationality. Nine historians present a dynamic picture of cultures in transition and in the process scrutinize a myriad of subjects—the sacrament of confession, volunteer hotlines, Nazi policies toward the family, the baby boom, evolving sexuality, the history of contraception, and ever-changing dress codes. They draw upon many unexpected sources, including divorce hearing transcripts, personal ads, and little-known demographic and consumer data. Perhaps the most notable pattern to emerge is a polarizing of public and private realms. Productive labor shifts from the home to an impersonal public setting. Salaried or corporate employment replaces many independent, entrepreneurial jobs, and workers of all kinds aggressively pursue their leisure time—coffee and lunch breaks, weekends, vacations. Zoning laws segregate industrial and commercial areas from residential neighborhoods, which are no longer a supportive “theater” of benign surveillance, gossip, and mutual concern, but an assemblage of aloof and anonymous individuals or families. Comprehensive and astute, *Riddles of Identity in Modern Times* chronicles a period when the differentiation of life into public and private realms, once a luxury of the wealthy, gradually spread throughout the population.

(630/91)



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“There’s something wonderfully audacious about the very concept of ‘History of Private Life,’ a five-volume study that seeks to reveal the most intimate details of everyday life over three millennia of Western European history. Here is one scholarly work in which the bathroom and the bordello figure as importantly as the storming of the Bastille or the defeat of Napoleon... a fascinating glimpse into the distant and exotic past.”

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Applause and Anxiety In the Age of AIDS

By DAVID GERE

ALIVE performance of Mark Dendy's "Dream Analysis" at Dance Theater Workshop has catapulted to its conclusion, and the audience is in a decidedly giddy mood. This dance-theater show is a comedy, after all, a thinking person's comedy peopled with multiple Martha Grahams and Vaslav Nijinskys. And it leaves one feeling lighthearted, buoyant, free.

But then, even before the applause has died down, Mr. Dendy saunters to the edge of the stage in his skimpy "faun" costume and makes this plaintive appeal: Dancers with H.I.V. disease and AIDS are in need of support during this time of continuing crisis. Won't you please give a donation to Dancers Responding to AIDS?

Depending on your point of view, this post-performance oration is either annoying (must he spoil a lovely evening?) or gracious (somebody ought to thank this guy for caring). And therein lies the split that is growing in the arts — and particularly in contemporary dance — as we pass the offi-

David Gere teaches dance history and theory at the University of California at Los Angeles and is writing a book on dance and AIDS.

A curse for the arts in general, AIDS has become the defining event of late 20th-century dance.

cial 16th year of the AIDS epidemic in the United States.

Nobody would argue with the proposition that AIDS has been with us too long already. A feeling of exhaustion seems inevitable. Denial, too.

But at the same time, "It ain't over," as the choreographer Bill T. Jones intoned repeatedly from the stage of the Brooklyn Academy as part of a recent pitch for Dancers Responding to AIDS. The AIDS epidemic can't be over when you hear anecdotal reports of those who don't respond to the new drugs or can't afford them. Or when you contemplate the estimated 650,000 to 900,000 Americans living with the knowledge that the virus is still active, perhaps replicating, in their bodies. Or when you read that new cases, especially among young people and women, continue unabated. Indeed, if the activism and efforts to

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1998

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Applause Meets Anxiety in the Age of AIDS

Continued From Page 1

raise money stop now, history will surely berate us for quitting too soon.

What's more, even if the epidemic were over, its crucial artistic effects would remain. For even while H.I.V. knows no particular target, it has had an undeniably devastating effect on the performing arts in general and dance in particular, contributing, for example, to ancillary debates regarding the question of whether most male dancers are gay, and casting a pall of mourning over much of the creative work of the last decade and a half. Whatever happens with the new advances in medical science, AIDS has become a defining event — perhaps the defining event — of late-20th-century dance.

One striking bit of evidence for the omnipresent effect of AIDS is the degree to which the post-performance financial pitch and the benefit performance have evolved into vibrant art forms in their own right. One of the most distinctive AIDS events of the season, Dancers Responding to the AIDS "Remember Project," takes place this Saturday at the Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church in the East Village. This annual dance marathon, from noon to midnight, supports D.R.A. and its umbrella organization, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, in distributing \$250,000 annually to subsidize rent and health care for dancers with H.I.V. Some 80 companies and individuals will take part, and honors will be given to the organization's major fund-raisers, Mr. Dendy among them.

But whether or not more money is raised, or a cure found, it seems clear that AIDS will endure in choreography at least as a kind of cultural artifact, preserved in the politics and esthetic practices of this era's diverse dance artists. In an infamous screed in *The New Yorker* four years ago, the dance critic Arlene Croce decried the rise of this sort of work, calling it "victim art." I would not

the main features of his theory. "Mourning," he wrote, "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person We rest assured that after a lapse of time it will be overcome, and we look upon any interference with it as inadvisable or even harmful." This is grief at the "normal" register. By contrast, melancholia, though sharing many of the surface characteristics of mourning, is identified by Freud as a pathological illness, marked by an inability to recover from the loss, to "overcome" it and to return to daily activities. Thus, "the complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound," a wound that refuses to heal, a loss that cannot be salvaged.

In the early years of the AIDS epidemic in the United States, the art critic Douglas Crimp co-opted Freud's essay as a springboard for arguing the necessity of AIDS activism — based substantially on Freud's understanding of melancholia as mourning that will not, cannot end. Mr. Crimp's 1989 essay "Mourning and Militancy" suggests that the reintegration inherent in Freud's mourning process is denied to gay men living in the shadow of AIDS. This is partly because of the very nature of the epidemic, with its repeated deaths and the accompanying sense of unending loss.

But Mr. Crimp also argues that there can be no healing, no return to "normalcy," precisely because homophobia lies at the root of American society and prevents homosexuals from achieving a state of psychological ease. The love for which the gay man grieves is not acceptable, and therefore not recognized as love. This phenomenon is exemplified by the refusal of many newspapers to list the surviving companions of gay men who died of AIDS (or other causes) in obituaries, a policy that was changed at *The New York Times* in 1986.

Because of such slights, which Mr. Crimp describes as demonstrating the "violence of silence and omission," the gay man transforms melancholia to activism in the crucible of his righteous anger. And it is this melancholic activism — a seeming

Boards in Seattle and Royce Hall at U.C.L.A. before having its New York premiere at the Next Wave Festival in Brooklyn next December, did not set out to make a work about AIDS, though he has in the past. Still, he says, "I have been so altered, changed by the AIDS crisis — particularly emotionally — that AIDS is very much reflected in this piece."

Resonances of AIDS can therefore turn up quite unexpectedly. In building a work around the narrative of two African-American slaves who fall in love and are brutally separated from each other, Mr. Rousseve asked his dancers to contribute material that was as intimate as possible without being directly sexual. Julie Tolentino, one of Mr. Rousseve's dancers, devised a scene in which she enters to find another dancer, Ilaan Egeland, lying perfectly still on the floor. Ms. Tolentino then changes Ms. Egeland's clothes. As Mr. Rousseve explains: "In real life, Julie had once actually gone over to a friend's house who had died of AIDS, and she had changed him into his burial clothes. And it was the most intimate

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Mr. Rousseve believes that some viewers will divine the literal reference in that scene. But others will see it as "an abstract image of trying to get something that you'll never be able to get from a person, from a lover." Regardless, he adds, "The emotional core that's feeding that scene is certainly the AIDS crisis."

But even as artists like Mr. Rousseve find the resonance of AIDS at a deep, almost unconscious level, others continue to create works that directly address recognizable aspects of the syndrome, often to disturbing effect. Joe Goode, a San Francisco choreographer whose works of the last decade have all, directly or indirectly, addressed the omnipresence of AIDS, is a case in point.

Mr. Goode's most recent dance-theater piece, "Deeply There (Stories of a Neighborhood)," is a musical centered on the character of Ben, an unseen figure — the prototypical gay man dying of AIDS — symbolized by tousel bedclothes on

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BUT after the San Francisco premiere of "Deeply There" — which will be performed again in January at the Mandell Weiss Theater in San Diego — Mr. Goode received a letter from a longtime supporter who was distressed by the theme. The letter described in moving terms the truthfulness of Mr. Goode's portrayal of the caregivers who surround Ben as he becomes sicker and sicker and ultimately dies. But then, the writer, a gay man, continued, "Why are you making a piece about AIDS now?" Mr. Goode was taken aback, interpreting the query as a fervent argument for denial: "We are in this respite from having to go to memorial services, so why am I making him

think about this?"

For Mr. Goode and other gay male choreographers, making dances about AIDS or asking for money from the stage or dedicating time to other volunteer efforts (Mr. Goode is head of the fund-raising committee of the Parachute Fund, D.R.A.'s San Francisco equivalent) is not so much a matter of choice as an unavoidable imperative, a compulsion to overcome melancholic ennui. The energized alternative, as Mr. Crimp argues, is a rigorous and committed melancholic activism.

Indeed, in the resolution to "Deeply There," Mr. Goode sings a soliloquy to Ben that seems to suggest that his grief will one day come to graceful closure. "Don't worry, I will be fine," he croons in a spookily unwavering tone. But then, in a final gesture rich with feeling and mystery, Mr. Goode shortens the line to lend it an existential twist, singing simply, "I will be." In the end, staying alive — and refusing to relinquish mourning — may prove to be this era's most distinctive form of activism. □

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use that scurrilous phrase, if only because people living with AIDS make it a practice not to think of themselves as victims. Nor would I want to denigrate art that speaks directly to the issues of our time. In my view, that is exactly what art does best.

But even if, owing to the cumulative effects of exhaustion, denial and homophobia, a segment of the public actually wanted artists to stop making financial appeals from the stage, or creating work about loss, or finding ways to speak about AIDS in their choreography, such efforts would have negligible effect. Death and grief, mourning and AIDS activism have, in fact, become so integral to the culture of the arts at the end of the millennium that the stamp of AIDS will surely remain on us long after the epidemic actually comes to an end — assuming it does. Adapting a term from Sigmund Freud, this phenomenon could be said to derive from a dominant psychological framework of our time: AIDS melancholia.

In a 1917 essay titled "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud began a careerlong meditation on how the human psyche deals with loss. At this early stage in his thinking on the subject, Freud had already defined the main features of his theory. "Mourning," he wrote, "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person We rest assured that after a lapse of time it will be overcome, and we look upon any interference with it as inadvisable or even harmful." This is grief at the "normal" register. By contrast, melancholia, though sharing many of the surface characteristics of mourning, is identified by Freud as a pathological illness, marked by an inability to recover from the loss, to "overcome" it and to return to daily activities. Thus, "the complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound," a wound that refuses to heal, a loss that cannot be salvaged.

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Because of such slights, which Mr. Crimp describes as demonstrating the "violence of silence and omission," the gay man transforms melancholia to activism in the crucible of his righteous anger. And it is this melancholic activism — a seeming conundrum — that is visible in the continuing proliferation of responses to AIDS within the dance world. The moment when the dancer becomes a spokesman in the fight against AIDS, verbally or choreographically, is highly charged. This is the moment when the dancer looks his (sometimes her) audience in the eye and says, AIDS is not over, the needs of my colleagues are overwhelming, and until a day arrives that I cannot now imagine even in my wildest dreams, I must continue to mourn, publicly and militantly. This is my Holocaust, and I must always remember.

In choreography, the form and content of AIDS remembering endure even as they undergo subtle shifts. Though hundreds of explicit "AIDS dances" have been created since the early 1980's, only a few of the excerpts being presented at this Saturday's "Remembering Project" benefit will make direct reference to AIDS. The participants include the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, the Trisha Brown Company and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, only the last of which is known for avid AIDS activism. Still, even Mr. Jones's most recent work, "We Set Out Early . . . Visibility Was Poor," makes no literal references to AIDS.

But these days choreography need not specifically refer to AIDS for an audience member to sense its reverberations. The Los Angeles choreographer David Rousseve, whose new "Love Songs" is heading to On the

Boards in Seattle and Royce Hall at U.C.L.A. before having its New York premiere at the Next Wave Festival in Brooklyn next December, did not set out to make a work about AIDS, though he has in the past. Still, he says, "I have been so altered, changed by the AIDS crisis — particularly emotionally — that AIDS is very much reflected in this piece."

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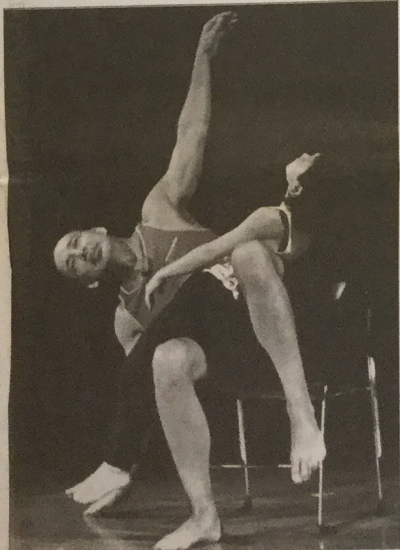
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Joe Goode, left, and Willis Bigelow performing Mr. Goode's "Deeply There (Stories of a Neighborhood)" in New York in September.

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When Plagues End

NOTES ON THE TWILIGHT OF AN EPIDEMIC.

By Andrew Sullivan

I.

FIRST, THE THINGS I RESIST REMEMBERING, the things that make the good news almost as unbearable as the bad.

I arrived late at the hospital, fresh off the plane. It was around 8:30 in the evening and there had been no light on in my friend Patrick's apartment, so I went straight to the intensive-care unit. When I arrived, my friend Chris's eyes were a reddened blur of fright, the hospital mask slipped down under his chin. I went into the room. Pat was lying on his back, his body contorted so his neck twisted away and his arms splayed out, his hands palms upward, showing the intravenous tubes in his wrists. Blood mingled with sweat in the creases of

his neck; his chest heaved up and down grotesquely with the pumping of the respirator that was feeding him oxygen through a huge plastic tube forced down his throat. His greenish-blue feet poked out from under the bedspread, as if separate from the rest of his body. For the first time in all of his illnesses, his dignity had been completely removed from him. He was an instrument of the instruments keeping him alive.

The week before, celebrating his 31st birthday in his hometown on the Gulf Coast of Florida, we swam together in the dark, warm waters that he had already decided would one day contain his ashes. It was clear that he knew something was about to happen. One afternoon on the beach, he got up to take a walk with his newly acquired beagle and glanced back at me a second before he left. All I can say is that, somehow, the glance conveyed a complete sense of finality, the

Andrew Sullivan, a senior editor at The New Republic, is the author of "Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality."



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"GERICAULT'S RAFT" (1996), BY DOUG AND MIKE STARN

COURTESY OF LEO CASTELLI AND PACE WILDENSTEIN MACGILL GALLERIES

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subtlet but clearest sign that it was, as far as he was concerned, over. Within the space of three days, a massive fungal infection overtook his lungs, and at midnight on the fourth day his vital signs began to plummet.

I was in the hall outside the intensive-care room when a sudden rush of people moved backward out of it. Pat's brother motioned to me and others to run, and we sped toward him. Pat's heart had stopped beating, and after one attempt was made to restart it, we intuitively acquiesced, surrounded him and prayed: his mother and father and three brothers, his boyfriend, ex-boyfriend and a handful of close friends. When the priest arrived, each of us received communion.

I remember that I slumped back against the wall at the moment of his dying, reaching out for all the consolation I had been used to reaching for — the knowledge that the final agony was yet to come, the memory of pain that had been overcome in the past — but since it was happening *now*, and now had never felt so unavoidable, no relief was possible. Perhaps this is why so many of us find it hard to accept that this ordeal as a whole may be over. Because it means that we may now be required to relent from our clenching against the future and remember — and give meaning to — the past.

II.

MOST OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ABOUT AIDS — the statements by responsible scientists, by advocate organizations, by doctors — do not, of course, concede that this plague is over. And, in one sense, obviously, it is not. Someone today will be infected with H.I.V. The vast majority of H.I.V.-positive people in the world, and a significant minority in America, will not have access to the expensive and effective new drug treatments now available. And many Americans — especially blacks and Latinos — will still die. Nothing I am saying here is meant to deny that fact, or to mitigate its awfulness. But it is also true — and in a way that most people in the middle of this plague privately recognize — that something profound has occurred these last few months. The power of the newest drugs, called protease inhibitors, and the even greater power of those now in the pipeline, is such that a diagnosis of H.I.V. infection is not just different in degree today than, say, five years ago. It is different in kind. It no longer signifies death. It merely signifies illness.

The reality finally sank in for me at a meeting in Manhattan this summer of the Treatment Action Group, an AIDS advocacy organization. TAG lives and breathes skepticism; a few of its members had lambasted me only nine months before for so much as voicing optimism about the plague. But as soon as I arrived at the meeting — held to discuss the data presented at the just-completed AIDS conference in Vancouver, British Columbia — I could sense something had changed. Even at 8 P.M., there was a big crowd — much larger, one of the organizers told me, than at the regular meetings. In the middle sat Dr. David Ho, a pioneering AIDS researcher, and Dr. Martin Markowitz, who presided over recent clinical trials of the new treatments. The meeting began with Ho and Markowitz revisiting the data. They detailed how, in some trials of patients taking the new protease

inhibitors used in combination with AZT and another drug called 3TC, the amount of virus in the bloodstream was reduced on average a hundred- to a thousandfold. To put it another way: Most people with H.I.V. can have anywhere between 5,000 and a few million viral particles per milliliter of their blood. After being treated for a few weeks with the new drugs, and being subjected to the most sensitive tests available, many patients had undetectable levels of the virus in their bloodstreams. That is, no virus could be found. And, so far, the results were holding up.

When Ho finished speaking, the questions followed like firecrackers. How long did it take for the virus to clear from the bloodstream? Was it possible that the virus might still be hiding in the brain or the testes? What could be done for the people who weren't responding to the new drugs? Was there resistance to the new therapy? Could a new, even more lethal viral strain be leaking into the population? The answers that came from Ho and Markowitz were just as insistent. No, this was not a "cure." But the disappearance of the virus from the bloodstream went beyond the expectations of even the most optimistic of researchers. There was likely to be some effect on the virus, although less profound, in the brain or testes, and new drugs were able to reach those areas better. *The good news was that H.I.V. seemed primarily to infect cells that have a short half-life, which means that if the virus is suppressed completely for two years or so, the body might have time to regenerate tissue that was "aviremic."* And since the impact of the drugs was so powerful, it was hard for resistance to develop because resistance is what happens when the virus mutates in the presence of the drugs — and *there was no virus detectable in the presence of the drugs.*

The crowd palpably adjusted itself, and a few chairs squeaked. These are the hard-core skeptics, I remember thinking to myself, and even they can't disguise what is going through their minds. There were

caveats, of course. The latest drugs were very new, and large studies had yet to be done. There was already clinical evidence that a small minority of patients, especially those in late-stage disease, were not responding as well to the new drugs and were experiencing a "breakout" of the virus after a few weeks or months. Although some people's immune systems seemed to improve, others' seemed damaged for good. The long-term toxicity of the drugs themselves — their impact on the liver, for example — could mean that patients might undergo a miraculous recovery at the start, only to die from the effects of treatment in later life. And the drugs were often debilitating. I tested positive in 1993, and I have been on combination therapy ever since. When I added the protease inhibitors in March, the nausea, diarrhea and constant fatigue had, at first, been overwhelming.

Still, after the meeting, a slightly heady feeling wafted unmistakably over the crowd. As we spilled out into the street, a few groups headed off for a late dinner, others to take their protease drugs quickly on empty stomachs, others still to bed. It was after 10, and I found myself wandering aimlessly into a bar, where late-evening men in suits gazed up at muscle-boy videos, their tired faces and occasional cruising glances a weirdly comforting return to normalcy. But as I checked my notebook at the

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door, and returned to the bar to order a drink, something a longtime AIDS advocate said to me earlier that day began to reverberate in my mind. He had been talking about the sense of purpose and destiny he had once felt upon learning he was positive. "It must be hard to find out you're positive now," he had said darkly. "It's like you really missed the party."

III.

SECOND, THE RESISTANCE TO MEMORY.

At 6 o'clock in the morning in the Roseland Ballroom in Manhattan on a Sunday last spring the crowds were still thick. I had arrived four hours earlier, after a failed attempt to sleep. A chaotic throng of men crammed the downstairs lobby, trying to check coats. There were no lines as such, merely a subterranean, almost stationary mosh-pit, stiflingly hot, full of lean, muscular bodies glacially drifting toward the coat-check windows. This was, for some, the high point of the year's gay male social calendar. It's called the Black Party, one of a number of theme parties held year-round by a large, informal group of affluent, mainly white, gay men and several thousand admirers. It's part of what's been dubbed the "circuit," a series of vast dance parties held in various cities across the country and now a central feature of an emergent post-AIDS gay "life style."

When people feared that the ebbing of AIDS would lead to a new burst of promiscuity, to a return to the 1970's in some joyous celebration of old times, they were, it turns out, only half-right. Although some bathhouses have revived, their centrality to gay life has all but disappeared. What has replaced sex is the idea of sex; what has replaced promiscuity is the idea of promiscuity, masked, in the increasing numbers of circuit parties around the country, by the ecstatic drug-enhanced high of dance music. These are not mass celebrations at the dawn of a new era; they are raves built upon the need for amnesia.

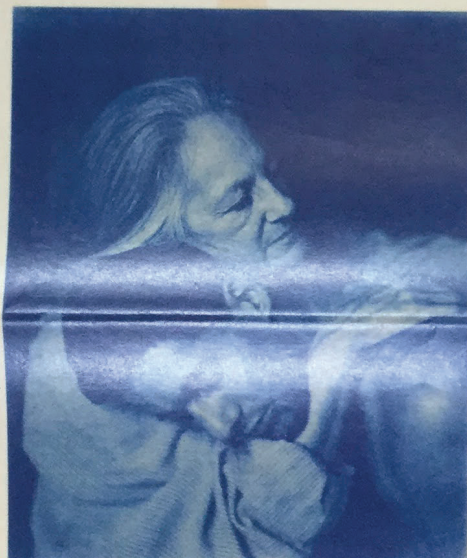
Almost nothing has been written in the mainstream media about these parties, except when they have juttred their way into controversy. A new circuit party, called Cherry Jubilee in Washington, incurred the wrath of Representative Robert Dornan because drugs had been used in a Federal building leased for the event. The annual Morning Party in August on Fire Island, held to raise money for Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York, was criticized on similar grounds by many homosexuals themselves. But in general, these parties have grown in number with a remarkable secrecy, reminiscent of the old, closeted era when completely bifurcated gay lives were the norm. But their explosion on the scene — there are now at least two a month, involving tens of thousands of gay men in cities as diverse as Pittsburgh and Atlanta — is interesting for more than their insight into party culture.

The events are made possible by a variety of chemicals: steroids, which began as therapy for men wasting from AIDS and recently spawned yet another growing sub-subculture of huge body builders; and psychotherapeutic designer drugs, primarily Ecstasy, which creates feelings of euphoria

and emotional bonding, and ketamine, an animal anesthetic that disconnects the conscious thought process from the sensory body. On the surface the parties could be taken for a mass of men in superb shape merely enjoying an opportunity to let off steam. But underneath, masked by the drugs, there is an air of strain, of sexual danger translated into sexual objectification, the unspoken withering of the human body transformed into a reassuring inflation of muscular body mass.

As the morning stretched on, my friends and I stood in the recess of a bar as the parade of bodies passed relentlessly by. Beyond, a sea of men danced the early morning through, strobe lights occasionally glinting off the assorted deltoids, traps, lats and other muscles gay men have come to fetishize. At the party's peak — around 5 A.M. — there must have been about 6,000 men in the room, some parading on a distant stage, others locked in a cluster of rotating pecs, embracing one another in a drug-induced emotional high.

For a group of men who have witnessed a scale of loss historically visited only upon war generations, it was a curious spectacle. For some, I'm sure, the drugs helped release emotions they could hardly address alone or sober; for others, perhaps, the ritual was a way of defying their own infections, their sense of fragility or their guilt at survival. For others still, including myself, it was a puzzle of impulses. The need to find some solidarity among the loss, to assert some crazed physicality against the threat of sickness, to release some of the toxins built up over a decade of constant anxiety. Beyond everything, the desire to banish the memories that will not be banished; to shuck off — if only till the morning — the maturity that plague had brutally imposed.



"THE ARTIST'S MOTHER" (1994). ONE OF JOHN DUGDALE'S SELF-PORTRAITS THAT RECORD HIS DUEL WITH AIDS.

IV.

I TALK ABOUT THIS AS A QUINTESSENTIALLY homosexual experience, not because AIDS is a quintessentially homosexual

experience. Across the world, it has affected far, far more heterosexuals than homosexuals; in America, it has killed half as many intravenous drug users as gay men. And its impact has probably been as profound on many heterosexual family members and friends as it has been on the gay men at ground zero of the epidemic. But at the same time, AIDS was and is inextricable from the question of homosexuality in the psyche of America because it struck homosexuals first and from then on became unalterably woven into the deeper and older question of homosexual integration.

In so many ways it was a bizarre turn of events. In the past, plagues were often marked by their lack of discrimination, by the way in which they laid low vast swaths of the population with little regard for station or wealth or sex or religion. But AIDS was different from the beginning. It immediately presented a political as much as a public-health problem. Before homosexuals had even been acknowledged as a central presence in American life, they were suddenly at the heart of a health crisis as profound as any in modern American history. It was always possible, of course, that, with such a lack of societal preparation, America might have responded the way many Latin American and Asian countries responded — with almost complete silence and denial — or that the gay world itself might have collapsed un-

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der the strain of its own immolation. But over the long run something somewhat different happened. AIDS and its onslaught imposed a form of social integration that may never have taken place otherwise. Forced to choose between complete abandonment of the gay subculture and an awkward first encounter, America, for the most part, chose the latter. A small step, perhaps, but an enormous catalyst in the renegotiation of the gay-straight social contract.

And an enormous shift in our understanding of homosexuality itself. Too much has been made of the analogy between AIDS and the Jewish Holocaust, and they are, indeed, deeply distinct phenomena. One was an act of calculated human evil, designed to obliterate an entire people from the center of Europe. The other is a natural calamity, singling out a group of despised outsiders by virtue of a freak of nature, and a disease that remained asymptomatic long enough to wipe out thousands before anyone knew what was happening. But in so far as each catastrophe changed forever the way a minority group was viewed by the world, the two have eerie parallels.

The hostility to homosexuals, after all, has far more in common with anti-Semitism than it does with racism. Homosexuals, like Jews, are not, in the psychology of group hatred, despised because they are deemed to be weak or inferior, but precisely because they are neither. Jews and homosexuals appear in the hater's mind as small, cliquish and very powerful groups, antipathetic to majority values, harboring secret contempt for the rest of society and sustaining a ghetto code of furtiveness and disguise. Even the details resonate. The old libel against Jews — that they would drink the blood of Christian children — has an echo today in the bigot's insistence that he has nothing against homosexuals per se, but doesn't want them allowed near his kids. The loathing for each group is closely linked to fear — and the fear is fanned, in many ways, by the distortion of a particular strain in Christian theology.

But that fear was abated, in both cases, by extraordinary contingent historic events. The Holocaust did many things to the structure of anti-Semitism, but in one hideous swoop it helped destroy the myth that Jews were somehow all powerful. The mounds of bodies, the piles of artifacts and the grotesque physical torture that the Jews of Europe suffered did not exactly indicate power. Out of that powerlessness, of course, came a new form of power, in the shape of achieved Zionism. But the idea of Jewish victimhood seared by mass murder into the Western consciousness was seared indelibly — and it remains one of the strongest weapons against the canards of anti-Semitism today.

Similarly, if on a far smaller scale, AIDS has dramatically altered the psychological structure of homophobia. By visiting death upon so many, so young, AIDS ripped apart the notion of subterranean inviolability that forms such a potent part of the fear of homosexuals. As tens of thousands of sons and uncles and brothers and fathers wasted away in the heart of America, the idea that homosexuals maintained a covert power melted into a surprised form of shock and empathy. For some, the old hatreds endured, of course, but for others an unsought and subtle transformation began to

take shape. What had once been a strong fear of homosexual difference, disguising a mostly silent awareness of homosexual humanity, became the opposite. The humanity slowly trumped the difference. Death, it turned out, was a powerfully universalizing experience. Suddenly, acquiescence in gay-baiting and gay-bashing became, even in its strongholds, inappropriate at a moment of tragedy. The victimization of gay men by a disease paradoxically undercut their victimization by a culture. There was no longer a need to kick them, when they were already down.

I think this helps explain the change in the American psyche these last 10 years from one of fearful stigmatization of homosexuals to one of awkward acceptance. And it's revealing that the same thing did not really happen to

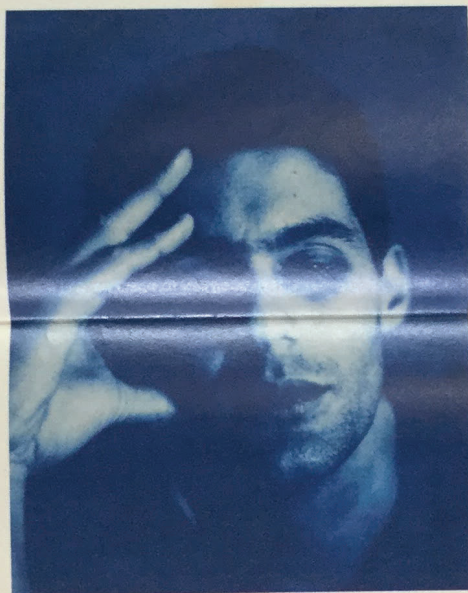
many other victims of the plague. With inner-city blacks and Latinos, with intravenous drug users, there was no similar cultural transformation, no acceleration of social change. And that was because with these groups, there had never been a myth of power. They had always been, in the majority psyche, a series of unknowable victims. AIDS merely perpetuated what was already understood and, in some ways, intensified it. With gay men, in contrast, a social revolution had been initiated. Once invisible, they were now unavoidable; once powerful subversives, they were now dying sons.

AIDS, then, was an integrator. If the virus separated, death united. But there was a twist to this tale. As the straight world found itself at a moment of awkward reconciliation, the gay world discovered something else entirely. At a time when the integration of homosexuals into heterosexual life had never been so necessary or so profound, the experience of AIDS as a homosexual experience created bonds and loyalties and solidarities that homosexuals had never experienced before. As it forced gay men out into the world, it also intensified the bonds among them; as it accelerated an integration, it forged an even deeper separation. The old question of assimilation

versus separatism became strangely moot. Now, both were happening at once — and feeding off the same psychological roots.

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I USED THE WORD "WE" IN PRINT IN reference to gay men. It was in an article I was writing as I witnessed my first AIDS death — of a stranger I had volunteered to help out in his final months. He was 32 years old when I got to know him, back in 1990. Without AIDS, we would never have met, and the experience changed my sense of gay identity for good. Before then, although I had carefully denied it, I had quietly distanced myself from much of what I thought of as "gay culture." Tom helped to change this.

He was the stereotype in so many ways — the 70's mustache, the Alcoholics Anonymous theology, the Miss America Pageant fan, the college swim coach. But he was also dying. His skin was clammy and pale. His apartment smelled of Maxwell House coffee and disinfectant and the gray liquid that was his constant diarrhea. I remember one day lying down on top of him to restrain him as his brittle, burning body shook uncontrollably with the convulsions of fever. I had never done such a thing to a grown man before, and as I did, the defenses I had put up between us,



"SELF-PORTRAIT WITH BLACK EYE" (FEBRUARY 1996)

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the categories that until then had helped me make sense of my life and his, these defenses began to crumble into something more like solidarity.

For others, the shift was more dramatic. Their own incipient deaths unleashed the unfiltered rage of the late 1980's, as decades of euphemism and self-loathing exploded into one dark, memorable flash of activism. The fire behind Act-Up was by its very nature so combustible that it soon burned out. But its articulation of a common identity — the unsustainable starkness of its definition of homosexuality — left a residue behind.

And I began to understand the pull of this identity more instinctively. Suddenly, it seemed, as my 20's merged into my 30's, everyone was infected. Faces you had got used to seeing in the gym kept turning up on the obit pages. New friends took you aside to tell you they had just tested positive. Old flames suddenly were absent from the bars. I remember thinking that a new term was needed for something that was happening to me with increasing frequency: I would be walking along a street and see an old man coming toward me whom I vaguely recognized. And then I would realize that it wasn't an old man; it was someone I knew who had just gone through some bout with pneumonia or some intestinal parasite. Like Scott, a soldier I had got to know as a 220-pound, 6-foot-3-inch, blue-eyed, blond-haired bundle of energy. During the gays-in-the-military affair early in the Clinton Administration, I had urged him to come out to his commanders and troops, sure that the new President would protect him. He told me I had to be out of my mind, and, of course, as it turned out, I was. And then, a few weeks later, he bumped into me on the street and confided the real reason he didn't want to confront anyone. He was H.I.V.-positive and needed the Army's support. He told me with genuine anguish, as if the knowledge of his disease demanded a courage his disease would also have punished.

Then, a mere year later, I saw him with a cane (literally), his spirit completely broken, his body shrunk to 140 pounds, his breath gone after the shortest walk, his eyes welling with the bitterness of physical pain and isolation. His lover of several years somehow endured the ordeal, nursing him every inch of the way, until Scott became a 90-pound skeletal wreck, unable to walk, his hair weak and gray and glassy, his eyes sunken miserably into a scaly face. Scott never fully reconciled with his family. And after Scott died, his lover told me that his last words had been, "Tell my mother I hate her."

When I would tell my straight friends, or my work colleagues or my family, about these things, it wasn't that they didn't sympathize. They tried hard enough. It was just that they sensed that the experience was slowly and profoundly alienating me from them. And they sensed that it was more than just a cultural difference. The awareness of the deaths of one's peers and the sadness evoked and the pain you are forced to witness — not just the physical pain, but all the psychological fear and shame that AIDS unleashed — all this was slowly building a kind of solidarity that eventually eliminated my straight friends from the most meaningful part of my life. There comes a point at which the experience goes so deep that it becomes almost futile to communicate it. And as you

communicate less and less and experience more and more, you find yourself gravitating to the people who have undergone the same experiences, the ones who know instinctively, the people to whom you do not have to explain.

I remember the moment when my friend Patrick told me he had AIDS. We had been friends for a long time, yet the meaning of that friendship had never been fully clear to us. But at that moment we were able to look each other in the eye and tell each other we would be there for each other, whatever it took and however hard it became. I don't think I had ever made such a commitment before — to anyone. It survived watching him waste away, seeing him buckled over on the floor, thumping the ground from the

pain of his infections; it survived him messing himself in panic as he fumbled with his IV; it survived his bloody-minded resistance to risky treatments that might have helped him; it survived the horrifying last hours in the intensive-care unit and the awkward silences with his family a year after he passed away. It survives still, as does the need to find a way to give it meaning in his absence.

For a long time I never broke down or cried about any of this — the dozens of acquaintances who have died, the handful of friends I have mourned or resisted mourning, the sudden flashes of panic at the thought of my own mortality. But late one night I caught sight of Senator Bob Kerrey on "Nightline." He was speaking haltingly of his relationship with Lewis Puller, the paralyzed Vietnam veteran who had survived the war, only to ultimately succumb to depression, alcoholism and, finally, suicide. There was in Kerrey's bitter, poignant farewell a sense that only he and a few others would fully understand Puller's anguish. Kerrey grasped, because he had experienced, what it was to face extreme danger and witness in the most graphic way possible the deaths of his closest friends and

colleagues, only to come home and find those experiences denied or ignored or simply not understood. And as he spoke, I felt something break inside me. Kerrey knew, as Mark Helprin expressed so beautifully in his novel "A Soldier of the Great War," what almost every gay man, in a subtler, quieter way, has also learned: "The war was still in him, and it would be in him for a long time to come, for soldiers who have been blooded are soldiers forever. They never fit in. . . . That they cannot forget, that they do not forget, that they will never allow themselves to heal completely, is their way of expressing their love for friends who have perished. And they will not change because they have become what they have become to keep the fallen alive."

At the time of this writing, almost three times as many young Americans have died of AIDS as died in the entire Vietnam War.

V.

IN CAMUS'S NOVEL "THE PLAGUE," THE DESCRIPTION OF HOW PLAGUES end is particularly masterful. We expect a catharsis, but we find merely a transition; we long for euphoria, but we discover only relief tinged with, in

Hovering behind
the politics
of homosexuality
after AIDS is the
question of what will
actually be purchased
from the horror.
What, after all,
did a third of a million
Americans die for?

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some cases, regret and depression. For some, there is a zeal that comes with the awareness of unsought liberation, and the need to turn such arbitrary freedom into meaningful creation. For many more, there is even — with good reason — a resistance to the good news itself because “the terrible months they had lived through had taught them prudence.” The reactions to the news, Camus notes, are “diverse to the point of incoherence.” Many refuse to believe that there is any hope at all, burned by dashed expectations one time too many, “imbued with a skepticism so thorough that it was now a second nature.” Others found the possibility of an end too nerve-racking to bear and almost dared the plague to kill them before it was too late.

And even now, among friends, there are those who refuse to be tested for a virus that, thanks to the new treatments, might be eliminated from the bloodstream. And there are those who are H.I.V.-positive who are still waiting to take the drugs and are somehow unable to relinquish the notion that being positive is a death sentence that they can endure only alone. And there are those many who, having taken all the drugs they can, have found that for some reason the drugs will not work for them and watch as their friends recover while they still sink into the morass of sickness made all the more bitter by the good news around them. And those more who, sensing an abatement of the pressure, have returned, almost manically, to unsafe sexual behavior, as if terrified by the thought that they might actually survive, that the plague might end and with it the solidarity that made it endurable.

You can already feel, beneath the surface, the fraying of the bonds. A friend in New York, H.I.V.-positive for 10 years, contemplates breaking up with his boyfriend because he suddenly realizes he is going to live. “I felt safe where I was,” he tells me. “But now I feel like an attractive person again. It’s more what you’re radiating inside — the feeling that, finally, you’re not a potential burden. I mean, maybe I’m not a potential burden.” Another positive friend, this one an AIDS advocate of hardened credentials, feels the meaning of his life slipping away. “At some point, you just have to go on,” he says. “You say that was a great period in your life, but it’s a big world and at some point you have to find a way to slip back into it and try and be a happy citizen. What I want is a boyfriend I love, a job that doesn’t make me crazy and good friends.”

But normalcy, of course, is problematic for gay America. The “normalcy” of gay life before AIDS is something few can contemplate and fewer remember. There are ways (the circuit parties) in which that history is repeated as farce, and ways (like the small revival of sex clubs) in which it is repeated as tragedy. But the solidarity of the plague years is becoming harder and harder to sustain. For the first time, serious resentment is brewing among H.I.V.-positive men about the way in which AIDS has slowly retreated from the forefront of gay politics. And among the longest-term survivors, there is a depressing sense that a whole new generation of post-AIDS gay men have no understanding of the profundity with which their own lives have become suffused.

Take John Dugdale, a 36-year-old photographer living in New York,

tall and chiseled, with dark hair and even darker eyes. (His self-portraits accompany this essay.) But when Dugdale looks at you these days, he merely looks toward you. Some time ago, he became almost blind from an AIDS-related virus. He took the new drugs, experienced euphoria as they obliterated the virus from his blood, crashed again a few months later as the virus returned, then experienced yet another high as his health improved once more. He knows his own survival is tenuous and is depressed by the shallowness of a culture that is clearly beginning to move on. As we chatted recently, he recalled with not a little edge a particular moment at the Black Party in New York earlier this year. It concerned a friend of his with AIDS, a body builder who still prized himself on being able to consort with the best of the competition. There

was one problem: he had lesions on his body, lesions he refused to have treated. And when he took his shirt off that night to dance with the throng, the lesions were all too visible. Not so long ago, they might have been viewed as war medals. Now, they’re something different. “This guy came up to him,” Dugdale recalled, “and said: ‘Would you please put your shirt on? You’re ruining it for everybody else.’”

For some, of course, the ebbing of AIDS could mean that the old divisions between H.I.V.-positive and H.I.V.-negative men could heal. With a less catastrophic diagnosis, the difference in life span — and self-definition — between negative and positive men might narrow. But there is also another possibility: that with a smaller and smaller percentage of gay men having H.I.V., the isolation of those infected will actually increase, and that those with full-blown AIDS could feel more intensely alone than before.

Even at the showing of the AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington this year, the divides were subtly present. There were those who went to see the quilt itself or went to the candlelight vigil and

those who went only to the many parties that filled the weekend. (In truth, many went to all.) And the internal tensions were palpable. It is as if many H.I.V.-positive men have emerged from transformingly deep spiritual experiences only to re-enter a culture that seems, at least in part, to be returning to the superficial. And the lifting of the veil of terror has served, paradoxically, only to isolate them still further in a subculture that has less time and less energy to sympathize or understand. The good news from the laboratory has robbed them not simply of the drama and intensity of their existence but also of the recognition of that drama and intensity. And even among their own kind.

VI.

A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE END OF AIDS AND THE END OF MANY other plagues: for the first time in history, a large proportion of the survivors will not simply be those who escaped infection, or were immune to the virus, but those who contracted the illness, contemplated their own deaths and still survived. If for some, this leads to bitterness, for others it suggests something else entirely. It is not so much survivor



“SELF-PORTRAIT GRINNING” (JUNE 1996)

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guilt as survivor responsibility. It is the view of the world that comes from having confronted and defeated the most terrifying prospect imaginable and having survived. It is a view of the world that has encompassed the darkest possibilities for homosexual — and heterosexual — existence and now envisions the opposite: the chance that such categories could be set aside, that the humanity of each could inform the humanity of the other.

Greg Scott is a Washingtonian I've known for years. We're both in our early 30's, and as the plague has unfolded over the last decade it has affected us in different ways. Greg is from a traditional Southern family, and when he was thrown out of the Navy for being a homosexual, he threw himself into years of furious activism. When I first came to know him, he was renowned in D.C. for hanging around bars and staring wildly at passers-by as a prelude to either lecturing or seducing them. For a short period of time, he would follow me around D.C. screaming "Collaborator!" to punish me for the sin of writing or voicing politi-

cally incorrect views. But we both knew, at some level, that we were in the epidemic together, and so when I saw him slowly declining over the last two years, I felt a part of myself declining as well. My friend Pat once described Greg as "hanging by the same length of rope" as he was, so for some time I half-expected to see Greg's face in the crowded obituary columns of the local gay paper along with the dozens of other faces I had known or seen over the years. When I wrote an op-ed piece a year ago hailing the latest breakthroughs in AIDS research, Greg came up to me in a bar and regaled me. "This is *not* a survivable disease!" he yelled over the music. "What do you know about it, anyway?"

So I learned to avoid Greg as far as I could. I never relished our meetings. Since he didn't know I was positive, too, our conversations had this false air about them. The solidarity I felt was one I could not fully express, and it ate away at me. I occasionally spotted him walking his dog in the neighborhood, his body, always thin, now skeletal, his large, staring eyes

disfigured by lesions, his gait that of a 60-year-old. When my parents visited, I pointed him out from a distance on the street, in some doomed attempt to help them understand: "See. That's my friend Greg." Read: "See. That's my friend Greg. *Do you see what this is doing to us?*" Last fall, Greg was taking morphine twice a day. He was on a regimen of 60 pills a day and was virtually bedridden. So when I caught sight of him five months ago, I literally jumped.

I had grown used to the shock of seeing someone I knew suddenly age 20 or 30 years in a few months; now I had to adjust to the reverse. People I had seen hobbling along, their cheekbones poking out of their skin, their eyes deadened and looking down, were suddenly restored into some strange spectacle of health, gazing around as amazed as I was to see them alive. Or you'd see them in the gym, skin infections still lingering, but their muscles slowly growing back, their skull-faces beginning to put on some newly acquired flesh. This is what Greg now looked like, his round blue eyes almost tiny in

his wide, pudgy face, his frame larger than I remembered it: bulky, lumbering, heavy.

In one of those bizarre coincidences, I bumped into him the day I quit my job as editor of *The New Republic*. He was one of the first people I was able to tell, and from the minute I spoke to him, I could tell he was changed. The anger was somehow gone; a calm had replaced it. He seemed to understand intuitively why I might want to take time to rethink my life. As we parted, we hugged awkwardly. This was a new kind of solidarity — not one of painful necessity, but of something far more elusive. Hope, perhaps? Or merely the shared memory of hopelessness?

Since then, I've become used to Greg's describing the contours of what he calls his "second life." And he describes its emergence in a way that is shared by more people than just him. The successive physical and material losses of his illness stripped him, he recalls, of everything he once had, and allowed him, in a way that's unique to the terminally ill, to rebuild himself from scratch. "There were

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When you have been girding yourself for the possibility of death, it is not so easy to gird yourself for the possibility of life.

times I was willing to accept that it was over," he says. "But things were never fully tied up. There were too many things I had done wrong, things I wanted to amend, things I still wanted to do. I was hanging on tenaciously out of some moral judgment of myself because I knew I hadn't got it right the first time."

In his progressive illness, Greg had lost first his energy, then his ability to digest food, then his job, then his best friend and then most of his possessions, as he sold them off to pay for medications. But he hung on. "In the early days," he remembers, "I couldn't imagine going through all that to stay alive. My friend Dennis would say that

I'd never go that far. But then he died. Looking back, it's absurd the lengths I went to. I'd never realized I cared so much about myself." (Greg's story brings to mind that of another friend: his illness finally threatened his sight, and he had to decide whether to pursue a treatment that involved an injection of a liquid directly into the eyeball. In other words, he had to watch as the needle came closer and closer and finally penetrated his eye. I remember asking him how on earth he could go through with it. "But I want to see," he told me.)

"When you're in bed all day, you're forced to consider what really matters to you," Greg elaborates.

"When the most important thing you do in a day is your bowel movement, you learn to value every single source of energy. You go into yourself and you feel different from other people, permanently different." Some gains are subtle. "It sparked a new relationship with my grandmother. Like me, she was suddenly finding she couldn't drive her car anymore, so we bonded in a way we'd never bonded before. You suddenly see how people are valuable. I mean, if you're healthy, who has time for this old lady? And suddenly this old lady and I have so much in common. And I still have that. That's a gain. I have an appreciation and love for her that I never fully had before." Some gains are even more profound. "My grandfather would say, 'You don't squeak under the bottom wire unless you're meant to.' And I feel that there's this enormous responsibility on me that I've never felt before. And it's a pleasant responsibility. I mean, lay it on me."

Responsibility is, perhaps, an unusual word for Greg to be using, and until AIDS it was not one

usually associated with homosexuality. Before AIDS, gay life — rightly or wrongly — was identified with freedom from responsibility, rather than with its opposite. Gay liberation was most commonly understood as liberation from the constraints of traditional norms, almost a dispensation that permitted homosexuals the absence of responsibility in return for an acquiescence in second-class citizenship. This was the Faustian bargain of the pre-AIDS closet: straights gave homosexuals a certain amount of freedom; in return, homosexuals gave away their self-respect. But with AIDS, responsibility became a central, imposing feature of gay life. Without it, lovers would die alone or without proper care. Without it, friends would contract a fatal disease because of lack of education. Without it, nothing would be done to stem the epidemic's wrath. In some ways, even the seemingly irresponsible outrages of Act-Up were the ultimate act of responsibility. They came from a conviction that someone had to lead, to connect the ghetto to the center of

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AIDS

Continued from page 62

had cherished and sustained in the teeth of such terror. AIDS wasn't the only thing that created this

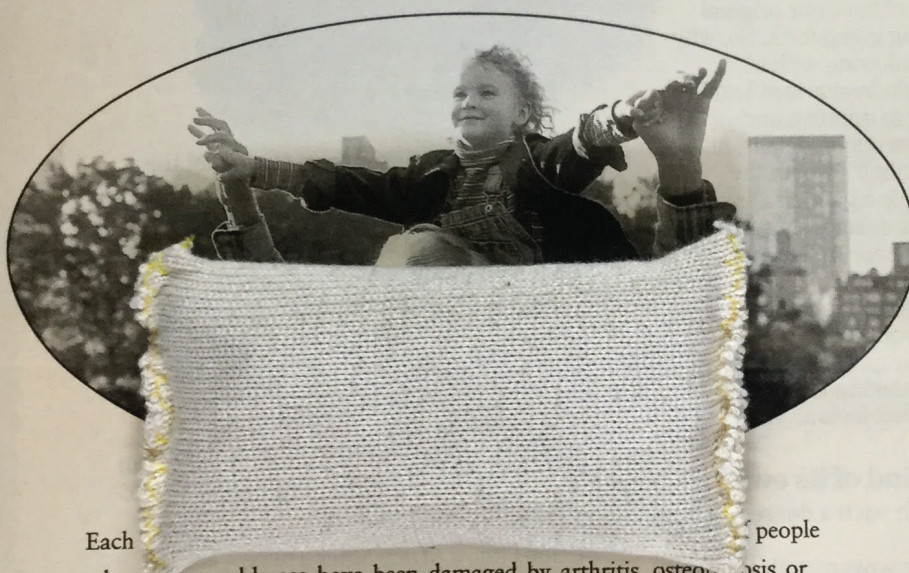
transformation of gay demands, but it was surely linked to them at a deep psychological level.

Plagues and wars do this to people. They force them to ask more fundamental questions of who they

are and what they want. Out of the First World War came women's equality. Out of the second came the welfare state. Out of the Holocaust came the state of Israel. Out of cathartic necessity and loss and

endurance comes, at least for a while, a desire to turn these things into something constructive, to appease the trauma by some tangible residue that can give meaning and dignity to what has happened. Hovering behind the politics of homosexuality in the midst of AIDS and after AIDS is the question of what will actually be purchased from the horror. What exactly, after all, did a third of a million Americans die for? If not their fundamental equality, then what?

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LAST, THE THINGS I WANT TO remember.

In the past six months, I have begun to believe I will live a normal life. By normal, of course, I don't mean without complications. I take 23 pills a day — large cold pills I keep in the refrigerator, pills that, until very recently, made me sick and tired in the late afternoon. But normal in the sense that mortality, or at least the insistence of mortality, doesn't hold my face to the wall every day. I mean I live with the expectation that life is not immediately fragile; that if I push it, it will not break.

It is a strange feeling this, and a little hard to communicate. When you have spent several years girding yourself for the possibility of death, it is not so easy to gird yourself instead for the possibility of life. What you expect to greet with the euphoria of victory comes instead like the slow withdrawal of an excuse. And you resist it. The intensity with which you had learned to approach each day turns into a banality, a banality that refuses to understand or even appreciate the experience you have just gone through.

Of course, I remember feeling this banality before and I remember the day it ended. I remember the doctor offering me a couple of pieces of candy, before we walked back into his office and he fumbled a way of telling me I was H.I.V.-positive. I've thought about that moment a lot in the past few months. When my doctor called recently to tell me that my viral load was now undetectable, part of me wanted to feel as if that first moment of mortality had been erased. But, of course, that moment can never be erased. And not simply because I cannot dare

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hope that one day the virus might be wiped completely from my system, but because some experiences can never be erased. Blurred, perhaps, and distanced, but never gone for good. And, in fact, beneath the sudden exhilaration, part of me also wants to keep the moment alive, since it allowed me to see things that I had never been able to see before.

I saw, to begin with, that I was still ashamed. Even then — even in me, someone who had thought and worked and struggled to banish the stigma and the guilt and the fear of my homosexuality — I instinctively interpreted this illness as something that I deserved. Its arrival obliterated all the carefully constructed confidence in my own self-worth. It showed me in a flash how so much of that achievement had been illusory — how, in a pinch, I still loathed and feared an inextricable part of who I was.

The diagnosis was so easily analogized to my sexuality not simply because of how I got it but also because it was so confoundingly elusive. I felt no sickness. I had no symptoms. There was nothing tangible against which I could fight — no perceptible, physical ailment that medicine could treat. So it seemed less like an illness than like some amorphous, if devastating, condition of life. Suddenly, it existed as my homosexuality had always existed, as something no one from the outside could glean, something I alone could know and something that always promised a future calamity.

For days after my diagnosis, I went through periodic, involuntary shaking spasms. My head literally sank onto my chest; I found it hard to look up or see where I was going. The fear of death and sense of failure — and the knowledge that there was nothing

I could do to escape this awareness — kept me staring at the sidewalk. At night, asleep, exhaustion gave way to anxiety as panic woke me up. And then, one morning, a couple of weeks later, after walking with a friend to get some coffee and muffins for breakfast, I realized in the first few sips of coffee that for a few short seconds of physical pleasure, I had actually forgotten what had just happened to me. I realized then that it was going to be possible to forget, that the human mind could find a way to absorb the knowledge that we are going to die and yet continue to live as if we are not. I experienced in some awful, concentrated fashion what I used to take for granted.

From then on, I suppose, I began the journey back. I realized that my diagnosis was no different in kind than the diagnosis every mortal being lives with — only different in degree. By larger and larger measures, I began to see the condition not as something constricting, but as something liberating — liberating because it forced me to confront more profoundly than ever before whether or not my sexuality was something shameful (I became convinced that it was not), and liberating because an awareness of the inevitability of death is always the surest way to an awareness of the tangibility of life.

And unlike so many others who are told they are going to die, and so many people who had been told they were H.I.V.-positive before me, I had time and health and life ahead. In one way, as I still lost friend after friend, and as others lived with griefs that would never be expunged, I experienced this with a certain amount of guilt. But also, as someone graced by the awareness of a fatal disease but not of its fatality, a heightened sense

Continued on page 84

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AIDS

Continued from page 77

of the possibilities of living. I realized I could do what I wanted to do, write what I wanted to write, be with the people I wanted to be with. So I wrote a book with a calm I had never felt before about a truth I had only belatedly come to believe. The date I inscribed in its preface was two years to the day since my diagnosis: a first weapon against the virus and a homage to its powers of persuasion.

And for a precious short time, like so many other positive people, I also sensed that the key to living was not a concentration on fighting the mechanics of the disease (although that was essential) or fighting the mechanics of life (although that is inevitable), but an indifference to both of their imponderables. In order to survive mentally, I had to find a place within myself where plague couldn't get me, where success or failure in such a battle were of equal consequence. This was not an easy task. It required resisting the emotional satisfaction of being cured and the emotional closure of death itself. But in that, of course, it resembled merely what we all go through every day. Living, I discovered for the second, but really the first, time, is not about resolution; it is about the place where plague can't get you.

Only once or twice did I find that place, but now I live in the knowledge of its existence.

So will an entire generation. ■

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Adorno [R. LUBART]

art's ability to critique is based upon its
removal from, its separation from,
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20th c. art ~ bourgeois art, art which seeks to
escape from the haunting conditions of
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BERGER, Maurice. Labyrinths: Robert
Morris, Minimalism, and the
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BUCHLOH, BENJAMIN H. "CONCEPTUAL ART
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INSTITUTIONS," OCTOBER VOL. 55
WINTER 1990

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BURGIN, VICTOR. "The Absence of
Presence" in The End of Art Theory
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DANTO, ARTHUR C. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE
COMMONPLACE - A PHILOSOPHY OF ART.
CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY
PRESS, 1981

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LEWITT, SOL. "PARAGRAPHS ON CONCEPTUAL
ART" ARTFORUM VOL. V no. 10 (1967)
pp. 56-57

_____. "Sentences on CONCEPTUAL
ART" ART + LANGUAGE vol. 1 no. 1
(MAY 1969) pp. 11-13 + 0-9
NEW YORK 1969.

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Linker, Kate. "When a Rose Only Appears
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Representation" in Impulsion:
A Postmodern Perspective.
(Stockholm: Moderna Museet,
1987) [p. 190 Lacan]

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Maris, Robert. "Mots et images?
dans le Modernisme et le
postmodernisme" Les Cahiers
du Musée National d'Art Moderne
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ARTFORUM V no 10 Summer 1967;

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Critical Anthology (NY 1968) p.131

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Siegelaut, Seth. "On Exhibitions and
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International [Dec. 1969]

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cf. KV/Maurice Miró

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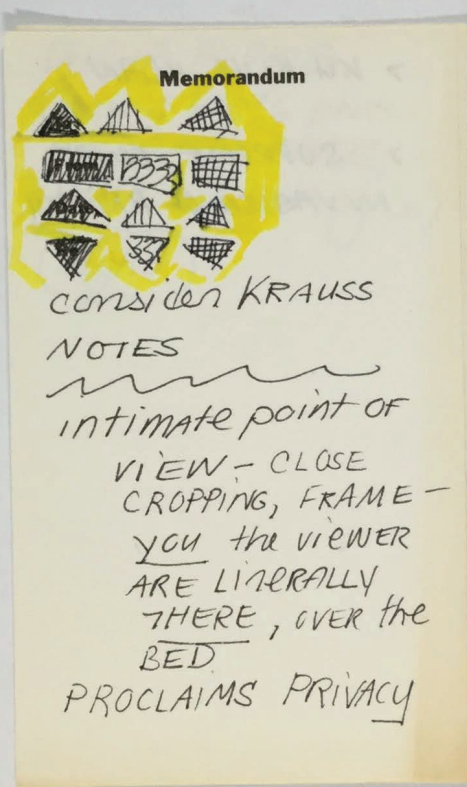
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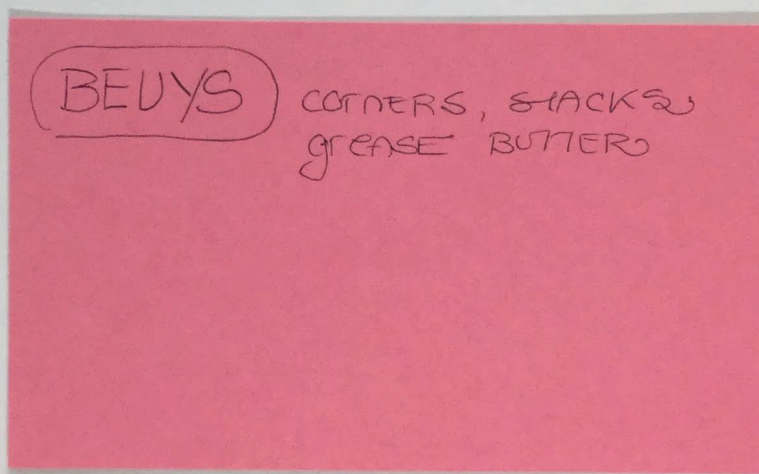
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Krauss/Rowell 1972 p. 60 blue 6/
p. 11 neg blue
Rowell 1986 p. 165 creative act +
contemporary events
pp. 2 94-95
TZARA 1931 papier collé

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Gombrich "Art does not exist and there
is no such thing as an artist."

dilemma of existence of art & its
attendant conditions, concern
of Duchamp Picabia Giacometti
Rauschenberg Beuys Filliou

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Buddhism and Manhattan: An Unlikely Joining Together

By ARI L. GOLDMAN

There may be few things as incompatible as Manhattan and Buddhism. One means competition, self-fulfillment and the fast track; the other means contemplation, self-abnegation and savoring the moment.

But all around Manhattan these days are little oases of Buddhism, part of a celebration of religion and culture called the Year of Tibet. The Dalai Lama arrived earlier this week to take part.

On Madison Avenue yesterday, for example, passers-by with shopping bags, briefcases and portable telephones stopped to peer into the window of the I.B.M. Building, where three orange-robed monks were creating a delicate sand painting. The painting, which will take three weeks to complete, is not for sale. When it is finished it will be scattered into the Upper New York Bay, a physical expression of the Buddhist idea of impermanence.

Times Square Message

From SoHo to Morningside Heights, the Year of Tibet will be marked with religious ceremonies, lectures, meditations, films, music and other ephemeral arts, like butter sculpture.

The serenity of Buddhism will even hit Times Square as videos about Tibet by American artists are shown on one of the world's largest screens, the Sony Jumbo-Tron. And just like the evangelist Billy Graham, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, will lead his



Jack Manning/The New York Times

The Year of Tibet celebration is promoting Buddhism throughout Manhattan. At the I.B.M. Building on Madison Avenue, monks worked on a sand painting that is to be discarded to demonstrate the philosophy of impermanence.

Continued on Page B4

NYT 10.11.91 B1

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Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

The Dalai Lama, leader of Tibetan Buddhism, speaking last night at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Buddhism and Manhattan: an Odd Union

Continued From Page B1

flock to a clearing in Central Park. There is so much happening, in fact, that one of the major organizers is concerned that the celebration might be more Manhattan than Buddhist.

"Maybe we should have done this in Wisconsin," said Robert A. F. Thurman, professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia.

But in Wisconsin the two major points that the Year of Tibet hopes to make — one political and the other religious — would not have reached the audience that only Manhattan can provide.

Good Omen Is Seen

In visits with diplomats, politicians and financial backers, the Dalai Lama hopes to build support for an independent Tibet, which is now a region of China. The Dalai Lama has been in exile since 1959 and now lives in Dharamsala, India.

He called for world support for his return to Tibet in a speech on Wednesday.

Beijing Is Resolute on Terms For the Dalai Lama's Return

BEIJING, Oct. 10 (Reuters) — The Chinese Foreign Ministry repeated today that the Dalai Lama must abandon his campaign for Tibetan independence before he can return to his Himalayan homeland.

"The most important thing is that the Dalai Lama stop his activities aimed at splitting China and undermining the unity of its nationalities, and abandon his position on Tibetan independence," the ministry spokesman, Wu Jianmin, said.

Mr. Wu was responding to a speech by the Dalai Lama in the United States on Wednesday in which he said he hoped to end his 32 years of exile soon and return to Tibet. China's claim to Tibet is disputed by the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in India.

day at Yale University where he said that the spirit of freedom that has swept the world was a good omen for a free Tibet. He pressed the point again last night in an ecumenical service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan where his topic was "Visions of Perfect Worlds."

The religious purpose to the Year of Tibet is to spread Buddhist teaching. The Dalai Lama, joined by five other Tibetan lamas, will expound on their religious philosophies in 10 days on the stage at the Paramount, formerly the Felt Forum, at Madison Square Garden. On Oct. 20, when the teachings are over, the Dalai Lama and the monks will conduct a "Sunrise Meditation for World Peace" in Central Park's Sheep Meadow.

Exhibit of Sacred Art

All noble efforts, to be sure, but, in Manhattan even a Buddhist monk needs a publicist. The Dalai Lama has three, at least.

The Year of Tibet itself is a bit of media hype; on the Tibetan calendar the year, 2115, has little significance. The Western year of 1991 was chosen because it coincided with the opening of a major exhibition, "Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet." Last spring it opened at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. It will open again on Tuesday at the I.B.M. Gallery of Science and Art, 590 Madison Avenue at 56th Street, just downstairs from the monks who are creating the sand painting. The Year of Tibet has also come with its own coterie of Manhattan celebrities and socialites. The actor Richard Gere, chairman of Tibet House, will accompany the Dalai Lama. And Elsie Walker, a cousin of President Bush, is organizing a series of upscale dinner parties.

Buddhism can be seen as a religious practice or as a nonreligious discipline and set of ethical and moral values. The Dalai Lama has many followers who insist that they maintain their Christian and Jewish faiths.

The highlight of the teachings at the Paramount will be a Kalachakra Initiation, a ceremony that Professor Thurman likened to a Christian Mass in which the Christian believers share a sacred meal. Participation in the Tibetan Kalachakra rite helps the Buddhist believer come closer to the goal of spiritual enlightenment.

A brightly colored sand painting, similar to the one being created by the monks at the I.B.M. Building, is used during the Kalachakra. At the conclusion of the ceremony it will be thrown into the water in view of the Statue of Liberty. The Statue has significance for the modern Tibetan. The Dalai Lama and his supporters watched hopefully in 1989 when Chinese students, using Miss Liberty as a symbol, demonstrated for freedom in China's Tiananmen Square. Even though the freedom movement was crushed, the symbol of the Statue of Liberty retains its power.

The cover of the official program for the Year of Tibet, in fact, is dominated by the likeness of Miss Liberty. All of which was another reason that the Year of Tibet could never have taken place in Wisconsin.

Lottery Numbers

Oct. 10, 1991

New York Numbers — 663

New York Win 4 — 9080

New York Pick 10 — 1, 4, 5, 14, 23, 28, 40, 41, 43, 44, 49, 50, 52, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 74, 80

New Jersey Pick-It — 186

New Jersey Pick 4 — 4701

New Jersey Pick-6 Lotto — 4, 10, 11, 27, 34, 39; bonus, 26602

Connecticut Daily — 395

Connecticut Play 4 — 3871

Oct. 9, 1991

New York Lotto — 7, 9, 17, 31, 41, 43; supplementary, 4

New York Pick 10 — 4, 6, 7, 8, 21, 22, 24, 36, 39, 40, 41, 52, 54, 55, 58, 61, 63, 64, 70, 72

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CONSTELLATIONS (4-2-91)

- art made under compelling historical conditions
- temporary collapse, incorporation of time and change
- compare to stained glass, to water, to veils, to reflections
- consider what is legitimate artistic response/voice of opposition. Surrealism after 1939 no longer the voice of opposition. Problem when realism associated in the 1940s with facism and abstraction with intellectual elitism
- consider Breton's introduction to 1959 edition, politics, abstraction, tachisme
- search for transcendence, touch upon Miro's catholicism, metaphor of the church
- titles of constellations, language, vague - do we know that they are Miro's for a fact, certain that Breton accepted them as Miro's
- how is art affected by contemporary culture, contemporary events
- political theory, twentieth century art = bourgeois art, art which seeks to escape from the harrowing conditions of the world (Adorno, states that art's ability to critique is based upon its removal from, its separation from, the world)
- Breton says "series" is like periodic table
- consider orientation, are all horizontals from Varengeville, Miro/vertical/horizontal
- stars, sex, grid, picture plane, projection, screen, palms

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Herbert Read, "Introduction," The International Surrealist Exhibition. Thursday, June 11th to Saturday, July 4th, 1936. London, New Burlington Galleries.

(page 13, under heading of "Superrealism in Particular"):

"A belief in the primacy of the imagination has one further consequence: mere cleverness, craftiness, prettiness, the chic and bloom of an over-ripe civilisation, sink to a secondary place. It is beside the point to talk of form and composition, of handling and handwriting. The work of art is to be judged, in the first place, not by its physique, but by its imaginative scope, its intimate revelations, its surprising incoherence, its superreality.

Do not judge this movement kindly. It is not just another amusing stunt. It is defiant -- the desperate act of men too profoundly convinced of the rottenness of our civilisation to want to save a shred of its respectability.

The philosophers, said Marx, have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point, however, is to change it. The artists, too, have only interpreted the world; the point, however, is to transform it."

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LES CAHIERS

DU MUSÉE NATIONAL D'ART MODERNE

AUX MIROIRS DU LANGAGE

TEXTES

CARTER RATCLIFF Dandysme et abstraction
dans un univers défini par Newton

DIDIER CARON La couleur pure et son ordre

DOMINIQUE CHATEAU Langue philosophique et théorie de l'art
dans les écrits de Marcel Duchamp

MOLLY NESBIT Les originaux des readymades : le modèle Duchamp

EDWARD BALL et ROBERT KNAFO Le dossier R. Mutt

W.J.T. MITCHELL Ut Pictura Theoria : la peinture abstraite
et la répression du langage

ROBERT MORRIS Mots et images dans le modernisme
et le postmodernisme

DIETER SCHWARZ Utiliser le langage, utiliser l'art :
le travail de Lawrence Weiner

NOTES DE LECTURE

par CLAIRE BRUNET et ÉTIENNE JOLLET

VIE DU MUSÉE

Expositions

33

AUTOMNE 1990



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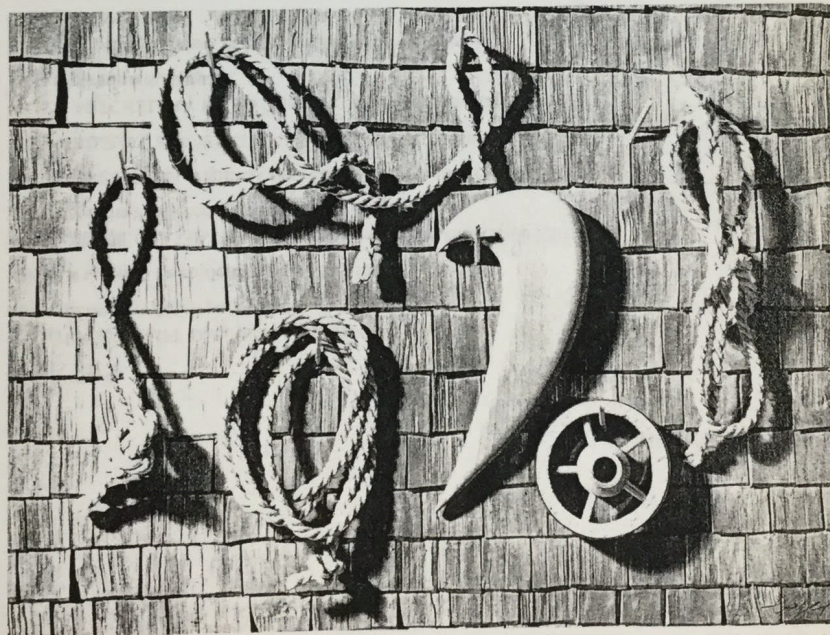
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AUX MIROIRS DU LANGAGE



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DIDIER CARON
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W.J.T. MITCHELL
DIETER SCHWARZ

33

AUTOMNE 1990

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Brenson on Stern NYT 12.28.90 "... someone who understands that political arguments in museums can only be effective if they are esthetically convincing."

Rob Stern on Golub Aia Dec. 1990 ambiguity surrounding term "political" when it is used to modify the word "art" has existed for as long as modernism has attempted to reconcile esthetic possibilities with social activism, formal truths & political truths

art that implicates viewer, that does not provide contemplative codage nor confirmation of prior convictions

as a product of the educated middle class, an admitted beneficiary of America's prosperity & basic civil freedoms, Golub makes no pretense to being a revolutionary - his work in the final analysis makes a simple but compelling case for the primacy of struggling to achieve basic decency

PHILOSOPHER RICHARD RORTY - job of writers & artists "to sensitize one to pain" & so work to reduce future suffering - FORSWEAR ideological ABSOLUTISM HALBREICH we build new identities, new pictures of ourselves, out of a self-awareness based on critical reassessment & acceptance of old

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The Museum of Modern Art: LATIN AMERICAN COLLECTION ELIMINATIONS

Ariza, Gonzalo (Colombian, born 1912)
BOGOTA. (1941).
Oil on canvas. 31 5/8 x 39 1/2"
Inter-American Fund
632.42

Bazile, Castera (Haitian)
BATTLE BETWEEN PEASANTS. (1948)
Tempera on cardboard. 20 x 24"
Inter-American Fund.
806.63

Berni, Antonio (Argentine)
NEW CHICAGO ATHLETIC CLUB. (1937)
Oil on canvas. 6' 3/4" x 9' 10"
Inter-American Fund
645.52

Berni, Antonio (Argentine)
SEATED BOX. (1940-42).
Oil on canvas. 37 x 22 3/4"
Inter-American Fund
646.42

Bigaud, Wilson (Haitian, born 1931)
MARCHE DES POULES.
Oil on composition board. 24 x 29 7/8"
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Allan Roos.
381.55

Borges de Torren, Norah (Argentine)
HOLY WEEK. 1935.
Tempera. 20 x 15 3/4" (sheet)
Inter-American Fund.
797.42

Butler, Horacio A. (Argentine)
EL CAMELOTE: TIGRE. (1941)
Oil on canvas. 32 x 39"
Inter-American Fund.
653.42

Carvalho, Flavio de R. (Brazilian, 1899-1973)
THE POET, PABLO NERUDA. 1947.
Oil over gesso on canvas, 39 3/8 x 30 7/8"
Inter-American Fund.
134.57

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THE NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIALS/LETTERS MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1991

The New York Times

Founded in 1851

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Little Comfort in Mr. Duke's Loss

David Duke's defeat in the Louisiana governor's race brings both a sense of relief and fresh alarm about where American politics seems to be headed.

Relief, because electing a former Nazi and Ku Klux Klansman governor would have been an appalling endorsement of bigotry. Alarm, because Mr. Duke's rapid rise in politics makes clear that racism has a large constituency.

Nearly 40 percent of voters in Mr. Duke's state thought him suitable to serve. Tens of thousands from around the nation rallied to his support or contributed to his campaign.

These results are disturbing when judged against the fact that Mr. Duke was widely condemned in newspapers and business circles, and repudiated by politicians from George Bush on down. That he still got almost 40 percent of the vote suggests that a candidate with a less odious past — and the same message — might have been elected.

To be sure, Mr. Duke had more than hatred working for him in the contest against the former three-term Democratic Governor, Edwin Edwards. Mr. Edwards was twice tried and acquitted on Federal racketeering charges. Top aides were jailed. And Mr. Edwards sealed his shady reputation by bragging to the press about his gambling escapades.

But Mr. Edwards's past became less of an issue when local business leaders warned that Mr. Duke's election would drive investment from the state. The choice between Mr. Edwards and the former Grand

Wizard of the Klan was summed up in a bumper sticker: "Better the lizard than the Wizard."

Voters did not vote for Edwin Edwards; they voted against David Duke.

Mr. Edwards received 61 percent of the vote, Mr. Duke 39. Many observers who expected a tighter race cite this margin as a source of comfort. They had presumed that many Duke supporters refused to reveal themselves in the polls. As it turned out, the hidden vote did not exist. But the worrisome thing is that virtually all of Mr. Duke's supporters felt no shame in proclaiming their allegiance to him.

Nor is there any comfort in an extreme polarization along racial lines: 96 percent of blacks voted for Mr. Edwards. But 55 percent of whites voted for Mr. Duke, as did 56 percent of Republicans.

The Republicans have tried to disown Mr. Duke. The disavowals came too late. Mr. Duke is a product of the racial appeals that the Party of Lincoln has used for more than a decade.

It makes no difference that Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Senator Jesse Helms delivered their appeals in political "code" rather than in expressly racist terms. The code has gradually made racism more respectable. David Duke, but for his past, has become indistinguishable from a host of mainstream Republicans.

Louisiana has denied David Duke the platform he sought. Now it is up to Republicans to renounce the racist strategy that helped create him.

Abroad at Home

ANTHONY LEWIS

America, Be on Guard

A sigh of relief. That is the first reaction to the result in Louisiana. David Duke lost, and we can put aside our worst fears. America is not so susceptible to the virus of racism.

But it is not really occasion for relief when a man who as recently as two years ago openly peddled Nazi propaganda was nearly 40 percent of the vote in an American state.

It is not an occasion for relief when a former leader of the Ku Klux Klan can master the techniques of modern politics so well that for hundreds of thousands of voters he is a hero, the voice of their frustration.

And it is not an occasion for relief when it takes weeks of effort, local and national, focused on a single election, to defeat such a man. If he had been just one of many significant races around the country, would the attention and the money have been there to fight David Duke?

"America, be on guard!" Edwin Edwards told a New Orleans crowd celebrating his victory. He said Louisiana had "rejected the demagogue," but the country could face "another assault of bigotry" in the Presidential campaign.

Yes it could. Mr. Duke got campaign contributions from 46 states. A finance report he filed at the end of October said that 47 percent of the \$1,370,067 he had then received in contributions came from people outside Louisiana.

Newspapers found some of the out-of-state contributors and asked why they liked David Duke. The answers tell us a good deal about public feelings these days.

Gerrard Nadeau, 74 years old, a

Duke may have lost, but for thousands of people he is a hero.

retired engineer in Adams, Mass., contributed \$50. He told Chris Black of The Boston Globe:

"The Republicans take care of the rich, the Democrats take care of the blacks and David Duke takes care of the whites. No one else is for the whites. I think civil rights have ruined this country. Black people don't want to work. They are taking over all the housing projects. This country is ruined."

John E. Carlson, 61, of Marston Mills, Mass., retired from the Air Force, said: "This country is becoming a third-rate nation. What kind of country is this when Bush pushes a free-trade bill that takes all the businesses out of the United States?"

Michael DeBeck of New York, who said he was a teacher, told Dennis Hevesi of The New York Times that Mr. Duke was saying "that there is something basically wrong with our system of government, that taxes are getting out of hand, that the laws we have are definitely discriminating. He is willing to address the mounting welfare thing."

Mr. DeBeck objected most vigorously to affirmative action. "White people are not being given a fair shake these days," he said.

The comments show how effectively Mr. Duke touched people's feelings — feelings that often have little to do with the facts. For example, President Bush is of course not proposing a trade bill to move all businesses out of the United States.

Welfare is another area where resolute emotion overwhelms truth. Mr. Duke was cheered for saying that high welfare payments encourage babies. In Louisiana welfare pays an additional \$11 a week per child.

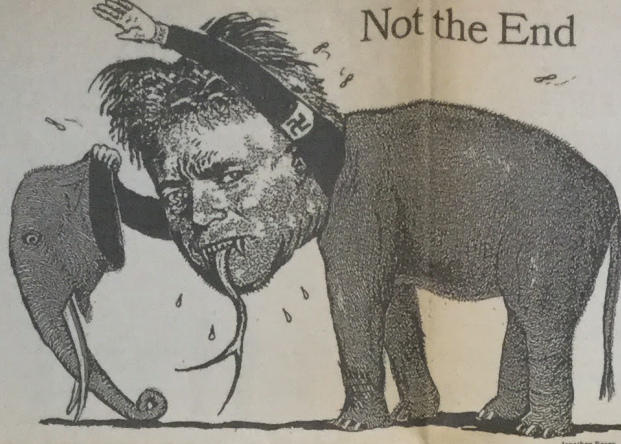
The racial and nativist feelings come through most strikingly. Again, facts are irrelevant. Affirmative action for women and minorities has virtually nothing to do with unemployment or other economic stress felt by white males. But there must be someone to blame for the misery that millions are suffering.

Mr. Duke was only following in the footsteps of respectable politicians. Ronald Reagan told and retold his tale of a "welfare queen." George Bush waved the bloody shirt of "quotas."

But there is something special, something incredible about Americans voting in large numbers for an admirer of Adolf Hitler. Less than 10 years ago Americans died fighting the unmitigated evil of Nazism. To know that many today would overlook a politician's attachment to that evil, to would believe his thin claims to have found redemption, is to know something is deeply wrong in this country.

"We've been sending a message," Mr. Duke said as he conceded defeat in Louisiana. "Next year, you'll have the message being expended all over the nation."

Not the End



Jonathan Rosen

By Hodding Carter

ALEXANDRIA, Va., twenty-seven years ago, the Republican Party made a Faustian bargain with Southern antecedents and national implications. On Saturday, the bill almost came due. David Duke lost, which saves the day, but did not end his political career. More to the point, his emergence as a national figure was the logical result of decisions repeatedly made by Republican mainstream leaders since Barry Goldwater went "hunting where the ducks are" in the Presidential election of 1964.

The road from Goldwaterite opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to Duke's overt, though slickly packaged, racism is a straight line. Long the party of Abraham Lincoln, the G.O.P. has become the party of white reaction and Southern Redemption. Its most recent Presidents, with the honorable exception of Gerald Ford, the accidental chief executive, have repeatedly driven their policies and campaigns deep into the racial fault lines of American society. David Duke is the first, but he won't be the last, political atavistic consequence.

Richard Nixon developed a "Southern strategy," which, as his biographers Rowland Evans and Robert Novak wrote at the time, sent a clear message to the new Republican constituency. "He was on the side of the South, the white majority and the status quo." Ronald Reagan never met a civil rights law he liked or a racist strictly he could condemn. George Bush ran against Willie Horton and affirmative action in 1988, just as he had betrayed his father's

Hodding Carter is a columnist and president of Mainstreet TV Productions.

Poorhouse Revisited

By Dennis P. Culhane

PHILADELPHIA The American welfare system has historically balanced two forms of paltry assistance: "outdoor" relief in the form of cash payments and "indoor" relief such as homeless shelters. In the early 19th century, outdoor relief was attacked as rewarding indolence, so a system of poorhouses was created where the destitute would presumably be converted to thrift and ambition.

Similarly, as the Government's war on poverty transformed into a war on the poor in the last decade, cash relief — viewed as welfare dependency — became its primary target. Reagan Administration "reforms" restricted eligibility for welfare, unemployment and disability benefits. By 1990, state aid to families with dependent children had declined on average to half the 1972 levels. Many states reduced or eliminated general assistance payments to the chronically disabled and unemployed.

Welfare reductions have been succeeded by a new institution of relief, the homeless shelter. The masses of homeless in the 1980's, freed from their dependence on welfare, inspired a social movement to provide shelter. In New York City, there are 23,000 shelter beds, including 14,000 beds for homeless families. Shelters have become a growth industry with professional advocates, administrators and government overseers. Cornell University even offers a course in "shelter management." But embodying many of the misguided assumptions of the poorhouse, the shelter has failed as a remedy for homelessness.

Shelter planners have assumed that the homeless are a easily definable group whose needs can be neatly distinguished. There is no such clear division with much of the "housed" population living in substandard and overcrowded housing. New York discovered this when it tried to close

heritage by running against the Civil Rights Act in his unsuccessful Texas race for the Senate in 1964.

And the returns came rolling in, adding up to two decades of virtually unbroken Presidential success and a near-mortal lock on the newly sold South. Actually, while the ostensible target was the South, it was a message without regional borders. The

David Duke will haunt the G.O.P.

Republican Party was deliberately refashioned as the white man's Presidential party, North and South, and with a clear understanding of the consequences. Those were as politically beneficial for the G.O.P. as they were morally troubling and socially destructive.

Lee Atwater, the late chairman of the national Republican Party, was a native of South Carolina, but he practiced what he instinctively knew — what would polarize the white electorate in the Carolinas would polarize it in the Middle West and along the Pacific Coast as well.

Which brings us back to David Duke and Louisiana. Mr. Duke is a twisted bigot, but a very bright one. He learned quickly and adapted even more quickly. He watched Republican respectable run code-word campaigns from the local level to the Presidential and knew a good thing when he saw it.

Rather than being some exotic shrimp in that old cliché, the "rich gumbo of Louisiana politics," he fashioned himself as the undeniable heir of modern Republican tradition. The national party disowned its bastard child; the state party never could or would summon the hypocrisy to do so.

shelters by giving families in them permanent housing. The plan backfired; it lured more families into the shelters seeking the same benefit.

Shelter programs assume that homelessness will be solved by reforming or treating mentally ill and drug-addicted homeless people, estimated to be half of the shelters' single-adult population. But shelters are an inappropriate place to treat this group; most are crowded, violent places where drugs are readily available. Poorly financed, ineffective mental health and substance abuse treatment programs continually replenish the supply of homeless to be reformed.

Like the poorhouse, shelters evolved as a reform instrument, presuming to rescue people from the vicissitudes of street life. But the shelters are an inhumane system of segregation — an intimidating environment, viewed by some as worse than the streets.

Reformers hope that an emphasis on smaller shelters — like the New York plan proposed last month by Mayor David Dinkins to build 24 small shelters for homeless single people — promotes self-sufficiency. But they also worry that better living conditions might encourage dependency.

Reforming shelters will not end homelessness any more than reforms of the poorhouse solved the problem of 19th-century poverty. Because shelters aren't the cause of homelessness, they cannot be the solution.

The shelter reveals a charade in American welfare policy, pretending to show concern for the visible poor while demonstrating contempt for the invisible poor — those struggling to keep a day ahead of homelessness. As we try to help the homeless with shelters, we ignore the policies that continue to put people in them.

Without a commitment to affordable housing, adequate Federal income support to protect against impoverishment and sufficient mental health care and substance abuse treatment, we are condemned to the shameful legacy of the 19th-century poorhouse — balancing outdoor penury with indoor brutality, building more homeless shelters and jails and having fewer thriving communities to make them obsolete.

Essay

WILLIAM SAFIRE

Ukraine Marches Out

KIEV, Ukraine "Unprincipled" is the word used to describe President Bush by Mykhailo Hryun, a former political prisoner and founder of Rukh, the Ukrainian independence movement. "We prefer Thomas Jefferson."

Fighters for a Ukraine free of Russian imperial rule are still smarting at Mr. Bush's speech in Kiev this summer blasting "suicidal nationalism" and lauding the Gorbachev center.

That misreading of the forces of history in his "chicken Kiev" speech not only made one American President appear to be anti-liberty, but jeopardized our relations with an emerging European power.

Ukraine (the article "the" is dropped when referring to a country, not a province) is the great, hobbled boot that will drop on Dec. 1 on top of Moscow center's pretensions to empire. On that day of referendum, at least two out of three Ukrainians are likely to vote to assert their country's national sovereignty. On that day, the Soviet "union" will die.

The courageous early move of the Baltic states was the key to disunion, but the departure of Ukraine is the sledgehammer blow. Imagine the United States without its southeastern quadrant; subtract the old Confederacy from our map to get an idea of what an impact on Russian colonialism the separation of Ukraine's 52 million people and productive capacity will have. On the overnight train from Moscow to Kiev, the visitor gets a notion of the

The word "Ukraine" means "borderland"; its Catholic west faces Europe, its Greek Orthodox east faces Asia. To win the coming referendum, the Ukrainians in the west have been actively selling the Russian-speaking population in the east (including those in the Crimea, a Black Sea gift to Ukraine from Khrushchev) on the glories of nationhood.

Opportunistic, too. The candidate leading the race for the presidency is Leonid Kravchuk, a longtime Communist subversive to the Kremlin and silent during the coup who has undergone a miraculous conversion to independence. He has stolen the Rukh opposition's platform, and if he gets away with the flip-flop, it will be a measure of the populace's desire for freedom from Moscow without too much change at home.

And Ukraine may spell trouble. American policy makers worry about plans announced in Kiev for a 400,000-man army, but that is a third of the Red Army troops now stationed here and may be a device for shipping the Russians home while keeping Ukrainian troops employed. The real trouble will be in enticing the new nation into giving up its nuclear weapons.

Even with milk in Kiev still suspect after the Chernobyl meltdown, Ukrainian politicians are not eager to give up the Soviet nuclear missiles located on their territory. Privately, some Kievans say that these weapons are bargaining chips for Russian cooperation on oil-for-grain trade and for Western help.

The center, as the poet Yeats predicted, cannot hold. We should stop supporting Moscow center and stop lecturing the Ukrainians on the need to ship the missiles to responsible Russia. That simplistic Bush-Gorbachev approach, typical of the offensive "chicken Kiev" speech, won't work.

Instead, as Russia's Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, hints, Washington should negotiate through the center's paper union with Russia, Ukraine and the other nuclear republics to dismantle land-based ICBM's until a level is reached at which the only missiles remaining happen to be on the Russian republic's soil. The criterion need not be insulating geographic to bring about that stabilizing result.

Complex? You bet. But with Ukraine as a player, Washington will have to stop wishing for the good old days of union dictatorship.

Jefferson preferred over Bush.

potential richness of the land. Black soil, intensive cultivation and a friendly climate add up to food production and economic power as soon as frustrated farmers are given transportation and the incentives of private property and personal gain. This is potentially France, not Bangladesh.

We should shake free of our old questions (What will independence do to the Soviet Union? How will Russia survive without its breadbasket?) and address the new. What sort of nation will Ukraine be?

Strongly nationalistic, for openers.

From urban despair to urban repair.



©1991 Chemical Bank. Member FDIC.

One house at a time, one block at a time, community groups are working to turn urban despair in the South Bronx into urban repair. Charlotte Gardens, above, is the work of one such group: The Mid-Bronx Desperadoes, a coalition of civic and church organizations. Working alongside the MBD and other neighborhood groups, Chemical Bank has developed some innovative programs to help.

Our Housing Opportunities Program offers general purpose grants and seminars to familiarize groups with development issues. The program also introduced recoverable grants: a Chemical innovation that helps groups pay upfront costs before their approved public grants are received. To date these zero interest loans have helped local groups build 5,000 units of affordable housing.

While we know that no single group can solve the shortage of affordable housing, we believe the business community, neighborhood groups and government working together can help people help themselves.

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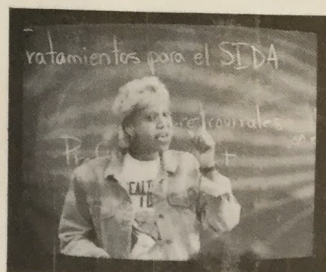
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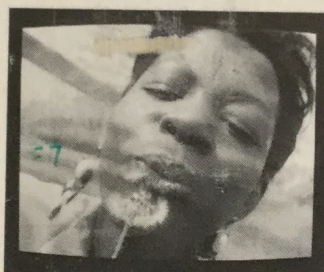
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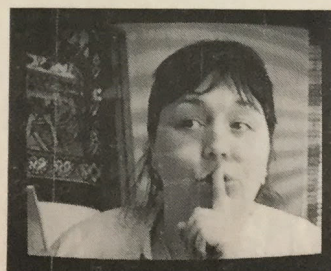
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(IN)VISIBLE WOMEN



A VIDEO BY **MARINA ALVAREZ & ELLEN SPIRO**



A **FEAR OF DISCLOSURE** PROJECT
PRODUCED BY **PHIL ZWICKLER & JONATHAN LEE**

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CREATIVE TIME presents

in observation of **WORLD AIDS DAY & DAY WITHOUT ART**

(IN)VISIBLE WOMEN

A VIDEO BY **MARINA ALVAREZ & ELLEN SPIRO**

(26 minutes, 1991)

Through community education, art and activism, women with AIDS challenge notions of female invisibility and complacency in the face of the epidemic. *(IN)VISIBLE WOMEN* is the second video of the *FEAR OF DISCLOSURE PROJECT*, initiated by the late Phil Zwickler and produced by Phil Zwickler and Jonathan Lee.

Available from Video Data Bank (1-800-634-8544) and Women Make Movies (212-925-0606).

NOVEMBER 30 **303 GALLERY**, 89 Greene Street, 10 am-6 pm, 966-5605 (Free)

DECEMBER 1 **THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM**, 144 West 125th Street
1 pm, 2:30, 4 pm, 5:30, 6:15 pm, 864-4500

DECEMBER 1 & 3 **THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**, 11 West 53rd Street
Roy & Niuta Titus Theater 2, *Speaking Out: Film & Video About
Aids*, Dec. 1, 2:30 pm, Dec. 3, 6pm, 708-9480

DECEMBER 3 **PREGONES THEATER**, 295 St. Ann's Avenue, Bronx
7-8:30 pm, 585-1202 (Free)

M
NEIL WINOKUR
310 GREENWICH STREET #252
NEW YORK NY 10014-6330

This project remembers Phil Zwickler, Iris De La Cruz & Irma Luz Nieves.
Special Thanks to Arthur Williams, The Tape House, Women Make Movies.

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Pleasures *and* Terrors



Essay by Katha Pollitt

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of Domestic Comfort

PLEASURES AND TERRORS of Domestic Comfort? Even the title sounds a bit self-mocking, an ironic echo, perhaps, of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, Balzac's great novel of ambition, crime, and sex played out in the grand salons and sordid alleys of Paris. It's a long way from Balzac's energetic schemers to Philip-Lorca diCorcia's *Mario* (1979), in which a young man sullenly contemplates a refrigerator shelf packed with eerily glowing processed foods. It's even a longer way to diCorcia's *Mario* (1981), in which the same young man, a bit paunchier perhaps, desultorily sands an ominously low living-room ceiling. If in the first photograph *Mario* seems to be asking, *Is this all there is?*, in the later one he's found his answer: Yes.

Recently, a young foreign-policy analyst named Francis Fukuyama made a stir by suggesting that history, understood as a



MELISSA ANN PINNEY.
Mother and Daughter, Halloween. 1988. From the series "Feminine Identity."
Chromogenic color print (Ektacolor). 20 1/2 x 30 1/2".

global competition between the ideas of democracy and totalitarianism, was coming to an end. With democracy about to triumph around the world, the future would be peaceful, prosperous, and boring. One can quarrel with Fukuyama's essentially Hegelian definition of history as ideological struggle. After all, most wars have been fought rather frankly over territory, resources, and markets, not over this or that vision of the

ideal state. And one can wonder, too, about the history-making potential of other Big Ideas he seems to disregard: nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, to mention two that seem to have plenty of juice left in them, to judge by recent events. Still, whatever the limits of Fukuyama's theory as a guide to events in Eastern Europe, or in the Middle East, or in Latin America, it accurately describes the world view of a very

Opposite:
PHILIP-LORCA DICORCIA.
Mario. 1979. Chromogenic color print (Ektacolor). 15 7/8 x 23". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchased with funds given anonymously.

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BRUCE CHARLESWORTH.

Untitled. 1985.

From the series "Fate." Silver-dye bleach print (Cibachrome). 23 x 23". Courtesy Jayne H. Baum Gallery, New York.

large segment of the population of the United States. The photographs gathered in *Pleasures and Terrors* are, for the most part, pictures of people for whom history is—or at any rate *feels*—over.

Consider, for instance, Tina Barney's *Sunday New York Times* (1982). One can read this portrait of country weekenders idly leafing through the paper as a study of tension and boredom, or, more benignly, as a joke at the expense of urbanites who bury themselves in newsprint rather than venture into the alien woodlands. But one can also read it as a social comment on a class, prosperous white thirtysomethings, whose horizons have shrunk to those of domestic

life (note how the group of readers is bracketed by the baby bottle in the foreground and the baby in the background). For these people, following the headlines is merely a spectator sport.

What do the photographs in *Pleasures and Terrors* tell us about domestic life in America today? One notes the popularity of gold carpeting and squashy flowered couches; of cassette players and televisions (but not books); of ugly plate-glass windows framing gorgeous views. It's a frankly materialist world, for the most part, in which the objects of daily life are so potent, so rich with implication, if not beauty, that they hold the camera's eye on their own. In the

photographs of William Eggleston, a formal meal set for one implies the absent diner; a gaping not-very-clean oven gleams with self-importance; jig-saw pieces scattered on a card table seem engaged in a complex dialogue with their closed container, in a living-room (gold-carpeted, of course) as impersonal as a waiting room. Eggleston shoots ordinary things with a devotion that leads us to think they *must* have some deep meaning. But the meaning itself is open-ended, mysterious.

At the other end of the spectrum from Eggleston are the satirists, who focus on the limitations and triviality of conventional domesticity. In Bruce Charlesworth's photo from the series "Fate," for example, a young man reads the want ads over corn flakes, in a cartoon-bright kitchen, under a clock that reads a quarter to eight. It's the hour of destiny for the Organization Man: will he get That Job? In Mary Frey's "Real Life Drama" series, pulp-romance captions counterpoint the banality of household chores. A middle-aged woman in a housecoat kneels on the kitchen floor, holding a dustpan and a miniature broom; the caption reads, "She quickened with the realization that things would never be the same." For this woman, of course, suspended between the falsifying clichés of popular fiction and the tedious reality

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POK CHI LAU.
Teen-ager's Room,
 Johnson County, Kansas. 1984.
 Chromogenic color print (Ektacolor).
 37 1/4 x 13 1/8".

of domestic drudgery, things will *always* be the same—including, perhaps, the recurrent conviction that things are about to be completely different.

Not surprisingly, the satirists tend to draw on imagery from the 1950s, the grand heyday of bourgeois complacency, ideological conformity, rigid sex-roles, and getting the laundry whiter than white. The fifties are currently undergoing yet another in an apparently endless series of revivals, but *Pleasures and Terrors* offers ample proof that the broad social changes of the last three decades are not about to be wished away. At first glance, Pok Chi Lau's *Teen-ager's Room*, *Johnson County, Kansas* (1984) is all frilly, girlish innocence: the white vanity with quilted skirt, the mirror bordered with snapshots of friends and boyfriends' phone numbers, the jumble of cute porcelain jars. But what are we to make of the ambisexual Calvin Klein perfume ads pinned to the wall? Even Kansas, it would seem, isn't in Kansas anymore.

And what has happened to that fifties byword "Togetherness"? A running theme in *Pleasures and Terrors* is the solitude of individuals within what we still like to call the family "unit." Children, in particular, seem to have their own agendas, to be bent on secret plans of their own. In

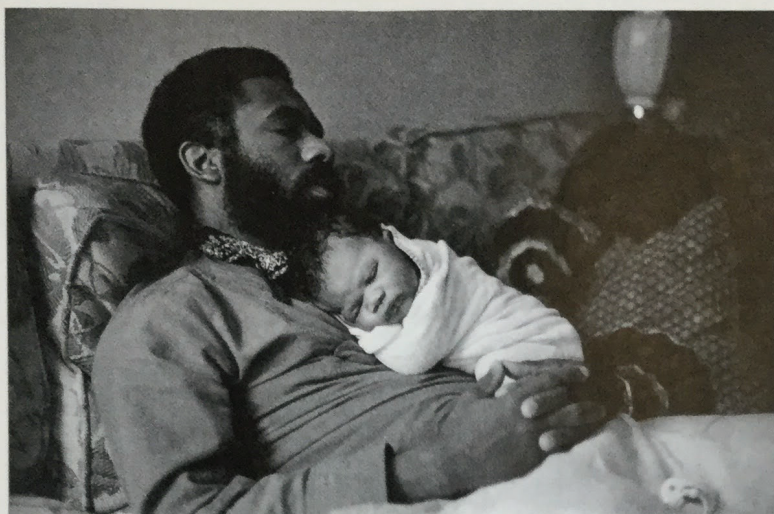


Melissa Ann Pinney's *Mother and Daughter, Halloween* (1988), a clearly cherished child endures her mother's embrace, her sly sidelong glance mirroring a grinning Halloween skull taped to the (plate-glass) window behind her. In an untitled photograph by Jock Sturges, an attractive, if slightly sagging, middle-aged couple hug on a beach, but their leggy pubescent daughter stands apart, calmly facing the camera. Her parents may not have noticed, but her independent womanly life has already begun.

In other ways, though, the families portrayed in *Pleasures and Terrors* seem not to have come as far from the fifties as we might like

to think. Compare, for example, two photographs about housework. In Peter Brown's *My Father Cleaning the Window* (1986), the white-haired man performs his chore with an air of serious absorption; behind him, a green garden vista stretches away in luminous plenitude. In Anne Turyn's 1983 photograph from the series "Illustrated Memories," by contrast, a barefoot, headless woman folds a blanket in a strictly functional attic bedroom. His task—one of those once-or-twice-a-year jobs that men perform when the spirit moves them—only adds to his aura of patriarchal dignity. Her task—a routine chore undone almost as soon as it is fin-

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MARILYN NANCE. *Al and Ali*. 1981.
Gelatin-silver print. 8 x 12".

(a ghost?) is superimposed on a picture of a man having a meal; "I'd like to have had a nice dinner with him," the caption reads, "just me and him." Such a small wish, in whose impossibility seems to lie all loss, all missed connection. Here too one must mention Albert Chong's haunting *The Two Sisters* (1987), in which a pair of little girls in white dresses look out at us with liquid eyes from behind a screen scattered with petals—the world of vanished childhood, or perhaps death.

Source of so much grief and boredom, of repression and oppression, of unmet needs and contradictory longings, domestic

ished—is so mindless she needs no brains, or so crazy-making she's lost them. His housework, interestingly, actually takes him outside the house, into the lovely life of nature. Her task confines her to a stuffy room at the top of the house. While both men and women photographers in *Pleasures and Terrors* focus their cameras on ordinary family life, what they see is not exactly the same—as one would expect, given the different tasks assigned (still!) to each sex, and the different value placed upon them. In general, the more lyrical depictions of family life are the work of men, while the women more often strike an anti-romantic note.

Race is another area in which we have not quite left the fifties behind. It's mostly a white world we see in *Pleasures and Terrors*; the relatively few images of blacks are, moreover, in a subtly different key. Apparently, we have not yet reached the point where blacks (or other nonwhites) can represent

either American society in general or a purely individual destiny. It is impossible to look at Marilyn Nance's lovely *Al and Ali* (1981), in which a father dozes with his infant son on his chest, without thinking of the precarious situation of black men and black children in contemporary America. One wonders, as one would not were he white, what will happen to that little baby, and to the parental hopes embodied in his name. Yet paradoxically, images of blacks can embody humanity at its most universal. In a 1981 photograph from Nicholas Africano's "Glenn Johnson" series, a white painted figure



ALBERT CHONG. *The Two Sisters*. 1987.
Gelatin-silver print. 37 7/16 x 28 9/16".

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life continues to lure us with promises of intimacy, joy, acceptance, freedom. Among the many impulses that attract the viewer to *Pleasures and Terrors*, not the least powerful is simple voyeurism.

How do other people live? Can we look at their living rooms and cluttered desks and rumpled beds and dinner tables and divine somehow if they know something we don't? We may never have met in the flesh Tolstoy's happy families that are all alike—or quip sardonically that they are all alike because there is only one of them—but we keep looking because for most of us home is the place where, if anywhere, lies our best, perhaps only, hope of happiness. That the hope is so often dashed does not seem to lessen its power. We may recognize the forceful political comment in Ken Botto's *Fort Winnebago* (1986), in which toys enact a clichéd suburban scene, complete with military tank parked in the side yard—one of the only photographs that connects American abundance to America's larger international role. But in our hearts, we don't think we live there, and certainly would never want to. No, where we want to live, and sometimes even believe we really *do* live, is in Mary Kocol's *Christmas Window, Somerville, Massachusetts* (1989), in which colored Christmas lights in a lace-curtained window shine out on a street of frame houses, or Robert Adams's *Summer Nights #18* (1985), in which the shadow of leaves at night seems to stir against a white clapboard house. The lights twinkle bravely, the



MARY KOCOL. *Christmas Window, Somerville, Massachusetts*. 1989. Chromogenic color print (Ektacolor). 37 1/2 x 25 1/4".

leaves richly sway. Inside, we feel somehow sure, all is intimacy and peace.

Katha Pollitt is a poet and a contributing editor to *The Nation*. She is working on a collection of essays about feminism.

Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort (through December 31) was organized by Peter Galassi, Director, Department of Photography. It is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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"The Crux of Minimalism" in
Individuals: A Selected History
of Contemporary Art, 1945-1986
Los Angeles: MoCA, 1986

W. Kemp "Death at Work: On
Constitutive Blanks in 19th Century
Painting," Representations
X, 1985, 102-123.

(concept of "blank" central notion of
reception aesthetics)

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ART * AUDIENCE ?

< Action
"Action" >

The issue of freedom loomed large after the cataclysmic war, and action was fused with ethical and philosophical concerns.

The notion that an individual can be defined by his acts was implicit in existentialism.

Sartre declared that "a man is not other than a series of undertakings."

Other philosophers stressed the "lived" experience in aesthetics, as opposed to theoretical doctrine.

In the phenomenology of Heidegger & Husserl & the writings of William James & John Dewey, the concept of the lived experience was applied to a dynamic aesthetic in which the whole being of the viewer is in action as a work of art is contemplated.

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Felix Stephan Huber

John Good Gallery
532 Broadway (near Spring Street)
SoHo
Through Nov. 7

Beds, real and imagined, are the theme of this photographic installation by Felix Stephan Huber, a young Swiss artist who lives in Cologne, Germany. Mr. Huber, whose work often has a diaristic quality, here lines the walls with large blowups of photographs of various beds he has slept in during the last year. The beds, from sleeping bags thrown casually on the floor to pristine hotel beds, appear both intimate and lonely in these gritty, grainy prints. Each frame, though, is stamped with the date and time the picture was made, giving it the impersonal quality of police photographs.

On the floor of the gallery Mr. Huber has taped off rows of rectangles to suggest cots lined up in a dormitory. In a small catalogue he makes explicit his hope that these ghost beds will evoke institutional housing, whether in refugee camps, prisons or homeless shelters. Reproduced in the catalogue is a newspaper photograph that shows the charred beds left after right-wing radicals set fire to an immigrants' camp in Leipzig, Germany.

Mr. Huber's provocative work effectively contrasts the personal and the political, a goal various artists have aimed at in recent years with mixed results. In a gesture that demonstrates the emotional resonance of this troubling piece, many gallery visitors step carefully around the taped rectangles of his imaginary beds as if they were graves. CHARLES HAGEN

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Pillow Talk

One of the pleasures of being a house guest is poking through your hosts' library and leafing through books you never got around to buying for yourself. The type of reading material found in the guest bedroom says a lot about their interests as well as what they think you might find interesting. And what better choice for a guest room than a couple of lavishly illustrated books on beds? **THE BED** (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$45) is exhaustively informative. Did you know that ancient nomadic Persians slept on goat skins filled with water? (And you always thought the water bed was invented by those libidinous 1960's flower children.) The early Saxons slept on sacks stuffed with hay, hence the expression "making a bed." Alecia Beldegreen, the creative director of *Bride's* magazine, also tells us that in the Middle Ages "beds were designed so that the sleeper sat upright" in a fully illuminated room with sword at the reach. Sleeping was "a communal affair" at both ends of the social spectrum until well into the 16th century, when "an invitation to share a bed was recognized as a mark of political esteem" and it was not uncommon for former enemies to share a bed as a symbol of reconciliation. In France during the Bourbon and Empire periods, the aristocracy slept, and often entertained, in beds of elaborate extravagance, several of which are depicted here. The graceful and simple four-poster beds that turn-of-the-century French nuns slept in are nearly as fascinating as the photograph of the vast one-room, 15th-century hospice where patients slept two to a bed as opposed to three or four in other hospitals. The most beautiful bed in this book must surely be that of the editor of *Bride's*, Barbara Tober, who has created a



Bed made in 1916 from an entire tree at a lodge in the Adirondacks.

king-sized fantasy out of antique lace and linens, chintz and mirrors. Ms. Beldegreen has also thoughtfully included an extensive source list and advice on how to choose and care for all types of bedding and bed-

clothes. Diane Von Furstenberg's **BEDS** (Bantam, \$35) is a very handsome and captivating volume filled with photographs of beautiful beds with fascinating histories from some very exclusive private homes. If you have always wanted to peek inside the bedrooms of the European aristocracy, past and present, as well as those of prominent American artists, designers and socialites, this book is a must-have. There are at least a dozen pages devoted to the beds of Napoleon, Josephine, Louis XIV, Marie Antoinette, Madame Du Barry and the perpetually recumbent Madame Récamier. In the event you are ever asked to stay the weekend with Kelly and Calvin Klein, you might do well to check out three of the guest rooms photographed here so you can put your dibs in for the one you like best. The next time you visit Gloucestershire, England, you simply must call in every favor ever owed you in order to wrangle an invite to the country home of Lord Jamie Neidpath, whose drawing room holds two of the most incredibly fabulous Chinese Chippendale daybeds. Real showstoppers these! I personally plan to stay a bit closer to home in the unlikely event Pauline Boardman or Baroness Marie-Hélène de Rothschild need an apartment (or should I say bedroom?) sitter. These two grandes dames sleep in rooms a storybook princess would covet. It was quite puzzling to come upon the photograph of a 19th-century Kang opium bed. It is very difficult to imagine anyone snoozing on something so clearly hard and cold. The only conclusion I could come to was that it is called an opium bed because you would have to smoke a great deal of opium before you could possibly fall asleep on it.

Sydney Biddle Barrows

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Critic's Notebook

John Cage's Music: Room for Nearly Anything

By BERNARD HOLLAND

This is about the late John Cage and here is how to read it:

First cut it out of the newspaper. Then, working from inside the border, clip away all the words. What should be left is a frame. Take it by the upper edges using two fingers of each hand.

Hold this empty frame up to whatever happens to be in front of you: a chair across the room, a truck passing outside the window. See what this empty frame does. Does it make you notice a chair you haven't thought about for weeks? Does the framed truck, one of scores that pass by daily, prompt something to move from the back of your mind to the front?

Now think about ears and not eyes. Try to imagine an empty frame that urges you to listen to whatever passes between its borders: the sound of one's own breathing, a neighbor's radio, the palpable silence that separates two aural events. Think about the frame — and whatever haphazardness might be trapped within it — and you will have an idea of John Cage's music.

Yeats claimed entitlement to ev-

A composer who asked questions only a listener could answer.

ery interpretive idea critics found in his poems, no matter how foreign to his original thinking. And so, if listeners will but keep their empty frames handy, everything they hear for the rest of their lives becomes music by John Cage. He died on Aug. 12, but his music keeps on composing itself. It is an ironclad claim to immortality Beethoven might have envied.

Cage and Richard Strauss, whose music was the subject of two recent weekends at Bard College, were very different men, but they agreed on what music in the 20th century no longer was. Music used to be something out there, something listeners sought contact with. Nineteenth-century thinking about Beethoven and Wagner made this external something noble, exalted, inspiring. Great com-

posers would build music as architecture, solid and permanent. Our souls would walk through it, touch its walls and exit moved and purified.

Strauss's music was still "out there" but "out there" tended to slip off Olympus and into the front parlor. The "Symphonia Domestica," the "Alpine Symphony" or the opera "Intermezzo" celebrated the everyday, using exalted skills to illustrate what was around us in the first place.

Cage went further, not only desanctifying "out there" but also rendering the idea meaningless. Cage's music is about "in here"; it asks what our senses are up to, quizzes them on what they may or may not have noticed. He changes the job description of the composer from creator of artifacts to middleman, a wholesaler who links the perceiver to the perceivable.

Cage himself once practiced art as the external object of worship and did it very well. But after the postwar Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano (Cage once said that he wanted to call this tampered-with instrument an "altered" piano but that it was something they did to cats), he changed.

I would hesitate to call him a modest man; indeed, he seemed well aware of his reputation, and indeed to enjoy and exploit it. But in a sense, Cage's music is the ultimate act of modesty; it stays the Beethovenian hand that would "take fate by the throat" and accepts anonymity. It worships the randomness and incoherence of life, lolls happily, helplessly in the unstructured flow of experience.

In another sense, however, Cage never lets us forget his presence. He somehow presides over these flights into chaos, perhaps by never letting the listener forget the precise and thoughtful framework that called our attention to them in the first place.

The Enlightenment said the mind would soon make sense of most things. The succeeding age of scientific discovery and industry said machines could be invented to take care of the rest. John Cage's art announces the failure of both philosophies. It suggests that we shall never really know what is going on in the universe, much less control it. It asks the ear to bend to uncertainty, to negotiate with chance, not defiantly but with wit, grace and invention.

Thursday Aug 27 1992

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FREDDIE ROKEN
PUBLIC FORMS OF PRIVACY
Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press
Theater and Dramatic Studies,
No. 32

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Artforum Summer 1992

NEWS FROM NOWHERE

Giorgio Verzotti

The very concept of beauty is tied to a sense of ethical urgency. Andres Serrano, for example, deals with it as an element of salvation, something that might redeem us from the ugliness of reality. And Jan Vercruyse speaks explicitly about the cathartic function that beauty recovers when it is tied to the sense of tragedy. Yet it must be admitted that, worked out in this way, the criteria of the beautiful and the ugly refer to traditional categories in which a harmony is sought that we know how to recognize and that governs the work. Discordant effects that manifest negativity will not fit into this schema.

The question of the ethical as it relates to much art today is less concerned with notions of beauty than with a possible relationship with the social and with an accompanying awareness that every element of this relationship must be integrally redefined. We begin not with knowledge but, precisely, in a state of ignorance: today we are addressing a community we no longer know anything about. And the tools we use to convince ourselves of its very existence speak to us, in reality, of its disappearance. The social becomes an abstract concept, only certain traces of which we can make concrete because the models of self-expression that it depends upon and makes use of reflect its alienation. A community is traceable but only as a rival subjectivity and as a conveyor of a specific need, and it bears with it an overriding awareness of division—into sexes, into ethnic groups, etc.—not the possibility of any unifying discourse.

The heroic actions of Barbara Kruger or Jenny Holzer, which spectacularize negativity, speak of this division; so do the antiheroic actions of Felix Gonzalez-Torres or Cary S. Leibowitz/Candyass, both of whom courageously assume a position of autobiographical melancholy and an unshakable stance before the spectacle.

and not necessarily consistent with the subject matter.

This is one way of debating the art system and its functioning; it is the least mystifying way of opening up that system to today's social urgencies. Two English artists, Henry Bond and Liam Gillick, work in analogous fashion, by attempting to revive a relationship with

photographs himself. Instead, he exhibits photographs rejected by clients of photo labs. Obviously, they are everyday images, documenting the most banal life-styles. These are appropriated to track esthetic values that common sense has rejected—the image is overexposed, say—or doesn't pay attention to. What matters to Bond is the glimpse of a social

dynamic "behind" the images that he chooses and then presents. His referent is an anonymous collectivity, whose expressive stereotypes he analyzes, in a manner similar to that of Gerhard Richter in his "photographic" paintings of the 1970s. The redefinition of the role of the artist that Richter undertook was based, to paraphrase Benjamin Buchloh, on the attempt to maintain a dialectical relationship within a given segment of a historical reality, criticizing a collective way of perception and expression with a formal, individual gesture.¹ The work of Bond and Gillick is based on the awareness of the difficulty of confronting a similar dialectic today, in the era of the end of opposing ideologies.

The method adopted by Bond and Gillick in the "Documents" series has been developed with care. It involves the collaborators themselves, who are not sure whether to define themselves as artists or perhaps as something else; the object of their analysis, the segment of historical "reality" that is being reproduced; and even the method, which is determined by the object of investigation and shows the effects of the latter's inability to be defined. Specifically, the two take on the roles of reporter and photojournalist—Gillick records the event in ques-

the social from within the art world itself. Their activity is articulated in terms of both artistic and critical production and theoretical organization and elaboration. Although each has worked independently, they collaborated on the ongoing series "Documents," begun in 1990—framed photographs with accompanying texts that question the truth of the artifacts of the information system.

In his own work Bond does not take



16 August 1991 Inverkip Scotland 12.30

World yachting Grand-Prix, Inverkip Marina.

The third world of Alfredo Jaar, the "blackness" of Lorna Simpson, become the contents of an artistic practice that gives voice to the repressed; for both of these artists, decontextualization functions as a contradictory element between what is shown and the expressive tools employed. The formal issues that all these artists confront have no redeeming function, but are nevertheless revealed as ideologically conditioned



14 February 1992 London England 14.30

Auction of the contents of Robert Maxwell's London home. Sotheby's.

"I apologise for the extreme crush that you've got which of course is not of our making. Purchases can be cleared during the sale, that's if you can get them out again. Facilities will be made to clear large items immediately after the sale. We've got a great deal to do this afternoon and I would remind you that the entire sale is without reserve, without reserve."

tion, Bond photographs it. In this work of "mimesis," the goal is simple (and pure) documentation of some media event. Most often, this is a press conference, which, offering prepackaged, official data about political, cultural, or ritual events, is a significant tool used by the state to control the dissemination of information. But Bond and Gillick have also documented an art auction, or the results of a trial, when the outcomes could not be predicted and therefore eluded official control.

What separates their work from "real" journalistic reporting is the presentation of the material thus recorded. The two artists reconstruct the event in question by randomly choosing a single image to represent it, and they accompany this with a fragment of taped discourse. There is, of course, no one interpretation that can be inferred from this data, which, at times, will show a particularly significant phase of the action and, at other times, the most inconsequential. Through their practice, the very concept of the "newsworthy" is brought into question—just as it is being articulated according to the dictates of the news profession.

If the actions of the *affichistes* of *Nouveau Realisme* became emblematic

of a collective desire for liberation, this occurred as a consequence of a concept of the social understood as a positive and reconciling principle—Baudelaire's city "throne," or the opposing class of the Marxist intellectual.² Bond and Gillick's referent is, instead, the information system, and in particular its mode of self-representation. They analyze a discursive structure that, by its nature, interprets and manipulates reality, and together they observe the prepackaged nature of the reality that is adapted for the most part to that structure. What is thematized in the "Documents" is the impossibility of establishing a concept of the social that does not pass through predetermined structures of self-presentation, that is, through alienating constraints. If the post-Modern "mass" begins as an entity that cannot immediately be known, it is necessary to elaborate strategies that will confront the mediations at work, beginning with the agencies through which the social begins to break into discourse. Bond and Gillick's acts of pure registration are a cataloguing of effects that first of all refer to the modalities of their organization into a discourse on order. The reduction of this material to an absolute of banality, or



Polish President
Neil Kinnock; sp
Polish Embassy.

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VIEWS NOWHERE

Giorgio Verzotti

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25 April 1991 London England 13.45

Polish President Lech Walesa on state visit and meets Mrs. Thatcher and
Neil Kinnock; speaks at young politicians' conference; news conference at
Polish Embassy.

"I don't want to talk about history, but forgive me a small reference to history.
We fought for a different Poland, we never wanted that system. In return for
our struggle, that system was given to us. I prefer to put honour closer to the
community. Because we were so honourable in struggle, we did not have any
strength left for the country. When I engaged myself in the struggle against
communism, western banks lent to the communists and much of their re-
source invested into things like bugging or security services that were used to
harass us, were financed by that money. I don't complain about that. That is
business, but now Poland is free, Europe is free, and we can make it into
something that will politically, militarily and economically benefit us all. And
let me say it again, the taxpayers and the politicians, British and otherwise,
have invested a lot into fighting communism. I want to make it possible to re-
cover that. Poland and Eastern Europe have such possibilities, and I encour-
age that you recover those losses. You have mentioned the fifty percent re-
duction, it is the old debt that I mentioned. The way I see it, is like repairing
the Polish car, those fifty percent. Anything about it like, five, ten percent like
adding a wheel to the car, we have repaired the Polish car well together, but
let's make sure that it has wheels. The US has given a few percent more over
the fifty percent, thereby giving us one wheel, France gave ten percent, it's
another wheel. The Germans may also give something and there is a problem
with the British. We don't have that fourth wheel."

inesentiality, takes on a transgressive
value, or, to put it better, and as the
artists themselves say: "The established
power structures of the news media and
its concentration on 'sympathetic' or
'unsympathetic' coverage is completely
disrupted by the 'Documents' series and
is brought into question in the work."

Looking at the image-text pieces of
Bond and Gillick we are witness to a
sort of politics of our time, one that
lends credence to attempts to speak of
the social as it is revealed within the
art system. Beyond the heroism of ne-
gativity, the whole notion of "the artis-
tic" is put into question. The point of de-

parture then becomes the nonartistic
(just as Theodor Adorno wanted) and
the unknowing (the goal of Georges
Bataille), a not insignificant gesture. For
the fact that, today, the social infiltrates
the artistic operation in the form of un-
knowing is the condition for its possible
reappearance as historical subject. □

Giorgio Verzotti is a writer who lives in Milan.

Translated from the Italian by Marguerite Shoen.

1. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority: 'Ciphers of
Repression: Notes on the Return of Representation in Painting,"
in *Art after Modernism*, ed. Brian Wallis, New York: New
Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, pp. 120-40.
2. Ibid., pp. 107-20.
All photos and accompanying texts are from Henry Bond and Liam
Gillick's "Documents."

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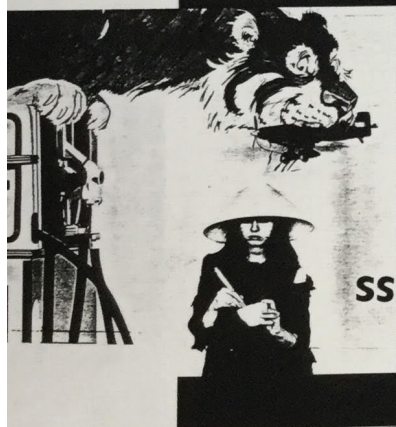
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Special Effects

the era of Yeltsin, the era of fashion. (Local wars are not.) Without a new informing science fiction will vanish. No invasion of the Body of the Planet Mars, for those in outer space were always communist invasions. What is the true agony to the east played out in scenes as much as tragic, scenes out of B movies, and even Z movies, scenes of the trial and execution, or of the aborted last August. This is communicating its own end. All is shadow.

void in the East, inhabited by lists (what else can we call watch our television and dream thees and our sodas. They are more than ever, and are more ever: at the slightest whistle westward by the thousands, is up as Ciccolina (not accendrian refugees), ready to dress pe—but in any case always st. In the West, we are left with superpower. It doesn't love talk to us, and is no longer even reducing good anticommu-ne creating a new ethical and

in writer who lives in Rome.
in Italian by Marguerite Shores.



Below: Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise*, 1967, still from a color film in 35 mm., 95 minutes. Yvonne (Juliet Berto). Opposite, top and bottom: Oliviero Toscani, images from spring/summer advertising campaign for Benetton, 1992.

Carol Squiers on
Violence at Benetton

Benetton, the Italian sportswear giant and advertising renegade, has created another ruckus with one of its socially conscious and controversially outrageous ad campaigns. In March it kicked off its spring and summer advertising in the U.S. with a series of three photorealistic images that came straight from the hard news pages of the daily papers, provoking a spasm of mostly negative press. Premiering in *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, the double-page images showed a car exploding into flames on an Italian street (presumably from a detonated car bomb), a ship laden with Albanian refugees trying to enter Italy to escape political violence at home, and an American family gathered around a son who is about to die of AIDS. Peter Fressola, director of communications for Benetton in North America, says that the controversy surrounding the campaign is "unprecedented in our experience, and probably in apparel advertising and maybe in advertising in general."¹ The uproar started before the campaign even appeared: several British magazines refused to run the ads, and Fressola says the British board that controls advertising has "virtually banned" the ads in England. The campaign has run into similar problems in France, but has been accepted by all American magazines with which Benetton does business.

The thrust of the criticism, which revolves mainly upon the AIDS image, is on the one hand that its use by Benetton is exploitative, cynical, and offensive, and on the other that this is no way to sell sweaters. "We've been saying all along that our intention is not to sell sweaters," Fressola says heatedly. "We're not that stupid. We're doing corporate communication. We're sponsoring these images in order to change people's minds and create compassion

around social issues. We think of it as art with a social message." He goes on to point out that the Benetton logo imprinted on the photographs has especially aroused ire, but that "exhibitions of controversial images are sponsored by business and corporations all the time."

Fressola's reasoning raises obvious objections. Among the most prominent: business does not in fact support controversial images but safe images, an exhibition is a different sort of animal from an advertising campaign, and corporate logos are usually placed next to the images, not right on them, though that might be drawing too fine a point. Speaking as a corporate representative, Fressola is no doubt accurately portraying how the corporate world thinks of its art support: as an eye-catching backdrop for its corporate identity. The difference here is that Benetton chooses the lowly advertising page in upscale magazines to make its point, rather than the precious walls of a museum.

But disagreements with Benetton's strategy can't be confined to its use of the AIDS image. Fressola says Benetton took the unusual step of running three pictures together, instead of the usual one, in order to provide a greater "context" for the ad. By not showing the AIDS picture alone, but by grouping it with other images, he says Benetton wanted to indicate that it is interested not in bringing attention to itself by using one sensationalizing image, but in bringing attention to a spectrum of social and political problems. Given the extensive work that's been done on the politics of representation, this assertion can only be categorized as studiously naïve.

But the campaign is anything but naïve. Taken as a whole, it can be seen as an ingenious attempt symbolically to appropriate, tame, and control the alarming contemporary political events that are disrupting the psychic drives carefully nurtured

for decades by public relations and advertising. Worldwide political crises have spilled over into our daily lives. One-on-one violence and upper-echelon thievery are no longer just the distant subjects of the news. People are being shot in our neighborhoods; our tax dollars will pay for the massive frauds perpetrated by white men who once were hailed as American geniuses of capitalism. We begin to feel not only that consumption will not provide the gratification we have been programmed to hope for but that our ability to continue consuming is at an end. In this context, Benetton is acknowledging a new level of the obsolescence of advertising as invented to promote. It is not only an obsolescence of goods but of individuals, ethnic groups, and even entire societies.

Despite Benetton's officially stated liberal aims, the company is in fact engaged in marketing what Stuart Ewen has called "history as style." Ewen has pointed out how the decade of the 1960s has been reduced to a "pulsating parade of provocative images, a collage of familiar fragments." "Black was beautiful," "women had their own cigarette," and Andy Warhol and Mary Quant were conflated with other "heroes" such as Malcolm X and Twiggy. "As style becomes a rendition of social history," Ewen writes, "it silently and helioctably transforms that history from a process of human conflicts and motivations, an engagement between social interests and forces, into a market mechanism, a fashion show."²

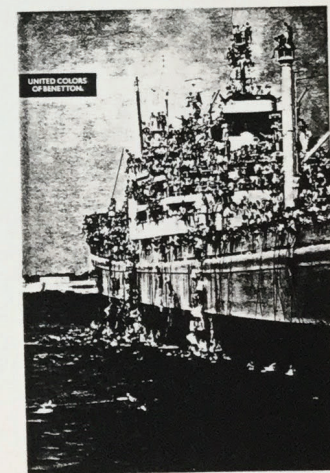
In the '90s, we know we don't have to wait thirty years for a newsworthy epoch to become marketable nostalgia. Nor does the market have that kind of time. Desperate refugees, urban violence, and AIDS are so disruptive of the orderly flow of business that they need to be immediately defused and diffused, in Dick Hebdige's terms, into the larger picture of commerce as usual. Denial in the service of upbeat consumerism is no



longer a workable strategy as we are continually overwhelmed by disturbing and even cataclysmic events.

By stripping news images of their context, Benetton wants to render them icons of universal suffering. Captionless and with no original information provided, the images seem like snippets from a rock video or movie. Indeed, the "waste" that is a predominant feature in each photo-

graph is comparable to the waste produced on a grand scale in mass entertainment. Of the well-worn, cliché car-chase. Ewen argues that it "represents total material ruin in its wake. Automobiles tumble over cliffs, smashing in flames; house and store fronts are demolished in an explosive spray of splinters and shards; innocent bystanders are 'wasted.'" In the Benetton ads the waste that is shown is



"real," but in the reframing and recontextualizing it becomes theatrical. The burning car, the refugees, the dying man and grieving family are united as distant, inevitable, terrible, but somehow fascinating spectacles of waste.

It is not quite correct to say that the images do not have captions, however. Each of them bears a message from Benetton printed in small type below the corporate logo: "Our spring/summer 1992 edition of *Colors* magazine is now available." An 800 number is added for calling convenience. *Colors* is one of the new breed of clothing catalogues/public relations pieces that clothes pioneers in the 1980s. Paralleling and introducing seasonal style changes, the catalogues promote the superior esthetic visions of individual designers and companies. Benetton's *Colors* is unique in that half of it is organized into article-type layouts on various human-interest topics. The other half is a clothing catalogue.

The fine print on the three pictures, substituting a notice of seasonal style change for informational captions, provides the final strategy that "defuses" and "diffuses" the dire nature of the subjects. The car bomb, the refugees, the dying man become the occasion to consider not the social and political relations that have caused the detonation, the flight, the death, but the social and esthetic relations that make updated fashion a necessity and a consolation of contemporary life. New clothes in themselves connote the security of the mundane. In whatever way the campaign is analyzed, the company has achieved its goal: extensive press. Along with Hollywood and Leo Castelli, Benetton can say that there's no such thing as bad publicity. □

Carol Squiers is a writer and curator who lives in New York. She is senior editor at *American Photo*, and a frequent contributor to *Artforum*.

1. All quotations of Peter Fressola are from a telephone interview with the author.
2. Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986, pp. 187, 248.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, MAY 4, 1992

THE MEDIA BUSINESS

Advertising

Stuart Elliott

Taking Posters to the Streets To Promote Racial Harmony

ONE ad agency's efforts to do well by doing good are assuming an unusual resonance in the wake of the violence over the Rodney King verdict.

Beginning tomorrow, posters that promote racial harmony are scheduled to be mounted on 250 telephone kiosks around the five boroughs of New York City. The pro bono campaign, by Smith/Greenland Inc., had been in the works since racial disturbances racked the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn last summer.

Of course, the campaign has taken on a fresh urgency after the rioting over last week's acquittal of four white Los Angeles policemen who had been on trial for beating Mr. King, a black motorist.

"That's what it is," Doug Raboy, creative director at Smith/Greenland, said in an interview last week at the agency's office on the West Side of Manhattan. "There's always something going on that makes this timely."

As soon as Mr. Raboy, 28 years old, joined Smith/Greenland last month from DDB Needham New York, he began working on the campaign with Drew Greenland, an executive vice president there.

"This is for all of us who are losing patience with each other," said Mr. Greenland, 34, who is the son of Leo Greenland, the agency's chairman and chief executive. "But we didn't want to put anything out unless it makes people think."

The posters were all produced in the same graphic format of contrasting black-and-white vertical columns. Two were printed with black text on a white background on the left, with white text on a black background on the right. On the third poster, the colors were reversed.

One says: "You have a tumor. In your brain. A specialist is ready to operate. He's black. Is that a problem?"

The second says: "You're drowning. You begin to panic. A hand reaches in to save you. It's black. Is that a problem?"

And the third says: "Your son needs a new kidney. In 48 hours. They found a donor. He's white. Is that a problem?"

Mr. Greenland estimated the value of the ad space on the kiosks at around \$200,000. Mr. Raboy said he and Mr. Greenland hoped to arrange for additional copies of the posters to be put up on walls, building facades and other sites around the city, in a guerrilla process known as sniping or wheat pasting, after the wheat paste used to affix the posters.

The posters were signed by Smith/Greenland on behalf of Citizens for Racial Harmony, an advocacy group that, at the moment, has a membership of two: Mr. Greenland and Mr. Raboy.

"To go through an organization, you have to run through the bureaucracy," Mr. Greenland said in explaining why the pair preferred to operate independently rather than create a campaign for existing groups that battle prejudice.

Robert Sherman, executive director of the Increase the Peace Volunteer Corps in Brooklyn, an organization founded in January through the office of Mayor David N. Dinkins, reacted favorably to the advertising after it was described to him in a telephone interview.

"We have to support a host of public awareness campaigns," he said. "The problem is so severe, and so emotional, that we need multiple efforts against it."

"There's one essential message, not necessarily in this campaign, that needs to get out there, and some campaign ought to tackle it one of these days."

"It's that people can take personal initiative on the issues of bias and prejudice. They are problems in people's lives, and the solutions are in people's lives — not just reading posters, but doing something in their own neighborhoods."

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THE NEW YORK TIMES OP-ED MONDAY, MAY 4, 1992

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If You Won the Perot Account . . .

Ross Perot has said that if he enters the Presidential race he would be willing to spend \$100 million of his own fortune. Out of curiosity, the Op-Ed page asked several top advertising agencies what Mr. Perot should do with the money. All of them took the question seriously — another sign of the times.

Action, Not Ads

Because he is not a politician, Ross Perot must prove that a business person's approach to politics is more effective than a politician's. His campaign needs a "product demonstration" that proves that he does not need to work within the accepted system in order to achieve his goals. Therefore, Mr. Perot should eschew advertising and politicking and focus instead on action.

While the other politicians are and will be spending millions in taxpayers' money and donations and are running TV commercials, Mr. Perot should invest his money, as he has done in the past, to solve a high-visibility problem that government has been unable to solve.

For example, in New York City he could build an apartment complex near Tompkins Square Park, where homeless people could live on a weekly basis in exchange for working to re-plant and build the park. This would demonstrate how he would approach similar problems on a larger scale, where he to be elected. This would also counter criticisms that Mr. Perot doesn't spell out his policies. His actions would expose the plans the other candidates talk about as nothing more than hopes and promises.

Of course, \$100 million is a drop in the bucket in the face of many huge social issues, but by putting his vision into action instead of words, Mr. Perot would demonstrate the waste of the electoral process as indicative of government in general.

This tactic could be criticized as a gimmick; but the criticism would sound hollow in the face of lasting improvement to the country as a result of a campaign instead of a stack of videotapes on a politician's shelf.

Richard Kirshenbaum, Jon Bond and Ritor Mickenberg, Kirshenbaum & Bond, New York.

No Spin Doctors

I see Ross Perot as a wolf in wolf's clothing. With money no object, he should be able to take the reins and do something about strengthening that image.

To do this he'll need professional marketing and advertising help. But he'd make a virtue out of his nonsense approach to life and business by not allowing himself to be surrounded by spin doctors, handlers and so-called media consultants who have turned off thousands of potential and registered voters.

With more than \$100 million, he can afford a campaign that doesn't look orchestrated or manipulative.

Mr. Perot could spend his money creating a few good messages aimed at specific voter groups and target media intended for these groups. They include women, business people, farmers, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, senior citizens and first-time voters.

It would be interesting if he tried something completely new, as befits a nontraditional candidate who wants to sell his message, not his personality. He could hire advocates who would also hit the campaign trail, articulating his position on a given topic to specific voter groups.

Caroline R. Jones, president, Caroline Jones Advertising Inc., New York.



Be Straight

Consider that in 1990, American Airlines spent \$102.6 million on advertising. Coors beer spent \$104 million. Ultra Slim Fast laid out a mere \$81 million. And Pepsi and Nike spent a paltry (by comparison) \$79 million and \$77 million, respectively.

So \$100 million is a formidable war chest with which to try to win the hearts and minds of voters. But in order for Ross Perot to become the 42d President, that money will have to help him define himself and his qualifications.

Thirty-minute "informercials" on the national networks as well as in individual markets can do this, but they must be used as events. It is difficult to get Americans to watch 30 minutes of paid programming that most of them would hardly find entertaining. So he must advertise heavily, on a market-by-market basis, on local television and radio, newspapers, radio stations and even billboards for the informercials.

By creating events early in the campaign, Mr. Perot can bring in thousands of volunteers; they are as much the mother's milk of politics as cold cash is. Lacking the organization that of a major party, he needs to create a bandwagon early in the race — the sooner he gets volunteers, the more money he can spend on advertising.

Then he can get down to reminding the people what a sorry state the country is in. The Republican line of the 80's — "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" — will haunt Mr. Bush and Mr. Clinton. Ross Perot can blame the Democratic Congress and Republican White House for the economy, higher taxes, fewer jobs, lower personal income and the country's deteriorating infrastructure. If he can explain how nebulous and low-interest political concepts like the budget deficit and the savings and loan bailout affect people's everyday lives, he may be able to win the election without having to offer any solutions.

Mr. Perot is better off using paid advertising than free media opportunities. Whereas most candidates jockey for as much free exposure as possible, Mr. Perot doesn't need it. And his candidacy would be best served by maintaining complete control over how his qualifications are portrayed and perceived.

In fact, if he is excluded from debates between the two major candidates it would probably work to his advantage because he could avoid tough questions and comparison with the other candidates on political experience and sophistication.

As for the message, it would be pretty simple: self-made, self-effacing billionaire talks straight about what's wrong with Washington and how to fix it. A lot of Americans believe that there are people in the private sector who could run the Government much better than the career politicians running it now.

Mr. Perot's ads would have to show him as a family man with a deep concern about the state of America and where it's heading. They should always imply a sense of duty, continually reminding voters that he is a true political outsider and a reluctant candidate who is only running because of popular bidding. It's not an easy job to make a billionaire a populist, but given the mood of the country, and \$100 million, it's certainly not impossible.

Bill Hillsman, president, North Woods Advertising, St. Paul. He created ads for Paul Wellstone's successful 1990 Senate campaign.

Let Him Narrate

Ross Perot, not Gov. Bill Clinton, is President Bush's main competition. He has the potential to be the two things voters want: a take-charge kind of guy who will take definitive steps to get and keep the country on track, and a leader who can be trusted and believed.

To give Mr. Bush a run for his

money, Mr. Perot must make the most of his powerful persona and his bigger-than-life image. His opportunity lies in using the media to bring to life the image of the mythical savior with the down-home appeal. As a self-made billionaire, renowned maverick and heroic problem solver, he has all the makings of a Paul Bunyan.

Initially, this will require more than 30 seconds of television at a time to accomplish. We would start out with a couple of 30-minute mini-episodes, followed by a phase of 90- and 60-second commercials. Nearer the election, with the Perot Legend well established, we would compile the highlights into 30-second spots.

Visually, the spots would recall Ronald Reagan's "Morning Again in America" campaign, combined with stirring images of the American pioneer spirit and the American worker. Because the voter must see Mr. Perot eyeball to eyeball, and because the spots must show his warmth and humanity, I would have him narrate them start to finish. By talking directly to the voters, he could convince them that the American spirit is still indefatigable and that, with a little redefinition, the American Way is still the way to go.

Lionel Sosa, chief executive officer of Sosa, Bromley, Aguilar & Associates, San Antonio. He created advertisements for the Reagan-Bush and Bush-Quayle campaigns.

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surface of the wall. . . . The opening looked like a surface, not a void. When the light of the sunset began to change, this feeling shifted from an empty space to a surface to a solid colored material. It was very strange to see something that didn't exist but, at the same time, was real."¹⁷ Count Panza's sensibility was right in accord with Turrell's. Instinctively he understood the California Sublime.

Count Panza had Turrell execute three rooms in his villa at Varese, Italy. He invested heavily in California light art. A disc and two window pieces by Irwin, a room by Maria Nordman, fourteen projects by Doug Wheeler. . . . Further, Count Panza understood that California — right at the crossroads between the new physics and Eastern mysticism — was the right place from which to take off into the future. "Turrell is a man," he said, "like Irwin, with a broad knowledge of science and philosophy. . . . His vision of the universe is great."¹⁸

4. Dr. No

We are all fond of reviewing in our minds the trajectory Walter Benjamin traces of art's development as it has been successively reshaped by the evolving means of its production, breaking through a path that moves steadily from private to public, from cult object made and viewed only by a priestly caste to exhibition object made in the service of and disseminated by secular powers. With the advent of mechanical reproduction this dissemination increases exponentially and the work, now securely lodged at the interface between private and public, makes of the public sphere both its subject and object. For on the one hand, new forms (like film, television, newspapers) tend to dissolve the individual author into the collectivity of "the producer," and on the other, meaning is increasingly focused on the exteriorization of subjectivity.

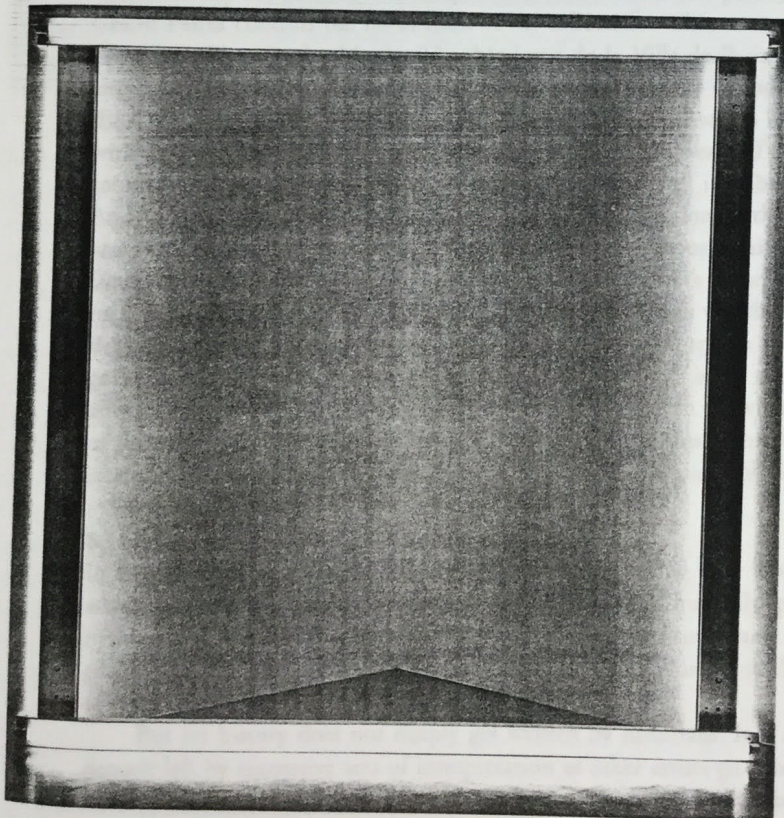
It was Minimalism more than any other movement that produced a climax of this sense of the radical contingency of both object (whose simple geometries were shown to be utterly porous to the effects of context) and viewing subject (who was shown to be a function of "lived bodily perspective," a subject who coheres, but only provisionally and moment by moment, in the act of perception). It was Minimalism that more than any art before it staked everything on what it means for experience to be entirely a function of external, public space. But curiously enough, it was Minimalism that, to a degree unprecedented within the history of a hundred years of modernism, was largely collected by a single individual, and thus ended up almost entirely in private hands.

If Count Panza di Biumo bought Minimalist works by the dozens and hundreds, it was to satisfy his own taste and his own sense of the meaning of this art. And for him Minimalism represented an essentialist, idealist, purist, experience: mind soaring free of matter. Once, when it was suggested to him that Robert Morris's work, for instance, had a great deal to do with the body,

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with eros, with the mind projected downward, away from concept and into compulsion, he adamantly refused such a blasphemy. Morris's work was noble, he insisted, rationalist, transcendent. It was "the attempt to look for something essential in shapes . . . to avoid what is not necessary and to look only for what is permanent. Rational forms are related to something permanent; pure shapes are an image of the capacity of man to think." If the work was great it was because it was not an exploration of contingency, history, time, but a delivery of truth: "I believe that the greatest emotion of life is knowledge, the discovery of truth. The research of truth is the main goal of man. This art revealed the research of truth through simple forms."¹⁹

With a taste for the metaphysical, Panza rewrote the Minimalist project to suit his own sensibilities. Dan Flavin's work (fig. 14) was quickly dematerialized into eddies and clouds of colored light, since unlike the artist, Panza didn't take the material presence of the fluorescent tubes seriously, saying, "But this quality is less important in Flavin; it's more important that the work is not confined to the shape of the material but expands into the volume of



14. Dan Flavin. *Untitled (to the "Innovator" of Wheeling Peachblow)*. 1968. Fluorescent lights and metal fixtures, 8' 1/2" x 8' 1/4" x 5 3/4" (245 x 244.3 x 14.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Helena Rubenstein Fund

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the room." The result of this interpretive conviction is the *Varese Corridor*,²⁰ in which the disembodied glow of works in a succession of small rooms fills the open doorways along a darkened, barrel-vaulted hallway of Panza's villa with intense rectangles of irradiated hue: crimson, pale blue, violet, yellow. . . . It is less like a Minimalist Flavin and more like the set of a sci-fi movie, some newly wrought ending for *2001*, where, in the Cartesian hotel suite in the sky, the astronaut is being gathered into the hands of God.

Count Panza is nothing if not frank about his desire to control the way his collection is displayed in that afterlife it will lead away from his private protection. As a condition of selling the Abstract Expressionist and early Pop part of the collection to MOCA in Los Angeles, he "asked and the museum agreed, that the installation go according to my instructions." These directives were concerted toward preserving the chapel-like quality of the converted stables in Varese, with each space consecrated to the work of a single artist, so that, as Panza says, "in some way, you breathe the soul of the artist."²¹

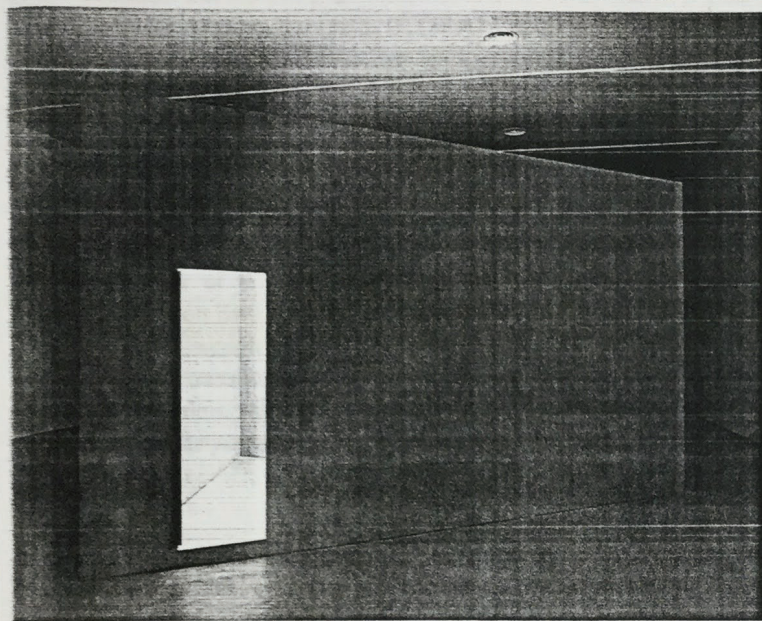
An experience like the *Varese Corridor* is thus not necessarily confined to Varese. It can be, I found out lately, reestablished elsewhere, particularly as Count Panza controls the installation of his collection within a sequence of museums. Thus in the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, where a large portion of the collection was displayed in the summer of 1990, under the Count's strict supervision, the metaphysical Flavin-effect was in high gear, with pools of light ricocheting off the gleaming floors and walls of darkened rooms, and penumbras of color glowing from far-off, still invisible spaces. And in this twilit installation in which the dematerialization of the objects was nothing short of spectacular, the emphasis had curiously shifted away from surface and onto work whose medium was "the viewer's perceptual process" itself. What had pride of place within this presentation was the work of Bruce Nauman (fig. 15), particularly those experimental spaces which recreate, in various ways, the intensification of emptiness that is the goal of the anechoic chamber. And, like a kind of Holy of Holies, in the very center of the collection, was a Space Division Construction by James Turrell. Minimalism had been folded at last into the arms of the California Sublime.²²

5. History Is a Matter of Who Gets to Write It

In the 1960s, even while the artists themselves were making their hostility to what they called "idealist aesthetics" as clear as was humanly possible, Minimalism was being defended by most of its critic supporters on the grounds of this very idealism. It was described as having plunged to the heart of matter and to have found the crystalline essence of form.

But art history does not simply get written by historians. It is also the deposit left by successive acts of interpretation as other artists go about their work. This issue of contingency that Minimalism had forced into the open, the permeability of both subject and object to what goes on in the space in

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what goes on in a space where both
subject and object coexist:

space
light
viewer's field of vision
institutional construction of "space"
legal + financial arrangements that
shape + control it
discursive practices that make
possible what can become
visible w/in it

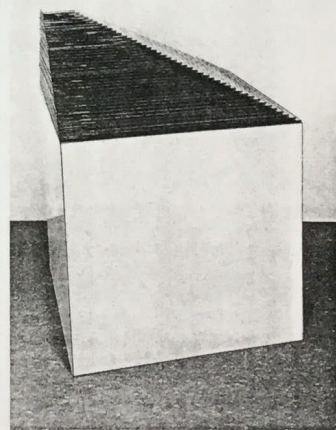
→ staging of subject's experience
of his or her own contingency

LANGUAGE } precede +
media } exceed bounds
of individual

15. Bruce Nauman. *Yellow Room (Triangular)*.
1973 (installed at the exhibition "Un Choix
d'art minimal dans la collection Panza," Musée
d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1990).
Wallboard and yellow fluorescent light.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

which both coexist, became the basis of a series of interpretive rewritings in the decades that followed the 1960s. Since "what goes on in the space in which both coexist" could be seen to be more than the "space, light, and the viewer's field of vision" to which Morris had referred when he recommended making "relationships out of the work and mak[ing] them a function" of their context,²³ this coordinating matrix could be understood to include the institutional construction of that very "space": the legal and financial "arrangements" that shape and control it; the discursive practices that make possible what can become visible within it. To further this part of the project after 1968 became the goal of artists ranging from Robert Smithson (fig. 16) and Daniel Buren to Hans Haacke and Michael Asher. The other part of the minimalist project, raised by its staging of the subject's experience of his or her own contingency, was also broadened in the seventies and eighties by successive artistic practices, these focusing on a critique of the representation of the subject, widening the "space" of interaction to include all those matrices — language, the media — which both precede and exceed the bounds of the individual. The work, for example, of Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine, may have little to do with the forms of Minimalism but takes up the critique of "private language" right where it left off.²⁴

This collective act of interpreting Minimalism by extending its sphere of relevance to contemporary artistic practice and reception, one which made



16. Robert Smithson. *Mirror Stratum*. 1968.
Mirrors on formica-covered base, 25 1/2 x 25 1/2
x 10 1/4" (64.8 x 64.8 x 26 cm). The Museum of
Modern Art, New York. Purchase

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contingency, contextualism, "effect," the salient aesthetic issues of a succeeding generation, is one way in which the "history" of the movement has been written. But another page of that history is now being filled in by the impact of the release, in the 1990s, of Panza's collection back into the public realm. For that collection, which has been inscribed by another set of interpretive acts, those of Panza himself, has, through the effect of its remaining together, become a kind of framing device through which Minimalism is being reintroduced as an historical object. And that device will tend to produce new emphases, to articulate new relationships among objects, to conjure up new centers of gravity, to rethink the movement according to its supposed interest in a "metaphysical entity." Thus, even while it will restore to the public the contents of a personal holding, the operations on behalf of the Panza Collection have already had the effect of an historical recoding of Minimalism in the direction of privacy, interiority, spirituality. Whether this interpretation will be transitory, or whether it will have some staying power as an act of redefinition, will be a part of the art history of the nineties as it succeeds or fails to do justice to the aspirations of the sixties.

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Notes

1. Quoted in Margit Rowell, *Ad Reinhardt and Color* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1980), p. 26.
2. "Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker*, September 30, 1985, p. 28.
3. In a conversation reported to the author by Michael Fried.
4. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), p. 34.
5. John Coplans, *Los Angeles 6* (Vancouver, B.C.: The Vancouver Art Gallery, 1968), p. 9.
6. Emily Wasserman, "Robert Irwin, Gene Davis, Richard Smith," *Artforum*, 6 (May 1968), p. 47.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Edward Levine, "Robert Irwin's Recent Work," *Artforum*, 16 (December 1977), p. 26.
9. Quoted in Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), p. 128.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
12. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1951), p. 89.
13. Robert Rosenblum, "The Abstract Sublime," *Art News*, 59 (February 1961), p. 56.
14. Stella speaks of this in the film *Painters Painting* by Michael Blackwood. Yve-Alain Bois called my attention to his comment.
15. *James Turrell: Light and Space* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980), p. 35.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
17. Quoted in Christopher Knight, *Art of the Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 47.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
20. Illustrated, *ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
22. For further discussion of this installation, see my "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October*, no. 54 (Fall 1990), pp. 3-17.
23. See Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), p. 232.
24. Hal Foster discusses the way much of postmodernism in both its critical modes (the critique of institutions, the critique of the representation of the subject) and its collaborative ones (the transavant-garde, simulation) is nascent within the Minimalist syntax, both spatial and productive, in his important analysis "The Crux of Minimalism" (in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945-1986* [Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986]).

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Overcoming the Limits of Matter: On Revising Minimalism

Rosalind Krauss

1. A Tale of Two (Black) Squares

I came to the sixties late, and from out of town. So The Jewish Museum's "Toward a New Abstraction" and the Modern's "Americans 1963," both of which opened in the spring of 1963, were news to me. Until that moment New York painting meant, as far as I knew, Willem de Kooning's abstract landscapes or Robert Motherwell's mural-size Elegies: Abstract Expressionism cresting on the cusp of the decade. Nothing had prepared me for the shock of those deadpan black paintings, by Frank Stella at one exhibition, by Ad Reinhardt at the other (figs. 1, 2). Nothing had set the stage of my experience for the entrance of Minimalism.

How long it took before I realized that these two sets of black pictures represented two different minimalisms — one bearing the capital M and facing forward into the decade; the second, small-m'd, and joining hands with other, similarly motivated, pictorial asceticisms from the past — I no longer remember. Yet it soon seemed obvious that what they had in common was, nothing.

For all that he might reiterate his art-as-art position, insisting on the formless, directionless, colorless, textureless, spaceless, relationless condition of the black squares, Reinhardt nonetheless seemed to think of Art as opening up some kind of back door in the mind, an expanding, pulsing awareness of the visual process itself. "Tao," he once wrote in a note to himself, "fills the whole frame yet you cannot keep track of it. . . . It is dim and dark, showing no outward form."¹ The black paintings became the vehicle for the staging of this "it" that one could not keep track of, except to acknowledge the infinitely slow pulse of perceptual change, to take account of the fact that perception *is* the registration of pure difference.

The long time that it takes simply to *see* the black paintings — to wait for the formless monochrome somehow to exhale the not-quite-colors of a kind of afterimage of a Greek cross that would appear to score the surface of the square, if it could ever be brought into focus in its entirety at any one moment — becomes the form of a meditation on perception. And perception is announced thereby as something that takes place as a *durée*, an unfolding, a diachrony. As one section of the nine-part grid thickens into the memory of

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Mixed Blessings

JOHANNA DRUCKER

Lucy Lippard. *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*. New York: Pantheon, 1990. 278 pp.; 40 color ill., 140 black-and-white. \$24.95 paper

The qualified tone of Lucy Lippard's title *Mixed Blessings* is only partially countered by her optimism in applying the adjective "multicultural" to America as if it were an undisputed term. In fact, the irony is that *Mixed Blessings* appears at a moment when the very concept of multiculturalism is under attack as part of the insidious right-wing backlash against agendas of progressive change identified with a phrase that has come to be seen as pejorative: "politically correct." The impact of this book as a politically charged document will be intensified by its publication in an era characterized by an increase in institutionalized racism in official American foreign and domestic policies, and heightened tensions in academic classrooms.

The tenuous bid to expand traditional curricular boundaries beyond the Eurocentric canon risks strong opposition from conservative critics who both misrepresent the intentions of multiculturalism and grossly exaggerate its success. But this book will also undoubtedly reap criticism from certain self-designated "left" academics, the neo-formalists who profess attachment to the outmoded model of the avant-garde as a manner of restricting the study of visual culture to those images that conform to high-art status. Lippard's project stands quite clearly against the first attack as a landmark production. *Mixed Blessings* grants visibility and legitimacy to a broad range of artists, projects, and works that have not been systematically published previously.¹ But this book also makes a compelling methodological argument for the study of visual images within the terms of their social function, rather than according to their narrowly defined status within a binaristic high/low art-world hierarchy. An additional irony attaches to this book: Pantheon Books, which engendered its publication, no longer exists in a form that would venture such a production. Though *Mixed Blessings* will serve a number of valuable functions, including that of a textbook, it will no doubt be a while before such a work will be produced from the factories in Englewood Cliffs or under the auspices of new-age, merger-driven corporations.

The role of visual images in the articulation of cultural difference is the central theme of this book. Focusing on work produced by Asian American, African American, Hispanic, and Indian artists in the last ten years, Lippard demonstrates the way in which these artists make use of visual

imagery to explore the formative processes of cultural identity.² Through activities she terms "naming," "telling," "mapping," "mixing," and "turning around," Lippard demonstrates the range of dynamic roles for visual representations in the mediation and expression of changed attitudes toward cultural heritage in the current scene. The implications for instance, of identifying oneself as "African American" vs. "Black," or of feeling the compulsion to append any such qualifier to the term "artist" as a practitioner are given full investigation in the section addressing the question of "naming." Combining descriptive presentations of artists' work with excerpts from critical, autobiographical, or theoretical writings by persons whose experience or concerns have addressed these issues, Lippard makes a rich pastiche of voices and images on each page of the book. She cites Jaune Quick-to-See Smith on the difficulties of being associated, as an Indian artist, with clichéd categories of "traditional" art, and the attendant problems raised by the concept of "authenticity," and then places next to this a section from Polingaysi Qoyawayma's *No Turning Back*.³ Qoyawayma's account of the experience of being renamed by her elementary school teacher in an initial ritual of involuntary assimilation complements the account of Smith's struggle with similar issues in professional circumstances. The format of the book is designed to accommodate such contrasts on each page, with the main body of the text flanked by a second column of source material. Excerpted from letters to the author, autobiographical testimony, original writings, and criticism, these sources give the book its vast scope and profundity while resisting a single synthetic metanarrative. As a consequence, the concept of "image" expands beyond that of the pictorial arts to operate as the full range of representations and reifications that produce and reproduce the defining terms of cultural difference within contemporary American society.

The range of work runs the full gamut of contemporary art practices from conceptual performance to object-oriented sculpture and painting. On the one hand, there is James Luna's 1986 *Artifact Piece*, in which he put himself on display within the framework of the ethnic museum. Posing as a living exhibition, he lay in one display case in leather breechclout and exhibited his collection of personal effects (Rolling Stone records, videos, mass-culture objects, etc.) in another. The blend

of Indian and American cultures as represented by these "artifacts" wrenches the terms of "otherness" out of comfortable binarism, contradicting the myth of exotic nativism. There are also works firmly anchored in the community as both source and site, such as Judy Baca's wall projects and Victor Orozco Ochoa's *Geronimo* mural. Sensitive to the rote expectations that are too often the norm, Lippard quotes the Chicano artist Gronk's observation that if Jonathan Borofsky paints a wall, it's an "installation," if I do it, it's a *mural*" as a counterpoint to the notion that murals are what one expects to see in a book on multicultural art (p. 29). In fact, no medium, no mode of contemporary art goes unrepresented here: Juan Suarez's assemblage works investigate the terms of history making; Robbie McCauley and Judith Wilson's performance pieces challenge racist stereotypes; Robert Colescott's paintings and Candace Hill's color photographs demonstrate the ambiguous mobility of familiar visual signs. Nothing unites these works but a compelling concern, self-consciously rendered: the insistent attention to the operation of images in the construction of cultural identities as continually negotiated domains.

Most of the artists presented are postwar baby boomers, or younger. Though they might resist characterization lumping them into that demographic bulge, their visible presence on the scene and the very tools with which they are able to articulate their positions are inseparably bound up with the development of a wide range of critical positions in art schools, colleges, and even art magazines of the last twenty-five years. The legacy of 1960s activism, evident in the existence of positions in which things may be said that formerly were unspeakable and unspoken, cannot be ignored. This work is acutely grounded to its history, and that history includes both the intellectual and community legacy of activist positions and the history of art in the last half century. It is, in fact, the very combination of these two that forces so many art issues to the fore in this work, rather than making it a document of marginal or ghettoized activity. This synthesis, and Lippard's presentation of this material in a manner that challenges those still persistent curatorial clunkers—exoticism, primitivism, high/low art, and orientalism/nativism—put this work in contrast to most of the other large-scale publications in the field. For while the skillful and sophisticated articulation

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of critical issues in the dynamics of cultural identity is well established in the work of Trinh T. Minh-ha, Henry Louis Gates, Bell Hooks, Edward Said, Michele Wallace, and Kobena Mercer, to name only a few of the many writers addressing such concerns, the production of exhibitions and "picture-book" publications has tended to reproduce the stereotypes of "roots" traditionalism. Such a bias, for instance, skews not only the prose, but also the selection of works in "Black Art: Ancestral Legacy (The African Impulse in African American Art)," an exhibition organized by the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in 1989, to give a representative example. Where that exhibition and accompanying catalogue eliminated artists like David Hammons, Faith Ringgold, and Betye Saar, whose work takes the contradictory aspects of heritage and present circumstances into (often unresolvable) dialogue, *Mixed Blessings* concentrates on the artists taking up this particular challenge. Atavistic (yet resurgent) nationalism and nostalgia for an ethnic purity of any kind all carry repressive force; the fact of current culture is that it contains the impossible mix of contradictory and unblended elements. Artwork that evidences these contradictions without posing simplistic terms for resolution helps to put such concepts into mainstream circulation where they work against the repressive force of fictive homogenization.

There are many points on which a publication as ambitious and comprehensive as Lippard's book will be vulnerable. Part of Lippard's rhetorical skill is displayed in her self-investigatory presentation of her own role. Concerned about the effect of "speaking for" those whom she "wishes to have heard" (p. 10), Lippard draws the attention of the reader to the very construction of hegemony endemic to what generally passes for neutral presentation in the writing of descriptive text. She is aware that her stance can come under critique from all sides, from the people whose "marginalization" is in some measure a product of the same system that allows her mainstream success, and from those in conventional positions of power ready to reject wholesale the materials presented here in the name of the old standards of "quality" still adhered to as articles of artistic faith in many sectors of the art world. Lippard articulates most of the objections likely to be brought to bear upon her book, thus defusing the explosive potential of their impact on her project.

If the work in this book appears in any way to be "other" to mainstream art, it is only because of the persistent racial and ethnic gerrymandering that continues to draw lines around, put into

quotes, or otherwise set off from the norm the images and objects in these pieces. If the Whitney Biennial, as a barometer of comfortably not cutting-edge art-world activity, managed this year to include some representative nonwhite (also nonmale and non-New York) artists, then this is a sign of at least a temporary and partial recognition of the existence of this large field of vibrant artistic activity. That recognition may be termed a success, but this bid for a place in the mainstream raises other specters of attack. Lippard betrays her own old avant-gardist loyalties, catching herself "bemoaning" the possible commercial and critical success of one of the artists she has presented, and then catches herself in this perverse attitude. But Lippard is almost entirely free of such prejudices, and the manner in which her presentation obviates discussion of the high/low issues that are a persistent bogey of new formalist theory seems exemplary. From the outset, she must address the issue of aesthetic value. Citing Howardena Pindell's acerbic observation about the insidious nature of judgment that undermines the interior conviction of artists whose work does not conform to fully established categories or conventions and thus gets dismissed on the bogus grounds of assessments of "quality," Lippard proceeds to present the work under discussion as a violent counter to the viability or validity of such a notion. The effectiveness of these images in negotiating the territory of symbolic formations is their primary role, the very reason for their existence. They may all aspire to the condition of high art in the economic and sociological sense (gallery sales and critical recognition), but they refuse its autonomy from the moment of inception, taking for granted and as their fundamental justification the fact that such images bring into being the very territory in which the issue of cultural identity is articulated in all its contradictions and complexity. These works do not reflect that activity, they are that activity, its very means and substance.

One of the legacies of modernism is the concept that art functions as the social conscience of the culture. Attached to this is the notion that art, to be effectively political, must forego recognition, financial success, and public acclaim by resisting consumability. This perverted version of sentimental pseudo-Adornoism validates the esoteric while refusing to come to terms with the paradoxes of realpolitik and the circulation of images through a variety of sights/sites and circumstances. The images of Judy Baca, Juan Suarez, and Jean-Michel Basquiat, for example, do function in and they necessarily circulate

through a range of actual, physical sites—from city streets, subway cars, and mainstream press to community centers and fine-arts museums. Transformed by this passage, they function differently as signs within each of these domains, demonstrating that the active operation of images engages with the construction of power relations and difference at many levels. Current discussions of the relations between the so-called high-art domain and all the "other" domains of visual-image production have kept intact the binarism by which the high retains its superior place merely through continuing to have a clear identity. Lippard avoids the dangerous and disputed terrain in which a line could be drawn around these works to marginalize them, or split them from each other according to a sorting process hierarchizing them by their proximity to the very traditions to which they should and often do have a polemic relation.

The amount of space Lippard necessarily devotes to exposing the nuanced complexities of cultural difference often leaves her short of the room required to detail all the various artists, movements, and events that have played a significant part in this ongoing activity. A list of topics deserving mention and further discussion often closes sections of fuller presentation. The need for more work in this area and continued publication of well-illustrated and annotated materials is evident. The extremely limited availability of materials presenting the work of artists defining themselves through images reflecting their cultural heritage has been highly frustrating, and this book makes a striking and useful contribution to both the critical and visual presentation of such work.

Notes

1. Lippard's extensive bibliography of exhibition catalogues, articles, and books demonstrates the range of materials that have made it into print in the last few decades, but many of these are difficult to find, are out of print, were not well distributed, and lack good reproductions, especially colorplates.
2. My use of these terms, especially "Indian," follows Lippard's selection from among various other options. In her introduction she discusses the issue of vocabulary at some length and the controversies, reservations, and difficulties surrounding such phrases as "people of color," "minority artist," and so forth.
3. Polingaysi Qoyawayma (Elizabeth Q. White), *No Turning Back* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964).

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ed. Carol Squiers, *The Critical Image: Essays on
Contemporary Photography*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1990

A NOTE ON PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE SIMULACRAL

Rosalind Krauss

This essay was originally published
in October 31 (Winter 1981) and
is reprinted here with permission
of the author and MIT Press. A
version of this essay was delivered
as the keynote address for the
National Conference of the Soci-
ety for Photographic Education in
Philadelphia, March 1983.

In 1983 French television launched *Une minute pour une image*, a program conceived and directed by Agnès Varda. True to its title the show lasted just one minute, during which time a single photograph was projected onto the screen and a voice-over commentary was spoken. The sources of these reactions to the given photograph varied enormously — from photographers themselves to writers like Eugène Ionesco and Marguerite Duras, or political figures like Daniel Cohn-Bendit, or art critics such as Pierre Schneider to a range of respondents that one could call the man-on-the street: bakers, taxi drivers, workers in a pizza parlor, businessmen.

This very gathering of response from a wide spectrum of viewers, including those who have no special expertise in either photography or the rest of what could be called the cognate visual arts, in its resemblance to an opinion poll and its insistence on photography as a vehicle for the expression of public reaction — this technique was a continuation, whether intentional or not, of a certain tradition in France of understanding photography through the methods of sociology, and insisting that this is the only coherent way of considering it. This tradition finds its most lucid presentation in the work of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who twenty years ago published his study *Un art moyen*. This title uses the notion of *moyen*, or middle, to invoke the aesthetic dimension of middling or fair as a stage between good and bad, and to mean midway between high art and popular culture; it also employs *moyen* to call up the sociological dimensions of middle class as well as distributed middle or statistical average. But before looking into Bourdieu's argument about this art for the average man, it might be well to examine a few samples of Varda's photographic showcase, to which public response was vigorous enough to warrant a morning-after publication in *Libération*, where each day following the transmission, the photograph was reproduced, its commentary forming an extended caption.

Here, for example, is a photographer's response, as Martine Frank comments on a 1958 image by Marc Riboud:

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expression of social distinctions. His feeling that art photography's difference is a sociological *effect* rather than an aesthetic reality stems from his conviction that photography has no aesthetic norms proper to itself; that it borrows its caché from the art movements with which various serious photographers associate themselves; that it borrows certain aesthetic notions from the other arts as well — notions like expressiveness, originality, singularity, and so forth — but that these notions are utterly incoherent within what purports to be the critical discourse of photography; and that, finally, most photographic discourse is not inherently different from the judgment of the common man with his Instamatic. They reduce, on the one hand, to a set of technical rules about framing, focus, tonal values, and so on, that are in the end purely arbitrary, and, on the other hand, to a discussion of genre, which is to say the judgment "it's an *x* or a *y*." Agnès Varda's experiment does nothing, of course, to disprove all of this.

Bourdieu's insistence that photographic discourse borrows the concepts of the high arts in vain — because that borrowing only leads to conceptual confusion — is confirmed by the intellectual discomfort that is provoked by Pierre Schneider's comparison of the François Hers photo to Matisse's painting. And Bourdieu analyzes the various aesthetic unities of the other arts to demonstrate that the mechanical nature of photography makes them inapplicable. The specter raised by Martine Frank that those hundreds of Japanese men will in fact make hundreds of identical images, insofar as it is a theoretical possibility, explodes the grounds on which there might be constructed a concept of photographic originality and, for Bourdieu, reduces all critical discussions of such originality in the photography magazines to mere cant.

Photography's technical existence as a multiple thus joins the theoretical possibility that all images taken of the same object could end up being the same image and thus partake of sheer repetition. Together these forms of multiplicity cut deeply against the notion of originality as an aesthetic condition available to photographic practice. Within the aesthetic universe of differentiation — which is to say: "this is good, this is bad, this, in its absolute originality, is different from that" — within this universe photography raises the specter of nondifferentiation at the level of qualitative difference and introduces instead the condition of a merely quantitative array of differences, as in a series. The possibility of aesthetic difference is collapsed from within, and the originality that is dependent on this idea of difference collapses with it.

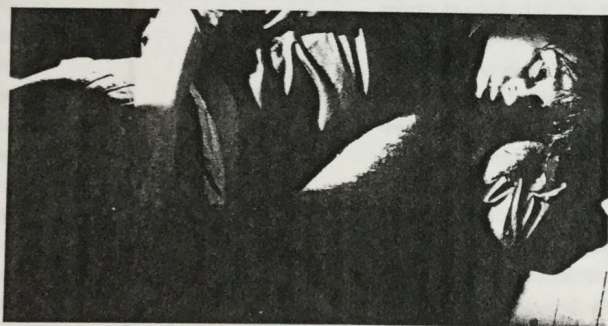
Now, this very experience of the collapse of difference has had an enormous impact on a segment of the very artistic practice that is

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supposed to occupy an aesthetic position separate from that of photography: the world of painting and sculpture. For contemporary painting and sculpture has experienced photography's travesty of the ideas of originality, or subjective expressiveness, or formal singularity, not as a failed version of these values, but as a denial of the very system of difference by which these values can be thought at all. By exposing the multiplicity, the facticity, the repetition and stereotype at the heart of every aesthetic gesture, photography deconstructs the possibility of differentiating between the original and the copy, the first idea and its slavish imitators. The practice of the multiple, whether one speaks of the hundreds of prints pulled from the same negative or the hundreds of fundamentally indistinguishable photographs that could be made by the Japanese men — this practice has been understood by certain artists as not just a degraded or bad form of the aesthetic original. It has been taken to undermine the very distinction between original and copy.

From contemporary practice an obvious example would be the work of Cindy Sherman. A concatenation of stereotypes, the images reproduce what is already a reproduction — that is, the various stock personae that are generated by Hollywood scenarios, TV soap operas,



Cindy Sherman,
Untitled, 1981.
Courtesy of Metro
Pictures.

Harlequin Romances, and slick advertising. And if the subject of her images is this flattened, cardboard imitation of character, her execution is no less preordained and controlled by the culturally already-given. One is constantly confronted by

formal conditions that are the results of institutional recipes: the movie still with its anecdotal suggestiveness, or the advertising image with its hopped-up lighting and its format dictated by the requirements of page layout.

That Sherman is both subject and object of these images is important to their conceptual coherence. For the play of stereotype in her work is a revelation of the artist herself as stereotypical. It functions as a refusal to understand the artist as a source of originality, a fount of subjective response, a condition of critical distance from a world which it confronts but of which it is not a part. The inwardness of the artist as

7. See Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), pp. 292–307. This section on Plato appears in English as "Plato and the Simulacrum," trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October* 27 (Winter 1983), pp. 45–56.

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a reserve of consciousness that is fundamentally different from the world of appearances is a basic premise of western art. It is the fundamental difference on which all other differences are based. If Sherman were photographing a model who was not herself, then her work would be a continuation of this notion of the artist as a consciousness which is both anterior to the world and distinct from it, a consciousness that knows the world by judging it. In that case we would simply say that Sherman was constructing a critical parody of the forms of mass culture.

With this total collapse of difference, this radical implosion, one finds oneself entering the world of the simulacrum — a world where, as in Plato's cave, the possibility of distinguishing between reality and phantasm, between the actual and the simulated, is denied. Discussing Plato's dread of the simulacral, Gilles Deleuze argues that the very work of distinction and the question of how it is to be carried out characterizes the entire project of Plato's philosophy.⁷ For Plato, difference is not a matter of classification, of properly separating out the various objects of the real world into genus and species, for example, but of knowing which of these objects are true copies of the Ideal Forms and which are so infinitely degraded as to be false. Everything, of course, is a copy; but the true copy — the valid imitation — is that which is truly resemblant, copying the inner idea of the form and not just its empty shell. The Christian metaphor rehearses this distinction: God made man in his own image and therefore at the origin man was a true copy; after man's fall into sin this inner resemblance to God was broken, and man became a false copy, a simulacrum.

But, Deleuze reminds us, no sooner does Plato think the simulacrum, in the *Sophist* for example, than he realizes that the very idea of the false copy puts into question the whole project of differentiation, of the separation of model from imitation. For the false copy is a paradox that opens a terrible rift within the very possibility of being able to tell true from not-true. The whole idea of the copy is that it be resemblant, that it incarnate the idea of identity — that the just man resemble Justice by virtue of being just — and in terms of this identity that it separate itself from the condition of injustice. Within this system, separations are to be made between terms on the basis of the particular condition of inner resemblance to a form. But the notion of the false copy turns this whole process inside out. The false copy takes the idea of difference or nonresemblance and internalizes it, setting it up within the given object as its very condition of being. If the simulacrum resembles anything, it is the Idea of nonresemblance. Thus a labyrinth

7. See Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), pp. 292–307. This section on Plato appears in English as "Plato and the Simulacrum," trans. Rosalind Krauss, October 27 (Winter 1983), pp. 45–56.

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is erected, a hall of mirrors, within which no independent perspective can be established from which to make distinctions — because all of reality has now internalized those distinctions. The labyrinth, the hall of mirrors, is, in short, a cave.

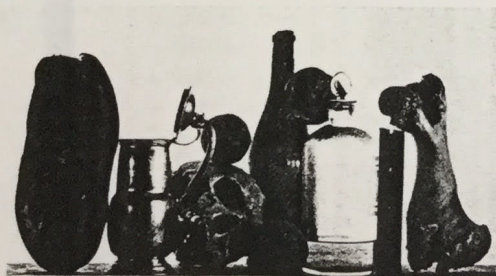
Much of the writing of poststructuralism, in its understanding of the Real as merely the effect of simulated resemblance, follows Nietzsche's attack on Platonism in which he insisted that there is no exit from this cave, except into an even deeper, more labyrinthine one. We are surrounded, it is argued, not by reality but by the reality *effect*, the product of simulation and signs.

As I have said, at a certain point photography, in its precarious position as the false copy — the image that is resemblant only by mechanical circumstance and not by internal, essential connection to the model — served to deconstruct the whole system of model and copy, original and fake, first- and second-degree replication. For certain artists and critics, photography opened the closed unities of the older aesthetic discourse to the severest possible scrutiny, turning them inside out. Given its power to do this — to put into question the whole concept of the uniqueness of the art object, the originality of its author, the coherence of the oeuvre within which it is made, and the individuality of so-called self-expression — given this power, it is clear that, with all due respect to Bourdieu, there *is* a discourse proper to photography; only, we would have to add, it is not an aesthetic discourse. It is a project of deconstruction in which art is distanced and separated from itself.

If Sherman's work gives us an idea of what it looks like to engage the photographic simulacrum in order to explode the unities of art, we might choose an example from serious "art" photography to look at the reverse situation — the attempt to bury the question of the simulacrum in order to produce the effect of art, a move that almost inevitably brings about the return of the repressed. As one of many possible ex-

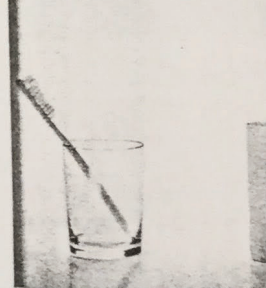
amples, one might look at a recent series of still lifes by Irving Penn through which the domain of high art is self-consciously evoked by calling on the various emblemata of the *vanitas* picture or the *memento mori* — the skulls, the desiccated fruit, the broken objects that all

Irving Penn,
Still Life with Shoe, 1980.
Courtesy of the artist.
© 1980.



Irving Penn,
Clinique advertisement.
Courtesy of Clinique.

Twice a day.



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8. Baudelaire expresses his
horror in terms that sound very
familiar to contemporary critical
thought; he invokes the supple-
ment: "If photography is allowed
to supplement art in some of its
functions, it will soon have sup-
planted or corrupted it alto-
gether, thanks to the stupidity of
the multitude which is its natural
ally" [The Salon of 1859, sec. 2,
"The Modern Public and Photog-
raphy," in Baudelaire, *Art in Paris*,
trans. Jonathan Mayne (London:
Phaidon, 1965), p. 154].

Penn wishes to affirm photography as the proper object of criti-
cism, which is to say, the photograph as a work of art. But, symptomati-
cally we might say, Penn's "art photographs" are like screen-memories
behind which lurk the forms and images of the primal scene: that
moment — viewed with a shudder by Baudelaire in the 1850s — of
art debauched by commerce.⁸

As distinct from Penn's, Sherman's work stands in an inverse
relationship to critical discourse, Sherman having understood pho-
tography as the Other of art, the desire of art in our time. Thus her
use of photography does not construct an object for art criticism but
constitutes an act of such criticism. It constructs of photography itself
a metalanguage with which to operate on the mythogrammatical field
of art, exploring at one and the same time the myths of creativity and
artistic vision, and the innocence, primacy, and autonomy of the
"support" for the aesthetic image.

These two examples, we could say, operate at the two opposite
poles of photography's relation to aesthetic discourse. But transecting
the line that connects these two practices is the socio-discourse of the
Varda experiment with which I began. *Une minute pour une image*,
with its system of presenting the isolated photograph as an invitation
for the viewer to project a fantasy narrative, and its abandonment of
the notion of critical competence in favor of a kind of survey of popular
opinion, occupies a position as far as possible from the rigors of serious
criticism. But in taking that position it raises the possibility of the utter
irrelevance of such criticism to the field of photography.

The specter of this possibility hangs over every writer who now
wishes to consider the field of photographic production, photographic
history, photographic meaning. And it casts its shadow most deeply
over the critical project that has been engaged by a growing number of
writers on photography as they try to find a language with which to
analyze the photograph in isolation, whether on the wall of a museum, a
gallery, or a lecture hall. For, they must ask themselves, in what sense
can this discourse be properly sustained, in what sense can it, as critical
reflection, be prolonged beyond the simple inanity of "a minute for an
image"?

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THE PLEASURES OF LOOKING

The Attorney General's Commission on Pornography versus Visual Images

Carole S. Vance

An early version of this paper was given at the Society for Photographic Education convention, Rochester, New York, 1989; thanks to the audience for a stimulating exchange and to the Women's Caucus for inviting me. Portions of this argument first appeared in "The Meese Commission on the Road," *The Nation*, 2-9 August 1986, pp. 65, 76-82.

1. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, *Final Report*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1986).

Public hearings were organized around preselected topics in six cities: Washington D.C. (general), Chicago (law enforcement), Houston (social science), Los Angeles (production and distribution), Miami (child pornography), and New York (organized crime). Each public hearing typically lasted two full days. Commission executive sessions were held in each city, usually for two working days, in conjunction with the public hearings. Additional work sessions occurred in Washington, D.C., and Scottsdale, Arizona.

All the commission's executive sessions were open to the public, following the provision of sunshine laws governing federal advisory commissions. Commissioners were specifically enjoined from discussing commission business or engaging in any informal deliberations outside public view.

My analysis is based on direct observations of the commission's public hearings and executive sessions, supplemented by many interviews with participants.

2. Larry Madigan, "former consumer of pornography," testified at the Miami hearings. He was

The Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, a federal investigatory commission appointed in May 1985 by then-Attorney General Edwin Meese III, orchestrated an imaginative attack on sexual pleasure and desire. The chief targets of its campaign were sexually explicit images, dangerous, according to the logic of the commission, because they might encourage sexual desires or acts. The commission's public hearings in six U.S. cities during 1985 and 1986, lengthy executive sessions, and an almost two-thousand-page report¹ constitute an extended rumination about visual images and their power. Although the term *representation* was not in its vocabulary, the panel of commissioners tenaciously clung to and aggressively advanced implicit theories of visual representation. More important, the commission took every opportunity to show sexually explicit images during its public hearings, using them to promote its point of view, to document the alleged nature of pornography, to offer a compelling interpretive frame, and to intensify a climate of sexual shame that made dissent from the commission's viewpoint almost impossible.

To enter a Meese Commission public hearing was to enter a time warp, an inviolable bubble in which the 1950s were magically recreated. Women were virgins, sex was dirty, shame and secrecy were rampant. Consider the testimony of self-described "victim of pornography" Larry Madigan.² He testified earnestly that at age twelve he was a "normal, healthy boy and my life was filled with normal activities and hobbies," when his life was radically disrupted by exposure to a deck of pornographic playing cards: "These porno cards highly aroused me and gave me a desire I never had before." Soon after that, he started to masturbate. Later, he went on to have "promiscuous" sex with two women and almost ended up "a pervert, an alcoholic, or dead," until he found Christ and was born again. How can we explain that this testimony was received in 1985 by several hundred people in a federal courthouse in a major American city without a single, publicly audible laugh? The answer lies in the commission's use of visual images to create a logical and emotional climate in which such claims were not only plausible, but convincing.

introduced by his therapist, Dr. Simon Miranda, who claimed that most of his own clinical work was with patients whose problems were caused by pornography. "Larry," he stated, "has informed me recently that, in fact, he can trace many of the problems that he has had life long, to an encounter with pornography" (Miami hearing transcript, 21 November 1985).

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Witness testifying anonymously, Meese commission hearings, 1985-86. Courtesy of the Department of Justice.

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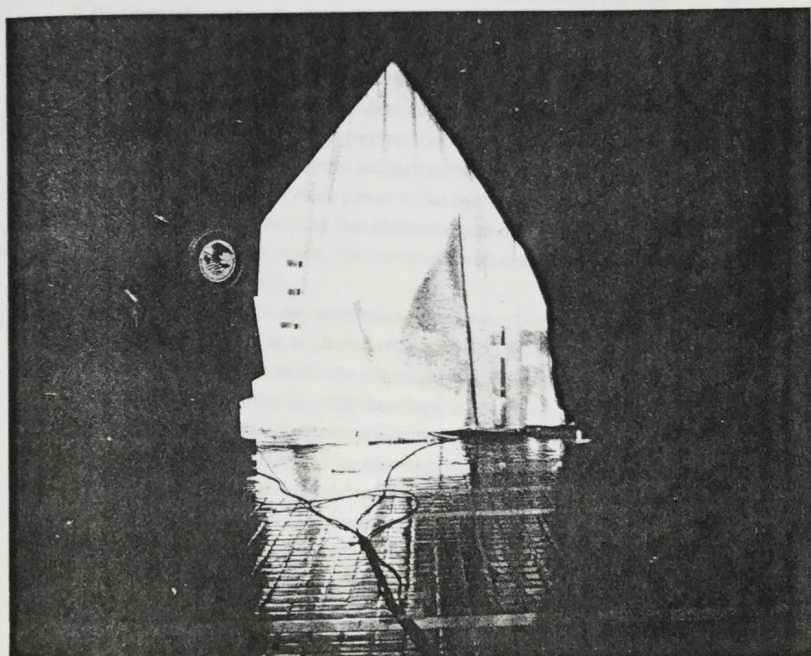
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November 1985).

Appointed during President Ronald Reagan's second term, the
commission paid a political debt to conservatives and fundamentalists
who had been clamoring for action on social issues, particularly pornog-
raphy, throughout his term of office. Pornographic images are symbols
of what moral conservatives want to control: sex for pleasure, sex
outside the regulated boundaries of marriage and procreation. Sexually
explicit images are dangerous, conservatives believe, because they have
the power to spark fantasy, incite lust, and provoke action, as well as
convey undesirable information. What more effective way to stop
sexual immorality and excess, they reason, than to curtail sexual desire
and pleasure at its source — in the imagination.



Witness testifying
anonymously, Meese
commission hearings,
1985-86. Courtesy of the
Department of Justice.

Conservatives also project their intense feelings about sexuality
and gender politics onto pornography. Pornography, to them, is a stand-
in for destructive sexual impulses that, left uncontrolled, threaten to
destroy the stability of the family, the authority of men over women,
and the power of parents over children. Sexual pleasure is always
suspect and usually dangerous, unless harnessed within marriage,

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Association of America, the Adult Film Association of America, and the National Cable Television Association), a free-lance porn producer, and representatives of several men's magazines, but they rarely addressed issues of interpretation and meaning. It is unclear if visual groups were absent because of their unwillingness to testify or their ignorance of the proceedings, but their absence was a serious loss.

II. Interpreting Visual Images

The commission's campaign against sexually explicit images was filled with paradox. Professing belief in the most naive and literalist theories of representation, the commissioners nevertheless brilliantly used visual images during the hearings to establish "truth" and manipulate the feelings of the audience. Arguing that pornography had a singular and universal meaning that was evident to any viewer, the commission staff worked hard to exclude any perspective but its own. Insisting that sexually explicit images had great authority, the commissioners framed pornography so that it had more power in the hearing than it could ever have in the real world. Denying that subjectivity and context matter in the interpretation of any image, they created a well-crafted context that denied there was a context.

The foremost goal of the commission was to establish "the truth" about pornography, that is, to characterize and describe the sexually explicit material that was said to be in need of regulation. Pornographic images were shown during all public hearings, as witnesses and staff members alike illustrated their remarks with explicit, fleshy, often full-color images of sex. The reticence to view this material that one might have anticipated on the part of fundamentalists and conservatives was nowhere to be seen, though the anomaly was not lost on wags in the audience, who jokingly referred to "the federally funded peep show." The commission capitalized on the realistic representational form of still photos and movie and video clips, stating that the purpose of viewing these images was to inform the public and themselves about "what pornography was really like." Viewing was carefully orchestrated, and a great deal of staff time went toward organizing the logistics and technologies of viewing. Far from being a casual or minor enterprise, the selection and showing of sexually explicit images constituted one of the commission's major interventions.

In fact, visual images dominated the hearings at all times. During screenings, pornographic images consistently captured the audience's attention with a reliability that eluded the more long-winded witnesses.

16. A number of potential witnesses told me that they were afraid to testify, in some cases declining actual invitations and in other cases deciding against requesting to speak. They feared hostile and humiliating cross-examination and, for producers of sexually explicit material, police retaliation in the form of harassment, investigation, and potential prosecution. Fear of reprisal was especially common among the free-lance, and often more innovative, producers of sexually explicit material, whether pornography or radical political graphics. As independent producers, they could not rely on large parent organizations to offer legal protection and financial backing (and, some implied, payoffs to corrupt vice cops). With only modest financial resources at hand, the prospect of disrupted business or costly legal battles (even if ultimately victorious) spelled financial disaster. Most small producers felt it was prudent not to testify, leaving the job to mainstream men's magazines not known for radical sex politics or innovative graphics.

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17. Descriptions of magazine photographs can be found in the *Final Report*, pp. 1614–1646. Videos and movies are also described, though the narrative concentrates primarily on plot and dialogue. The narrative reproduces long sections of dialogue verbatim, arguably constituting a copyright violation.

18. *Final Report*, statement of Judith Becker and Ellen Levine, p. 199. In addition, they wrote: "We do not even know whether or not what the Commission viewed during the course of the year reflected the nature of most of the pornographic and obscene material in the market; nor do we know if the materials shown us mirror the taste of the majority of consumers of pornography.... While one does not deny the existence of this material, the fact that it dominated the materials presented at our hearings may have distorted the Commission's judgment about the proportion of such violent material in relation to the total pornographic material in distribution."

19. Recent empirical evidence does not support the often-repeated assertion that violence in pornography is increasing. In their review of the literature, social scientists Edward Donnerstein, Daniel Linz, and Steven Penrod conclude, "at least for now, we cannot legitimately conclude that pornography has become more violent since the time of the 1970 obscenity and pornography commission" [in *The Question of Pornography: Research Findings and Policy Implications* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), p. 91].

20. The only original research conducted by the commission examined images found in the April 1986 issues of best-selling men's magazines (*Cheri*, *Chic*, *Club*, *Gallery*, *Genesis*, *High Society*, *Hustler*, *Oui*, *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, *Swank*). The study found that "images of force, violence, or weapons" constituted less than 1 percent of all images (0.6 percent), hardly substantiating the

in the books, their cost, and how to order them. The report describes photographs found in ten sexually explicit magazines, for example, *Tri-Sexual Lust*, *Bizarre Climax* No. 9, *Every Dog Has His Day*, and *Pregnant Lesbians* No. 1. The interpretive approach may not be on the cutting edge of photographic criticism, but here it earnestly slogs along for thirty-three pages ("one photograph of the female performing fellatio on one male while the other male's erect penis rests on her cheek" and "one close-up photograph of a naked caucasian male with the testicles of another naked caucasian male in his mouth").¹⁷

The commission viewed a disproportionate amount of atypical material, which even moderate commissioners criticized as "extremely violent and degrading."¹⁸ To make themselves sound contemporary and secular, conservatives needed to establish that pornography was violent rather than immoral and, contradicting social science evidence, that this violence was increasing.¹⁹ It was important for the panel to insist that the images presented were "typical" or "average" pornography. But typical pornography — glossy, mainstream porn magazines directed at heterosexual men — does not feature much violence, as the commission's own research (quickly suppressed) confirmed.²⁰ Yet the slide shows did not present many carefully airbrushed photos of perfect females or the largely heterosexual gyrations (typically depicting intercourse and oral sex) found even in the more hard-core adult bookstores. The commission concentrated on atypical material, produced for private use or for small, special-interest segments of the market, or confiscated in the course of prosecutions. Slides featured subjects guaranteed to have a high shock value: excrement, urination, homosexuality, bestiality (with over twenty different types of animals, including chickens and elephants), and especially sadomasochism (SM). Child pornography was frequently shown (with no effort made to disguise the identity of the children), despite repeated testimony from the commission's own expert witnesses that severe penalties had made this material virtually unobtainable in the commercial market.

Predictably, the commission relied on the realism of photography to amplify the notion that the body of material shown was accurate, that is, representative. The staff also skillfully mixed atypical and marginal material with pictorials from *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, rarely making a distinction between types of publications or types of markets. The desired fiction was that extreme images were found everywhere and that all pornography was the same. Images existed in a timeless pornographic present, with little attention given to describing an image's date, provenance, conditions of production, intended market,

commission's claim that violent imagery in pornography was common. Although the results of this study are reported in the draft, they were excised from the final report.

The study found that the most common acts portrayed were "uple beaver" poses (20 percent), other imagery including touching (19 percent), oral-genital activity (12 percent), and activities between two women (12 percent). According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) the thirteen top-selling mainstream magazines sold 12 million copies per month (4.2 million copies for *Playboy*, 3.3 million copies for *Penthouse*), with a monthly sales value over \$38 million (1984 data).

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fundamentalist distrust and puzzlement about the imagination and the symbolic realm, which seem to have no autonomous existence; for fundamentalists, imagination and behavior are closely linked. For these reasons, the commission was deeply hostile to psychoanalytic theory, interpretation, or the notion of human inconsistency, ambiguity, or ambivalence. If good thoughts lead to good behavior, a sure way to eliminate bad behavior was to police bad thoughts.

The voice-over for the visual segments was singular and uniform, which served to obliterate the actual diversity of people's response to pornography. But sexually explicit material is a contested ground precisely *because* subjectivity matters. An image that is erotic to one individual is revolting to a second and ridiculous to a third. The object of contestation is meaning. Age, gender, race, class, sexual preference, erotic experience, and personal history all form the grid through which sexual images are received and interpreted. The commission worked hard to eliminate diversity from its hearings and to substitute instead its own authoritative, often uncontested, frequently male, monologue.

It is startling to realize that many of the Meese Commission's techniques were pioneered by antipornography feminists between 1977 and 1984. Claiming that pornography was sexist and promoted violence against women, antipornography feminism had an authoritative voice-over, too, though for theorists Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon and groups like Women Against Pornography, the monologic voice was, of course, female.²³ Although antipornography feminists disagreed with fundamentalist moral assumptions and contested, rather than approved, male authority, they carved out new territory with slide shows depicting allegedly horrific sexual images, a technique the commission happily adopted. Antipornography feminists relied on victim testimony and preferred anecdotes to data. They, too, shared a literalist interpretive frame and used SM images to prove that pornography was violent. It was not a total surprise when the panel invited leading antipornography feminists to testify at its hearings, and they cooperated.

In the Meese Commission's monologue, even dissenting witnesses inadvertently cooperated by handing over the arena of interpretation to the commission. Not a single anticensorship witness ever showed a slide, provided a competing frame of visual interpretation, or showed images he or she thought were joyful, erotic, and pleasurable.²⁴ All lost an important opportunity to present another point of view, to educate, and to interrupt the fiction of a single, shared interpretive frame. Visual images remained the exclusive province of the censors and the

23. Major works of antipornography feminism include Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1979); Laura Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night* (New York: William Morrow, 1980); Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech," *Harvard Civil Rights - Civil Liberties Law Review* vol. 20 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1985), pp. 1-70.

Opinion within feminism about pornography was, in fact, quite diverse, and it soon became apparent that the antipornography view was not hegemonic. For other views, see Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985) and *Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship* (New York: Caught Looking, Inc., 1986).

24. These witnesses included legal scholars, representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Freedom to Read Committee, and publishers' and authors' groups.

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holding aloft the latest exhibit, he questioned them about their organi-
zation's position on *Hot Bodies* or *Split Beavers*. Did their members
produce such images? Did their organization mean to defend such
material? Did they think such material should be available?

Like vampires spying crosses and garlic cloves, witnesses shrank
back. Having never seen the sexually explicit material or thought about
it, having no well-developed position about sexuality or visual represen-
tation, and sensing the increasingly dangerous turf they were being
lead into, they said, "No." They were unprepared, speechless, and un-
willing to defend anything so patently sexual. The chair had proven his
point: even anticensorship advocates would not defend visual pornog-
raphy. He politely excused them, with bland, if inaccurate, assurances
that antipornography efforts would target only indefensible sleaze, not
worthy high culture. More important, he appeared to establish a
consensus, which included even liberals, that sexually explicit visuals
were beyond the pale. Despite their valiant effort, the testimony of
anticensorship witnesses never succeeded in deconstructing or inter-
rupting the Meese Commission's rhetorical and symbolic strategies.
The right-wing's commitment, however, to controlling symbols means
that there will be other times, other battles in which to elaborate a
richer, more complex response.

IV. Speaking Sexual and Visual Pleasure

The antidote to the Meese Commission — and by extension all conser-
vative and fundamentalist efforts to restrict sexual images, whether in
pornography, sex education, or AIDS information — is a complex one,
requiring vigorous response that goes beyond appeals to free speech.
Free expression is a necessary principle in these debates because of the
steady protection it offers to all images, but it cannot be the only one.
We need to offer an alternative frame for understanding images, one
that rejects literalist constructions and offers in their place multiplicity,
subjectivity, and the diverse experience of viewers. We must challenge
the conservative monopoly on visual display and interpretation. The
visual arts community needs to employ its interpretive skills to unmask
the modernized rhetoric conservatives use to justify their traditional
agenda, as well as deconstruct the "difficult" images fundamentalists
pick to set their campaigns in motion. Despite their uncanny intuition
for choosing culturally disturbing material, their focus on images also
contains many sleights of hand, even displacements, which we need to
examine. Images even we allow to remain "disturbing" and unconsidered

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LIVING WITH CONTRADICTIONS

Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics

Abigail Solomon-Godeau

A version of this essay originally appeared in *Screen* (Summer 1987).

1. "Neo-geo," also referred to as "simulationism," the latest art package to blaze across the art-world firmament, is a good case in point. The artists involved (Ashley Bickerton, Peter Halley, Jeff Koons, Haim Steinbach, Meyer Vaisman — to name only the most prominent) were the subject of massive media promotion from the outset. See, for example, Paul Taylor, "The Hot Four: Get Ready for the Next Art Stars," *New York* magazine, 27 October 1986, pp. 50–56; Eleanor Heartney, "Simulationism: The Hot New Cool Art," *Artnews* (January 1987), pp. 130–37, and Douglas C. McGill, "The Lower East Side's New Artists. A Garment Center of Culture Makes Stars of Unknowns," *The New York Times*, 3 June 1986. The media blitz was subsequently ratified by a group exhibition at the Sonnabend Gallery and, on the museological front, by an exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston ("Endgame: Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture," 25 September–30 November 1986) with an accompanying catalogue featuring essays by prominent art historians and critics such as Yves-Alain Bois, Thomas Crow, and Hal Foster. For a less exalted and intellectualized view of this phenomenon, see "Mythologies: Art and the Market," an interview with Jeffrey Deitch, art advisor to Citibank, *Artscibe International* (April/May 1986), pp. 22–26. The interest of this interview lies in the way it clearly indicates the determinations and mechanisms in the fabrication and marketing of a new art commodity.

It should have become abundantly clear, especially during the Reagan years, that the function of criticism, for the most part, is to serve as a more or less sophisticated public relations or promotional apparatus. This is less a function of the critic's active partisanship (Diderot and Baudelaire, for example, are historically associated with the artists Greuze and Guys, whom they championed as exemplars) than a consequence of the fact that most contemporary art criticism is innocent of its own politics, its own interests, and its own ideology. In fact, the promotional aspect of most art criticism derives from the larger institutional and discursive structures of art. In this respect, the scholarly monograph, the temporary exhibition, the discipline of art history, and last but not least, the museum itself, are essentially celebratory entities. Further — and at the risk of stating the obvious — the institutions and discourses that collectively function to construct the object "art" are allied to the material determinations of the marketplace, which themselves establish and confirm the commodity status of the work of art.

Within this system, the art critic normally functions as a kind of intermediary between the delirious pluralism of the marketplace and the sacralized judgment seat that is the museum. But even this mediating process has now been bypassed; artists such as Julian Schnabel, to take one particularly egregious example, have been propelled from obscurity to the pantheon without a single serious critical text ever having been produced in support of their work. The quantum increase in the scale of the international art market, the unprecedented importance of dealers in creating (or "managing") reputations and manipulating supply and demand, the emergence of a new class of "art consultants," and the large-scale entry of corporations into the contemporary art market have all contributed to the effective redundancy of art criticism. Art stars and even "movements," with waiting lists of eager purchasers in their train, stepped into the spotlight before many art critics knew of their existence.¹ This redundancy of criticism, however, can hardly be understood as a consequence of these developments alone. Rather, the current state of most art criticism represents the

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final dissolution of what was, in any case, only a fragile bulwark between market forces and their institutional ratification, a highly permeable membrane separating venture capital, so to speak, from blue-chip investment. As a result, art criticism has been forced to cede its illusory belief in the separateness or disinterestedness of critical discourse.

In this essay I am primarily concerned with the condition — and position — of critical practices within art criticism and artmaking in the age of Reagan. In contradistinction to business-as-usual art promotion and the atavistic, cynical, and mindless art production exemplified by pseudoexpressionism, critical practices, by definition, must occupy an oppositional place. But what, we must ask, is that place today? Within the map of the New York art world, where is that place of opposition and what is it in opposition to? Second — and integrally linked to the first set of questions — we must ask what defines a critical practice and permits it to be recognized as such. What, if anything, constitutes the difference between a critical practice and a recognizably political one? If artists as dramatically distinct as, for example, David Salle and Sherrie Levine can both say that their work contributes to a critique of the painterly sign, what common political meanings, if any, ought we attribute to the notion of critical practice? Last — and here is where I am most directly implicated — what is the nature, the terms, even the possibility, of a critical practice in art criticism? Is such a practice not inevitably and inescapably a part of the cultural apparatus it seeks to challenge and contest?

Postmodernist Photography: The Third Time Around A Case History

When I think of it now, I don't think what Julian Schnabel was doing was all that different from what I was trying to do.

— Sherrie Levine²

By way of exploring these questions, and in the interest of providing some specificity to the discussion, I want to concentrate primarily on the evolution and development of postmodernist photographic work from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, using it as a case history in which to explore the salient issues. This corpus of work, identified with its now fully familiar strategies of appropriation and pastiche; its systematic assault on modernist orthodoxies of immanence, autonomy, presence, originality, and authorship; its engagement with the simulacral; and its interrogation of the problematics of photographic mass media

2. Sherrie Levine, "Art in the (Re)Making," interview with Gerald Marzorati, *Artnews* (May 1986).

3. See Hal Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), pp. ix-xvi. The conception of postmodernism in the visual arts as a critical practice was established in the following essays: Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," in *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (Boston: David R. Godine, 1984), pp. 175-87; "On the Museum's Ruins," in Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, pp. 43-56; "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," October 15 (Winter 1980), pp. 91-101; "The End of Painting," October 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 69-86; "The Museum's Old, the Library's New Subject," *Parachute* 22 (Spring 1981), pp. 32-37. For a theorization of postmodernism as an allegorical procedure, see Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, parts I and II," October 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 64-86 and October 13 (Summer 1980), pp. 59-80, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," *Artforum* (September 1982), pp. 43-56. See, further, Rosalind Krauss's important essays "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, pp. 31-42 and "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," in Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 151-70. For a synopsis of the above essays, see Hal Foster, "Re: Post" in Wallis, *Art after Modernism*, pp. 189-201. See also my essay "Playing in the Fields of the Image," *Afterimage* (Summer 1982), pp. 10-13.

4. See Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenor, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972), and Charles Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977).

5. Irving Howe and Harry Levin were using the term in the late fifties.

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5. Irving Howe and Harry Levin were using the term in the late 1960s.

representation may be taken as paradigmatic of the concerns of a critical postmodernism or what Hal Foster has designated as "oppositional postmodernism."³ The qualifier "critical" is important here, inasmuch as the conceptualization and description of postmodernism in architecture — chronologically anterior — was inflected rather differently.⁴ There it signaled, among other things, a new historicism and/or repudiation of modernist architecture's social and utopian aspirations, and a concomitant theatricalization of architectural form and meaning. In literary studies, the term *postmodernism* had yet another valency and made its appearance in literary criticism at an even earlier date.⁵ Within the visual arts, however, postmodernist photography was identified with a specifically critical stance. Critics such as Benjamin Buchloh, Douglas Crimp, and Rosalind Krauss, for example, theorized this aspect of postmodernist photographic work as principally residing in its dismantling of reified, idealist conceptions enshrined in modernist aesthetics — issues devolving on presence, subjectivity, and aura. To the extent that this work was supported and valorized for its subversive potential (particularly with respect to its apparent fulfillment of the Barthesian and Foucauldian prescriptions for the death of the author and, by extension, its subversion of the commodity status of the art object), Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince were perhaps the emblematic figures. For myself, as a photography critic writing in opposition to the academicized mausoleum of late-modernist art photography, part of the interest in the work of Vikkie Alexander, Victor Burgin, Sarah Charlesworth, Silvia Kolbowski, Barbara Kruger, Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, and Jim Welling (to cite only those I have written about) lay in the way their work directly challenged the pieties and proprieties with which art photography had carved a space for itself precisely as a modernist art form.⁶ Further, the feminist import of this work — particularly in the case of Kruger and Levine — represented a theoretically more sophisticated and necessary departure from the essentialism and literalism prevalent in many of the feminist art practices that emerged in the seventies.⁷

In retrospect, Levine's production in the late seventies to the mid-eighties reveals both the strength and weakness of this variant of critical postmodernism as a counterstrategy to the regnant forms of art production and discourse. The changes in her practice, and the shifts in the way her work has been discursively positioned and received, are themselves testimony to the difficulty and contradiction that attend critical practices that operate squarely within the framework of high-art production.

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Sherrie Levine, *Untitled*
(After Walker Evans: 2),
1981. Courtesy of
Mary Boone Gallery.
Collection:
The Menil Foundation,
Houston, Texas.

9. Martha Rosler, "Notes on
Quotes," *Wedge 3* (1982), p. 72.

claims for the critical function of work such as Levine's and Prince's (Prince at that period was rephotographing advertising images, excising only the text). The force of this criticism hinged on the work's insularity, its adherence to, or lack of contestation of, the art-world frame, and — more pointedly — its failure to articulate an alternative politics, an alternative vision.

In 1982, for example, Martha Rosler wrote an article entitled "Notes on Quotes" focusing on the inadequacies of appropriation and quotation as a properly *political* strategy:

"What alternative vision is suggested by such work? [She is referring here specifically to Levine.] We are not provided the space within the work to understand how things might be different. We can imagine only a respite outside social life — the alternative is merely Edenic or Utopian. There is no social life, no personal relations, no groups, classes, nationalities; there is no production other than the production of images. Yet a critique of ideology necessitates some materialistic grounding if it is to rise above the theological."⁹

Rosler's use of the term *theological* in this context points to one of the central debates in and around the definition — or evaluation — of critical practice. For Rosler, failure to ground the artwork in "direct social analysis" reduces its critical gesture to one of "highlighting" rather than "engaging with political questions that challenge...power relations in society." Moreover, to the extent that the artwork "remains locked within the relations of production of its own cultural field" and limited to the terms of a generic rather than specific interrogation of forms of domination, it cannot fulfill an educative, much less transformative, function.

But "theological" in its opprobrious sense can cut both ways. It is, in fact, a "theological" notion of the political — or perhaps one should say a scriptural notion — that has until quite recently effectively occluded issues of gender and subjectivity from the purview of the political. Rosler's objections are to some degree moored in a relatively traditional conception of what constitutes the political in art ("materialistic

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grounding," "direct social analysis"). Thus, Rosler's characterization of a purely internal critique of art as ineffective because it is theological can, from a somewhat different vantage point, be interpreted as a theologized notion of the political. It is, moreover, important to point out that while unambiguously political artists (unambiguous because of their choice of content) are rarely found wanting for their total exclusion of considerations of gender, feminist artists are frequently chastised by Left critics for the inadequacy of their political content. Nevertheless, the echoing cry of the women's movement — the personal is political — is but one of the remappings of political terrain that have engendered new ways of thinking the political and new ways of inscribing it in cultural production.

But perhaps even more important, to the extent that art is itself a discursive and institutional site, it surely entails its own critical practices. This has in fact been recently argued as the significance and legacy of the historical avant-garde.¹⁰ For Peter Bürger, the Kantian conception of self-criticism is understood not in Greenberg's sense of a *telos* of purity and essence, but rather as a critical operation performed within and upon the *institution* of art itself. Thus, art movements like dadaism and constructivism and art practices such as collage, photomontage, and the Duchampian readymade are understood to be performing a specifically political function to the extent that they work to actively break down the notion of aesthetic autonomy and to rejoin art and life. Bürger's rigorous account of art as an institution in bourgeois culture provides a further justification for considering internal critiques such as Levine's as a genuinely critical practice. Cultural sites and discourses are in theory no less immune to contestation, no less able to furnish an arena for struggle and transformation than any other.¹¹ This "in theory" needs to be acknowledged here because the subsequent "success" of postmodernist photography as a *style* harkens back, as I shall argue, to problems of function, critical complicity, and the extreme difficulty of maintaining a critical edge within the unstable spaces of internal critique.

In the spring of 1982, I curated an exhibition entitled "The Stolen Image and Its Uses" for an alternative space in upstate New York. Of the five artists included (Alexander, Kolbowski, Kruger, Levine, and Prince), Levine was by far the most controversial and sparked the most hostility. It was, in fact, the very intensity of the outrage her work provoked (nowhere greater than among the ranks of art photographers) that appeared, at the time, to confirm the subversive effects of her particular strategies. But even while such exhibitions or lectures on

10. Peter Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

11. The theorization of a localized "site specificity" for contestatory and oppositional practices is one of the legacies of Louis Althusser and, with a somewhat different inflection, Michel Foucault. See Michel Foucault, "The Political Function of the Intellectual," *Radical Philosophy* 12 (Summer 1977), pp. 12–15, and "Revolutionary Action: 'Until Now,'" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, Selected Essays and Interviews* by Michel Foucault, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 218–33.

Shirley Kolbowski,
Model Picture VII,
1984. Courtesy of
Postmasters
Gallery, Photo:
Mary Bachmann.

12. See Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July–August 1984), pp. 53–92. An earlier, less developed version of this essay, entitled "Post-Modernism and Consumer Society," is reprinted in Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, pp. 111–25.

13. For various critiques of Jameson's arguments, see Mike Davis, "Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism," *New Left Review* 151 (May–June 1985), pp. 107–18; Terry Eagleton, "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism," *New Left Review* 152 (July 1985), pp. 60–73; and Douglas Crimp, "The Postmodern Museum," *Parachute* (March, April, May, 1987), pp. 61–69.

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Louise Lawler, *Arranged*
by Carl Label at Weil,
Gotshal, and Manges,
1982. Courtesy
of the artist.



both exceed and bind the individual artist. Whether artists choose to define their positions publicly in opposition to, or in strategic alliance with, dominant modes of cultural production is important only insofar as such definitions may contribute to a collective space of opposition. But, in the absence of a clearly defined oppositional

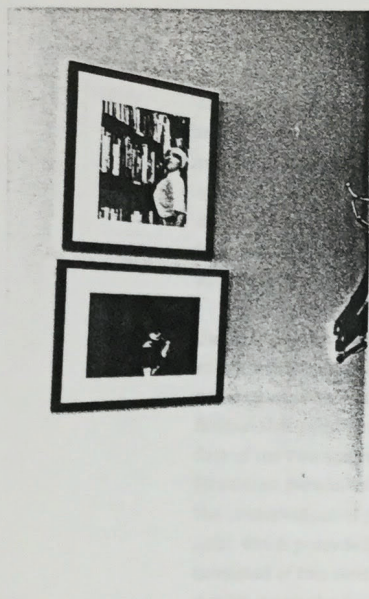
sphere and the extreme rarity of collaborative practice, attempts to clarify the nature of critical practice must focus on the artwork's ability to question, to contest, or to denaturalize the very terms in which it is produced, received, and circulated. What is at stake is thus not an ethics or a moral position but the very possibility of a critical practice within the terms of art discourse. And, as a fundamental condition of possibility, critical practices must constantly address those economic and discursive forces that perpetually threaten to eradicate their critical difference.

Some notion of this juggernaut can be obtained from a consideration of the parallel fortunes of Levine's earlier photographic appropriations and, indeed, postmodernist photography as a whole. In 1985, for example, three large group exhibitions featuring postmodernist photography were mounted: "Signs of the Real" at White Columns, "The Edge of Illusion" at the Burden Gallery, and most grotesque of all, "In the Tradition of: Photography" at Light Gallery. Not the least of the ironies attendant upon the incorporation of postmodernist photography into the now expanded emporium of photography was the nature of the venues themselves: the Burden Gallery was established in January 1985 to function as the display window of *Aperture*, the photographic

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publication founded by Minor White and customarily consecrated to modernist art photography; Light Gallery, a veritable cathedral of official art photography, represents the stable of officially canonized modernist masters, living and dead. The appearance of postmodernist photography within the institutional precincts of art photography signaled that whatever difference, much less critique, had been attributed to the work of Levine and others, it had now been fully and seamlessly recuperated under the sign of art photography, an operation that might be characterized as deconstruction in reverse.

How had this happened? The Light Gallery exhibition title — "In the Tradition of: Photography" — provides one clue, elaborated in an essay that accompanied the show. Postmodernist photography is here understood to be that which follows modernist photography in the same fashion that postimpressionism is thought to follow impressionism. The first of the two epigraphs that introduced the essay was taken from Beaumont Newhall's *History of Photography* — a sentence describing the conservatism of pictorial, that is, premodernist, art photography (that which preceded the Light Gallery regulars). The second epigraph consisted of two sentences from one of my essays, "Photography after Art Photography," asserting that the stakes that differentiate the two modes are a function of their position in relation to their institutional spaces. In much the same way that the modernist hagiographer Beaumont Newhall and I were equally useful in framing the thesis that postmodernist photography is part of an evolutionary *telos* having to do only with the internal development of art photography, so too did the gallery space both frame and render equivalent the two practices. This reduction of difference to sameness (a shorthand description for the eventual fate of most, if not all, initially transgressive cultural practices) was emblematically represented by the pairing — side by side — of a Sherrie Levine rephotograph of a Walker Evans and — what else? — a "real" Walker Evans beneath the exhibition title. That postmodernist photographic work and art photography came to inhabit the same physical site (although with the exception of the Levine-Evans coupling, the two were physically separated in the installation) is, of course, integrally linked with the nature of commercial space in the first place. In the final analysis, as well as a Marxist analysis, the market is the ultimate legitimator and leveler. Thus, among the postmodernist work, one could also find excerpts from Martha Rosler's 1977 book project *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (originally published by the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design). Various an uncompromising critique of conventional humanist muckraking

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color photograph of a contemporary model has been montaged bears at least a family resemblance to the recent work of Laurie Simmons. But where Simmons's pictures derived their mildly unsettling effects from a calculated attempt to denaturalize an advertising convention, the reappearance of the same montage tactic in the new Dior campaign marks the completion of a circuit that begins and ends in the boundless creativity of modern advertising.

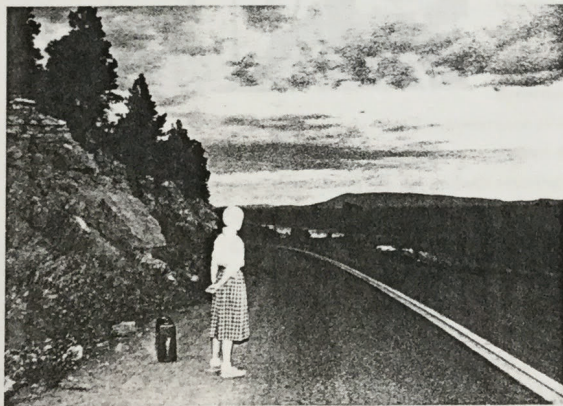
The cultural loop that can be traced here is itself part of the problematic of critical practice. The more or less rapid domestication and commodification of art practices initially conceived as critical have been recognized as a central issue at least since the time of the Frankfurt school. This means that irrespective of artistic intention or initial effect, critical practices not specifically calibrated to resist recuperation as aesthetic commodities almost immediately succumb to this process. In this respect, the only difference between the fate of postmodernist photography and previous practices is the rapidity of the process and the ease, if not enthusiasm, with which so many of the artists accommodated themselves to it.

As was the case with its pop-art predecessors, the first wave of postmodernist photography pillaged the mass media and advertising for its "subject," by which I include its thematics, its codes, its emblems.

These were then variously repositioned in ways that sought to denaturalize the conventions that encode the ideological and, in so doing, to make those very ideological contents available to scrutiny and contestation.

Thus, Cindy Sherman's black-and-white movie stills — always her and never her — aped the look of various film genres to underscore their conventionality, whereas her infinite tabulation of the "images of women" generates equally conventionalized signs producing a category (woman) and not a subject. Additionally, the cherished notion of the

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled*
Film Still, 1979. Courtesy
of Metro Pictures.



20. This aspect of Sherman's work was of particular importance to critics such as Douglas Crimp. For an interpretation of Sherman's photographs that stresses their humanist critique, see Judith Williamson, "Images of 'Woman,'" *Screen* 24 (November/December 1983), pp. 102-16.



Richard Prince, *Untitled*
(Cowboy), 1980-84.
Courtesy of Barbara
Gladstone Gallery.

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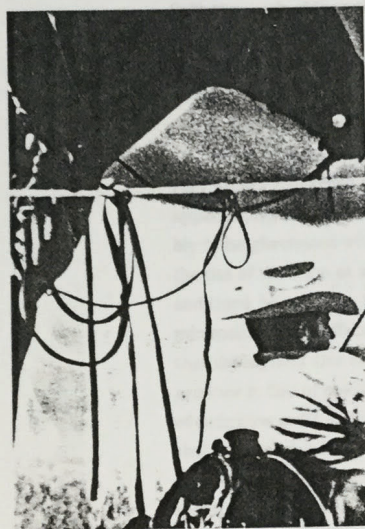
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Richard Prince, *Untitled*
(Cowboy), 1980–84.
Courtesy of Barbara
Gladstone Gallery.

artist's presence *in* the work was challenged by the act of literally inscribing the author herself and revealing her to be both fictional and absent.²⁰ Similarly, Richard Prince's rephotographs of the "Marlboro Man" advertisements, which he began to produce in the early years of the Reagan administration, pointedly addressed the new conservative agenda and its ritual invocations of a heroic past. Here, too, the jettisoning of authorial presence was a component of a larger project. By focusing on the image of the cowboy — the individualistic and masculine

icon of American mythology — Prince made visible the connections between cultural nostalgia, the myths of the masculine, and political reaction. Recropping, rephotographing, and recontextualizing the Marlboro men permitted Prince to unpack the menace, aggression, and atavism of such representations and reveal their analogical link to current political rhetoric.

In contrast to practices such as these, work such as Majore's abjures critique, analysis, and intervention on either its purported object — the seductiveness of commodity culture, the hypnotic lure of simulacra — or the material, discursive, and institutional determinations of art practice itself.

Not surprisingly, the disappearance of a critical agenda, however construed, has resulted in an apparent collapse of any hard-and-fast distinction between art and advertising. In pop art, this willed collapse of the aesthetic into the commercial function carried, at least briefly, a distinctly subversive charge. The erasure of boundaries between high and low culture, high art and commodity, operated as an astringent bath in which to dissolve the transcendentalist legacy of abstract expressionism. Moreover, the strategic repositioning of the images and objects of mass culture within the gallery and museum reinstated the investigation and analysis of the aesthetic as an ideological function of the institutional structures of art. Postmodernism as style, on the other hand, eliminates any possibility of analysis insofar as it complacently affirms the interchangeability, if not the co-identity, of art production and advertising, accepting this as a given instead of a problem.

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their changing historical conditions, the problem of definition must always be articulated in terms of the present. Gauging the *effectiveness* of critical practices is perhaps even more difficult. By any positivist reckoning, John Heartfield's covers for *A-I-Z* (*Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*) had no discernible effect on the rise of fascism, although he was able to draw upon two important historic conditions unavailable to contemporary artists (a mass audience and a definable Left culture). Still, the work of Heartfield retains its crucial importance in any consideration of critical practice insofar as it fulfills the still valid purpose of making the invisible visible and integrally meshing the representation of politics with the politics of representation. In other words, its critical function is both externally and internally infected.

Although Heartfield was clearly a political artist, few contemporary artists concerned with critical practice are comfortable with the appellation *political*: first, because to be thus defined is almost inevitably to be ghettoized within a (tiny) art world preserve; second, because the use of the term as a label implies that all other art is *not* political; and third, because the term tends to suggest a politics of content and to minimize, if not efface, the politics of form. It is for all these reasons that throughout this essay I have chosen to employ the term *critical practice* in lieu of *political practice*. That said, the immediate difficulty of definition must still be addressed, and it is made no easier by the fact that a spate of recent practices — so-called simulationism, or neo-geo, and postmodernist photography in all its avatars — lays claim to the mantle of critical practice. Whether one is to take such claims at face

Hans Haacke,
MetroMobilan, 1985.
Courtesy of John
Weber Gallery.
Photo: Fred Scruton.



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In Search of a Beholder: On the Relation between Art, Audiences, and Social Spheres in Post-Thermidor France

Stefan Germer

The year 1799 saw the public appearance of three striking images. While the Salon confronted Philippe-Auguste Hennequin's *Triumph of the French People* (Fig. 1) and Pierre-Narcisse Guérin's *Return of Marcus Sextus* (Fig. 6), Jacques-Louis David presented his *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (Fig. 7) in a special exhibition at the end of the year. These three pictures had a particular impact, since contemporaries immediately understood them both as contributions to the metadiscourse concerning the Revolution and as reconsiderations of painting's status in society.¹

Both issues were pressing ones. In post-Thermidor and Directoire France, there was no coherent interpretation of the Revolution per se, but rather a number of conflicting and contradictory definitions of the event that were propagated by different social and political factions, each of whose group identity was formed by a shared conception of the "significance" of the Revolution.² Painting played an essential role in these conflicts: along with public discourse, revolutionary pageants, and books and pamphlets, it was employed to formulate certain "master narratives," which came to dominate interpretation of that event.³

At the same time France witnessed a fundamental change in the relation of public and private spheres of society between 1794 and 1799. Prior to Thermidor, especially during the period of the Revolution commonly referred to as the "Terror," the concept of "public interest" had been used as the basis for legitimizing all societal activities, while the "private sphere" had been equated with counter-revolutionary and "conspiratorial" maneuverings.⁴ With the fall of the Jacobins, this definition was reversed, and all those dissenting private interests that had been suppressed in the name of the *volonté générale* came forcefully to the fore, leading to a fragmentation of the public sphere.⁵ Denouncing "public interest" as a concept merely veiling factional politics, anti-Jacobin propaganda of the post-Thermidor period had effectively discredited that concept as a possible foundation

of a post-revolutionary social order. Consequently, all political factions were forced to reconsider the issue of defining a legitimizing base for post-Thermidor society.

The erosion of what had been the unquestioned and, for the Jacobins, virtually unquestionable core of revolutionary politics had a decisive impact on artistic production, as it forced painters and intellectuals to re-evaluate the social function of the arts, thereby confronting the issue of who their audience was supposed to be. Their reconsideration of these questions found its expression in numerous writings on the function of the arts in society, and in a number of the paintings produced and exhibited during that period.⁶ What was at stake, then, was the question of "representation" in both the artistic and the political senses of that term. While during the period of the public sphere's dominance, the relation of painter to audience had (at least in theory) been resolved—since painting was supposed to address the public realm—it became evident in the post-Thermidor and Directoire years that artists could no longer take their audience for granted and had to begin by defining their relation to it. Such redefinition implied a reconsideration of painting's content as well as the development of strategies of attracting or involving the beholder.

In considering the content of their pictures, painters had to reckon with the fragmentation of the public sphere: rather than addressing an undifferentiated general audience, they had to select subjects that would appeal to specific segments of the public. Since Thermidor had made the difference between private experience and social requirements apparent, they could either choose to address a fictional public sphere and concomitantly ignore dissenting private voices, or to focus on actual private experiences in which public issues figured only in a negative sense, if at all. Either option necessitated a political as well as an artistic commitment, since the decision to address either public or private sphere implied both a specific interpretation of the Revolution and

I would like to thank Julia L. Bernard for her comments and criticism of various drafts of this article, and her help in translating what some may consider a very German form of discourse. I am equally grateful to *The Art Bulletin's* readers, whose comments constituted a challenge that forced me to rethink (and hopefully to clarify) parts of my argumentation.

¹ For the notion of a metadiscourse about the Revolution, cf. M. Ozouf, "De Thermidor à Brumaire. Le Discours de la Révolution sur elle-même," *Revue historique*, no. 493, Jan.-Mar. 1970, 31–66.

² Cf. Lajer-Burcharth, 1991, 397ff.

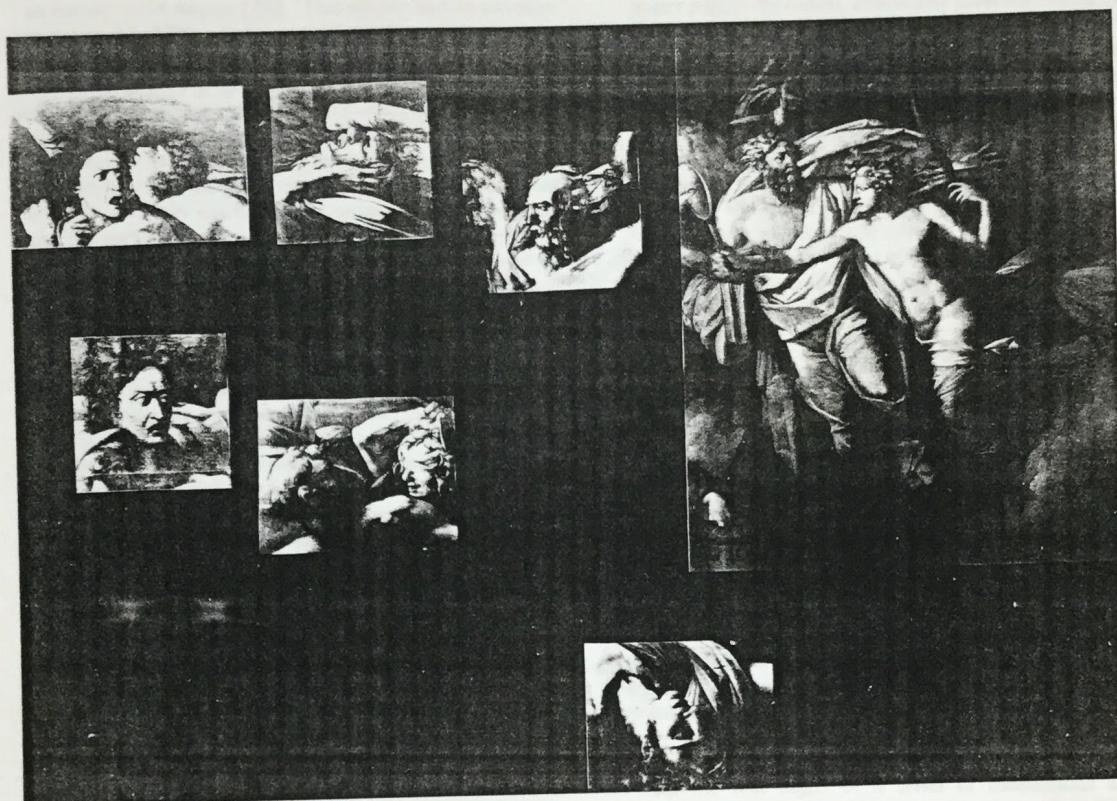
³ On the formation of such explicatory "master narratives," see Furet, 182–227. On the role of the visual arts in the formation of revolutionary political culture, see L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984.

⁴ Jürgen Habermas has described the evolution of social spheres in his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1962. For an application of that concept to art-historical concerns, see W. Busch, *Die notwendige Arabeske. Wirklichkeitsaneignung und Stilisierung in der deutschen Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1985; and Crow.

⁵ Cf. L. Hunt, D. Lansky, and P. Hanson, "The Failure of the Liberal Republic in France: The Road to Brumaire," *Journal of Modern History*, LI, Dec. 1979, 734–759. See also Bacsko, 6f.

⁶ Cf. Leith, 130f. Of particular importance in this context is the essay competition on the topic "Quelle a été et quelle peut être encore l'influence de la peinture sur les mœurs et sur le gouvernement du peuple libre," sponsored by the painting section of the Institut National.

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1 Reconstruction of the *Triumph of the French People* by the author

a particular definition of the proposed function of art within society.

Devising a strategy that would capture the attention of one's audience was equally problematic, and the period in question is consequently very rich in pictorial forms aimed at an involvement of the beholder. However, though the necessity of attracting an audience motivated the choice of pictorial means on the part of many artists during these years, Hennequin, Guérin, and David—whose post-Thermidor work is the focus of this article—went beyond merely appealing to the viewer. Their selection of their distinctive pictorial languages was intended to define an ideal public for their pictures, through either addressing the political beliefs or appealing to the concrete revolutionary experience of specific social groups.⁷

⁷ I follow Timothy J. Clark here in drawing a distinction between audience and public; Clark has written on the problem of artist and public: "I want to put back ambiguity into that relation: to stop thinking in terms of the public as an identifiable 'thing' whose needs the artist notes, satisfies or rejects. The public is a prescience or a phantasy within the work and within the process of production. It is something the artist himself invents, in his solitude—though often in spite of himself, and never quite as he would wish"; *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Princeton, 1982, 14f.

My essay therefore concentrates on distinguishing the narrative modes chosen by Hennequin, Guérin, and David, in order to show in which fashion these three painters' redefinition of their respective publics can be understood as contributing to the metadiscourse on the Revolution and to the debates concerning art's position in post-revolutionary society. To this end, I employ methods devised by theoreticians of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, drawing in particular upon concepts formulated by Hans-Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, and Wolfgang Kemp, as well as by the linguist Émile Benveniste.

Addressing a Fictional Public: Hennequin's Allegorical Solution

Hennequin's *Triumph of the French People* (Fig. 1) was painted at a moment of personal as well as political crisis, following his release from imprisonment for his involvement in an aborted *babouviste* uprising, the Camp de Grenelle affair.⁸ The psychological impact of the canvas can only be surmised, since it was cut up during the Restoration and only fragments have survived; its subject celebrated the abolition of the

⁸ I. Woloch, *Jacobin Legacy: The Democratic Movement under the Directory*, Princeton, 1970; Michel, 112.

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monarchy on 10 August 1792.⁹ This subject had a particular importance in 1799, which was a period of intensive ideological struggle in which various factions tried to present themselves as the legitimate heirs of the Revolution.¹⁰

The Directoire government, faced with a difficult military situation and continuing royalist agitation, had decided to intervene in these debates. It intended to strengthen its position by reaffirming the two revolutionary myths upon which its authority was based: the unity of the Third Estate and the anti-royalist bias of the Republic. It had therefore commissioned François Gérard and Jacques-Louis David to complete their paintings of the *Tenth of August* (Fig. 2) and of the *Oath of the Tennis Court* (Fig. 3), respectively, which both painters had conceived and abandoned years before.¹¹ While the commission to realize these already-composed images might have been prompted by the dearth of pictures convincingly affirming the republican position, in the context of the current struggle about the meaning of the Revolution, this must be understood as an attempt to appropriate its memory to the ends of one political faction.

It was at this point that Hennequin intervened.¹² Believing that only a convinced republican could adequately depict the abolition of the monarchy, he created his interpretation of the Tenth of August with the explicit intention of countering the Directoire government's scheme and reaffirming the legitimacy of Jacobin claims to the revolutionary heritage. The *livret* of the 1799 Salon described his painting thus:

The People, armed with his club and holding the scale of justice in his hand, has overthrown the Colossus of Royalty, whose fall is visible in its broken attributes. With it fell the chains of slavery and ignorance, which sapped the masterpieces of art. On these ruins of tyranny triumphant Liberty rises; with one hand she leans on the People and seems to identify with him, with the other she places a crown on the marble which should transmit to posterity this sublime period of the Revolution. Overhead the oak of Virtue spreads its immortal branches. At the feet of Liberty, Discord agitates, her half-extinguished torch no longer fed; she cries out and serpents writhe upon her head, while Calumny, implacable enemy of Merit and Equity, tears with venomous tooth the laurel of Glory and tries with her crooked hand to cover the inscription [of the commemorative monument] with a bloody veil. In the

upper part of the canvas, Philosophy parts the clouds that had hidden Truth, brought forth by Time. Her mirror in her hand, this goddess dazzles the Crimes and overwhelms them. Rage, armed with a sword and pulling her own hair, somber Despair, and Fury, throwing down a child that she has just strangled, are trying to elude the victorious splendor pursuing them. Further on is fallen Fanaticism, arming with a murderous sword the hands of Credulity, who still clings to an overturned altar. In the background and to one side appears Treason, who alone escapes the just punishment of the People, behind which she hides. She cannot endure the rays of Truth, and already she prepares to cover herself with her mask and to use her dagger.¹³

In the context of contemporary pictorial production and critical discourse, Hennequin's decision to employ an allegorical language to present the Tenth of August was hardly self-evident. "Are there any good allegorical paintings?" the critic Pierre Chaussard polemically asked in *La Décade philosophique*, voicing a skepticism about allegories that was based upon two arguments. The first was historical: Chaussard considered allegory an outmoded form belonging to the time when art had been a "hieroglyphic language" rather than an imitation of nature, so that its employment in contemporary painting signified for him a regression to art's primitive beginnings. The critic's second argument against allegory was that it complicated the appreciation of a painting's content:

When I am looking at a painting, I am already separated from the real object by a series of conventions and illusions, so that in order to enjoy it I have to collect all my attention (and this is the reason why there are so few people who are experts in painting). I am even further distanced from the object and lose it totally from my sight, if within this narrow frame a new set of assumptions is introduced which divide and tire my gaze. A painting is an

⁹ Benoît and Dijour, 322–327.

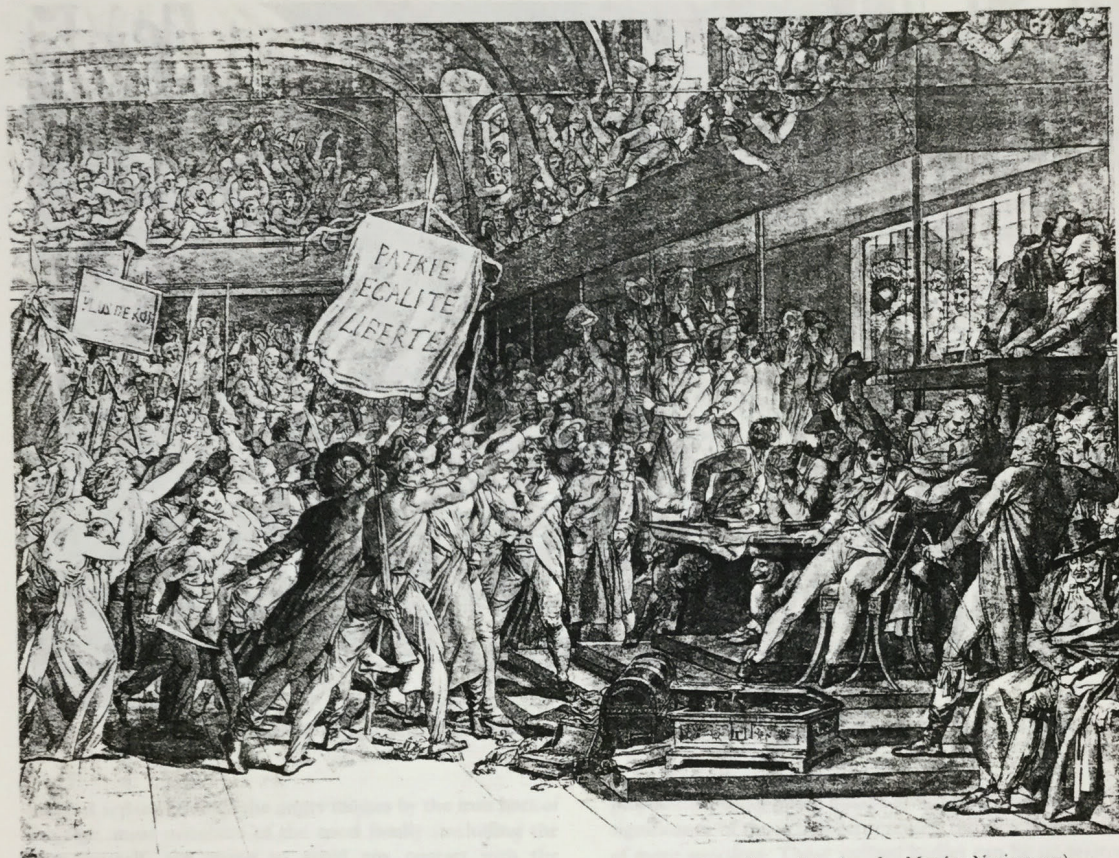
¹⁰ Cf. *La Révolution française*, nos. 826–826G; and Bordes, 1979, 199–212; as well as A.M. Benso, *Hennequin, la vie et l'oeuvre (Mémoire de Maîtrise)*, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1975.

¹¹ In addition to these commissions given to David and Gérard, the government asked Girodet to execute a painting representing the assassination of the *plénipotentiaires* in Rastadt. For Gérard, see *La Révolution française*, Pt. 3, no. 1079; M. Moulin, "François Gérard, peintre du 10 août 1792," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Apr. 1983, 197–202; and W. Olander, "French Painting and Politics in 1794: The Great Concours de l'an II," *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750–1850*, II, Athens, Ga., 1980, 19–27. For David's painting, the essential study is P. Bordes, *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume de Jacques-Louis David: Le Peintre, son milieu et son temps de 1789 à 1792*, Paris, 1983; cf. also Michel, 122–125.

¹² P.A. Hennequin, *Un Peintre sous la Révolution et le Premier Empire, mémoires écrits par lui-même, réunis et mis en ordre par Jenny Hennequin*, Paris, 1933, 194.

¹³ My translation. "Le Peuple armé de sa massue, et tenant la balance de la justice, vient de renverser le colosse de la royauté, dont la chute est exprimée par ses attributs brisés. Avec elle tombent les chaînes de l'esclavage et de l'ignorance qui sapent les chefs d'oeuvre des arts. Sur ces débris de la tyrannie s'élève la Liberté triomphante; d'une main elle s'appuie sur le Peuple, et semble s'identifier avec lui; de l'autre elle pose une couronne sur le marbre qui doit transmettre à la postérité cette époque sublime de la révolution. Au dessous le chêne de la Vertu étend ses branches immortelles. Aux pieds de la Liberté s'agit la Discorde, dont la torche à demi-éteinte ne reçoit plus d'aliment: elle pousse des cris et les serpents se replient sur sa tête, tandis que la Calomnie, implacable ennemie du Mérite et de l'Équité, déchire de sa dent vénimeuse le laurier de la Gloire, et s'efforce de sa main crochue d'entendre sur l'inscription une voile ensanglantée. Dans le haut du tableau est la Philosophie écartant les nuages qui cachaient la Vérité que le Temps amène. Cette Déesse, son miroir à la main, éblouit et terrasse les Crimes. La Rage, armé d'un glaive et s'arrachant les cheveux, le sombre Désespoir, la Fureur jetant un enfant qu'elle vient d'égorger, cherchant à se dérober à l'éclat victorieux qui les poursuit. Plus avant est le Fanatisme abbatu, armant d'un fer homicide les mains de la Crédulité, qui s'attache encore à un autel renversé. Sur le 3^e plan et à l'écart, paraît la Trahison, cette dernière échappe seule à la juste punition du Peuple, derrière lequel elle se cache; elle ne peut soutenir les rayons de la Vérité, et déjà elle s'apprete à se couvrir de son masque et à se servir de son poignard."

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2 François Gérard, *The Tenth of August*. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

illusion; an allegorical painting is an illusion within an illusion.¹⁴

In light of such strong opposition, Hennequin's use of allegory demands explanation. Far from being a mere expression of the painter's aesthetic conservatism, it must rather be seen as a political statement within the context of debates concerning the "significance" of the Revolution, for it entailed an interpretation of the event that stood in open contrast to the historicizing one presented by Gérard and endorsed by the Directoire government.

In order to understand the oppositional quality of Hennequin's choice of an allegorical language, it is necessary to

take a closer look at Gérard's *Tenth of August* (Fig. 2). In his depiction of the event, Gérard concentrated on a specific historical moment: the intervention in the National Assembly on 10 August 1792 of the people who—led by the *commissaires des sections*—demanded the deposition of Louis XVI, who had sought protection by the legislative body. The Tenth of August marked the beginning of the second phase of the Revolution, which was to bring about the deposition, incarceration, and finally the execution of Louis XVI. By 1794, when Gérard had first sketched his composition, this date had become synonymous with the nation's unanimous rebuttal of the threats that royalism and foreign armies posed to its existence.¹⁵

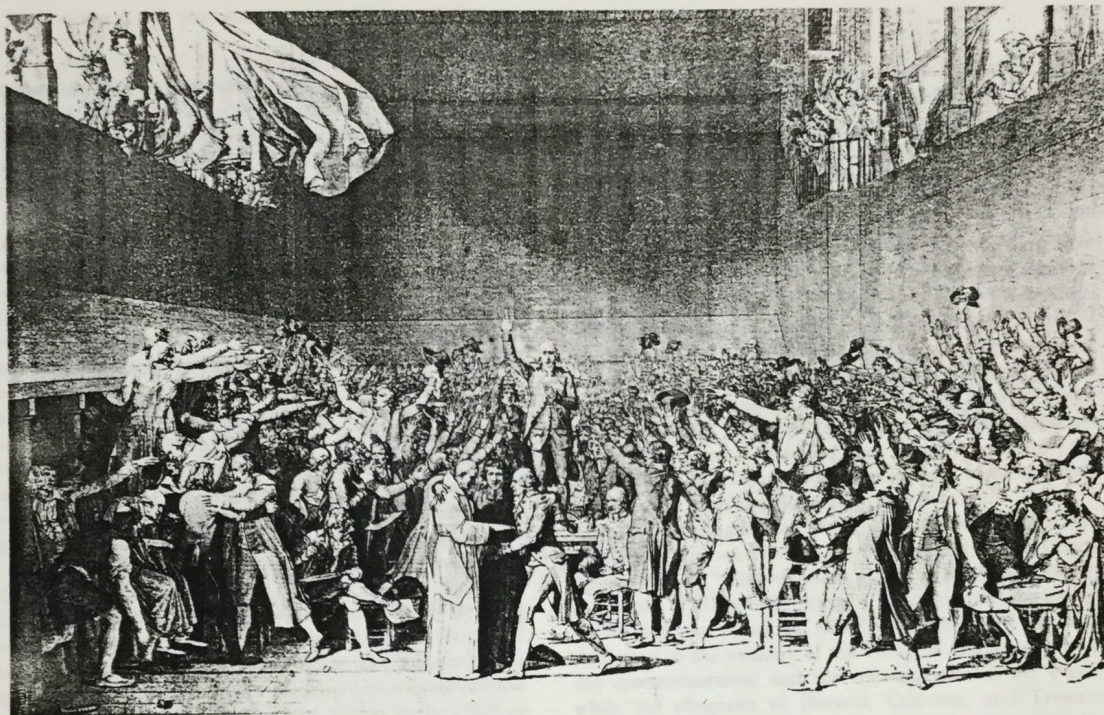
Renouncing the habitual devices of historical representation, the artist tried to give his picture the appearance of an eyewitness report. His composition is set in the Salle du Manège, the meeting hall of the National Assembly, and characterized by the confrontation of groups of revolutionaries with the royal family, which has found refuge in the *loge* of the parliamentary stenographer. Visible from the assembly

¹⁴ P. Chaussard, "Exposition des ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture, Dessins, Modèles, composées par les Artistes vivans, et exposées dans le salon du Musée national des arts, le 1^{er} Fructidor an VII de la République," *La Décade Philosophique*, 30 Fructidor, An VII, Paris, 1799, 542ff. Esp. p. 546: "Lorsque je considère un tableau, si je suis déjà séparé de l'objet par une suite de conventions et d'illusions telles qu'il me faut pour en jouir, rassembler tout mon attention (et voilà la raison pourquoi si peu de personnes se connaissent en tableaux) je m'éloigne encore plus de l'objet, je le perds entièrement de vue lorsqu'on introduit dans ce cadre étroit de nouvelles suppositions qui fatiguent et divisent mes regards. Un tableau est une illusion: un tableau allégorique est une illusion dans une illusion."

¹⁵ For the conditions in which the composition was originally conceived, see U. van de Sandt, "Institutions et concours," in Bordes and Michel, 137–165.

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ON THE RELATION BETWEEN ART, AUDIENCES, AND SOCIAL SPHERES IN POST-THERMIDOR FRANCE 25



3 Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Tennis Court*. Versailles, Musée du Château de Versailles (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

hall but separated from the angry masses by the iron bars of the *loge*, most members of the royal family (including the king himself) are trying to avoid any contact with the revolutionaries, while Marie-Antoinette stares at them with an expression of hatred and disgust.

With historical accuracy, Gérard shows that the deputies have lost all initiative to the people: their reactions to the popular intervention range from the Girondins' despair to the overt hostility of the Royalists. Without resorting to traditional allegorical vocabulary in his *Tenth of August*, Gérard had to depict the confrontation in a seemingly historiographic presentational mode and at the same time suggest its prehistory and consequences. The artist solved this problem by uniting different strategies. Following David's recent example (Fig. 3), he combined documentary precision with a stylization of the protagonists' bodies, dramatically accentuating their facial expressions and gestures and idealizing their postures by basing them on models derived from recent artistic production.¹⁶

Both strategies served the same purpose: Gérard em-

ployed his protagonists' bodies in order to suggest that the significance of the action represented transcended the level of mere anecdote. These stylized bodies can be understood as expressing four qualities inherent in revolutionary practice. First, its temporality: such a focus upon bodily expression demonstrated that the Revolution was entirely the consequence of human action. Second, its universality: by integrating all the figures into tightly linked groups, the artist demonstrated that no one—including its enemies—could resist the force of the Revolution. Third, its transferring of authority: the figural groups could be seen as embodying the *volonté générale* and as enacting the shift of power from the monarch and parliamentary representation onto the People itself. Fourth, its historical significance: by basing his composition and the postures of his figures upon pre-revolutionary images, such as David's *Brutus* and *Horatii*, and upon revolutionary representations such as the *Oath of the Tennis Court*, Gérard placed the Tenth of August within a historical continuity extending beyond the moment of actual popular intervention.

The significance of this intervention is further emphasized by Gérard's inclusion of a female figure wearing a Phrygian bonnet, who might be understood as representing either France or Liberty, but who nevertheless is relegated to a secondary position amidst the revolutionaries. The reduction of this allegory's importance reflects Gérard's overall tendency to renounce metaphorical forms in the interest of the greater veracity of his representation. In keeping with

¹⁶ These were drawn for the most part from the oeuvre of David. In effect Gérard's *Tenth of August* can be seen as a pastiche of Davidian motifs: the overall conception—especially in its combination of contemporary figures and stylized poses—is related to that of the *Oath of the Tennis Court*, while some figures are taken almost literally out of David's pictures. The woman on the left is a reversed rendering of Brutus's wife and the central group pointing toward the royal family mixes elements of the *Horatii* with motifs from the *Oath of the Tennis Court*.

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this aim, the artist relied exclusively upon metonymic references as a means to evoke the prehistory of the popular intervention and its consequences. For example, the wounded man who is carried in on the left is to be understood as a victim of fighting between the People and the Swiss Guards at the Tuileries, which had preceded the storming of the National Assembly, thus hinting at the prehistory of the event. The chests containing jewelry, together with the royal insignia, which are placed in front of the table of the president and secretaries of the Assembly, similarly refer to the invasion of the Tuileries. However, the chests have yet another significance: as Régis Michel has observed, they can be understood as a reference to royal corruption and consequently to the necessity of ousting the monarch and his family, whose subsequent incarceration is already anticipated by the iron bars of the *loge du logographe*.¹⁷ By introducing these metonymic references into his picture, Gérard was able to remind the viewer of the events preceding the intervention in the National Assembly and their consequences.

Despite their ingenuity as substitutes for a traditional allegorical language, however, Gérard's devices ultimately failed to overcome the effect of his painstakingly detailed mode of presentation, which characterized the Tenth of August as an irrevocably past event. For, as Chaussard quite accurately remarked, Gérard's presentation neutralized the political significance of the Tenth of August in the effort to invest his picture with the semblance of historical authenticity: "... if you paint the event of the Tenth of August, it will be nothing but the siege of a palace..."¹⁸ (italics added).

It was precisely with this historicizing perspective on the Tenth of August that Hennequin took issue. For no matter how radical the connotations of Gérard's composition may initially have been, after Thermidor it lent itself to an interpretation that defined the Revolution as being finished—having completed a course that ran from the Tennis Court Oath to the Tenth of August, or from the constitution of the first National Assembly to the establishment of the Republic. In this view, the Tenth of August constituted a closure of the revolutionary process. Yet such an interpretation was unacceptable to Hennequin: for him the Tenth of August represented the promise of a permanent revolution, an idea that he believed had gained a particular topicality after Thermidor.

The painter's point of view was that of a politically marginalized group of Jacobin partisans. Persecuted by the government and weakened by the distancing of former supporters, the remaining activists had great difficulties in defining a policy adequate to the changed political climate. Therefore their agitation was for the most part confined to a

repetition of concepts devised long before Thermidor. In its attempt to assert the validity of Jacobin ideals that had lost both their actual basis in society and the ideological hegemony they could claim before the fall of Robespierre, Hennequin's painting was characteristic of post-Thermidor Jacobin politics and indicative of the difficulties encountered therein.

The use of allegory in Hennequin's *Triumph of the French People* was central to the project of reaffirming Jacobin concepts under conditions that forbade their simple restitution. Allegory enabled the painter to ignore the strictures of a linear narrative history (with beginning, middle, and end), and to conceive his painting instead as being simultaneously a depiction, a commemoration, and an actualization of the Tenth of August. In contrast to Gérard, who had singled out a specific historical moment that represented both the Revolution and its conclusion, Hennequin could combine three distinct stages of the event in one painting.

Instead of being located at a specific moment in time, the Revolution appeared thus in the a-temporality of a mythical "eternal return." The victorious giant¹⁹ of the People represented the actual overthrowing of the monarchy; the oak of Virtue and the figure of Liberty, who crowned an altar dedicated to the memory of the Tenth of August, stood for the commemoration and the consequences of the event, while the allegories of Discord, Calumny, and Treason personified the threats that royalism continued to pose to the Republic. Discord (waving her half-extinguished torch), Treason (masking herself and preparing her dagger), and Calumny (attempting to cover the commemorative monument with a bloody veil and making an unequivocal allusion to counter-revolutionary propagandists who had frequently portrayed the Jacobins as a gang of bloodthirsty crooks),²⁰ all emphasized that even in 1799 the achievements of the Revolution were endangered by royalist forces.

Hennequin's presentation of the Tenth of August as a confrontation between a unified people and the forces of royalism conforms to mechanisms that Mona Ozouf has described as typical for revolutionary propaganda's coping with an adverse political situation: namely, it transforms actual experience (in Ozouf's terminology, *sens vécu*) into desired interpretation (*sens voulu*) by a system of repetition and overdetermination.²¹ In the context of revolutionary propaganda, both strategies were intended to master anxieties generated by unpredicted and otherwise inexplicable

¹⁷ Michel, 124.

¹⁸ Chaussard (as in n. 14), 546: "Je m'explique: en effet, peignez l'événement du 10 Août; ce n'est plus qu'une siège d'un palais." Departing from his habitual anti-allegorical rigorism, Chaussard praised Hennequin's solution (which he defined as "l'allégorie pure combinée avec l'imitation de la Nature") as being better suited to a representation of the Tenth of August than Gérard's picture: "... mais peignez, comme Hennequin l'a fait, la Révolution du 10 Août: avec peu de figures allégoriques, vous exprimez beaucoup, je saisis l'influence des siècles sur cet événement, et celle de cet événement sur les siècles"; *ibid.*, 546.

¹⁹ The choice of Hercules as the central figure should be understood as a political statement: see L. Hunt, "Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution," *Representations*, II, Spring 1983, 95–117; also Herding and Reichardt, 143–149.

²⁰ Herding and Reichardt, 132f.

²¹ See Ozouf, 342–370, in particular p. 343f. on the notion of repetition in revolutionary festivals: "Or, si la fête répète, ce n'est nullement au sens d'une répétition érudite, mais bien plutôt au sens que Freud a donné à la répétition: effort aveugle pour maîtriser le choc perturbateur, sans que celui-ci, précisément, puisse être situé, daté, arraché du présent invivable et enfin gouverné. C'est l'homme incapable de se faire l'historien de sa vie qui s'engluie dans la répétition, cette cérémonie où piétine une affectivité serve. La fête répétitive, tout comme la névrose, manifeste beaucoup plus qu'une pédagogie temporelle, une stratégie de l'archaïsme contre l'angoisse."

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4 Philippe-Auguste Hennequin, *Triumph of the French People*, fragment with Truth and Philosophy. Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

events by providing a closed framework of explanations within which every new development could be understood as a variation upon an already established pattern.²²

Hennequin's recourse to allegory in his depiction of the triumph of the French People can be understood as such an attempt to transform *sens vécu* into *sens voulu*. Allegory helped to simplify the complicated political situation via its reduction to a limited number of basic elements, while the scheme of the "battle of opposites" adopted for their presentation provided the painter with a compositional solution that allowed the distribution of conflicting forces on his canvas according to a Manichean logic of good and evil. He was in this fashion able to skirt the difficult issue of what social group in reality corresponded to the victorious giant in the center of the *Triumph*. By abstracting from actual circumstances and by replacing the idea of an ongoing historical dynamic with the reiteration of a set of basic beliefs, Hennequin's employment of allegorical language enabled him to block out any factor that would have reminded his viewers of the futility of resuscitating Jacobin concepts in post-Thermidor France.

Repetition and overdetermination—the characteristics sin-



5 Philippe-Auguste Hennequin, *Triumph of the French People*, fragments with heads of counter-revolutionaries. Angers, Musée des Beaux-Arts, and Le Mans, Musée des Beaux-Arts (photos: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

gled out by Ozouf—structure Hennequin's overall presentation of the Tenth of August as well as its individual elements. The iconography of his picture is nothing but a simple variation of the basic opposition between good and evil, and its figures were apparently generated by multiplying the original set of oppositions. Proceeding in this fashion allowed Hennequin to give his presentation greater consistency: the various aspects of the confrontation were treated as if each constituted individual issues rather than facets of the conflict; consequently, every one of them was personified by a different allegorical figure. On the whole, however, the complexity of this iconography remained relatively limited, and the picture seemed less determined by the action of a protagonist than generated from within by its own basic logic.

Even though Hennequin insisted upon the importance of the People to the success of the Revolution by making Hercules the central figure of his composition, the overthrow of the monarchy was not so much presented as the result of revolutionary action as it was given the higher necessity of an inevitable natural phenomenon. This understanding of the event was emphasized by the intervention of Time, Truth, and Philosophy (Figs. 4–5)—who, appearing on the right of the painting, drove the anti-revolutionary forces away without any support from the Hercules representing the People. The temporal logic of the picture further underscored this interpretation: by the time that the beholder arrived, the victory had already been won and even the threat posed by Calumny, Discord, and Treason would be overcome by the forces of Time, Truth, and Philosophy alone. Perhaps the landscape background, of which no traces have remained,²³ might have elaborated this naturalizing interpretation of the Revolution, since we know from Hennequin's prints that he

²² See also H.-U. Gumbrecht, *Funktionen parlamentarischer Rhetorik in der französischen Revolution. Vorstudien zur Entwicklung einer historischen Textpragmatik*, Munich, 1978, 93–125.

²³ Cf. "Beaux Arts, Musée central des arts," *Mercure de France*, 1799, *Collection Desloynes*, xxi, no. 563, 263: "Le paysage du fonds est charmant, mais il n'y a point d'air dans l'espace: c'est un autre tableau qui détaché du grand pourrait se trouver sur le premier plan."

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customarily employed landscape elements to support his pictures' central messages.²⁴

Like his portrayal of the revolutionary forces, Hennequin's characterization of the Revolution's opponents remained on a generalized level (Fig. 5). Avoiding allusions to historical figures, the painter depicted them by employing the attributes that *Iconologies* in the Ripa tradition had reserved for the vices, and further emphasized their destructive character by giving them the facial expressions that since the time of Le Brun's *Conférence sur l'expression des passions* had been used to depict the violent passions.²⁵ This form of characterization was in keeping with the "logic of conspiracy" governing Jacobin political thought, which was, generally speaking, not interested in individualizing its opponents, but stylized them into embodiments of an ungraspable absolute Evil in order to magnify the danger that they represented.²⁶

The concept of the conspiracy offered a negative and distorted image of what the Jacobins wished the Revolution to be: an unlimited and unlimitable power. By creating an opponent that was as terrifying and as omnipresent as they themselves hoped to appear, the revolutionaries had forged a justification for the continued use of an all-encompassing power in defending the Revolution against the onslaughts of their horrible enemy. Taken together, Revolution and Conspiracy thus constituted the two essential components of what could be called a democratic fiction of power; it was the necessary corollary of an ideology that on the one hand proclaimed that absolute power had been abolished, while on the other aimed at justifying its continuing existence in a post-absolutist state.

This contradictory attitude resulted from the fact that the revolutionaries used the term "power" exclusively to stigmatize their opponents' practices, while they saw their own policy as the realization of the *volonté générale* and thus not as a form of power. While this strategy simplified matters on the ideological level, since it allowed the revolutionaries to claim that power had been abolished with the overthrowing of the monarchy, it complicated definition of the actual power relations in post-revolutionary political practice.

Unlike previous conceptions of authority, the idea of a *volonté générale* defied representation: whereas before the Revolution power had been somatically structured and could thus be represented by depicting the "sacred body" of the king (who literally embodied the State), revolutionary ideology forbade any mediation of the *volonté générale*. In its view, revolutionary politics were not the realization of particular interests, but rather the expression of a unanimous consent, thus forcing everybody to agree to the dictates of the *volonté générale* while regarding all dissenting voices as "other" and as inimical to the will of the People.

In practice, this led to a difference between ideological postulates and actual politics, for anyone who wanted to pursue his particular interests had to present them as an expression of the *volonté générale*; being in power consequently meant being able to define the *volonté générale*. The paradox of the new concept of authority thus consisted in the fact that it made power invisible, since it enabled those who defined the *volonté générale* to mask their particular interests as the will of the People, while at the same time they extended their power over the whole of society, because the *volonté générale* by definition presupposed universal consent.

The definition of revolutionary power constituted a major dilemma for artists: how could they depict a form of authority that was by definition unrepresentable? In his *Oath of the Tennis Court* (Fig. 3), David had found a pictorial form that allowed him to demonstrate the coincidence of individual and general interests. By arranging the deputies in the form of an ornament consisting of individual bodies, he had been able to suggest that the Revolution had constituted a supra-individual body: namely, that of society, which was to replace the "sacred body" of the king in which authority had been centered before, and which was presented as the new collective agent of power. Through the perspectival organization of his composition, David underscored that the viewer had to include him or herself in this collectivity—thus demonstrating that the *volonté générale* manifesting itself within the picture extended beyond its frame to encompass the whole of society.²⁷ By concentrating on the very moment in which the concept of the *volonté générale* had ceased to be a mere theoretical construct and had become an almost corporeal reality, and by opening his picture to include its viewers, David had solved the problem posed by the unrepresentability of the *volonté générale*.

That this solution was limited to a specific moment in the history of the Revolution becomes evident when we compare it with the one Gérard had found for his presentation of the *Tenth of August* (Fig. 2). In revolutionary thought, this event constituted a manifestation of the *volonté générale* comparable to the Tennis Court Oath. As has been seen, Gérard had accentuated this parallel by borrowing configurations from David's picture. However, while his stylization of bodies formed an ornament like those in David's *Oath of the Tennis Court*, Gérard's perspectival organization and relief composition served to exclude the viewer, thereby turning the picture into the representation of an event that had lost its immediate power to influence contemporary society.

For Hennequin, the issue was even more complicated. Wishing to affirm the validity of the concept of the *volonté générale* at a point in time when its ideological function as a mask for particular political interests had become evident, Hennequin adopted what was almost an authoritarian attitude toward his viewers. The set of iconographical oppositions drawn from the Jacobin "logic of conspiracy" he employed, as well as the paratactic order in which he

²⁴ For example, as in the print *La Régénération de la France par la Constitution*, produced in 1793.

²⁵ Philippe Bordes has criticized the attempt of Ms. Benso to interpret the allegorical figures as personifications of the protagonists of 10 August 1792. See Bordes, 1979, 211.

²⁶ Cf. Furet, 67f; for the tradition of the *expression des passions*, see T. Kirchner, *L'Expression des Passions: Ausdruck als Darstellungsproblem in der französischen Kunst des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Mainz, 1991.

²⁷ For a discussion of the perspectival organization of David's picture, see W. Kemp, "Das Revolutionstheater des Jacques-Louis David. Eine neue Interpretation des Schwurs im Ballhaus," *Marburger Jahrbuch*, XXI, 1986, 165–184.

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arranged them, left no doubt as to the side in the confrontation between the two absolute principles of Good and Evil with which he wanted his beholder to identify.²⁸

The painter cast the viewer in the role of a witness, not that of a participant in the action. Iconographic typology and composition form a simple closed structure which assigns the audience a passive role. The pictorial structure of the *Triumph* presupposed the audience's consent and therefore did not have to leave blanks necessitating an interpretation, but rather simply required the beholders to ratify the pro-revolutionary message it presented as their own position.²⁹ This authoritarian conception of the audience's role paralleled the picture's basic political content: for, in spite of the changed political circumstances or perhaps even because of them, Hennequin's painting advocated a regression to the moment of the Republic's foundation as the only way to overcome the dichotomy between individual and general interests apparent after Thermidor.

Wishing to re-establish the fictitious unity of the *volonté générale*, Hennequin's political fantasy thus took a regressive turn which was typical of the incapability of many Jacobins to adapt to a changed political situation in Directoire France. Thus such obsession with the moment of the foundation of the Republic, and the stubborn repetition of concepts stemming from the Jacobin "logic of conspiracy," were attempts to escape a historical reality in which revolutionary politics were on the verge of being marginalized. In this context, the central characteristics of the *Triumph*—the depiction of the abolition of the monarchy in the form of a mythical "eternal return," the use of an allegorical language to mask historical reality, and the almost hysterical, emphatic mode in which the event was restaged—have to be seen as the expression of a desperate attempt to make the viewer believe in the validity of Jacobin concepts.

Given the painter's strong desire to pre-structure his viewers' reactions, it might seem ironic that the *Triumph* failed to stir up the pro-Jacobin sentiments in contemporary

criticism that it was intended to provoke. A thorough examination of the critical response to Hennequin's painting leads to the conclusion that critics were well aware of the painting's political message but consciously sought to direct their readers' attention away from it. In their discussion of the picture, writers resorted to strategies of avoidance and disavowal, which were typical of the manner in which post-Thermidor political discourse dealt with the memory of the Revolution.

In a decidedly de-politicizing move, some critics avoided discussing the painting's subject altogether in order to concentrate solely upon the evaluation of Hennequin's artistic abilities,³⁰ while others mentioned it but presented it in such a generalized fashion that the political affiliations of its author remained unclear to the reader.³¹ Other critics stressed Hennequin's ability to give a horrible subject an aesthetically satisfying form, but they referred to the "horrible" in such an unspecific manner that Hennequin's painting did not appear as a statement about the Revolution, but rather as a contribution to a discussion of the representability of the ugly, which had preoccupied eighteenth-century aesthetic debate.³²

Perhaps the commentary most pertinent to the issues discussed here was an article published by the *Bulletin de l'Europe* in which an anonymous reviewer evaluated different pictorial languages according to their ability to attract the beholder's interest. In this author's opinion, an artwork's appeal to viewers would only be successful if it gave them the opportunity to empathize. In order to achieve such empathy, a painter would have to limit himself to subjects accessible to individual experience: "Everything that is in the realm of humanity belongs to us, all that is beyond it seems strange to us."³³ Consequently the critic urged painters to eschew self-referential pictorial forms—such as allegory—since these would have reminded the viewer of the difference between an event and its representation, thus rendering empathy impossible.

The interpretation of the *Bulletin de l'Europe's* critic was, in

²⁸ Cf. A. Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1964, 304–305. In contrast to Fletcher, P. de Man interprets allegory as a form that leaves the reader a greater liberty, since it signals its own rhetoricity. Cf. P. de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight, Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, Minneapolis, 2nd ed., 1983, 187–228.

²⁹ In its relation to the beholder, Hennequin's painting could be compared to the structure that Wolfgang Iser has described as typical of the "Thesenroman" (Iser, 294), "Im Thesenroman als Paradigma didaktischer und propagandistischer Literatur . . . ist die Anschließbarkeit der Textschemata in hohem Maße geregelt. Dadurch verringert sich der Leerstellenbetrag und folglich auch die von solchen Beträgen ausgelöste Vorstellungstätigkeit des Lesers. Denn der Sachverhalt, den ein solcher Roman zu vermitteln trachtet, ist dieser Vermittlung weitgehend vorgegeben und muß daher als imaginäres Objekt kaum noch konstituiert werden." This is the reason why the "Thesenroman" is often perceived as boring. ". . . weil er dem Leser nur noch den Spielraum gewährt, der nötig ist, um ihm die Illusion zu geben, er habe dem vom Text geregelten Sachverhalt aus eigener Einsicht die ohnehin erwartete Zustimmung gegeben" (p. 300). For a discussion of the development of the beholder's role in French 18th-century painting, see M. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley, 1980.

³⁰ Cf. "Examen de cette exposition," *Journal des Arts*, 1799, *Collection Deloynes*, XXI, no. 567, 239: "Cet ouvrage est le plus considérable de ceux qu'on a exposé cette année. Nous ne ferons pas l'analyse du sujet, nous

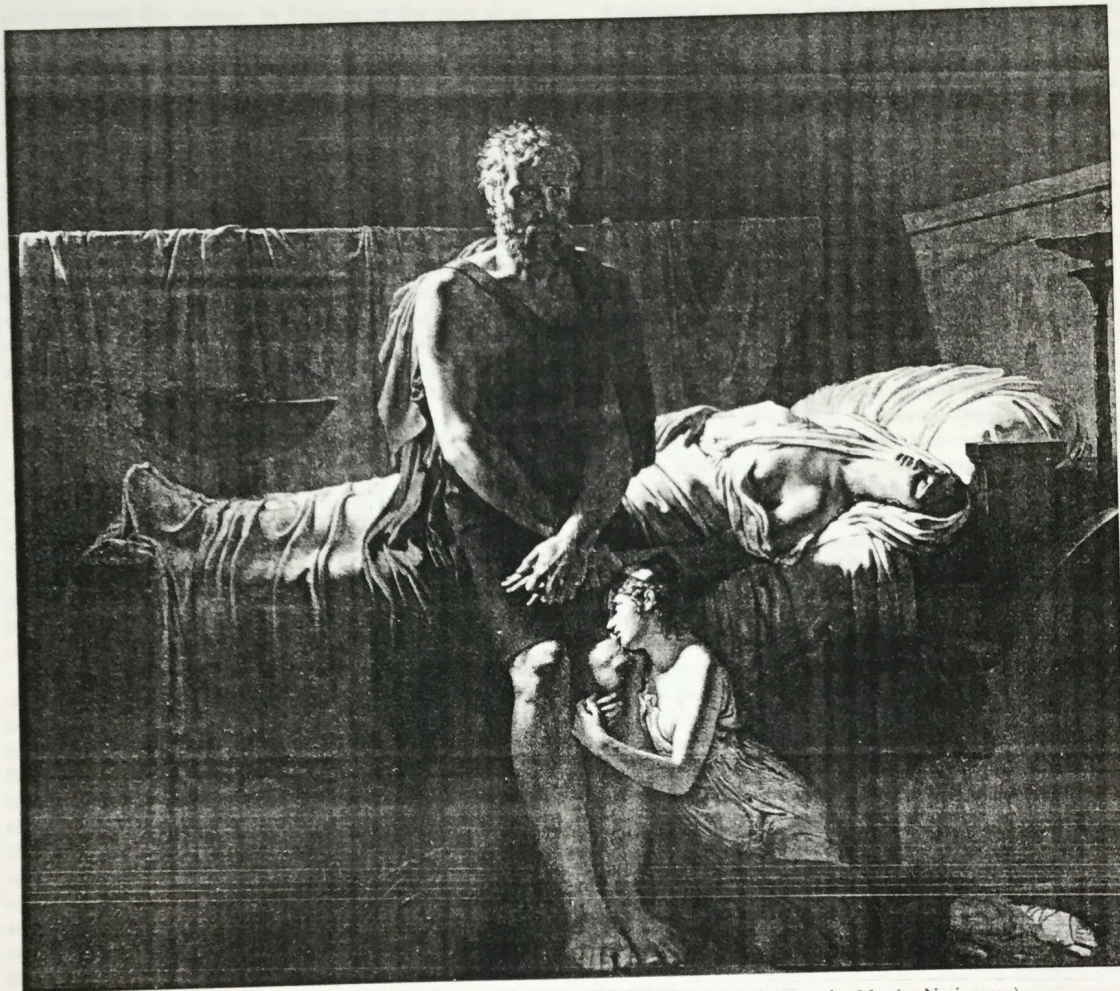
renvoions nos lecteurs au livret du Salon; nous croions qu'il est plus utile pour le bien de l'art d'analyser le talent qui puisera peut-être dans nos réflexions des observations fondées et des motifs d'encouragement. . . ."

³¹ Cf. "Beaux-Arts, Musée Central des Arts," *Mercur de France*, 1799, *Collection Deloynes*, XXI, no. 565, 262: "C'est un poème et un poème riche en idées. Le trône est brisé et le colosse de la royauté est étendu, sans vie sur ses débris. Le peuple sous la figure d'un jeune hercule foule aux pieds de ce cadavre. Près de lui, s'élève la Liberté."

³² A typical example of this strategy is the anonymous review in the *Journal d'Indications*, 1799, *Collection Deloynes*, XXI, no. 579, 363f.: "Ce tableau au premier aspect a quelque chose d'effrayant; il offre à l'oeil du spectateur épouventé des cadavres, des têtes hideuses, des êtres furieux, ensanglantés, culbutés presque tous sans jambes, amorcés d'une manière horrible, cependant il regne un certain ordre dans plusieurs parties du tableau qui dédommage de ce fracas."

³³ The anonymous reviewer compares both the subject and the pictorial language of Hennequin's painting to that of Guérin's *Marcus Sextus*; cf. "Observations sur le tableau de Marcus Sextus," *Bulletin de l'Europe*, 1799, *Collection Deloynes*, XXI, no. 575, 333f.: "Il est aisé de se rendre compte de la différence des sensations qu'on éprouve en voyant deux tableaux si différens [sic]. L'âme se recueille d'avantage à l'aspect du malheur qu'à l'aspect du triomphe; et les affections particulières, les larmes d'une fille sont plus fortes que la massue d'Hercule. Tout ce qui est du ressort de l'humanité nous appartient, tout ce qui est audessus, nous semble étrange."

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6 Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *The Return of Marcus Sextus*. Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

other words, diametrically opposed to Hennequin's project. While the painter had hoped to demonstrate the validity of Jacobin concepts through his use of generalizing forms such as allegory, the reviewer demanded that such abstract concepts should be replaced by narratives drawn from the private realm. It is therefore not surprising that he should prefer Guérin's *Marcus Sextus* to Hennequin's *Triumph*.

Exploiting the Beholder's Recollections: Guérin's Narrative Strategy

Guérin's *Return of Marcus Sextus* (Fig. 6) differed from Hennequin's *Triumph* in the conception of a public that it presupposed. If the former painting's narrative mode is compared with that of Hennequin's picture, it becomes clear that Guérin's approach constituted a decisive break with the tradition of history painting. Guérin had in fact invented the

character of Marcus Sextus, describing him in the *Salon livret* as a victim of Sulla's proscriptions who upon his return from exile found his wife dead and his daughter in despair. The public immediately understood him as the embodiment of the experience of the *émigrés* returning to France. In fact, ever since T.G. de Lally-Tolendal's *Défense des émigrés* of 1797, anti-revolutionary propaganda had been preparing the Salon audience for such an analogy.³⁴

As has been shown, when faced with the incompatibility of private experience and the needs of society, Hennequin had given an allegorical interpretation of the "public" aspect of history, concomitantly ignoring its private side. Guérin in

³⁴ T.G. de Lally-Tolendal, *Défense des émigrés français adressée au peuple français*, Paris, An V (1797).

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effect reversed this relation, by focusing on the story of an individual whom he offered his audience as a "screen" onto which their collective experience could be projected. This identification was achieved through choosing a nuclear family as the subject, as well as by employing a lifesize protagonist facing the beholder.

Still more important to inducing such identification was the choice of a narrative mode that stimulated the beholder's active participation. In contrast to Hennequin's picture, Guérin's *Marcus Sextus* does not give its viewers the whole story; instead, it offers only fragmentary indications of a narrative, thereby leaving blanks to be filled in by the viewer's imagination.³⁵ In Guérin's picture, the beholder is confronted with the decisive segment of an incomplete linear narrative: the moment between the return of Marcus Sextus and his reaction to the misery that had afflicted his family in his absence.

While Hennequin had set his *Triumph* in the a-temporality of a mythical "eternal return," Guérin strove to efface the difference between the time of the story and that of its narration in order to give the impression that the return of Marcus Sextus was happening in present tense. To heighten the tension of the scene, Guérin suspended all action in his painting; yet in spite of the passivity of the protagonist, the picture has a specific narrative structure that instead appears in a displaced and reified form.

Consideration of the figure of Marcus Sextus makes this displacement of the narrative apparent: for although his bodily posture addresses the beholder, his gaze avoids meeting that beholder's eyes. The empty stare of Marcus Sextus constitutes a blank—a refusal to complete the narrative, or to "make sense"—which serves to direct the beholder's attention away from the figure of the protagonist onto the objects contained within the painting. With its monumental background wall, Guérin blocks spatial recession and creates a narrow, relief-like stage. Developing the narrative as a coherent planar pattern of objects rather than as the action of figures in space, he treats even Marcus Sextus and his family with no more emphasis than objects. In this fashion, Guérin reverses the role of protagonist and beholder: while the viewer of Hennequin's *Triumph* had been a mere witness of an action unfolding without his or her participation, the passivity of Marcus Sextus requires the audience's active intervention in supplying those elements of the narrative withheld by the image.³⁶

Employing the terms introduced by the French linguist Émile Benveniste to designate the different literary forms that can be used in addressing an audience, I would characterize Hennequin's narrative mode as a *récit* since it tends to efface the presence of the audience. It can thereby be distinguished from Guérin's mode, which rather forms a *discours* since it insistently evokes the presence of an audience in front of the canvas.³⁷ David's *Marat*, for example, had provided an important pictorial precedent for the *Marcus Sextus*, since David also structured his painting as a *discours* and forced the beholder to understand the murder of Marat by deciphering the relations of the objects within the picture—thereby supplying the narrative that the image itself withheld.

Such displacement of the narrative from the action of the figures onto the relationship of the objects within the picture granted the beholder greater freedom in reconstituting the narrative presented by the image. However, the seeming openness of the narrative is illusionary, since the blanks that Guérin left in developing the story of Marcus Sextus already suggest the way in which the beholder is supposed to fill them in. As Wolfgang Iser has shown in his analysis of the act of reading, a blank does not constitute a simple absence, but instead functions within a play between determined and undetermined elements of a text, directing and prestructuring the reader's reconstruction of its narrative.

Concealing the existence of a narrator, this play of predetermined elements and blanks serves an important ideological function. Since it forces readers to draw upon their experience to complete the narrative, it leads them to validate the preformulated text via this experience, thereby giving it the semblance of authenticity and veracity. Thus Guérin's painting is characterized by a system of blanks and predetermined elements comparable to that described by Iser: in order to guarantee that the beholders' glances would succeed in grasping the painting's message regardless of where their inquiry began, the painter structured his image using a set of directional indicators conceived to lead viewers to draw only the desired conclusions. Serving to focus the viewer's attention, in this painting these indicators all frame the protagonist in such a fashion that he seems trapped in an interlocking system of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines.

Structuring his picture using this system allowed Guérin to detach the narrative from bodily action, thereby presenting

³⁵ The concept of the "blank" is a central notion of reception aesthetics. See R. Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, Tübingen, 1960. For an application to painting, see W. Kemp, "Death at Work: On Constitutive Blanks in 19th Century Painting," *Representations*, x, 1985, 102–123.

³⁶ In this respect, Guérin's pictorial strategy could be compared to the mechanism that Iser has described as typical for the "Fortsetzungsroman," which employs blanks, parallel narratives, and artificially limited points of view in order to stimulate the reader's imagination. "Daraus ergibt sich dann ein ganzes Geflecht möglicher Verbindungen, deren Reiz darin besteht, daß nun der Leser die unausformulierten Anschlüsse selbst herzustellen beginnt. Angesichts des temporären Informationsentzuges wird sich die Suggestionenwirkung selbst von Details steigern, die wiederum die Vorstellung von möglichen Lösungen

mobilisieren. Solche Leerstellen bewirken dann, daß der Leser die Lebendigkeit der erzählten Geschichte nahezu selbst produziert; er beginnt, mit den Figuren zu leben und steht mit ihnen die Ereignisse durch, von denen sie betroffen sind" (p. 297).

³⁷ E. Benveniste, "Les Relations de temps dans le verbe français," *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Paris, 1966, 237–250, in particular p. 241f. Cf. also S.R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. S.R. Suleiman and I. Crosman, Princeton, 1980, 3–45. For an application of Benveniste's terminology to painting, see L. Marin, "Toward a Theory of Reading in the Visual Arts: Poussin's *The Arcadian Shepherds*," in Suleiman and Crosman, 293–324.

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his protagonist not as the self-determining hero of the *exemplum virtutis* (ready to sacrifice his private interests for the public benefit), but rather as the victim of a policy executed in the name of public interest.³⁸ In traditional history painting, power had taken a definite form: it was represented as a force in the possession of the protagonist which gave him the capacity to intervene, and thus it had positive connotations. A product of the reappraisal of the private sphere, Guérin's picture thus reversed the value system that had previously governed history painting, for it showed history as a power beyond the grasp of the passively suffering individual. By concentrating attention on the hero-as-victim, Guérin defined power in a negative fashion—as something that could only be gauged by its effects.

Power was the big absence in the *Marcus Sextus*, a blank that had to be filled in by the beholder's imagination. The fact that power could therefore only be depicted in an indirect fashion was another consequence of the shift, described above, from the traditional somatic model of representing power to a modern conception of authority. And it was in its conception of authority that Guérin's picture differed decisively from its pictorial models, David's *Brutus* and his *Marat*.³⁹ Despite the fact that the story of Brutus had been set in the private sphere, David had not questioned his protagonist's ability to act, although he may have expressed doubts about the moral implications of Brutus's decision. In the *Marat*, the hero had been presented as a victim in order to provoke political action, not sentimental empathy as here.

Guérin's redefinition of the figure of the hero implied a concomitant change in the conceptualization of societal morality. Since post-revolutionary society relied upon mechanisms of social control for its functioning, there was no need for the exemplary sacrifice of the self-determined hero of the *exemplum virtutis*. Individual action in this context was only conceivable as an act of resistance to society, as private disobedience. The figure of Marcus Sextus appeared at a moment when control over society was at issue, and his passive resistance seemed justified to those who saw the existing societal system as a perverted and corrupt one. Yet his appearance also signified that art could no longer claim to serve society as a whole, through giving it exemplary hero figures, but would only serve to satisfy the purposes of particular factions in their struggle for hegemony within society. Marcus Sextus had no moral lesson to teach, but since his example prompted the beholder's compassion through opposing private memory to official historiography,

it could be used to subvert the current interpretation of the Revolution as a universal victory.

In the Salon exhibition, Guérin's picture was hung across from Hennequin's *Triumph of the French People*, and anti-Jacobin critics immediately hailed the former as the artistic as well as political opposite of the latter.⁴⁰ The actual target of Guérin's attack, however, was David. By employing the pictorial strategies used in the *Marat* and the *Brutus*, which had been intended or at least come to be understood as pro-revolutionary interventions, and in staging his Salon appearance like an eighteenth-century "surprise invader" who deliberately sent his picture to the exhibition late in order to ensure it maximum public attention, Guérin aimed at reversing David's conquest of the public sphere.⁴¹

To this end, Guérin exploited the memory of those who saw themselves as victims rather than beneficiaries of the Revolution, thereby countering the current historical explanations of the event and thus shaping a collective basis for his picture's reception. The existence of this anti-revolutionary memory was a precondition for Guérin's use of a fragmentary narrative in his presentation of Marcus Sextus, since it supplied the text that the image withheld, thereby enabling the painter to dispense with the traditional narrative structure with beginning, middle, and end.

Generally speaking, texts or pictures functioning by means of blanks are always dependent upon the existence of such an extraneous guarantee for their operation: they remain tied to a frame of reference constituted by collectively shared experiences and expectations. Since the memory of the Revolution provided such a framework, an appeal to it seemed a possible means to overcome the dichotomy between the interests of the individual and the requirements of society, which was characteristic of the post-Thermidor and Directoire periods. Although memory may seem to have a personal or individualized status, given that all individual recollection is provisional and must be interwoven into the cultural fabric formed by a specific social group's collective experience in order to endure, it has in effect a social foundation.⁴²

As was seen in the case of *Marcus Sextus*, memory in this transformatory process takes the form of paradigmatic examples. Rather than simply attempting to resurrect the past, it reconstructed it as a coherent imaginative pattern that conformed to the needs of a particular faction of the Salon audience. For members of that group, remembering was not a process of retrieval but rather one of reconfiguration; as

³⁸ Cf. Germer, 11–87 ("Der Abschied vom Helden"), for a discussion of the dissolution of the traditional concept of the *exemplum virtutis*.

³⁹ Vivian Cameron has observed that the *Marcus Sextus* can be understood as reversing the gender roles that David had assigned to the protagonists in his *Hector and Andromache*. Marcus Sextus is depicted in the role traditionally occupied by a suffering woman, while the dead wife is shown in the pose reserved for the depiction of deceased heroes. This reversal was an effective means of enhancing the impact of Guérin's narrative. The painter played with convention, and by reversing the gender roles consciously disappointed the beholder's expectations and thus directed his or her attention to the unnatural situation in which Marcus Sextus found himself. *Hector and Andromache* is a precedent for the narrative strategy employed by Guérin, for David suspended all

action in his painting (or limited it to the reliefs on Hector's bed) and focused the viewer's interest on the emotional reaction of his heroine. I would like to thank Dr. Cameron for sharing her research with me; my paper has benefitted from her comments.

⁴⁰ Cf. for example, "Observation sur le tableau de Marcus Sextus," *Bulletin de l'Europe*, 1799, *Collection Desloynes*, XXI, no. 575, 333f.

⁴¹ For the tactics of the "surprise invader," cf. Crow, 134f.

⁴² M. Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris, 1925, and *La mémoire collective*, Paris, 1950. For a comparison between Halbwachs's theory of memory and that of P. Ariès, see P.H. Hutton, "Collective Memory and Collective Mentalities: The Halbwachs-Ariès Connection," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions historiques*, II, Summer 1988, 311–322.

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James Rubin has shown, those who saw themselves as "victims" of the Revolution tended to reinforce their shared experience by "localizing" it in particular images of space and time, such as the stories of Oedipus at Colonus, Belisarius, or Eponina and Sabinus, which were frequently featured in theatrical as well as pictorial productions of that period.⁴³

A look at contemporary theatrical practice in fact reveals developments that parallel Guérin's transformation of history painting from a historiographic medium into one centered upon a collective, yet privately experienced, form of memory. Post-Thermidor theatrical productions differed from those of the revolutionary period, and this change manifested itself in the content of high drama as well as in the structure of more popular forms. In tragedies a new emphasis was placed upon the protagonist's suffering, which in post-Thermidor productions was not presented as a deserved punishment for his personal failings, but rather as a misery afflicting a character not fully responsible for his own fate. Exclusive concentration on the characters' suffering led to the trivialization of a subject matter that had originally been tragic, and its consequent sentimentalization verging on melodrama.

As Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht has demonstrated, a comparable change manifested itself in the more popular *genre sérieux*—which consisted of *already* melodramatic plays—whose standard plot revolved around the misfortunes brought upon the virtuous central character by abominable villains, and culminated in a happy ending in which the *vertu persécutée* was saved.⁴⁴ In the post-Thermidor re-interpretations of these stories, the *vertu persécutée* was retained as the character with whom the spectator was to identify, but the stories were deprived of their positive *dénouement*. Whereas before Thermidor an ending that left the conflict between good and evil unresolved would have been inconceivable, this even became a standard strategy in post-Thermidor melodrama.

In post-Thermidor society, the terror permeating these negative, unresolved narratives was not perceived as a breach of theatrical decorum, but rather as an accurate restaging of the spectators' recollection of their experiences during the Revolution.⁴⁵ Such unresolved tensions gave these plays an

open structure comparable to that of the *Marcus Sextus*, inviting the spectators' participation in completing the narrative. The open structure of these productions further allowed the spectators not only to give their individual recollections a larger historical dimension, but even to enjoy their own previous private experience as an aesthetic spectacle.

Plays and pictures of the post-Thermidor period thus restaged past terror as if it was an immediate present, while the actual temporal difference between the scene depicted and the beholder's reality deprived them of their formerly menacing character. Personal anxieties experienced during the Revolution were transformed into a "sublime" experience in this fashion, and so prompted what Burke has defined as the pleasurable *frisson* that an awe-inspiring scene is capable of stimulating when witnessed from a safe vantage-point.⁴⁶

The focus of interest was thus no longer placed upon the moral content of a painting, but rather on the spectacularity of its subject matter. This transformation, which might be called the "spectacularization" of artistic production, led in turn to a further erosion of the concept of the *exemplum virtutis*. It was ultimately the consequence of an eighteenth-century transformation of the Salon from a showcase of the Academy's production into a medium of popular entertainment.⁴⁷ For the mass viewership of the Salon exhibitions no longer judged a picture on the basis of its moral message, but rather according to the sensational value of its subject matter. In this respect, the *Marcus Sextus* was the prototype of a new kind of painting that found its referent not in the lofty realm of morals, but rather in the competitive conditions of the Salon exhibitions. This competition necessitated a redefinition of art's position vis-à-vis society: the *Marcus Sextus* is an example of "high art" that exploited the spectacular topics and strategies that had been the domain of popular media, in order to attract a mass audience.

Combining Two Narrative Strategies: David's Utopian Solution

David's contribution to this meta-discourse concerning the Revolution, and his position in these debates about the redefinition of artistic practice in post-Thermidor society,

⁴³ Cf. Rubin, 1973, 141–171.

⁴⁴ For the changing conception of the *genre sérieux*, see H.-U. Gumbrecht, "Über das Versiegen 'Süßer Tränen' in der Französischen Revolution—ein Aspekt aus der Funktionsgeschichte des 'Genre Sérieux,'" *Lendemanns. Zeitschrift für Frankreichforschung und Französischstudium*, xi, Aug. 1978, 67–85, and H.-U. Gumbrecht, "Ce sentiment de douloureux plaisir, qu'on recherche, quoiqu'on s'en plaigne." *Skizze einer Funktionsgeschichte des Theaters in Paris zwischen Thermidor 1794 und Brumaire 1799*, *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*, iii, 1979, 335–373.

⁴⁵ The Marquis de Sade was among the first to analyze the impact of the Revolution on the reading habits of the French public. In his "Idée sur les romans," he explains the interest in the Gothic novel as a reaction to the Revolution, an explanation that probably can be extended to the visual arts as well. He states: "Peut-être devrions-nous analyser ici ces romans nouveaux, dont le sortilège et la fantasmagorie composent à peu près tout le mérite en plaçant à leur tête le Moine, supérieur, sous tous les rapports, aux bizarres élans de la brillante imagination de Radcliffe; mais cette dissertation serait trop longue. Convenons seulement que ce genre, quoi qu'on en puisse dire, n'est assurément sans mérite; il

devenait le fruit indispensable des secousses révolutionnaires dont l'Europe entière se ressentait. Pour qui connaissait tous les malheurs dont les méchants peuvent accabler les hommes, le roman devenait aussi difficile à faire que monotone à lire; il n'y avait point d'individu qui n'eût plus éprouvé d'infortune, en quatre ou cinq ans, que n'en pouvait peindre, en un siècle, le plus fameux romancier de la littérature. Il fallait donc appeler l'enfer à son secours, pour composer des titres à l'intérêt, et trouver dans le pays des chimères ce qu'on savait couramment, en ne fouillant que l'histoire de l'homme dans cet âge de fer"; *Oeuvres complètes du Marquis de Sade*, x, Paris, 1966, 14f.

⁴⁶ Cf. R. Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)*, New Haven and London, 1983, chap. 3, "Burke, Paine and Wollstonecraft: The Sublime and the Beautiful," 57–87.

⁴⁷ This development had already begun in the 18th century but gained momentum through the expansion of the Salon beyond the membership of the Academy during the Revolution. For a discussion of these changes, see Kemp, 103f. See also U. van de Sandt, "La Fréquentation des Salons sous l'Ancien Régime, la Révolution et l'Empire," *Revue de l'art*, lxxii, 1986, 43–48.

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7 Jacques-Louis David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*. Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

have remained controversial.⁴⁸ The painter had attempted to offer a third position: one located between Hennequin's allegorical reaffirmation of revolutionary historiography and Guérin's heroization of private experience. Like Guérin, David had taken the concrete experience of his beholders as a starting point; his painting, however, expressed such retrospective anxieties less than it explored prospective aspirations.

The *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (Fig. 7) can in fact be understood as an utopian model for what David intended as a solution to end the factional strife disrupting French society. As we know from the testimony of contemporaries such as E.J. Delécluze,⁴⁹ J.L. Meyer,⁵⁰ and P.M. Delafontaine,

⁵¹ the *Intervention* had been intended as an appeal for reconciliation in Directoire France. And, as the writings of Chaussard and other critics of the period demonstrate, it was received as such.⁵² The theme of the intervention of the Sabine women was itself particularly suited for such reconciliatory purposes, since it showed that a conflict that appeared to be unresolvable in the public sphere could be overcome if it was redefined in terms of private experience.

As might be recalled, warring between the Romans and the Sabines in this story concerned the status of women in their respective tribal communities: the Sabine definition of women as daughters belonging to their fathers was irreconcilable with a Roman interpretation viewing them as wives belong-

⁴⁸ For an interpretation of David's *Intervention* differing radically from the one given here, cf. Lajer-Burchard, 1989, 310–321. Cf. also M. Fried, "Thomas Couture and the Theatricalization of Action in Nineteenth-Century French Painting," *Artforum*, viii, 1970, 36–46.

⁴⁹ E.J. Delécluze, *Louis David, son école et son temps. Souvenirs*, Paris, 1855, 53, 61–62, 71, 178, 186–188, 193–195, 197, 340, 400, 413.

⁵⁰ Fr. J.L. Meyer, *Fragmente aus Paris im IVten Jahr der französischen Republik*, Hamburg, 1797, 228–229.

⁵¹ Cf. P.M. Delafontaine, Bibl. Institut ms 3782, fols. 2–3 and 28–30; published in a slightly altered form by A. Jal, "Notes sur Louis David, peintre d'histoire," *Revue étrangère*, LV, Sept. 1845, 623–631 and 701–710. Antoine Schnapper offers a good survey of the literature on the *Intervention* in his article in the catalogue *Jacques-Louis David*, Paris, 1989, 323–388.

⁵² P. Chaussard, *Sur le Tableau des Sabines, par David*, Paris, An VIII (1800). For a bibliography of contemporary criticism, see *David*, cat. no. 146.

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ing to their husbands. Since the domain of public interest remained blocked by these opposing factional claims (a blockage that David indicates by "freezing" the two male protagonists in their fighting poses), a shift to the private sphere was necessary in order to understand that these mutually exclusive viewpoints could be reconciled.

Hersilia's gesture—simultaneously signaling the separation of the warriors and the unification of the family members—shows that the conflict can be overcome, if the definition of women via adherence to one tribal community is replaced by the concept of a double allegiance. In this interpretation, the rape of the Sabine women, which the Sabine men in their restricted vision had understood as a violation of the laws of tribal bondage, assumes the character of a legitimate exchange of women which would come to serve as the basis for a larger society encompassing both tribal entities.⁵³ The unity of the new society would thus be achieved through a sacrificing of women, who thereby acquire the status of symbolic tokens guaranteeing a social order that would no longer be based upon exclusive tribal allegiances, but rather on a system of nuclear families uniting the two tribes.

In other words, the *Intervention* celebrated the discovery that family ties could provide a bond that held the larger society together, helping to overcome a dichotomy between individual and general interests. Like Guérin's *Marcus Sextus*, David's *Intervention* presupposed an audience that would recognize the situation depicted as analogous to its own. Yet David differed from Guérin in his definition of the common experiential basis uniting that audience. For while Guérin was drawing on specific historical recollections, David appealed to a more general collective bourgeois experience, namely that of having been socialized in small nuclear families. David's attempt to redefine the social conflicts of Directoire France as familial infighting must have appeared logical to members of a social class for whom the nuclear family constituted a first frame of reference, and it therefore acted as a model by which all subsequently experienced social entities were judged.

In order to convey this private solution of societal conflicts to the beholder, David employed a complex narrative scheme. Whereas Hennequin had cast the viewer in the role of witness of a *récit* unfolding without his participation, and Guérin had made him the addressee needed to complete his fragmentary *discours*, David employed both narrative modes of address at the same time. Moreover, he exploited the difference between these two forms of narration in order to determine with precision the beholder's temporal relation to the event depicted.

The *récit*—which includes the male protagonists, their armies, and the figure of Hersilia—is developed along a contained horizontal axis. The organization of the figures in a frieze parallel to the picture plane, as well as the nudity of the male fighters and the suspension of all action by freezing the protagonists in highly stylized poses, serve to emphasize

the distance of the event depicted from the beholder's reality. This stylization deprives the story depicted of immediate impact, since it is presented in a borrowed and therefore derivative language.⁵⁴ David stated that his models for this strategy were Raphael's compositions, which he understood as a combination of isolated figures held together by an abstract concept and consequently requiring an intellectual as opposed to an emotional response.⁵⁵ The painter adopted this mode in his painting in order to characterize the battle as something that belonged to the immediate past, and thus no longer directly affected the beholder.

In contrast to the *récit*, the *discours* is developed along an orthogonal axis pointing directly toward the viewer. It is composed of the women and children, whose postures and glances are in part addressed to the warriors and in part beg for the beholder's intervention (as is most evident with the woman in red borrowed from Raphael's *Massacre of the Innocents*). While the *récit* depicted the immediate past, the *discours* extends into the present and therefore involves the beholder.

David emphasized this difference between the modes of address of his two narrative axes by depicting the male heroes of his *récit* in a state of emotionless calm, reserving expression of the violent passions for the women of the *discours*. This combination of *récit* and *discours* in one painting permitted the painter to draw a distinction between two strategies for resolving the conflict between the Romans and the Sabines, while at the same time enabling him to imply that only the present-tense appeal of the women would ultimately be effective. The picture thus prestructured the beholder's response while still requiring ratification of that position. David thereby demonstrated that a reconciliation had yet to be achieved, and that it depended upon the beholder's active participation.

In combining *récit* with *discours*, the compositional organization of David's painting forced the beholder to realize the shift of the foundation of society from the public to the private sphere. The compositional strategies employed in the *Intervention* served to present this specifically bourgeois conception of the private self as a universally valid basis for any social order, and thus can be seen as having contributed to transforming a historical development into a "family novel" in the Freudian sense.

As the figure pivotal for the resolution of the battle as well as the foundation of a new society, Hersilia belongs to both narrative systems. Since her intervention signifies the interruption of the *récit* by the *discours*, she is placed at the intersection of the two narrative axes of the picture. What distinguishes her intervention from that of Brutus's wife, to whom David in his earlier painting had similarly assigned an active role, is the fact that her action not only questions the male code of morals in a *post-festum* emotional outburst, but effectively disrupts male fighting. By separating the two men,

⁵⁴ Cf. Bryson, 1987, 85–175.

⁵⁵ Cf. Kohle, 121–134.

⁵³ See Bryson, 1986, 152–173.

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Hersilia changes her status from an object of their struggle to that of its arbiter, and thereby is transformed into an active agent in her own right.

Such an emphasis placed upon the action of the female protagonist in this pictorial context did *not*, however, indicate a principal reversal of gender roles. It was rather a momentary shift of focus brought about by specific representational necessities that ultimately served to reinforce patriarchal role models. In the atmosphere of Directoire society, defense of the private realm against the claims of the public sphere acquired a new meaning; it no longer signified opposition to a socially prescribed moral code, but embodied the essence of the new ethical foundation for society.⁵⁶ As the private sphere was now being recognized as capable of yielding symbolic figures, the role of women was re-evaluated since they could perfectly embody this new foundation of society within the private sphere, having been confined to the private realm all along.

Summarizing these observations, it can be said that the sophistication of David's narrative strategies consisted in his having made three principal "moves." First, in drawing a distinction between the level of the *récit* and that of the *discours*—thus, emphasizing the antiquatedness and inadequacy of conventional models for resolving factional strife—he showed that the private sphere constituted the only possible future basis for founding a society. Second, by placing Hersilia at the intersection of the two narrative axes of his picture, David portrayed her as embodying both the cause of the conflict and its potential resolution. Third, in conceiving Hersilia as the pictorial counterpart of the viewer, he underscored that the beholder would ultimately have to assume her point of view—that is, the addressee of the *discours* would have to participate actively in similar reconciliatory efforts. Ultimately, the efficacy of David's narrative strategy thus depended on his beholders' willingness to identify with the characters depicted.

Identification was, however, only one of the possible attitudes that the *Intervention* suggested. The painting's stylized figures could equally well be understood as inviting the beholder to a disinterested connoisseurial appreciation, in the course of which individual configurations would be contemplated independently of their narrative function, isolated from their context as purely aesthetic phenomena. In his formal treatment of the figures in the *Intervention*, David simultaneously emphasized the self-referentiality and

the historicity of Directoire artistic practice, thereby implying a difference between the topical message of reconciliation that his painting advocated and the "instant-masterpiece" status to which his work aspired.⁵⁷

The artist avoided committing himself to either an identificatory or an aestheticizing interpretation, but rather left the decision as to how his picture should be understood up to his viewers. This apparent ambivalence enabled him to appeal simultaneously to two different groups of them; for while the message of reconciliation was destined for the general public and intended to ensure the popular success of the *Intervention*, its erudite borrowings from antique and Renaissance sources aimed at a cultivated but decidedly de-politicized elite group. To the latter David offered, for the first time in his entire career, the opportunity to engage in a purely aesthetic appreciation of one of his history paintings.⁵⁸

Each understanding entailed a different definition of the artist's position within society: in an identificatory reading he proposed a model solution for societal conflicts, while in an aestheticizing interpretation David was rather a director staging other artists' productions and thereby concentrating the beholder's interest on the formal solution's wit and beauty.⁵⁹ David's attempt to reconcile these mutually exclusive definitions had the paradoxical result that the *Intervention* offered a utopian solution for ending the conflicts in post-Thermidor society, while at the same time questioning painting's ability to propose such solutions.

His effort was typical of a situation in which artists were trying to distance the aesthetic realm not only from its former ties with politics but from its ties to the societal domain. As Philippe Bordes has demonstrated in his discussion of David's post-Thermidor politics, the artist was still actively intervening in political conflicts at this point, yet his primary concern was adapting to changing professional conditions.⁶⁰ Central to this project of defining his position in post-revolutionary French society was his wish to stake out an autonomous realm for artistic production.

The *Intervention* marked the final step in a series of attempts to determine his position vis-à-vis society. While his *Self-Portrait* of 1794 had been prompted by the desire to present himself as an outcast and misunderstood genius, and

⁵⁶ For the distinction of audiences in David's *Marat*, cf. the fundamental contribution of K. Herding, "Davids Marat als dernier appel à l'unité révolutionnaire," *Idea. Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, II, 1983, 89–112.

⁵⁷ Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II (Werke in zwanzig Bänden, XIV)*, Frankfurt am Main, 1980, 235f., "Es gibt heutigentags keinen Stoff, der an und für sich über dieser Relativität stände, und wenn er auch darüber erhaben ist, so ist doch wenigstens kein absolutes Bedürfnis vorhanden, daß er von der Kunst zur Darstellung gebracht werde. Deshalb verhält sich der Künstler zu seinem Inhalt im ganzen gleichsam als Dramatiker, der andere, fremde Personen aufstellt und exponiert. Er legt zwar auch jetzt noch sein Genie hinein, er webt von seinem eigenen Stoffe hindurch, aber nur das Allgemeine oder das ganz Zufällige; die nähere Individualisierung hingegen ist nicht die seinige, sondern er gebraucht in dieser Hinsicht seinen Vorrat an Bildern, Gestaltungsweisen, früheren Kunstformen, die ihm, für sich genommen, gleichgültig sind und nur wichtig werden, wenn sie ihm gerade für diesen oder jenen Stoff als die passendsten erscheinen."

⁶⁰ Bordes, 1988, 72f. See also Rubin, 1976, 547–568; and J.C. Stein, "The Image of the Artist in France: Artists' Portraits and Self-Portraits around 1800," Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1982, 136f.

⁵⁶ For the status of women both in revolutionary representations and in revolutionary reality, see J.B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca and London, 1988; D. Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture*, New Haven and London, 1989; D. Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses. Les Femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française*, Aix-en-Provence, 1988; V. Cameron, "Becoming Heroines: Questions of Gender and the French Revolution," paper presented at the 78th Annual Conference of the College Art Association, New York, 1990.

⁵⁷ Recognizing the painter's desire to inscribe himself immediately into tradition, one critic characterized the *Intervention* quite pointedly when he wrote: "On peut considérer ce nouvel ouvrage de David plutôt comme un cadre dans lequel il a renfermé une magnifique collection de suprêmes tableaux que comme un tableau qui mérite d'être placé parmi les chefs-d'oeuvre" (*Collection Desloynes*, XXI, no. 586, 677).

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his drawings of Homer stemmed from a similar self-definitional need, the *Intervention* presented David as the master of a new professional system—one characterized by the deliberate distance it adopted from the requirements of state and society.

Conclusions

This discussion of three attempts to adapt artistic practice to a changed situation in post-Thermidor and Directoire France has demonstrated that it is particularly productive to analyze the pictorial production of this period with attention to narratological issues and questions of reception aesthetics. The years following the fall of Robespierre were characterized by the necessity of defining painting's position in society, and more specifically of determining its relation to its viewers, since Thermidor had effectively discredited the belief that painters could take their audience for granted.

In this situation, artists such as Hennequin, Guérin, and David were forced to devise narrative strategies aimed at defining an ideal public for their pictures, through either addressing their audiences' political beliefs or through incorporating into their paintings the concrete experiences of specific social groups during the Revolution. Although all of the artists discussed here felt it necessary to find a form of address that could be used in defining an ideal public for their paintings, the solutions they developed varied according to their political beliefs.

Whereas Hennequin chose an allegorical language in an attempt to reaffirm the validity of Jacobin ideas that had been marginalized by political developments, Guérin adopted a narrative approach characterized by blanks to be filled in by the recollections of those who considered themselves victims of the Revolution. In contrast to his peers, who left no doubt about their political convictions, David presented a picture that allowed for contradictory interpretations: although the theme of the *Intervention of the Sabine Women* could be seen as proposing a utopian solution to factional fighting in post-Thermidor France, the pictorial form employed seemed to question painting's ability to provide such solutions. The painter refrained from taking an unequivocal stand, leaving up to the viewer the question whether the *Intervention* should be understood as a model for solving current conflicts or as a manifesto for an autonomous art. Because Hennequin, Guérin, and David relied upon the experiences their viewers had had during the Revolution in their attempts to define an ideal public for their pictures, the *Triumph of the French People*, the *Return of Marcus Sextus*, and the *Intervention of the Sabine Women* contributed to the metadiscourse about the Revolution while at the same time redefining art's position in post-revolutionary society.

As has been demonstrated, both of these concerns can be analyzed productively by employing the methods that *Rezeptionsästhetik* has developed to describe the way in which artworks prestructure their own reception. In order to evaluate the validity of results gained through an analysis of pictures from the point of view of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, however, a widening of the methodological focus seems necessary. Further research would have to combine the methods of reception aesthetics with those of social history, in order to

distinguish the ideal public defined via varied modes of address or narration within a picture from the makeup of contemporary audiences and the pictures' actual reception.

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