The Insistence of Art

AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY AFTER EARLY MODERNITY

PAUL A. KOTTMAN, EDITOR

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The Claim of Art: Aesthetic Philosophy
and Early Modern Artistry

Paul A. Kottman

Considering the attention paid to artists from the early modern period by philosophers working in what we now recognize as "aesthetics," considering the extent to which artworks and practices of the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries were accompanied by an immense range of discussions about the arts and their relation to one another, and considering above all the sheer breadth and scope of the artistic achievements in the period, it is striking that so little recent effort has been made to understand the connection between early modern artistic practices and the emergence of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy over the course of the eighteenth century.[1] It is striking, that is, how seldom nowadays specific artworks and artistic practices are seen as explaining, clarifying, requiring, or embodying the distinctive set of concerns articulated in that philosophical discipline we call aesthetics.[2] Art is more often taken by philosophers and historians as a "stand-in" for, or reflection of, some other question, historical event, or social event of significance, rather than as being the phenomenon itself. The ten essays in this volume attempt to remedy this.

Each essay included suggests ways in which the artworks and practices of the early modern period show the essentiality of aesthetic experience

for philosophical reflection, and in particular for the rise of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, while also showing art's need for philosophy. Each contribution teaches us by example how we might better grasp central artistic and philosophical preoccupations of the preceding centuries and our own time, by asking after both early modern art's claim on philosophy and philosophical realizations of the claim of art.

This broad historical framing—"early modern art" and "modern aesthetics"—implies some delineations concerning, for instance, the divide that separates the cultures of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries in Venice, Florence, London, or Amsterdam from the eighteenth century in Königsberg, Weimar, or Berlin. Each essay in this volume articulates that frame in its own way. Overall, however, making sense of this framing is understood here not just as a matter of establishing or gathering facts that might help us determine whether, say, Hegel ever laid eyes on a particular painting or how well Herder may have grasped Shakespeare's English—though gathering these facts, too, is an ineliminable part of our collective work. Rather, since we do not doubt that artworks and practices from the early modern period *exist* alongside works of aesthetic philosophy from the eighteenth century, what we really want to know is whether these two existences are connected in some essential way. By "essential way" I do not just mean a further fact—or a so-called "smoking gun"—but something like what Hegel might have called the *Wirklichkeit*, or what earlier philosophers might have called the *logos* (the actuality or reality) of a connection between early modern art and aesthetic philosophy. Put another way, we want to know what reasons we might have for reconsidering the stories we already tell ourselves about early modern art and philosophical aesthetics. We want to know how, whether, and why we should reconsider the intellectual histories that have prevented these two historical phenomena from being considered together as part of our collective inheritance.

As Richard Rorty once pointed out, the German way of doing intellectual history—"starting with the Greeks and working down through, for example, Cicero, Galileo and Schelling before saying anything off your own bat—is easily parodied."[3] But, as Rorty went on to note, this kind of approach helps us conscientiously clarify what we might otherwise take for granted, or carelessly assume. After all, we "all carry some potted intellectual history around with us, to be spooned out as needed. . . . Such stories determine our sense of what is living and what is dead in the past, and thus of when the crucial steps forward, or the crucial mistakes or ruptures, occurred."[4] And those of us who do not undertake the historians' legwork

ourselves generally borrow a story from someone else—Karl Marx, say, or Hans Blumenberg. Taking the spirit of Rorty's remark—that we would do well to be more vigilant when it comes to the histories in view of which we understand our present—the first thing this Introduction will do is consider what, in our "potted histories," has been blocking, or effacing, a clearer view of the connection between early modern artistic practices and aesthetic philosophy.

There are a number of these, of course. However, I think we can usefully identify four narratives—sections 1–4 below—that have arguably contributed the most to obscuring our view of the relation between early modern artworks and aesthetic philosophy. First, there is a story according to which art proper, the fine arts, or notions of aesthetic autonomy, took shape only in the eighteenth century. Second, we find aesthetic philosophy's self-articulation over the course of the eighteenth century and its introduction of an apparently new set of issues and questions for the human sciences. Third, there is the concurrent emergence of art history as an academic discipline in the work of J. J. Winckelmann especially and its predominant focus on ancient artworks rather than on the art of the early modern period (as had been the case in the work of Giorgio Vasari, for instance).[5] Fourth, the establishment of the "Renaissance," the "Baroque," or the early modern period itself, as objectively distinct, was in part predicated on scholarly methods and apparatuses that took shape in the late eighteenth century.

Let me briefly describe each of these by trying to lay bare the "potted history" implied or contained in each, in order to make clearer how they tumble into and compel questions under investigation in this volume. I then turn to a discussion of the essays included here.

1

One history that is commonly borrowed to explain the emergence of aesthetics in the eighteenth century was influentially told by Paul Oskar Kristeller, a German scholar of Renaissance humanism (who emigrated to the United States in 1939), in a two-part article he published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* in 1951–52, titled "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics."[6] There Kristeller argued that the "system of the five major arts, which underlies all modern aesthetics and is so familiar to us all, is of comparatively recent origin and did not assume definite shape before the eighteenth century, although it has many ingredients which go back to classical, medieval and Renaissance thought."[7]

These five arts—painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry—began to set themselves apart as art proper, according to Kristeller, by virtue of being distinguished from other crafts and sciences, and thus by acquiring a kind of independence from instrumental aims, ritual function, or moral-educational purposes.[8] It is, Kristeller argued, this recognition of a provisional aesthetic autonomy, and the corresponding consolidation of a "system" of the five arts now conceived as the fine arts, or *Beaux Arts*, that made possible the kind of philosophical attention the fine arts received in the eighteenth century.[9]

One issue in Kristeller's story, which persists whenever a version of his story is borrowed, is whether the five-art system, or the practical autonomy of the fine arts, was achieved artistically and *then* subsequently recognized as a practical achievement by philosophers and art theorists, or whether the very notion of art proper (or aesthetic autonomy) is the product of a discursive recognition conferred upon certain art forms by philosophers and art theorists.[10] At times Kristeller seems to imply the former, as when he notes that the ancients and medievals tended to treat art as "something that can be taught and learned," whereas "modern aesthetics stresses the fact that Art cannot be learned."[11] In saying this, Kristeller is implying that a genuinely novel set of artistic practices (he calls them "human activities") emerged when art ceased to be treated, by artists, as something practicable apart from its traditional modes of transmission in workshops or "schools."[12] However, Kristeller does not really develop this implication in his account. Instead, he devotes the bulk of his attention to the way art is discussed in literary discourses or philosophical treatises, from antiquity through the Middle Ages, into the Renaissance and through the eighteenth century: the coining of the term *Arti del disegno* by Giorgio Vasari, the contest between the arts stressed in Leonardo's *Paragone*, and in writers from Castiglione and Francis Bacon through the emergence of academies in France, and the distinction of the arts from the sciences articulated in the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, as in Charles Perrault's *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes* (1688–96). From there, Kristeller leads us to discussions of beauty that began to appear in the early decades of the eighteenth century in the work of J.-P. de Crousaz, Abbé Batteux, the earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson (so important for later philosophers such as David Hume and Denis Diderot), and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who finally introduced the term "aesthetics."

In sum—and this is the point to be emphasized here—Kristeller's story is a descriptive history of ideas as evidenced by discourses *about* art from antiquity, and especially from the Renaissance, through Kant. He

indicates that thinkers in Europe, from the Renaissance onward, changed their minds and their terms when it came to discussions of the arts—as the emergent discourse around the "fine arts" or *belle arti* shows. But the connection between those discursive works and the history of the art practices is not addressed or explained by Kristeller; that is, he does not show how that change of mind might have been precipitated by, or required by, anything in the art itself—either as a practice, or in its reception.

I mention Kristeller first not only because of the broad influence of his account but also because other well-known accounts mirror his reliance on discursive reflections on the arts to explain the emergence of aesthetics as a philosophical concern. Soon after Kristeller's essays appeared, for instance, M. H. Abrams emphasized the birth of the idea of artistic genius in the writings of the Romantics.[13] Peter de Bolla and Andrew Ashfield have emphasized the notion of the sublime, as it supplanted traditional notions of beauty, in the work of many writers of the European Enlightenment.[14] Luc Ferry has offered an alternative view, following a longer tradition (going back to Kant and rejuvenated by Hannah Arendt), that sees modern notions of *Individualität* and subjectivity as necessitating the emergence of aesthetic philosophy, linking issues of taste to broader social changes, especially to new emphases on consensus between individuals in modern democracy.[15]

In another quarter, many in literary studies have followed Terry Eagleton in regarding the emergence of aesthetics as nothing but an ideology necessitated by "the middle class's struggle to preserve its hegemony." High culture, on this view, looks like one way the bourgeoisie reproduces itself.[16] Although Eagleton's concerns express a set of neo-Marxist commitments that had yet to emerge in the era under consideration, his formulations are useful for characterizing the tendency that I am quickly summarizing here—namely, that of turning to discourses *about* art to explain the particular attention accorded to art since the eighteenth century. Indeed, Eagleton goes out of his way to emphasize how silly he thinks it is to imagine that artistic practices themselves could have played any role in the emergence of aesthetics as a philosophical or social concern. "It is," he writes, "on account [of the dominant ideological forms of modern class society], rather than because men and women have suddenly awoken to the supreme value of painting or poetry, that aesthetics plays so obtrusive a role in the intellectual heritage of the present."[17] And, as if to demonstrate in his very own approach the irrelevance of artworks and practices themselves, Eagleton elects to devote, almost exclusively, four-hundred-plus pages to discussions of works by German philosophers: Kant, Schiller,

Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin, and Adorno.

<center>*2*</center>

In another sense, to turn to the second narrative, the separation of discussions *about* art from the history of art practices and works is often symptomatic of aesthetic philosophy's own self-articulation—the presentation of the philosophical concerns that course through texts from Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Baumgarten through Kant and beyond. The issues and concerns here are notoriously complex, but some general outlines can be discerned.

As is often noted, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten was the first to refer to "aesthetics" as a subject within philosophy when he, in 1735, defined the term as "a science of how things are to be known by means of the senses."[18] Baumgarten accorded to what he called "sensible cognition" an authority that liberated cognition from a tradition of German scholasticism that identified cognition with logic.[19] At the same time, as Kant observed, Baumgarten "sought to bring the critical treatment of the beautiful under rational principles, and so to raise its rules to the rank of science."[20] Although Kant was unconvinced by Baumgarten's philosophy, the latter's attempt to free aesthetics from the empirical—argues Paul Guyer—might be seen as "the origin of Kant's notion of an aesthetic idea, that is, a product of the imagination which has genuine cognitive content . . . but which is at the same time so rich and indeterminate that it preserves our sense of the freedom of the imagination from constraint by the understanding."[21]

Before Baumgarten, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, had written *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), followed by Jean-Baptiste Du Bos's *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* (1719), and *Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* by Shaftesbury's follower, Francis Hutcheson (1725). Guyer plausibly suggests that the central idea to emerge in each of these works is "the freedom of imagination," which provided "much of the impetus behind the explosion of aesthetic theory in the period." By introducing the idea of disinterestedness into aesthetic discourse, Shaftesbury paved the way for later thinking about the relative independence of aesthetic experience and the eventual privileging of aesthetic reason.[22] Hutcheson, for his part, emphasized a contrast between aesthetic response and both cognition and the will—a contrast that, Guyer suggests, laid the groundwork for mental activities that Kant would gather together under the imagination. Du Bos,

too, anticipated something of Kant's view of the imagination's freedom by emphasizing the way in which our response to imitations is not limited by what we "know" or cognitively comprehend.[23]

Further overcoming the empirical-rational divide in philosophy, Kant and Herder later transformed this early eighteenth-century inheritance by taking, respectively, a transcendental and a historicist-hermeneutic perspective. The new understanding of sensation provoked by these early aesthetic philosophies allowed Kant and Herder to develop new, decisive views on the connection between logic and epistemology, on the one hand, and anthropology, psychology, and world history, on the other. As Angelica Nuzzo has shown, this same nexus also informs Hegel's own, quite different, account of art as part of Absolute Spirit.[24] And this view appears not only in the secondary commentaries: each new aesthetic philosophy, from Kant and Herder to Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel (and, beyond, to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche) explicitly offered itself as a new solution to a set of philosophical problems inherited from this nascent tradition of aesthetics, and with respect to the same issues it had attempted to address. See, for instance, Hegel's "Historical Deduction of the True Concept of Art," in which Hegel positions his own teaching vis-à-vis that of Kant, Schiller, Winckelmann and Schelling.[25] The history of aesthetic philosophy is often told as a series of reflections on its own self-constitution in the eighteenth century, as new solutions to a set of problems inherited from the great intellectual debates in empiricism and rationalism in the seventeenth century. Even figures peripheral to the German tradition—such as Giambattista Vico (1668–1744)—position themselves with respect to this philosophical inheritance.[26]

I do not wish to suggest that there is anything historically or philosophically mistaken in this self-presentation; nor is my aim here to provide a more "correct" intellectual history about the emergence of aesthetics, or a truer statement of the broad philosophical issues under discussion in any of these thinkers. It is worth pointing out, however, that the value of any blanket statement about philosophical aesthetics in this period—as in Kristeller's identification of a "system," or Eagleton's claims about "ideology"—starts to look severely limited, since we are dealing not with a coherent set of "theories about art" but with a lively debate over what the issues with art or aesthetics are, exactly.

That said, by these widely cast lights, it is striking how—in these philosophical discourses and debates—inherited artworks and practices start to look like little more than placeholders, whose newly expanded constellation of issues now ranges from theories of beauty and taste, to psychology, nature,

physiology, world history, anthropology, and the study of human culture. After all, the privileging of aesthetic reason in the eighteenth century also coincided with the emergence of a novel relation between philosophical disciplines and a host of academic fields and disciplines that are still with us—which is, of course, one reason for the difficulties in adjudicating the "history" modern aesthetic philosophy tells about its own emergence.[27]

Nothing I say in this context can make the difficulties that adhere to discussions of these issues any easier. Here I want, rather, to expand the list of issues under consideration by emphasizing the conception of artworks and practices at work in accounts—both secondary and primary—of the emergence of aesthetic philosophy. For, both in the primary works themselves and in secondary accounts, "art" is often presented as a stand-in for a set of extra-artistic philosophical-historical-social concerns—rather than as the issue itself. I have already hinted at how Kant's placement of the aesthetic between theoretical and practical philosophy. For, whose heart lies the issue of freedom, represents one such moment. Schiller's agon with Kant in his *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, with its attempt to reconcile the rational and the sensuous as freedom, is another. Schelling's insistence on aesthetic intuition and artistic genius as demanding comparison to philosophical cognition is a third.[28] Proposing a horizon that would situate all of these thinkers, Jay Bernstein has similarly suggested that the emergence of aesthetic thought in this tradition "turns on a conception of artworks as fusing the disparate and metaphysically incommensurable domains of autonomous subjectivity and material nature, and hence, by inference, upon a conception of artistic mediums as *stand-ins or plenipotentiaries* for nature as (still) a source for meaningful claims."[29] According to this view, the disenchantment of nature by scientific reason—to which Kant's Copernican turn, Schiller's uniting of beauty and freedom, Hölderlin's view of modern aesthetics as provisionally ameliorating the loss of nature, and Schlegel's romantic turn to aesthetic freedom all purportedly respond—explains the "conception" of art as a "stand-in" for crises and issues registered philosophically: freedom, nature, or the meaning of scientific rationality. Corroborations of this story also appear, of course, in other familiar "potted histories" about the modern age, from Alexandre Koyré's story about modern science in *From a Closed World to an Infinite Universe* to Hannah Arendt's story about science and nature in *The Human Condition* and Theodor Adorno's critique of Enlightenment rationality and his philosophy of art.

Here I wish to draw attention only to the way in which aesthetic philosophy's self-articulations often seem to *require*, for their own internal

coherence, a conception of art as some kind of "stand-in" for distinctly modern philosophical problems—for instance, (lost) nature, freedom, genius, or beauty. Bernstein's own summary is telling: "The moment when aesthetic rationality takes on its most robust, self-authorizing articulation . . . is equally the moment when the true claim of art becomes lost."[30] The suggestion (which resonates with conclusions reached in different ways by Heidegger, Adorno, and Derrida) is that art's "claim to truth" is lost—art becomes "alienated" from truth—in part by being taken up in aesthetic rationality. And this is so, even when this "taking up" is historically as well as philosophically motivated—as a response to the rise of modern sciences, to a rift between disenchanted, causally determined nature and human freedom, subjectivity, and natural matter.[31]

But why, exactly, is the self-articulation of aesthetic reason the moment when art loses its true claim? Is it because art becomes a "stand-in" for philosophical thinking about a set of issues that go beyond the fate of art? Is art's alienation from truth something that is "registered" by philosophy, or is it "sustained" by philosophical aesthetics?[32] Is art's purported alienation from truth part of aesthetic reason's own self-constitution as philosophy (one way aesthetic philosophy distinguishes itself from art)? And what is art's "true claim" anyway? Given the pains taken by virtually every one of these philosophers—Kant, Schiller, Schlegel, Hegel—to articulate not just a philosophical position *on* art, but also a view of the relationship *between* philosophy and art as historical activities or possibilities, and given that this task continues unabated, it is difficult to imagine that these kinds of questions could have been settled by what Bernstein refers to as aesthetic philosophy's "robust, self-authorizing articulation." So this potted history calls for further scrutiny, too.

3

One measure of how unsettled the question was in the eighteenth century lies in aesthetic philosophy's entanglement with new, competing and increasingly sophisticated—or, at least, self-aware—attempts to furnish a history of art. Or, more especially, to furnish a history of ancient art—as if the social and aesthetic concerns of the eighteenth century were more readily considerable in view of newly excavated ruins of the classical world than in the canvases of sixteenth-century painting, the poetry of Elizabethan drama, or the music of J. S. Bach.

With this, we come to the third obstacle under consideration.

As is well known, the eighteenth century not only saw the rise of philo-sophical aesthetics but the concomitant emergence of what we now tend to think of as the academic discipline of art history. Although Pliny the El-der (23–79), Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72), and Giorgio Vasari (1511–74)—to name only the best known—had already sought to situate artists and works historically (albeit in different ways, to different ends), it was with the appearance of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* (1764) that art was offered as a source of historical knowledge capable of teaching us about the present (about "modernity") through a fuller un-derstanding of past social worlds.[33] Writing in the wake of the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and making use of his study of the works of Du Bos, Hume, and Batteux, Winckelmann constructs a history in which art is tied to the rise and fall of an entire nation or culture, and to specific artworks and practices, rather than (as in Vasari) to the lives and careers of practicing artists. More important, Winckelmann attempts to produce this history on the basis of an interpretative visual assessment of the art itself. His aim, as he puts it, is a historical understanding or interpretation of a past world (Greece) on the basis of visual observation of its artistic productions—taking as its "principal object the essential of art."[34] If this sounds straightforward enough as a description of what art historians do, then it is because of Winckelmann's influence on the discipline. However, at least two aspects of Winckelmann's work—and the broader connection between the birth of art history and the rise of aesthetic philosophy to which it belongs—further illustrate how our own understanding of any connection between aesthetic philosophy and the art of the centuries im-mediately preceding it has been blocked or obscured.

The first aspect has to do with the reception of Winckelmann's work, and the abiding significance attained by Greek art and culture in subse-quent German writers and philosophers, from Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, and Hegel to Heine, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. That a con-frontation with, and appropriation of, ancient Greek artworks was highly significant for the literary and cultural foundations of modern Germany, and perhaps for modern German identity, has long been maintained by ac-ademics and even in the popular imagination—down to the famous Monty Python football skit.[35] Without discussing this confrontation further here, I merely note that one of its effects has been to obscure discussion or con-sideration of the significance of early modern artistic practices for the eighteenth-century foundations of German philosophy and culture.[36]

The second aspect has to do with the scope of Winckelmann's own project. This can perhaps be most handily described by a comparison to

the other figure most often cited as the founder of modern art history, Giorgio Vasari, with respect to whose work Winckelmann positioned his own.[37] Like Winckelmann, Vasari was motivated to write his *Lives of the Artists* by a need to make sense of the relation between artworks of the classical past and the present: his Florentine context. Unlike Winckelmann, however—and closer to Alberti or Machiavelli—Vasari instituted a discursive framework within which the art of Florence could be seen as part of an artistic tradition that extended back, and was palpably connected to, the art of the classical world. Vasari did this, for instance, through the metaphor connecting the arts to the biological course of "life," asserting ways in which Florentine artists contributed to the "process by which art has been reborn" (*il progresso della sua rinascita*).[38] Moreover, Vasari wrote—in the shadow of his mentor Michelangelo, and as a practicing artist immersed in the social world of Florence—of how the history of art *up until his time* should be judged and appraised by norms or ideals whose progressive realization it had been his historical privilege to bear witness to.[39] The present moment of artistic achievement in Florence was, for Vasari, both the telos toward which prior art tended and the "norm" by which its progress was to be judged.[40]

Like Vasari, Winckelmann was faced with the same need to connect classical art to the demands of the present, especially in light of the new excavations at the base of Vesuvius. However, unlike Vasari—and writing in the mid-eighteenth century, and at the height of neoclassical distaste for the Baroque—Winckelmann did not aim to expound a "tradition" connecting the work of (his) contemporary artists to the works of Michelangelo or Rafael.[41] Although his "system," as he called it, continued to make use of the biological metaphor of birth, maturity, and decay, the fact that it was a "systematic" account of art—and not the espousal of an ongoing tradition or *rinascita*—shows the historical rift Winckelmann perceived between the concerns of his *History of Ancient Art* and the artistic practices themselves, a rift that constitutes the necessary conditions for his own efforts.[42]

Although Winckelmann was a practiced draftsman, he was not—in contrast to Vasari—widely seen as the practitioner of an easily identifiable traditional activity. And whereas Vasari had seen in his native Tuscany a technical progression in the arts, Winckelmann lived in Italy as a foreign observer; he saw historical discontinuity in Baroque Rome and its view of its classical past—as in the work of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–78).[43] Indeed, by focusing on the rise, maturity, and decay of Greece, Winckelmann was able to connect the decline he saw in Hellenistic culture to the

Baroque world he inhabited.[44] For Winckelmann, then, understanding artworks entails understanding those who produced them—their social world, in as much detail as possible—rather than understanding something about the ahistorical procedures or norms according to which art gets produced (like "the imitation of nature," for instance, as in Vasari or Giovanni Pietro Bellori).[45] Winckelmann's normative account of art, in contrast to Vasari's account, was not to be an account of the refinement of artistic practices or techniques, but something like an account of an ideal social world (late fifth- to early fourth-century Athenian democracy). And unlike Bellori, who saw in the "norms and proportions" of Greek architecture a set of ahistorical ideals for the production of beautiful art, Winckelmann saw in Greek art the norms and ideals for the production of a historically specific (if ideal) way of life.[46] Indeed, Winckelmann sought to explain not Greek art, but Greece as a whole—as a "nation," as a total lifeworld, through its art; and he did so by making sociohistorical ideals seem more important than technical ideals for the adjudication of the art and society of a historical people.[47]

The precise reasons for Winckelmann's preference for Greece remain somewhat obscure, decisive though this preference became for subsequent generations of German philosophers.[48] It seems to have been connected to the "contemporary political attitudes, in which what is seen as one latter-day manifestation of Roman imperial art and architecture—the Baroque style—was inferentially linked to large and in some cases despotic states and institutions to which [Winckelmann's] own views on personal freedom were antipathetic."[49]

One thing is certain, however. By judging not just the art but also the social values and norms of the contemporary world by the lights of classical Greece, Winckelmann has contributed mightily to the blocking of a fuller understanding of aesthetic philosophy (and, indeed, of his own work) that might be rooted in "modern" artworks and practices from the sixteenth century onward.

4

A fourth potted history can be tracked in the way in which the early modern period itself—the so-called Renaissance—came to be periodized, cordoned off from later historical eras. (The "Baroque" has likewise been the topic of heated debate, and in recent years has come to represent something like a period that troubles periodization itself—especially of the

Renaissance.)[50] This periodization reached a culmination with the publication of Jules Michelet's *History of France* in 1855. It was Michelet who set historical boundaries to the Renaissance, when he claimed that it "went from Columbus to Copernicus, from Copernicus to Galileo, from the discovery of the earth to that of the heavens." Michelet's work was then followed by Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in 1860, arguably one of the most widely disseminated works of scholarship ever written, which further cemented the sense that the "Renaissance" names not just a historical period but a discrete object of scholarly inquiry.[51]

However, this cordoning of the Renaissance—or what scholars now call the early modern period—was also already under way in the eighteenth century, with the establishment of a scholarly apparatus that made work like Michelet's and Burckhardt's possible, even necessary: the authentication of documents, of periodization, individuation, chronology, and the various tools of positivist historicism.

Because the work of William Shakespeare came to figure so prominently in the tradition of aesthetic philosophy under investigation in this volume, *The Insistence of Art*, because three of the essays included here deal directly with Shakespeare, and because the study of Shakespeare as the exemplary author of the English canon can plausibly be taken to instantiate the intellectual commitments involved in the study of early modern art and literature, let me illustrate this process with reference to the critical imperative to historicize that took shape in the study of Shakespeare over the course of the eighteenth century. I have in mind the emergence of an ostensibly "authentic" or "period" Shakespeare, through the production of scholarly editions of his work that sought, crucially—and in direct refutation of a then continuous tradition of Shakespeare publications over the intervening generations since the publication of the First Folio in 1623—to connect Shakespeare-the-man to a set of independently verifiable facts about his life, to historical accounts characterizing his era, to a reliable chronology of his works, to authoritative editions of his writings, and to other "biographical" pieces of evidence, such as his portrait, image, birthplace, and the Globe Theatre. As Margreta de Grazia has shown, the emergence of this "authentic" Shakespeare—tied through extratextual evidence (and not through a direct interpretation of the artwork) to the historical world of early modern England—can be plausibly traced to the publication of Edmond Malone's ten-volume *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (1790, revised and expanded in 1821).[52] (That said, in debunking one

"potted history" about Shakespeare and the Renaissance, de Grazia might be accused of merely instituting another—namely, a kind of Foucauldian story about the "rupture" between pre-Malone and post-Malone editorial practices, which belies significant continuities between Malone's efforts and those of, say, Nicholas Rowe or Samuel Johnson.)

Although Malone's publication was indebted to earlier editions and biographies of Shakespeare—from the 1709 edition and biography by Nicholas Rowe, through Alexander Pope, William Warburton, Edward Capell, George Steeves, and the publications of other eighteenth-century authors—Malone's work sought to distinguish itself as relying on independently verifiable evidence in piecing together Shakespeare's biography. Malone's was also the first edition of Shakespeare's work to present a chronology of the plays and an annotation of the sonnets, and it seems to have been the first to offer a linguistic analysis of the particularities of Shakespeare's usage of English. Until Malone, previous editions and biographies of Shakespeare had presented themselves as "genuine," "original," "perfected," or "corrected"—though not "authentic"—by editing texts that were closest to the editor, rather than closest to the author. For instance, the Fourth Folio of the play (1685) was based on the Third (1663–64), which had been based on the Second (1632), in turn based on the First (1623). Similarly, tales about Shakespeare's life had been transmitted without being verified (leading to the production of "stories" about Shakespeare's life that are still repeated today). According to de Grazia, Malone challenged this editorial tradition by introducing external "positive" evidence—gathered from documents, records, and archives dating to Shakespeare's lifetime—in order to produce an "authentic" Shakespeare: the man and his work.

This reification of an "authentic" Shakespeare (an individual man and author reliably connected to a body of work) was part of a growing body of "critical biographies" and "studies of the life and era of an author" now seen as essential to early modern literary studies and to philological work more generally (for instance, in the wake of German positivists such as the Brothers Grimm or Karl Konrad Friedrich Wilhelm Lachmann). This work of returning to "original" evidence or documents—and, hence, of eliding the interpretations and revisions of intervening generations of artists and critiques—has deeply influenced the entrenchment of positivistic historicism as a dominant mode of humanistic inquiry. Think, for example, of the ambitious Shakespeare biographies that began to appear in the early nineteenth century (James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, especially),

as well as the New Historicism of recent generations—which itself gave rise to new critical biographies of Shakespeare (Stephen Greenblatt, Peter Holland, Katherine Duncan-Jones).[53] The point to be emphasized here is the extent to which this scholarly tradition—and the periodization of the Renaissance to which it contributed—might be said to stem from this eighteenth-century reconfiguration of "art" (for instance, of Shakespeare's written words) and the history of its reception and transmission through the eighteenth-century.

If we turn now to the perspective of the present volume, this trend toward "cordoning the Renaissance" can also start to look like a forceful, even allergic, reaction to the interpretive problems raised in connection with Shakespeare by the so-called Shakespeare cult in German writers of the eighteenth century. After all, Lessing, Herder, the Schlegels, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Goethe, and others approached Shakespeare's work with a hermeneutic vigor that has defined the other major critical imperative in literary studies since the eighteenth century.[54] Strikingly, the hermeneutic study of Shakespeare by figures such as Herder placed Shakespeare's work on a historical continuum with the social world of the eighteenth century—and arises in stark contrast to the "authentic" Shakespeare reified in the post-1790, largely English and Anglo-American, tradition described above. This new philosophical-hermeneutic tradition stemmed from a new evaluation of Shakespeare's work that began with Lessing's commentary and, especially, with Herder's 1773 essay on Shakespeare. This nonpositivistic approach to Shakespeare set limits in principle—not limits based on a temporary lack of independent evidence—to an empirical-positivistic grasp of Shakespeare or ourselves. As Kristin Gjesdal's contribution to this volume shows, Herder argued not only for a novel interpretation of Shakespeare's work, but for an interpretive methodology according to which the understanding of Shakespeare (or any past culture or writer) requires subjecting an interpreter's own preconceptions and epistemic limitations to critique. For Herder, the task was not only to interpret Shakespeare in light of his era or life, but also to interpret our own era by the lights of Shakespeare.

5

If the contributions collected here share a common view, it is that artworks and practices are not examples or instantiations of theoretical insights achievable in the absence of aesthetic experience. Art is not regarded as

the embodiment of some nonartistic problem or issue that is "really" un-der discussion—social history, political events, or cultural facts. Art *is* the issue. Art is not the passive mirror for already established sociohistorical realities, but a fundamental matrix through which social reality is estab-lished, brought into being.

Victoria Kahn's essay, "Allegory, Poetic Theology, and Enlightenment Aesthetics," argues that this qualified autonomy of the aesthetic was not just the product of Enlightenment thought. It was also the achievement of allegory or what she calls "the history of reading." Kahn shows how al-legory as a mode of reading classical and Christian texts, in antiquity and through the Middle Ages, produced competing heritages—scriptural and classical, theological and literary—to which Renaissance writers and read-ers were forced to respond. Inasmuch as Christian and classical texts could no longer be read as somehow compatible with one another—the way that, for instance, Dante had managed to fit Virgil into the cosmology of the *Divina commedia*—the question of *how* to read these competing tradi-tions became ever more pressing. Kahn argues that this produced a height-ened self-awareness about the very process of reading and writing—of the position of the *reader* vis-à-vis texts and traditions now construed as having somewhat incompatible aims and origins, and hence as having *his-torical*, not divine, origins. As a result, "a new concept of literary reading as inseparable from the artist's and reader's own hermeneutical activity" took shape.

Rachel Eisendrath's contribution, "Object Lessons: Reification and Re-naissance Epitaphic Poetry," looks at the same shift away from classical and Christian modes of interpretation in Renaissance writings. Like Kahn, she focuses on the emergent distinction between interpreting subject and interpreted object, but she does so from the perspective of the fault line between aesthetic experience and materiality, especially as taken up by Theodor Adorno's survey of Enlightenment aesthetic thought. Eisendrath aims to show how processes of objectification and reification—in particu-lar, the reification of the scholarly object or piece of historical evidence (as discussed in section 4 above)—are undermined by the status attained by art objects since the Renaissance. She considers different poetic and visual artworks that portray the rape of Lucrece—in particular, epitaphic poetry —as "reified objects" that "undo that reification from within." Rather than collapse subjective experience into objects, Eisendrath argues, art creates objects through which subjectivity can emerge. In this way, she demon-strates how Renaissance poetics presages a critique of Enlightenment, akin to Adorno's own, *avant la lettre*.

Andrew Cutrofello's "How Do We Recognize Metaphysical Poetry?" likewise turns common narratives about the obsolescence of seventeenth-century poetics on its head. We tend to think that the rise of early modern natural philosophy required a whole new conception of "knowledge"— "one based not on resemblance but on the systematic representation of identities and differences" and the making of determinate judgments— and hence required the supersession of a poetic view of the world that was rooted in witty comparison, imaginative thinking, and the binding together of the most heterogeneous elements. However, building on Paul de Man's claim for the modern importance of poetic allegory as distinct from symbolism (a claim consonant with Kahn's essay, mentioned above), Cutrofello argues that the purported supersession of poetic humanism by modern science—or the gulf between materiality and subjective freedom—is best explained by metaphysical poets such as Shakespeare and Donne, whose work achieves a unification of aesthetic experience and truth.

The next two essays continue this examination of Shakespeare, but from the point of view of two philosophers, Herder and Hegel, whose work stems from what both recognized in Shakespeare: perhaps our fullest artistic expression of modernity as an ongoing predicament. Kristin Gjesdal's essay, "Literature, Prejudice, Historicity: The Philosophical Importance of Herder's Shakespeare Studies," challenges the notion that modern hermeneutics develops out of romantic philosophy and its reaction to the ahistorical thinking of the Enlightenment. Although she locates hermeneutics in the Enlightenment tradition of German eighteenth-century philosophy, she turns not to the transcendental philosophy of Kant but to the early work of Johann Gottfried Herder on Shakespeare. And while Gjesdal's account of the origins of modern hermeneutics contrasts with Kahn's in virtue of this emphasis on Herder, like Kahn she also situates the beginnings of modern aesthetics and interpretation, not in the transcendental conditions of possibility for judging touted by some eighteenth-century philosophers (and the critics who follow them), but in an engagement with the historically particular artistic practices of the early modern era.

My own contribution, "Reaching Conclusions: Art and Philosophy in Hegel and Shakespeare," departs from an observed propinquity—in formal presentation, as well as in substance—between the epilogue to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the concluding words of Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art*. I argue that these two epilogues demonstrably achieve—rather than assert or describe—provisional conclusions to historical practices (art and philosophy) that are, in virtue of such conclusions, attempts to render these practices intelligible from within. I suggest, further, that to bring

an activity to conclusion as *part* of the activity itself is to stage a test of our freedom and rationality—and, as such, holds clues for understanding the philosophical ambitions that adhere in Hegel's presentation of art and philosophy as dimensions of what he called "Absolute Spirit" (*der absolute Geist*), as well as for Shakespeare's own artistic self-understanding.

Turning to broader discussions of the arts in Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the next essays consider the artistic and philosophical elaboration of concepts that would become fundamental for philosophical aesthetics in the Romantic period: paragone, beauty, and genius. In "'All Art Constantly Aspires to the Condition of Music'—Except the Art of Music: Reviewing the Contest of the Sister Arts," Lydia Goehr offers a genealogical reading of this statement of Walter Pater's, the nineteenth-century art critic, against the background of an older paragone that saw a distinction between the art of music and the condition of music, such that the arts, other than music, could aspire to that condition more fully than the art of music itself. Goehr shows how, via the exemplary art of Renaissance painting—especially Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas*—all the arts instrumentalized the condition of music for their own "ends" to raise their status as "Art."

Maarten Delbeke's essay, "The Beauty of Architecture at the End of the Seventeenth Century in Paris, Greece, and Rome," shows how older notions of perfection in the arts—the perception of teleologies of flourishing and progress in art (as in Vasari's account)—were thrown into crisis by the ornamental excess and stylistic liberties of seventeenth-century architecture and sculpture. Faced with the radical new works of artists such as Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini—whose products hardly fit into the artistic telos of Vasari's *Lives*—figures such as Bellori and Roland Fréart de Chambray scrambled to shore up what Bellori came to call the "idea" of architecture, a beauty whose ideality and expression of "nature" could be discerned apart from the historicity of specific art practices. Delbeke then shows how the problems and contradictions internal to Bellori's and Chambray's approaches compelled Claude and Charles Perrault to challenge Bellori's "idea" of beauty and to propose instead that beauty was essentially an issue of aesthetic judgment, anticipating a line of thinking that would culminate over a century later in the work of Kant. Last, Delbeke shows how Piranesi's response to the Perraults revealed an appreciation for the historical development of the arts as a reflection on felt changes in the claims of nature, and in this way to a new appreciation of the medium-specificity of architecture and poetry.

If Bellori recoiled from the Baroque excesses of what was beginning to be called "modern" art, then—as Jon R. Snyder shows in his essay, "Strokes of Wit: Theorizing Beauty in Baroque Italy"—Emanuele Tesauro's *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (1654) and Marco Boschini's *La carta del navegar pitoresco* (1660) exalted the "shock" value in the new arts, seeking to understand the importance of their wit and ingenuity. Tesauro's work subverts what we have come to see as the splitting of the arts and natural sciences, seeing in the procedures of both—the spontaneous *macchie* (solar flarings) that Galileo observed on the sun, and the *macchie* (drops of paint, spills, splashes) of painterly art—phenomena that should call us to see our own imaginative practices as both the source and limitation of what we objectively know or represent, and hence to see both the arts and the natural sciences as sharing the same practical conditions of possibility. Boschini, for his part, offers a defense of Venetian painting—in polemic contrast to the "imitation of nature" that Vasari saw in Florentine art—by extolling its supersession of the laws of nature in what we might see as proto-Idealist fashion. Boschini sees a negation of nature's tyranny in Venice itself, in its republican institutions, as well as its subjection of the lagoon to ornate *palazzi* and human-made canals. If the brushstrokes of Titian and Tintoretto can show "that nature is no longer autonomous or original," then it is also because Venice itself—as the history of art would continue to bear out—has achieved a painterly reality, an objective political and social reality brought into being artistically as if by sheer ingenuity.

The final two essays in the volume take up what might be called the aesthetic or artistic realization of secularity in the modern age. Like Snyder, Anthony J. Cascardi considers what he calls Francisco Goya's "commitment to invention" as a hard-won achievement, fought against older traditions of religious painting, picturesque naturalism, and late Baroque illusions (as in the large-scale frescos of Tiepolo). In "Goya: Secularization and the Aesthetics of Belief," Cascardi pursues a discussion of Goya's religious paintings and a related body of his works that pose questions about the power of belief, both in religious matters and in aesthetic. It is, Cascardi argues, principally within the secular realm that Goya's critical project takes root, even as Goya seems also to understand that space had to be won before it could be addressed or called into question. Cascardi claims that it was won through a *process* of secularization that involved, among other things, a recognition of the tensions between aesthetic plausibility and religious belief. All this, Cascardi argues, was expressed artistically in Goya's use of perspective, composition, and the beholder's standpoint, all

of which reveal themselves as innerworldly *constructions* and not as divinely ordained or the products of nature.

The last essay, Jay Bernstein's "Remembering Isaac: On the Impossibility and Immorality of Faith," tracks the artistic achievement of secularity through an interpretation of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's 1603 *Sacrifice of Isaac*, and two critical moments in the modern interrogation of faith: First, Descartes's demonstration that faith is essentially an impossible effort of self-abnegation in the "evil demon doubt" and its resolution in the *Cogito, ergo sum*, and, second, Kierkegaard's embrace of the effort of self-abnegation as constitutive of faith—as absurd—in his elaborate reading of the Abraham and Isaac narrative in *Fear and Trembling*. At the center of Kierkegaard's account, Bernstein argues, is a logic of sacrifice—of Isaac, of love of the world—the possibility of which depends on writing Isaac out of the narrative. In modernity, according to Bernstein, religion devolves into faith, and faith has at its core a logic of sacrifice. Bernstein sees Caravaggio's *Sacrifice of Isaac* as the great modern undoing of myth, religion, and sacrifice though a retelling of the narrative that makes Isaac's terror its center, and Abraham's act the murderous one it always was. Holding these two claims together is the relation between canvas and viewer, a relation that Caravaggio transforms from contemplative to ethical. It is this artistic transformation of art and its perception that, Bernstein concludes, vanquishes the religious worldview that depends on the logic of sacrifice and inaugurates secular modernity.

Although our volume comprises only ten entries, we hope it might spark further conversation. Consider, for instance, Rembrandt's etchings (Figures 1, 2, and 3), along with his 1636 painting, the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, as part of a response to Caravaggio. In Rembrandt's 1636 painting, located in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, the angel is depicted as having to physically intervene in order to stop Abraham. As in the 1655 etching (Figure 1), the word of God is not enough—the angel is compelled to hold back Abraham's arms, to arrest a murderer in the act. Isaac's face is moreover covered by Abraham's hand (note, Isaac is blindfolded). Pressing these same issues, Rembrandt also etched the moment of the narrative in which Isaac inquires, "Where is the lamb?" (Figure 2). Here father and son are depicted in conversation, looking at each other.

And then there is Rembrandt's haunting image of Abraham caressing Isaac (Figure 3), in which Abraham himself looks directly at the viewer. Abraham's gaze in this last etching seems to pose a direct challenge to anyone who argues (as did the young Hegel) that Abraham does not love,

Figure 1. Rembrandt, *Sacrifice of Isaac*. 1655. Etching, 15.6 × 13.1 cm (6 $^1/_8$ × 5 $^3/_{16}$ in). Collection Minneapolis Institute of Arts; The William M. Ladd Collection Gift of Herschel V. Jones, 1916.

or "wanted *not* to love," his son.[55] After all, the "sacrifice" would not be a sacrifice if the ethical requirement to nurture one's children had no force.[56] What, then, must we see or acknowledge in order to, as Hegel put it, "leave the ideal for the reality of life," in order to grasp genuine ethical conflict in its lived concreteness?[57] And how do art, criticism, and philosophy respond to this question?

Figure 2. Rembrandt, *Sacrifice of Isaac*. 1635. Oil on canvas, 193 × 132 cm (76 × 52 in). Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

It is our collective hope that these essays will, both as parts and in their sum, offer programmatic possibilities that vivify early modern (and modern) art's claims on our thinking, and hence on aesthetic philosophy as it continues today. The last word, we think, should belong neither to the art nor to the philosophy, but to their need for each other, and to the readers' sense of the depth of that need.

Figure 3. Rembrandt, *Abraham and Isaac*. c. 1637. 116 × 89 mm. Photo credit: The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

<div style="text-align:center">NOTES</div>

1. In this Introduction, I use the term "early modern" as a loose designation, encompassing historical periods that might be seen by some scholars as more properly designated by the Renaissance or the Baroque. However, as I will explain momentarily, I am less concerned with establishing the precise terms or dates for the period in question than I am with signaling the difficulties we have connected to two phenomena: the artworks and practices in Europe in the centuries immediately preceding the rise of aesthetic as a philosophical discipline and the historical rise of that philosophical discipline itself.

2. Rarity does not mean absence. See, for example, M. H. Abrams, "From Addison to Kant: Modern Aesthetics and Exemplary Art," in *Doing Things with Texts* (New York: Norton, 1989), and Howard Caygill, *Art of Judgement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). Notable recent contributions are John Sallis, *Transfigurations: On the True Sense of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), and Sanford Buddick, *Kant and Milton* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010). In *Picturing Art History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), Ingrid Vermeulen argues that art history in the eighteenth century (in Giovanni Bottari, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and Jean-Baptiste Séroux d'Agincourt) came to see the artistic past not in terms of "lives of the artists," but as a "chain" of artworks in which historical progress can be discerned. Also relevant to the concerns of this volume is Rocco Rubini's discussion of Paul Oskar Kristeller in *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). In *Antiquity, Theatre, and the Painting of Henry Fuseli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Andrei Pop considers Fuseli's paintings as exemplary of a "pluralist classicism" in dialogue with J. G. Herder, J. J. Winckelmann, and others. (I thank Andrei Pop for his helpful response to a draft of this Introduction. Thanks also to James Porter.)

3. Richard Rorty, "Against Belatedness," *London Review of Books* 5, no. 11 (16 June 1983), 3–5.

4. Ibid.

5. This is not to deny that Winckelmann also paid attention to early modern art, or to the art of his period. Winckelmann discusses early modern artists in his "Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture," in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), for instance. And Ingrid Vermeulen has shown how Winckelmann's ideas about Greek art and artistic progress were forged in his encounter with Bartolomeo Cavaceppi's collections of drawings, including Italian drawings from the mid-fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. See Ingrid Vermeulen, "Wie mit einem Blicke: Cavaceppi's Collection of

Drawings as Visual Source for Winckelmann's History of Art," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 45 (2003): 77–89; see also her *Picturing Art History*.

6. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 4 (1951): 496–527; and 13, no. 1 (1952): 17–46.

7. Ibid., 498.

8. Although other arts—dance, theater, gardening, engraving, opera (and we could now expand the list to include, say, film and animation)—are considered by philosophers from time to time, "the basic notion that the five 'major arts' constitute an area all by themselves, clearly separated by common characteristics from the crafts, the sciences and other human activities, has been taken for granted by most writers on aesthetics from Kant to the present day." Kristeller, "Modern System of the Arts," 498.

9. Kristeller's account of art's autonomy is indebted to R. G. Collingwood's claims about the autonomy of aesthetic experience in his *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938). Kristeller is explicit about his debt to Collingwood, but it seems to me that Kristeller goes further than Collingwood in arguing for the relationship between the perceived autonomy of art as fine art and the emergence of aesthetic philosophy. For a discussion, see James Porter, "Is Art Modern? Kristeller's Modern System of the Arts Reconsidered," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–24.

10. Kristeller's story is borrowed, for instance, by Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 6–7; Philip Alperson and Noël Carroll, "Music, Mind and Morality: Arousing the Body Politic," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42, no. 1 (2008): 1–15; and Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). See Porter, "Is Art Modern?," nn. 1, 2, and 7.

11. Kristeller, "Modern System of the Arts," 498.

12. "The rising social and cultural claims of the visual arts led in the sixteenth century in Italy to an important new development that occurred in other European countries somewhat later: the three visual arts, painting, sculpture and architecture, were for the first time clearly separated from the crafts with which they had been associated in the preceding period." Ibid, 514.

13. Here is Abrams describing his method: "[T]o adapt an analytic scheme which avoids imposing its own philosophy, by utilizing those key distinctions which are already common to the largest possible number of the theories to be compared . . . ." M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 5–6.

14. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–8, especially.

15. Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus*: *The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, edited and with an interpretive essay by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

16. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 3.

17. Ibid.

18. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus / Philosophische Betrachtungen über einege Bedingungen des Gedichtes*, ed. Heinz Paetzold (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), §§xv–cxvi. Baumgarten expanded on this in his *Aesthetica* of 1750/58—see the modern edition published by Benedetto Croce (Bari: Laterza, 1936)—when he wrote that *Aesthetica (theoria liberalium artium, gnoseologia inferior, ars pulchre cogitandi, arts analogi rationis) est scientia cognitionis sensitivae*. See *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibusi* §115.

19. I owe the outlines of this account to Angelica Nuzzo's discussion of Baumgarten in her essay "Hegel's 'Aesthetics' as Theory of Absolute Spirit," *International Yearbook of German Idealism* 4 (2006): 293–95.

20. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1950), 66n.

21. Paul Guyer, "The Origins of Modern Aesthetics: 1711–35," in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 36; revised version in *Values of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also Guyer's three-volume *A History of Modern Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

22. See Guyer's discussion of Shaftesbury in "Origins of Modern Aesthetics."

23. Guyer's recently published three-volume *History of Modern Aesthetics* reflects not only the chronology of the primary sources—starting in the early 1700s—it shares their sense of self-articulation and self-authorization. Guyer devotes no space in the entire three-volume set to a discussion of artworks or practices related to the philosophical work, or discussed by the philosophers, he treats.

24. Nuzzo, "Hegel's 'Aesthetics' as Theory of Absolute Spirit," 295.

25. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1:55–69.

26. In Vico's case, Cartesian rationalism is the primary counterpoint. Of course, later histories of aesthetic thought—most notably Benedetto Croce's, but also Donald Verene's, Hayden White's, and others'—show Vico's consonance with the history of German aesthetic philosophy, too. (Croce even saw Vico as the founder of modern aesthetics.) For a recent discussion of Vico's significance, going forward, see Rubini, *Other Renaissance*.

27. As Nuzzo observes, "After Baumgarten, aesthetics as a science of sensibility becomes a discipline that unifies a complex constellation of interests and fields of intellectual inquiry," which are, in Kant and Herder, parceled out into what becomes the organization of modern academic fields of inquiry. See Nuzzo, "Hegel's 'Aesthetics' as Theory of Absolute Spirit," 293–94.

28. Art is "the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which always and continuously documents what philosophy cannot represent externally." Friedrich Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. F. W. J. Schelling (Stuttgart: Augsburg, 1856–61), 3:627.

29. *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), viii, my emphasis. ("Plenipotentiary" is, in this context, a term that Bernstein borrows from Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997], 310.) Bernstein has expounded on this perspective and its roots in Adorno in connection with the history of art *since* the period under discussion. See his *Against Voluptuous Bodies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). Somewhat contrary to the hypothesis motivating this volume, and perhaps in tension with his own contribution to it (see his remarks on Caravaggio in chapter 10), Bernstein's view there seems to be that issues first articulated philosophically demanded that, next, art itself take a certain path: "If we watch carefully, the path that runs from Lessing to Jena romanticism looks uncannily like the path that runs from artistic modernism to the postmodern art scene of the present. So uncanny is the anticipation that we may feel it tells us more about our artistic and aesthetic present than the present can say for itself." *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*. viii.

30. Bernstein, *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*. viii.

31. See the discussion in J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 4 and passim.

32. See Gregg Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

33. On Vasari's debt to Pliny, see *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21–27. For discussions about Winckelmann's inauguration of the modern discipline of art history, see Moshe Barasch, *Modern Theories of Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); David Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). For accounts that dispute the eighteenth-century origins of art history, see Jeremy Tanner, *The Invention of Art History in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Michael Squire, "The Art of Art History in Greco-Roman Antiquity," *Arethusa* 43, no. 2 (2010): 133–63; and Porter, "Is Art Modern?"

34. Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, cited in Ferris, *Silent Urns*, 21. As the art historian Donald Preziosi has argued, this assumption forms the "conceptual core" of the discipline of modern art history, since it assumes that objects of human manufacture might reveal something about its maker or source (construed, by Winckelmann, to be a society or historical world) that is "time-factored"—tied to some historical development that separates us from that world. See Donald Preziosi, introduction to *The Art of Art History*.

35. E. M. Butler's 1938 book, received by much clamor during the Second World War, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, reprinted 2012) presented the identity-formation thesis, and devoted its opening pages to a study of Winckelmann.

36. Without wading into these thickets, I note (without endorsing) one influential explanation—advanced by Butler and many others since: namely, that post-Lutheran culture instilled in the "Germans" a desire to turn away from the Italianate beauty being cultivated in other parts of Europe, in favor of the soul's inner salvation. A fuller and more philosophically interesting account—one that deals with the importance of Lutheranism and Christian eschatology to Hegel's philosophy, but which touches on issues relevant to this present discussion—can be found in Lawrence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially the illuminating discussion in chapter 1.

37. On Winckelmann's comments on Vasari, and on his expropriation of Vasarian elements, see Édouard Pommier, *Winckelmann, inventeur de l'histoire de l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 117–49, and the work of Elisabeth Décultot, *Untersuchungen zu Winckelmanns Exzerptheften* (Ruhpolding: Franz Philipp Rutzen Verlag, 2004) cited in Katherine Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity: History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108.

38. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue, insino a' tempi nostri*, a cura di Bellosi e Rossi (Milan: Einaudi, 2005), 101. See the discussion in Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 149–51.

39. Jon R. Snyder's contribution to this volume reminds us that Vasari's history had strong detractors in the intervening years—perhaps none so vocal as Marco Boschini (1613–78) who saw in Venetian Baroque art a justification for the way of life of the Venetian Republic. That this claim anticipates, by analogy, the interpretation of Greece through its art given by Winckelmann will become apparent in the following paragraphs. Unlike Winckelmann's modern alienation, however, Boschini saw himself as a Venetian through-and-through, as Snyder's discussion shows.

40. Whence the way in which Vasari frames Florentine art as the conclusion of a development that runs from Gothic art through the rediscovery of classical ideals, uncovered in ruins and in ancient texts, such as those by Pliny. In this sense, Vasari's work is closer to the sort of progressivist account of world spirit often attributed to Hegel than is Hegel's own work.

41. As Ingrid Vermeulen has shown, Winckelmann arrived at his views on ancient art through a confrontation with early modern drawings, but the connection Winckelmann detected between the ancient and the early modern was not one of continuity or "tradition," as in Vasari. See notes 2 and 5, above.

42. See Michael Fried, "Antiquity Now: Reading Winckelmann on Imitation," *October* 37 (Summer 1986): 87–97.

43. One thinks of the famous passage from Henry James's *A Portrait of a Lady*, in which Isabel Archer contemplates Greek sculptures: "It is impossible, in Rome at least, to look long at the great company of Greek sculptures without feeling the effect of their noble quietude; which, as with a high door closed for the ceremony, slowly drops on the spirit the large white mantle of peace. . . . Isabel sat there a long time, under the charm of their motionless grace, wondering to what, of their experience, their absent eyes were open, and how, to our ears, their alien lips would sound." Henry James, *A Portrait of a Lady* (New York: Wordsworth, 1996), 263.

44. See the discussion in Preziosi, *Art of Art History*, 4.

45. Which is of course why Winckelmann is so often associated, also, with the emergence of the modern study of classical Greek culture. He challenged himself to be acquainted with as much extra-artistic evidence from Greece as possible: For instance, "Without collecting and uniting (every remaining textual fragment mentioning the artworks) . . . no correct opinion can be formed (of the artworks)." J. J. Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, trans. G. H. Lodge, 2 vols. (Boston, 1880), 1:300–301.

46. Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 61b; see the discussion of this passage in Maarten Delbeke's contribution to this volume, below.

47. By setting Greece as the historical standard against which art is to be measured, Winckelmann could thus see Etruscan or Egyptian art as immature expressions of what would flower only in classical Athens, and it is why he saw Roman art and society as a derivative phase of Greek art—a view of Rome that has stubbornly persisted in so many quarters.

48. There is, however, the account of the young Winckelmann's predilection for Greece given by Butler in *Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 10–15.

49. Preziosi, *Art of Art History*, 18.

50. See the discussion in Jon R. Snyder, *L'estetica del Barocco* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005).

51. The way in which such "historical" work also served to institute the very historical fields or periods they set out to investigate or explain has been a topic of much discussion, at least since the publication of Hayden White's *Metahistory*. "I believe the historian performs an essentially *poetic* act, in which he *prefigures* the historical field and constitutes it as a domain upon which to bring to bear the specific theories he will use to explain 'what was really happening' in it." Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), x. White's own view of the poetic constitution of historical discourse could well be another "potted history" to add to the four already under consideration here.

52. See Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

53. Each of these biographies, it should be said, exhibits a range of relationships to literary and anecdotal evidence—as well as interesting articulations of those relations. Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World* (New York: Norton, 2004), for instance, is explicit about the fictional and narrative liberties it takes with respect to the historical evidence. However, these biographies understand themselves to be extending a tradition traceable to, made possible by, an established scholarly connection between Shakespeare-the-man and his historical era.

54. Their influence on major figures in Shakespeare studies in England and North America—starting with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt, and A. C. Bradley, and extended through Northrop Frye and Stanley Cavell—is well known.

55. "Abraham wanted *not* to love, wanted to be free by not loving . . . even the one love he had, his love for his son, even his hope of posterity . . . could depress him, trouble his all-exclusive heart and disquiet it to such an extent that even this love he once wished to destroy; and his heart was quieted only through the certainty of the feeling that this love was not so strong as to render him unable to slay his beloved son with his own hand." G. W. F. Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 185–87.

56. For a compelling interpretation of Kierkegaard's account of the binding of Isaac, relevant to a reckoning with these images, see Jonathan Lear's discussion of the "teleological suspension of the ethical," in *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), esp. 92–97.

57. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 2, trans. Knox, 812.

Allegory, Poetic Theology, and Enlightenment Aesthetics

Victoria Kahn

Included in Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1672) is an engraving of an allegorical figure of "wise imitation" (*imitatio sapiens*), which Stephen Halliwell has described in the following way: "Classically draped and seated inside an architectural perspective, [she] self-admiringly gazes into a mirror, symbol of her own idealized potential, but simultaneously treads resolutely on an unprepossessing 'ape,' traditional metaphor for the debasement of mimesis into the empty simulation of a world of vulgarly reflective surfaces."[1] This allegorical figure of imitation aptly illustrates two common (and ultimately entwined) ways of telling the story of the relation of the Renaissance to the history of aesthetics. One version is a story of the rupture with the Middle Ages brought about by the recovery of the classical traditions of rhetoric and poetics, and their various ideas of the imitation of nature or nature's laws. A second version concedes the superficial continuity of allegorical interpretation from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, while emphasizing the Renaissance break with habits of medieval allegorizing. Instead of gods and goddesses in medieval dress, we find a new sense of historical anachronism and a new attention to the formal properties of ancient art

and art more generally, properties which in turn provoke imitation on the part of Renaissance artists. Particularly in this second story, Renaissance art is described as gradually liberating itself from the theological strictures of medieval theorizing and as anticipating something like the autonomy of the eighteenth-century aesthetic artifact, with its formal purposiveness for disinterested contemplation.[2]

Ultimately, as Bellori's image suggests, these two stories are two aspects of the same rich development of Renaissance art. But for the purposes of this essay, I would like to tell the story of Renaissance aesthetics from the perspective of the long history of allegorical interpretation, not least of all because of the prominent role Kant has frequently played as the telos of this narrative. In my version, however, this is a story not so much of rupture as of transformation, one in which Aristotelian and rhetorical ideas of imitation commingle with late antique and medieval traditions of Neoplatonic allegorizing. As in the other stories, so in this one the Renaissance could be said to discover the autonomy of artistic form. But I argue that it is conceding too much to the eighteenth-century discourse of aesthetics to say that Renaissance ideas of form are important because they anticipate Immanuel Kant, as Ernst Cassirer and Erwin Panofsky were wont to do. Instead, it is better to see the Renaissance as helping us historicize the idea of the aesthetic. That is, it helps us understand that the aesthetic is not a Hegelian idea that achieves its full realization only at a certain moment in history or indeed at the end of history. Instead, even as we concede that something new emerges with the idea of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested contemplation in the eighteenth century, it is possible to trace a distinctive Renaissance engagement with questions of aesthetics that contributes to later notions of the autonomy of art, at the same time that it complicates any attempt to locate the origin of aesthetics in the eighteenth century.

The use of the term *aesthetics* is not common in the scholarship on the Renaissance. In the Renaissance, as in antiquity, art, it's argued, was most often seen in a moral, pedagogical, rhetorical, and pragmatic context rather than being conceived in purely aesthetic terms.[3] Although Renaissance artists were just as preoccupied with the rhetorical and ethical failures of art to persuade to virtue as with its successes, such rhetorical failure was, according to this argument, not yet recuperated as a higher form of art: the aesthetic conception of the work of art as an autonomous artifact designed for the sole purpose of the reader's or viewer's pleasure was still only rarely articulated.[4] But perhaps in our attention to programmatic defenses of poetry, explicit statements about the rhetorical function of art, or

examples of art's failure to persuade, we have been looking in the wrong places for the Renaissance contribution to the history of aesthetics. Once we turn to the history of reading, specifically of allegorical hermeneutics, we find a new attention to the form-giving power of the artist and reader that helps unhinge art from its previous rhetorical, ethical, and in some cases theological frameworks in ways that have something in common with aspects of the Enlightenment notion of the aesthetic. It is the argument of this essay that we can track the gradual emergence of something like the autonomous aesthetic artifact by looking to the history of allegorical interpretation from antiquity through the Renaissance. If, in antiquity and the Middle Ages, allegory was a mode of reading both classical and Christian texts, by the time of the Renaissance the dual influence of scripture and classical culture led to a new historical consciousness of their differences and to a crisis of how to read this dual heritage. Ancient, medieval, and Renaissance writers distinguished between theological allegory and literary allegory, between allegory as a description of the cosmos and allegory as a rhetorical mode or product of human invention. The negotiation between these two concepts of allegory and the eventual preeminence of the latter in the Renaissance helped produce a new concept of literature and a new concept of literary reading as inseparable from the artist's and reader's own hermeneutical activity. The Renaissance focus on the interpretive activity of giving form deserves as much of a place in the history of aesthetics as the centrality of aesthetic contemplation and judgment in Kant's account of aesthetic experience.

In the Renaissance history of aesthetics, the notion of poetic theology—the idea that the first theologians were poets who concealed theological truths under the allegorical veil of fiction—had an important role to play. This is because poetic theology condenses in one concept the complicated relationship between theological and literary allegory. If poetic theology, in the early Renaissance, is the hinge between theology and poetry, in time it comes to signify the emergence of aesthetics from the bonds of theology. Tracing the history of poetic theology and allegorical interpretation thus helps remind us that the chief accomplishment of Renaissance culture was a break with the medieval subordination of art to theology and metaphysics, and a renewed attention to what Ernst Cassirer and Erwin Panofsky called "the problem of form" and the form-giving capacity of human beings.[5]

Renaissance writers could have learned about the classical tradition of poetic theology from Saint Augustine's paraphrase of Marcus Terentius Varro in *The City of God*. According to Augustine, Varro divided theology into mythical theology (a poetic theology or theology of fables); physical

theology (the theology of the philosophers attempting to explain the nature of the gods and the physical universe); and civil theology (the political theology used by the city). Augustine went on to criticize Varro's effort to distinguish between mythical and civil theology, arguing that mythical theology—"the theology of the theater and stage"—is merely a part of civil theology because "poetry and priestcraft are allied in a fellowship of deception."[6] According to Augustine, the false gods of the ancients cannot promise true happiness, which is to say eternal life; this can only be the gift of the true God of Christianity. Renaissance writers took up the idea of poetic theology as a way of negotiating the conflict between antiquity and Christianity, classical myth and Catholic theology, but it also proved to be one avenue for the emergence of a new concept of art and literature in the period. In elaborating their theories of poetic theology, Renaissance writers drew on the ancient and medieval view of allegory as a practice of reading as well as one of writing, and this practice proved to be a vehicle of literary and, more broadly, cultural innovation. The history of poetic theology and the related history of allegory both contributed to the emergence of a new concept of literature and the new discipline of aesthetics. In order to understand how poetic theology and allegory facilitated these developments in the Renaissance, we need to turn first to antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Already in antiquity, as we see from Varro, something like poetic theology existed in the form of allegorical interpretation of myth and pagan theology.[7] Many Greeks and Romans evinced skepticism about the literal truth of myth and of the pagan gods, but were willing to accept these myths as poetic representations of deeper cosmological truths. The Stoics read Homer as an allegory of cosmic forces, and Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* argued that previous generations had handed down ancient wisdom in the form of myth.[8] In late antiquity, Porphyry and Proclus developed an allegorical hermeneutics predicated on the idea that great poetry, such as Homer's, was not mimetic in Plato's sense but rather enigmatic and symbolic of higher theological truths. And Dionysius the Areopagite applied Proclus's ideas about allegory to Christian rituals and sacraments.[9] In all these cases, allegory could be considered the moral and philosophical antidote to myth, literally construed.[10] As a technique of interpretation, allegory saved classical mythology by making it possible "to associate the most scandalous of narratives and bizarre details to deep truths."[11] In this way, allegory preserved myth both for the ancients and for its later revival in Renaissance poetic theology and in romantic poetry.

Equally important for the later reception of classical myth and the later understanding of literature, ancient poetic theology was an unstable compound that threatened to precipitate a new self-consciousness about the fictions of theology. For some, allegorical interpretation of myth was a vehicle of critique and demystification. In the third century BCE, Euhemerus, nicknamed "the atheist," explained the origin of myth in the superstitions of popular religion and the divinizing of great men.[12] In Cicero's *De natura deorum*, Vellius the Epicurean described Plato's creator God in the *Timaeus* as "a figment of the imagination," and asserted, "When we speak of Jupiter, we mean ether. When we speak of Ceres, we mean the earth."[13] Vellius explicitly connected such "philosophical fantasies" of gods who care for humans with the "fictions of the poets," which he judged to be superstitious and harmful.[14] The Academic skeptic Cotta went even further and argued against Vellius: "If [the gods] are real only as ideas in our minds, and have no solidity or substantial form, what is the difference between imagining god and imagining a centaur?"[15] Cicero's Stoic, Balbus, who defended the existence of the gods, agreed with Vellius in condemning the anthropomorphic understanding of the gods as "fable."[16] For Balbus, it was important to distinguish true religion from myth, interpreted allegorically. To this, Cotta objected that if allegorical interpretations are false, why engage in them, as the Stoics tended to do? "Whether the poets have corrupted the Stoic philosophers, or the philosophers have given authority to the poets, it would be hard to say. They both deal in marvels and monstrosities."[17] In Cotta's view, "Such fables must be discredited, if religion itself is not to be brought into confusion and disrepute."[18]

Balbus's and Cotta's concerns received a new twist in the Christian Middle Ages. As Étienne Gilson has observed, the specific problem for Christianity was that its own truth was expressed not in the language of philosophy, but in poetry.[19] Christianity could not simply condemn the figurative expressions of the Bible—for example, the biblical metaphor of God as a lion—as Plato and Cotta had condemned myth. It was necessary instead to find a true meaning in such expressions, and this produced the medieval allegorical interpretation of scripture. The allegorical interpretation of the anthropomorphic God of scripture on the part of someone like Origen (third century CE) was also designed to refute pagan philosophers who charged that the biblical representation of God was indecorously mythological.[20] Some medieval theologians distinguished the scriptural use of literary figures from secular literary allegory. In the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas contrasted the use of figurative language in poetry, which

simply hides its lack of truth, to the use of figurative language in scripture, which makes the otherwise incomprehensible divine truth accessible.[21]

Even more important was the distinction drawn by Aquinas and others between theological allegory, the revelation of God's truth in history, and literary allegory, a mere rhetorical trope. For Hugh of Saint Victor (twelfth century) and Nicholas of Lyra (fourteenth century), it was important to distinguish between figurative speech such as metaphor that is "part of the *literal* sense of scripture," and allegory that is a theological or spiritual dimension of meaning. Failure to do so led, in their view, to an arbitrary, capricious multiplication of allegorical meanings based on the over-reading of the figurative language of the text.[22] Aquinas, too, insisted that literary allegory was confined to the literal dimension of the text, broadly construed: "In no form of knowledge which is the product of human powers is any but the literal sense to be found, but only in those Scriptures of which the Holy Spirit is the author, man but the instrument. [Hence] . . . poetic images refer to something else only so as to signify them; and so a signification of that sort goes no way beyond the manner in which the literal sense signifies." As Denys Turner comments, Aquinas's description of poetic images applies to both secular literature and the literal dimension of scripture, while true theological allegory is reserved to scripture alone because such allegory "is not a semantic property of the *words* of Scripture, but is the meaning of actual *events* . . . that Scripture narrates through those words."[23] Theological allegory was an *allegoria in factis*, that is, it defined an allegorical relationship between earlier and later historical events. Erich Auerbach called this kind of relationship *figura*, by which the events in the Old Testament prefigure those in the New.[24]

Whereas medieval theologians wanted to distinguish between theological and literary allegory, some medieval poets encouraged their confusion. In an elegant argument too complicated to do justice to here, Albert R. Ascoli has argued that Dante, as poet and reader of his own work, deliberately conflated the allegory of poets and theologians, as well as allegory as a mode of writing and allegoresis as a mode of reading. Through a process of self-commentary, he made his own work the equal of the ancients and, in doing so, gestured "towards modern notions of authorial reflexivity and intentionality."[25] Similarly, Rita Copeland and Peter Struck have argued that Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun "found that they could play with accepted distinctions between allegory as verbal trope and allegory as theological or cosmological truth, in order to lay claim to much greater authority than traditionally accorded secular poetry."[26] The importance of the poet-theologian only increased in the Renaissance, not least because

of the enormous revival of interest in the literary achievements and poetic theology of antiquity. But the greater prestige of vernacular poetry also played a role, a prestige owing in large part to Dante. As Charles Trinkaus has argued, "It is difficult to separate [poetry's] new status from the enormous impact that Dante's *Divina Commedia* had in the fourteenth century within a generation of his death."[27]

The consensus of intellectual historians is that, although the allegorical tradition of interpretation persisted in the Renaissance, the defining characteristic of this period was a new perception of the historical difference between antiquity and the present, and a new appreciation of the distinctiveness of classical forms. Instead of using allegorical hermeneutics to erase the difference between past and present, to paper over the enormous rupture created by the emergence of Christianity, and to insist on a transhistorical continuity of meaning or "content," Renaissance readers and writers focused instead on what Cassirer has called "the problem of form." They focused, that is, on what in ancient culture resisted assimilation, flaunted its anachronism, and in so doing provoked admiration and emulation.[28] I am in general agreement with this account of the period's defining virtues. But what I think deserves more attention is the shifting role of allegorical interpretation in these developments. If, in the beginning of the Renaissance, allegory provided an overarching hermeneutic that permitted the reconciliation of ancient texts and Christian doctrine, in time the new profusion of classical texts and the Renaissance encounter with them provoked a crisis of allegorical reading, further destabilizing the distinction between theological and literary allegory. Instead of mediating divine truth, poetic theology became a vehicle for attending to poetic form. Instead, that is, of referring to a transcendent signified, poetic theology tipped on its axis and became the name of a human capacity. In the process, allegory as human invention supplanted allegory as a description of the cosmos or as the revelation of truth in history. In time, allegory became another name for the reader's construction of meaning, as well as a sign of the autonomous literary artifact.

In these developments, the interpretation of classical myth had an important role to play.[29] The classical allegorical interpretation of myth was known in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, but the problem posed by ancient myth was now more complex than it was for ancient philosophers because pagan allegory existed alongside the Christian tradition of the allegorical interpretation of the Bible.[30] For Renaissance humanists interested in the recovery of classical texts, the problem of interpretation was particularly acute. What was the relationship between classical literature

and scripture, and what was the relationship between their modes of figuration? If both used allegory, how did one differentiate between them? A relatively early figure like the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati still argued that, in contrast to pagan myth, which was literally false, or false on the surface, scripture was true both literally and figuratively.[31] Later humanists seemed less inclined to take this route, but this then made it even more difficult to distinguish between scripture and myth. Whereas the problem for ancient writers had been how to make sense of unruly anthropomorphic gods and the fantastic elements of myth, the problem for Renaissance writers was how to interpret classical myth allegorically in a way that did not threaten the allegorical truths of the Christian religion—how, in other words, to distinguish one kind of allegory from another. Given the etymology of allegory as speaking otherwise, we can say that the Renaissance—with its psychomachia of Christianity and classical culture, its confrontation with Christianity's pagan other—is the preeminent allegorical moment.

In one sense, allegory is always a response to a crisis of reading, a crisis about the literal meaning of the text. But the Renaissance also precipitated a meta-crisis of allegory, understood as the strategy for negotiating or resolving the crisis of literal reading. One characteristic move in the psychomachia of antiquity and Christianity that I have described was simply to continue to argue (as had been done in the Middle Ages) that a classical text such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* allegorized Christian morality. In arguing that pagan poetry contained theological truths that were compatible with or anticipated the truths of Christianity, this kind of reading was a form of poetic theology.[32] But in reinterpreting classical texts allegorically to fit with Christianity, and thus in a certain sense leveling the distinction between them, Renaissance humanists also exposed scripture to a rereading that threatened its unique revelation of divine truth. If in a first movement poetic theology elevated ancient poetry to the level of theology, in a second movement theology could itself be reduced to the level of fiction. Poetic theology, we could then say, was the solvent that produced literature out of scripture. It's this dynamic that I'd like to trace with reference to three exemplary figures: Boccaccio, Ficino, and Erasmus.

In the *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, Boccaccio declares that his intention is to show "the art of the ancient poets and the consanguinity and relations of the false gods."[33] In a first move, the assertion of falseness turns the theology of ancient myth into mere art. But although Boccaccio isolates literature, understood as "the art of the ancient poets," by pointing to the

theological falseness of the pagan gods, he also uses the figurative dimension of scripture to justify literature understood as secular poetry. If critics of poetry condemn it as fiction, he argues, they will also need to condemn much of the Bible. For what the poets call fable or fiction, "our theologians" have named "figure," "parable," or "exemplum."[34] Boccaccio makes no reference to Thomas Aquinas's distinction between the figures of scripture and of poetry; he is not talking about allegory in factis but about the distinction between literal and figurative language. He does, however, mention Varro's argument about "physical theology"—the hiding of physical and moral truths under pagan myth. Varro then allows Boccaccio—in a second move—to recuperate the falseness of pagan literature, making it available to Christian use. In the preface to the *Genealogy*, in response to his patron's request that he explain the meanings wise men have hidden under their tales, Boccaccio comments, "Such interpretations are harder than you think; they are properly the business of the theologian, for Varro in treating of many matters both divine and human holds that such subjects constitute a sort of theology that may properly be called 'mythical,' or as others would say . . . physical." And he adds that in view of "the large element of absurd untruth in mythology, there is the more need of skill in separating true from false."[35] Later, in book 15, he quotes Varro to support his claim that some ancient writers were theologians of the pagan gods, and that their moral teachings could in some instances be "employed in the service of Catholic truth."[36] In this way, allegory comes to be identified with figuration and even fiction, which pleases the unlearned on the surface while it exercises the minds of the learned with its hidden truth. That is, allegory and poetic theology require a certain labor of reading and rereading. One wonders if Boccaccio is remembering here Cicero's etymological derivation of *religio* from *relegere*, to reread, an etymology that Augustine repeated in *The City of God*.[37] But instead of applying it to scripture, Boccaccio applies it to the new religion of literature.

In this way Boccaccio's account of literature vacillates between a cognitive critique and an aesthetic defense. He recounts how, even as a child, he knew "all pagan gods were devils" and disapproved of "their absurd misdeeds," but "their manner of worship aside, the character and words of certain ancient poets have delighted me."[38] In a double movement of reading, he discounts the literal truth of these pagan tales but delights in their poetic language. Elsewhere, Boccaccio emphasizes the harmless pleasure of pagan fiction—harmless because only a pagan would take seriously the mythic representation of anthropomorphic, lustful gods. In this emphasis

on harmless pleasure Boccaccio suggests that Christianity immunizes the
reader and thus authorizes a space for secular literature understood as aes-
thetic play.

But if literature or poetry includes surface artistic embellishment, which
is pleasing in itself, it also points to hidden truths. Here Boccaccio dis-
tinguishes between an inferior, merely aesthetic, pleasure and a superior
pleasure that conduces to moral and theological profit. Anticipating what
later humanists would call poetic theology, Boccaccio asserts that poets
"won the name of theologians even among the primitive pagans."[39] In ar-
guing for the moral, theological, and philosophical content of poetry, this
defense takes place under the auspices of Plato.[40] At the same time, Boc-
caccio frankly confesses that, where he has not been able to find classical
interpretations of ancient myth, he has simply invented them. In allying
poetic theology with human invention, Boccaccio suggests that myth is
not so much the revelation of divine truth as the preeminent manifestation
of the human imagination. This tension between divine truth and human
invention is at work in later discussions of poetic theology as well, includ-
ing in the Florentine Neoplatonism of Marsilio Ficino, the author of a vast
synthesis of Christianity and classical philosophy titled *The Platonic Theol-
ogy* (completed in 1474 and published in 1482).

The Neoplatonists were interested in reconciling Christianity not sim-
ply with Greek and Roman mythology but with all religious traditions,
including foreign cults. As Jean Seznec has written, "Their attitude [was]
no longer one of rationalization [of ancient myth] . . . [but] of believers and
mystics, reverently teaching the depths of meaning within a sacred text."[41]
It is for this reason, I think, that C. S. Lewis argued that Neoplatonists did
not so much read allegorically (if by allegory we understand personifica-
tion) as symbolically or sacramentally. For Lewis, "the allegorist leaves the
given—his own passions—to talk of that which is confessedly less real,
which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is
more real."[42] In a sense, one could say that, for Ficino, allegory is neither
the allegoria in factis of medieval scriptural commentary nor is it simply a
practice of reading. Instead, the cosmos itself is constructed as an allegory,
since lowly matter points to higher spiritual reality. Within such a struc-
ture, the human soul is a "copula," the bond that links matter and spirit in
human nature, which in turn serves as a microcosm of cosmic order.[43]

This view of the cosmos had implications for reading the works of an-
tiquity. Above all, the Neoplatonists believed that Plato conveyed the same
sacred truths as Christianity. This in turn meant that Plato himself both
wrote allegorically and taught that poetry was enigmatic and should be

read allegorically.[44] If one consequence of this hermeneutic was to lessen the difference between philosophy and religion, Plato and Christ, or—to borrow from Ficino's title—Plato and theology, another consequence was to diminish the distance between philosophy and religion, on the one hand, and poetry, on the other. All were characterized by the distinction between matter and spirit, that is, between the physical representation, figure, or veil, and the hidden spiritual truth. It has been suggested that Ficino's conviction of the agreement between philosophy and religion fostered a general concept of natural religion that prepared the way for deism and religious tolerance.[45] But I think one could also argue, with Michael Allen, that Ficino's syncretism turned poetry into the preeminent mode of philosophy and theology.[46]

Paul Oskar Kristeller argued that Ficino did not really have an aesthetic, if by this we mean a discrete discourse on art as we now understand it. I think this is true but only because the category of art has expanded in Ficino to include all creative forms of human activity. Although Ficino is regularly associated with Platonic idealism and the contemplative ascent from the material world to the world of Ideas, there is a countervailing impulse in Ficino—as in Pico della Mirandola—to celebrate God as not simply a creator but as a maker—an artist or artifex—whose activity serves as a model and authorization of human artistic activity broadly construed.[47] According to Ficino, such creative activity is itself evidence of the immortality of the soul. Just as humans know God by knowing the divine in themselves, in their own souls, so they know divinity in the human activity of culture or cultivation, both physical and spiritual. "Throughout the whole globe how marvelous is [man's] culture of the earth!" Ficino exclaims in book 13 of *The Platonic Theology*. "In inhabiting all the elements and cultivating them all, he performs the office of God [vicem gerit dei]." And later he remarks that the "soul emulates all God's works through its various arts [per varias artes]."[48] Among these cultural activities are government and the liberal arts, including music, rhetoric, and poetry.[49] Ficino also suggests that there is a creative dimension to the production of philosophical texts and to the process of reading, by which we ascend from the material reality of the text to higher spiritual truths. Like the poets, the philosophers veil theological truths with figurative language, and it is the task of the reader to discover the spiritual meaning through a diligent labor of allegorical interpretation: "Wherefore, since Plato had conveyed to the youthful Dionysius certain divine mysteries under a veil, he enjoined him first to examine them diligently. . . . And he added furthermore that the divine mysteries after more frequent, nay unending examination, are

eventually and after great difficulty and labor rendered pure and dazzling like gold."[50] It is true that Ficino vacillates in his account of this process of uncovering spiritual truths, sometimes attributing it to "diligent examination," and sometimes to "divine revelation." But given what Ficino says elsewhere about how the mind comes to recognize divinity within itself, there may not be a substantial difference between the two.

Thus, despite his emphasis on the contemplative ascent to contemplation of God, Ficino's poetic theology contributed powerfully to the Renaissance preoccupation with humanity's form-giving capacity. This was because, in Ficino's view, the soul was itself a principle of form. As Ernst Cassirer argued long ago, Ficino portrayed the human soul as the "copula" or "vinculum" between God and the world because the soul contained an innate "norm of beauty" that allowed it to perceive and judge the beauty of the external world.[51] And this in turn meant that Neoplatonism did not simply authorize a contemplative stance toward the world; it also underwrote the Renaissance preoccupation with man-made aesthetic forms:

> According to Ficino, the whole point of religious and philosophical *knowledge* is nothing other than the eradication from the world of everything that seems deformed; and the recognition that even things that seem formless participate in form. But such knowledge cannot content itself with the mere concept; it must be transformed into action, and prove itself through action. Here begins the contribution of the artist. He can fulfill the requirement that speculation can only state. Man can only be certain that the sense world *has* form and shape if he continually *gives* it form. Ultimately, the beauty of the sensible world does not derive from itself; rather, it is founded in the fact that it becomes, in a sense, the medium *through which* the free creative force of man acts and becomes conscious of itself.[52]

Cassirer went on to adduce Leonardo da Vinci as an example of this approach:

> "O investigator of things," says Leonardo, "do not praise yourself for your knowledge of things brought forth by nature in its normal course; rather enjoy knowing the aim and the end of those things designed by your mind." For Leonardo, *this* is science and art. Science is a second creation of nature brought about by reason, and art is a second creation brought about by the imagination. Reason and imagination no longer confront each other as strangers; for each is simply a different manifestation of the same basic power in man, the power to give form.[53]

In this way, Cassirer ultimately brings Ficino into the fold of those Renaissance figures who anticipate the Kantian critique of judgment:

> The common characteristic joining the world of pure knowledge to
> that of artistic creation [in the Renaissance] is that both are dominated,
> in their different ways, by a moment of genuine intellectual generation.
> In Kantian language, they go beyond any "copy" view of the given; they
> must become an "architectonic" construction of the cosmos. As science
> and art become more and more *conscious* that their primary function is
> to give form, they conceive of the law to which they are subject more
> and more as the expression of their essential freedom.[54]

Neoplatonism had a powerful impact on the Northern humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, who articulated its assumption about the relation of body to spirit and drew out the implications of its practice of allegorical reading in the *Enchiridion*, or "Handbook of the Militant Christian" (1503). Erasmus argued that reading the pagan poets and philosophers is a good preparation for the Christian life, but only if one reads allegorically: "Just as divine Scripture bears no great fruit if you persist in clinging only to the literal sense, so the poetry of Homer and Virgil is of no small benefit if you remember that all this is allegorical."[55] Like Ficino, Erasmus believed that the philosophers state what is contained in a different manner in the holy scriptures. And, like Ficino, Erasmus recommended "the Platonists" the most highly: "Because in most of their ideas and in their very manner of speaking they come nearest to the beauty of the prophets and of the Gospels."[56] As Erasmus later explains, he is referring here to "the figurative language that [the Platonists] use, abounding in allegories, [which] very closely approaches the language of Scripture itself." Reading ancient philosophy and poetry in fact provides a kind of literary training for reading scripture allegorically. "Of course," Erasmus adds, whatever one finds in the Platonists should "be related to Christ."[57] It is not surprising, then, that among scriptural commentators, Erasmus recommended those who "go as far as possible beyond the literal meaning": "Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine."[58] But Erasmus himself went even further, arguing that perhaps more was to be gained from reading myth allegorically than reading the Bible literally ("Immo fortasse plusculo fructu legetus poetica cum allegoria, quam narratio sacrorum librorum, si consistas in cortice").[59] As Jean Seznec has commented on this passage, "Neoplatonic exegesis, which had presented [Renaissance humanists] with hitherto undreamed-of possibilities of reconciliation between the Bible and mythology, had now

so obscured the distinction between the two that Christian dogma no lon-
ger seemed acceptable in anything but an allegorical sense."[60] Although
Erasmus did not go so far, in questioning the literal reading of Christian
doctrine, allegorical reading could ultimately point to a radical questioning
of the truth of Christian religion.

The explosive implications of these insights can be seen in the later lit-
erature of the Renaissance, where classical myth is no longer sublated by
Christian doctrine through allegorical reading but anticipates something
like the autonomy of the aesthetic artifact. To cite just three examples, we
see this in Marlowe's Faustus's conjuring of Mephistopheles and Helen
of Troy, and in Milton's catalogue of pagan gods in *Paradise Lost*. In the
first case, Marlowe prefaces the Latin spell that summons Mephistopheles
from hell with Faustus's own gorgeous poetry, thereby inviting the reader
or viewer to associate Faustus's magic with the magic of poetry, as well as
with theater's capacity to invent and bring to life figures such as Mephis-
topheles. Mephistopheles in turn encourages Faustus's tendency to sus-
pend Christian belief and treat scripture as mere literature, not least of all
by presenting the allegory of the seven deadly sins not as moral instruction
but as mere entertainment. If from one perspective, this allies aesthetic
pleasure with the devil, from another it shows skepticism about religion in
which the suspension of Christian belief morphs into literary experience.
As Graham Hammill has argued, "Faustus's blasphemy develops a sense
of language that completely reformulates theological belief." What makes
Doctor Faustus "tragical" according to Hammill is "less Faustus's renuncia-
tion of God and pact with Lucifer than the relation it establishes between
Faustus and the literary, a relation that makes the literary, as the site of
what Eliot called blasphemy, tragically inescapable."[61] In a less tragic vein,
Richard Halpern has commented on Faustus's summoning of Helen of
Troy: "For Marlowe, as for Faustus, the problem of the phantom Helen
is at one level the problem of classical culture as such, which appears as
a source of beauteous splendor and as a dangerous pagan delusion": "as
phantom or *eidolon*, [Faustus's Helen] lacks substance and, as a representa-
tive of a culture 'cancelled' by Christianity, she cannot serve as a reposi-
tory of transcendent values." But precisely because "Helen" does not al-
legorically represent transcendent value, she foregrounds Marlowe's own
invention. As Halpern writes, "The spell cast by her beauty is akin to that
produced by the work of art," including Marlowe's own.[62]

Milton might have been thinking of Marlowe when he associated his
devils with art in book 1 of *Paradise Lost*. Milton first wittily plays on the

Euhemerist critique by suggesting that the pagan gods were originally not important men but rather devils.[63] But in his metapoetic reflections about the building of Pandemonium and elsewhere, Milton also suggests, in David Quint's words, "that the imagination is a potential entry point for the diabolical into human experience": "Milton must summon the devils into poetic being in order to warn a reader who . . . is figured as unaware of them. But he runs the risk of fascinating the reader with that very poetic creation."[64] Although Quint does not make this argument, one implication of this analysis is that the representation of God is just as poetic or fictional as that of the devils. Another is that this elevation of poetry above theology or in place of theology is precisely what Milton intended. Gordon Teskey suggests as much when he places Milton at "the threshold of a post-theological world," and argues that his poetic power derives from "a rift at the center of his consciousness over the question of creation itself." Milton is "the last major poet in the European literary tradition for whom the act of creation is centered in God and the first in whom the act of creation begins to find its center in the human."[65] To use the terms I elaborated at the beginning of this essay, Milton dramatizes the transition (or at least the difficulty of maintaining the distinction) between poetic theology as divinely inspired poetry and as poetry that enacts the fiction of the divine. But even if we do not want to go so far, it seems clear that for Milton, as for Erasmus, literature itself is capable of being the vehicle of spiritual insight if read in the correct fashion, and this in turn suggests that what distinguishes scripture from other works is a habit of reading rather than any intrinsic features of the text.[66] In Milton's universe, hermeneutics constitutes one's relation to God: More radically, God himself might even be constituted through the activity of interpretation. In the process, the form-giving capacity of the human mind becomes the central preoccupation of both poet and reader.

Sanford Budick has argued that Kant's conception of aesthetic judgment and in particular of the analytic of the sublime was profoundly influenced by his reading of Milton. This reading was shaped by a generation of German Miltonists, for whom *Paradise Lost* was the supreme literary masterpiece of the Renaissance and the supreme instance of sublimity in poetry. But Kant was unique in linking Milton to his philosophical account of the aesthetic as purposeful purposelessness, that is, as a formal structure (rather than a specific content) that was ultimately internal to the mind. Kant, according to Budick, saw in Milton's poetry the transcendence of the mere copy view of art and the dramatization of a poetic process of

Nachfolge—a kind of imitation or emulation that achieves originality and in doing so exemplifies in formal terms the moral autonomy of the freely self-determining subject.[67]

Although Budick's analysis of Kant's indebtedness to Milton is unusual for its philosophical rigor, the insight at the heart of his analysis—his focus on the new centrality of form and the form-giving capacity of the human mind as keys to the emergence of the eighteenth-century discourse of aesthetics—is shared by some of the most important twentieth-century scholars of the Renaissance. As we've seen, early in the twentieth century, both Panofsky and Cassirer argued that whereas the Middle Ages appreciated the content of ancient culture, Renaissance artists attended to its formal qualities as well. And for both, this attention to form was the first step toward what Kant called aesthetic judgment. One of Panofsky's main arguments about the Renaissance prehistory of aesthetics, seconded by Cassirer, is that the period effected a divorce between the pulchrum and the bonum, the beautiful and the good, and thus liberated art from its medieval subordination to theology and metaphysics. At the same time, Renaissance artists strengthened the tie between the pulchrum and the verum, understood as the true representation of nature or nature's laws, thus anticipating the rule-governed conception of artistic genius prominent in Kant and eighteenth-century aesthetics more generally. For Panofsky, this divorce was achieved not simply by a focus on art as a craft but also by a new emphasis on the imitation of nature, as opposed to Platonic ideas.[68] Whereas Plato had been critical of art as mimesis at two removes of the eternal Ideas, early Renaissance art theorists such as Alberti conceived of the "idea" in Ciceronian terms as a mental construct, an idea of proportion or harmony, which was derived from nature and also gave the artist the confidence to imitate nature.[69] In Alberti, "the autonomy of the aesthetic experience . . . was recognized *de facto* even if not *de jure*."[70] Cassirer argued in a similar vein that for Leonardo, "the power of the mind, the power of artistic and of scientific genius does not reside in unfettered arbitrariness but in the ability to teach us to see and to know the 'object' in its truth, in its highest determination. Be it as artist or as thinker, the genius finds the necessity in nature." For Cassirer this development was part of a larger narrative about the emergence of the aesthetic: "Centuries elapsed before this principle was formulated in all its theoretical clarity, i.e. before the 'critique of judgment' could formulate the principle that genius is the gift of nature through which 'nature in the subject' gives the law to art. But the path towards this objective was now clearly indicated."[71]

I will quarrel in a moment with Cassirer's elision of the difference between the Renaissance idea of artistic creation, of giving form to the art object, and Kant's idea of aesthetic judgment, which is famously indifferent to the existence of the object.[72] But I also think that Panofsky and Cassirer were right to emphasize the emergence of a new idea of aesthetic autonomy in this period. As I've argued in the preceding pages, one signature of the new autonomy of the aesthetic artifact in the later Renaissance was the transformation of allegory. No longer a poetic vehicle of divinely authored theological truths, allegory became instead a sign of the eminently literary. In *Paradise Lost*, for example, Milton employed allegory in the encounter between Sin and Death, an episode that in the eighteenth century was alternately praised for its sublimity and condemned for its obvious artifice. Allegory here is not a form of poetic theology, revealing the hidden truths of the cosmos under a veil of fiction. Instead, the allegory of Sin and Death points self-referentially (Sin is described as "a sign") to the deadly abstraction of this rhetorical mode. At the same time, it celebrates the genial, inventive power of the poet. Whether one sees the allegory of Sin and Death as "very beautiful and well invented" or condemns it as unreal or improbable in the context of epic (Addison did both), it foregrounds Milton's poetic achievement: In the first case, we note the sublimity of Milton's imagination of Sin and Death; in the second case, we appreciate by contrast "the realism" of the rest of the poem's "epic surface."[73] If from one perspective, then, the allegory of Sin and Death dramatizes the deadliness of a certain kind of autonomous signification (Sin as sign) or in more orthodox theological terms the diabolical nature of the aesthetic as a category and an experience divorced from God, from another perspective Milton could be said to be consciously of the devil's party, dramatizing his own aesthetic powers of invention.[74] Here we have moved entirely from one pole of allegory (allegory as a structure of the cosmos) to the other (allegory as the human invention of forms that would otherwise be unimaginable).

If we now return to early twentieth-century genealogies of the aesthetic, we can see that Panofsky and Cassirer were right to treat the Renaissance preoccupation with form as an important moment in the history of aesthetics. But, as the preceding pages have shown, what Milton and others meant by form was not the purposive purposelessness of Kant's free beauty, which the judging subject finds in (that is, ascribes to) the autonomous aesthetic artifact. Nor was form understood in Kantian terms as a symbol of the self-legislating subject who gives the moral law to himself. Instead, Renaissance artists from Alberti to Milton celebrated the actual form-giving

capacity of the artist, while creating works of art whose beauty Kant would have described as "dependent." This is a beauty that does not produce disinterested contemplation and is instead inseparable from the emotions and concepts through which we make sense of our experience, including ethical concepts and ideas of truth.[75] As M. H. Abrams recognized long ago, form for these Renaissance authors was a matter of construction more than aesthetic contemplation, at least in Kant's sense of the term. Kant's identification of the experience of form with disinterested contemplation thus represented a fundamental shift away from the powerful insights of Renaissance artists into their own ability not simply to imitate, but to create new forms and new worlds.[76]

NOTES

1. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 357.

2. For the former, see, for example, Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), and Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*: *Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); for the latter, see an older generation of scholars such as Jean Seznec and Erwin Panofsky, discussed below. Ernst Cassirer, though not discussing only the history of allegorical interpretation, also reads the Renaissance as anticipating Kant's insights in *The Critique of Judgment*.

3. For an argument that the Renaissance did not yet have a full-blown concept of aesthetics, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 163–228.

4. On the failure of the humanist pedagogical project in poetry, see Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). For one articulation of the aesthetic conception of literature in the Renaissance, see Lodovico Castelvetro's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*. For an argument about the way that early modern political thought and moral philosophy anticipate certain aspects of the Kantian aesthetic, see Howard Caygill, *Art of Judgement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). And for an argument in some ways close to the one I elaborate here, see M. H. Abrams, who charts the shift from what he calls a construction conception of art in the Renaissance to a focus on contemplation (by the viewer or reader) in eighteenth-century aesthetics in "From Addison to Kant: Modern Aesthetics and Exemplary Art," in his *Doing Things with Texts* (New York: Norton, 1989).

5. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), 51, 67, 95; and Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1960), chap. 1. I return to Cassirer and Panofsky at the end of this essay.

6. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1972), 6.6.239 and 6.6.237.

7. Although Plato was critical of myth as mimesis, he reintroduced myth in his own work in the form of the allegory of the cave. Although—or precisely because—Plato's myth was an invented myth, his allegorizing gesture proved to be prophetic of later recuperations of Greek and Roman myth. That is, it was later used by Renaissance Neoplatonists to argue that Plato himself wrote allegorically, just as the poets did.

8. Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 30.

9. See Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chap. 1. Struck argues that ancient theories of the symbol, with their emphasis on the enigmatic or allegorical reading of texts, anticipate modern concerns with "the ontological linkage between signs and their referents, the notion that language is autonomous and creates a world rather than passively labeling it, and the view of the poet as a solitary genius, attuned to the hidden truths of the cosmic order" (13). One of Struck's main points is that, unlike Romantic theory, ancient theory did not distinguish between symbol and allegory. Another is that allegory in antiquity was a practice of reading, not of writing.

10. See Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 269, on the preservation of myth in the Renaissance.

11. See Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths*, 1.

12. On Euhemerus as "the atheist," see ibid., 48.

13. Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, trans. Horace C. P. McGregor (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1972), 86.

14. Ibid., 87.

15. Ibid., 112–13.

16. Ibid., 152.

17. Ibid., 233.

18. Ibid., 218.

19. Etienne Gilson, "Poésie et vérité dans la *Genealogia* de Boccace," in *Studi sul Boccaccio*, vol. 2, ed. Vittorio Branca (Florence: Sansoni, 1964), 259.

20. Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 49.

21. See Thomas Aquinas's commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (1 *Sent.*, *prologue* 1, 5c and *ad tertium*), in which Aquinas sees metaphor as "common to both poetry and theology," a position he refines in the *Summa Theologica* (I, 1, 9 ad 1). E. H. Curtius gives the references to Aquinas and provides an account of the medieval debate about poetic theology, specifically about whether poetry can be conceived of as a form of theology or must instead be distinguished from Christian theology, in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 217. In "Allegory in Christian Late Antiquity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Denys Turner argues that the distinction between theological and poetic allegory advanced by Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra, and Hugh of Saint Victor was designed "to liberate theological allegory from its confusions with the literary," but "an untended consequence was in turn to liberate the literary possibilities of allegory from their confusion with the theological" (82). For an account of poetic theology in the Renaissance, see Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1970), 2:683–722.

22. See Turner, "Allegory in Christian Late Antiquity," 79.

23. Ibid., 80.

24. In "Figura," trans. Ralph Manheim in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), Erich Auerbach described figura as "allegorical in the widest sense," but different from the usual understanding of allegory in "the historicity of both sign and signified" (54). This kind of relation introduces a temporal dimension into allegory, one that would provide a model for negotiating the vast temporal and moral difference between pagan and Christian texts in the Renaissance. Just as the Old Testament prefigures events in the New, so it would be argued pagan myth prefigures the truths of Christianity.

25. See Albert R. Ascoli, "Dante and Allegory," in *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 135; and *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Thus Dante would be one important medieval author who anticipates the modern notion of literature that I am locating primarily in the Renaissance.

26. Copeland and Struck, introduction to *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 5.

27. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2:685.

28. Instead of depicting Hercules anachronistically clothed in medieval doublet and hose, Renaissance painters and sculptors depicted Hercules in

ancient Greek dress. The appreciation of classical form was thus inseparable
from a new perception of the difference in historical periods, a new historical
self-consciousness. Formalism and historicism, so often thought to be op-
posed, were in this case not antithetical but mutually enabling. Historicism,
that is, was not a cause of skepticism, nor did it imply a whiggish philosophy
of history. Instead, it signified a newly confident appreciation of the objec-
tive achievements of the past. In addition to fostering a new historical self-
consciousness, the enlivening encounter with classical forms also produced a
new epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. See Karl Borinski, *Die Weltwiederge-
burtsidee in den neueren Zeiten, I: Der Streit um die Renaissance und die Enste-
hungsgeschichte der historischen Beziehungsbegriffe Renaissance und Mittelalter*
(Bayreuth: Bayrische Academie der Wissenschaften, 1919), cited by Cassirer,
Individual and Cosmos, 6, 159–60; Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods*; Panof-
sky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, 84, 112, 177.

29. See Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods*; and for an argument that
Seznec exaggerates the continuities between the Middle Ages and the Re-
naissance allegorical interpretations of the pagan gods, see Eugenio Garin,
"Le favole antiche," in *Medioevo e rinascimento: Studi e ricerche* (Bari: Laterza,
1973), 63–84.

30. See Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths*, 113. Brisson is talking
about Byzantine Christianity; cf. also Gilson, "Poésie et vérité."

31. Coluccio Salutati, *De laboribus herculis*, book 2, cited in Trinkaus, *In
Our Image and Likeness*, 2:697. See also Ronald Witt, *Hercules at the Cross-
roads: The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham, NC: Duke
University Press, 1983), 212–26, 405–9.

32. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2:690. The widespread Renais-
sance interest in what D. P. Walker has called "ancient theology," that is,
the compatibility of what were believed to be ancient Orphic, Hermetic,
and Neoplatonic texts with Christian doctrine, is relevant here. See Walker,
*The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the
Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972). I discuss
Neoplatonism below.

33. Giovanni Boccaccio, *On Poetry*, trans. Charles Osgood (New York:
Macmillan Press, 1956), 12.

34. Ibid., 48–49.

35. Ibid., 6.

36. Ibid., 121–23.

37. See Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 2.72; Augustine, *Civitate Dei*, 10.3,
12.24.

38. Boccaccio, *On Poetry*, 128. For an excellent reading of Boccaccio's
Genealogia, see Ronald Levao, *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1985), 111–16. Levao stresses "the ambiguity latent within the poet's originating *inventio*: the twilight boundary between objective discovery and projection; allegory as it is fashioned in the *Genealogy* becomes as much a sign of the imagination at play as a grounded justification of that play" (116).

39. Boccaccio, *On Poetry*. 122.

40. See Gilson, "Poésie et verité."

41. Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 85. On Neoplatonism, see also Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. Joseph J. S. Peake (New York: Icon, 1968), and E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance II* (New York: Phaidon, 1978), esp. 150–91.

42. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 45.

43. See Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, trans. Michael J. B. Allen, ed. Michael Allen and James Hankins, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001–6), 3.236 and 242. on the soul as the "copula mundi." I cite the *Platonic Theology* by book number and page.

44. Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 96. Significantly, Plotinus rejected Plato's notion that art imitates the Ideas at two removes, arguing instead that the artist has direct access to the Ideas. See his *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber, 1926), 5.8.1.

45. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Platonic Academy in Florence," in *Renaissance Thought II: Papers on Humanism and the Arts* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 99. See also Cassirer, *Individual and Cosmos*, 71, on how Ficino's concept of religion leads to increased tolerance toward different forms of religion.

46. In his introduction to Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* i n *Commentaries on Plato*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Michael J. B. Allen, I Tatti Renaissance Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), Allen writes, "As the first great poem by Plato—whom Ficino believed to be the last and greatest of the *prisci theologi* . . . the *Phaedrus* establishes poetry as the philosophic mode par excellence and the poetical style as the authentically Platonic style" (12). See also the introduction to Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 1:xii: Ficino used the term "prisci theologi"; Pico had planned to write a "poetic theology."

47. Ficino calls God the "artifex omnium" in the epistolary introduction to *Platonic Theology* that he wrote for Lorenzo de' Medici, which is included in volume 6 of the I Tatti edition, here 244. On this dimension of Ficino's argument, see André Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art* (Geneva: Droz, 1954); Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2:461–504; and E. N. Tigerstedt, "The Poet as Creator: Origins of a Metaphor," *Comparative Literature Studies* 5 (1968): 455–88, esp. 471–75. Tigerstedt argues that Landino's comparison of the poet to God the creator was fundamentally influenced by Ficino's concep-

tion of man as "a semi-creator," an intermediary between the world and God (475). Ernst Cassirer also emphasizes this aspect of Ficino in *Individual and the Cosmos*: "Ultimately, the beauty of the sensible world does not derive from itself; rather, it is founded in the fact that it becomes, in a sense, the medium *through which* the free creative force of man acts and becomes conscious of itself. Seen in this light, however, art no longer lies outside the province of religion but rather becomes a moment of the religious process itself" (67). "In [its] religious justification of the world, . . . the Florentine Academy always returns to the miracle of beauty, to the miracle of artistic form and of artistic creation. And upon this miracle it founds its theodicy" (63), citing *Platonic Theology*, 10.5; "The theodicy of the world given by Ficino in his doctrine of Eros had, at the same time, become the true theodicy of art" (135). For Ficino, however, philosophy was always a *pia philosophia* rather than an independent method of investigation, as was the case for Cusa (61).

48. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 14.248.

49. Ibid., 13.175.

50. Ibid., 14.305–7.

51. Cassirer, *Individual and Cosmos*, 63.

52. Ibid., 67.

53. Ibid., 67; see also 160–61.

54. Ibid., 143.

55. Erasmus, *The Enchiridion of Erasmus*, trans. and ed. Raymond Himelick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 51. See especially chapter 14 for Erasmus's Neoplatonic language about the relationship between body and soul, matter and spirit.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 53.

59. Ibid., 105.

60. Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 99; the Erasmus example is from Seznec.

61. Graham Hammill, *Sexuality and Form: Caravaggio, Marlowe, and Bacon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 97.

62. Richard Halpern, "Marlowe's Theater of Night: *Doctor Faustus* and Capital," *ELH* 71, no. 2 (2004): 487, 488, 489. In this essay Halpern is not particularly interested in arguing that Marlowe is criticizing theology, but I think this is one of the implications of his argument.

63. In "Milton's Book of Numbers: Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* and Its Catalogue," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13, no. 3 (2007): 528–49, David Quint traces this line of argument to Augustine in *The City of God* 8.24. See 546.

64. Ibid.

65. Gordon Teskey, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5, 29.

66. I've made this argument in relation to *Paradise Regain'd* in "Job's Complaint in *Paradise Regain'd*," *ELH* 76, no. 3 (2009): 625–60.

67. Sanford Budick, *Kant and Milton* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010). Kant "viewed the phenomenon of exemplary genius as the surest indication of the universal human potential for freedom, originality, individuality, and even moral feeling" (15). On *Nachfolge*, which Budick translates not as "following" but as "succession," see p. 3.

68. Panofsky, *Idea*, 47. See also Halliwell, *Aesthetics of Mimesis*, on the Renaissance recovery of the Aristotelian tradition of mimesis and the diverse ways in which the imitation of nature was construed by Renaissance artists and theorists.

69. Panofsky, *Idea*, 50, 65.

70. Ibid., 55. In the later Renaissance, by contrast, Panofsky argued, Neoplatonism undermined this achievement by reverting to a concept of the idea as transcendental and a priori, and insisting on providing a metaphysical justification of beauty. See ibid., 56, 93.

71. Cassirer, *Individual and Cosmos*, 164.

72. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, §2. On this indifference to the object, see the excellent discussion of Kant in Jonathan Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics: Autonomy, Indifference, Postmodernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), chap. 2.

73. Steven Knapp, *Personification and the Sublime: Milton to Coleridge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 56, quoting Addison's appreciation of the allegory and paraphrasing Addison's criticism of its improbability in the context of the epic.

74. On Sin and Death as in part an allegorical critique of the autonomy of the aesthetic, see my earlier essay, "Allegory and the Sublime in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton*, ed. Annabel Patterson (London: Longman, 1992), 185–201.

75. See Halliwell, *Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 10, on the difference between free and dependent beauty in Kant. Kant discusses dependent aesthetic judgments in *The Critique of Judgment*, §16.

76. See M. H. Abrams, "From Addison to Kant," on the shift from a construction model of art to a contemplation model, and on the idea of a heterocosm. On the Renaissance conception of art as a heterocosm, see also Harry Berger Jr., *Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction-Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

Object Lessons: Reification and Renaissance Epitaphic Poetry

Rachel Eisendrath

In this essay I explore how early modern artworks, both visual and verbal, anticipate Theodor W. Adorno's concerns with reification in aesthetics.[1] Focusing in particular on epitaphic poetry, I argue that early modern art provides a kind of "unconscious" history of reification during a period in Europe that was, in Adorno's view, pivotal in the development of reification.

Adorno's well-known claim that "all reification is forgetting"[2] can be understood in at least two overlapping senses: one, that reification forgets whatever does not fit into the conceptual categories of instrumental reason and in so doing disregards the irreducible alterity of the things of the world,[3] and two, that reification forgets history, failing to acknowledge the historical processes that produced it. "Ever since men began to seek the foundation of all knowledge in the supposed immediacy of subjectivity, they have endeavored to expel the historical dimension of thought," Adorno writes.[4] Scientific methodology, for example, which emerges in the early modern period, presents itself as timeless.

Given Adorno's interest in this problem of effaced history, especially in regard to the rise of scientific objectivity, it is surprising that critics

rarely trace his thinking further back than the eighteenth century. Adorno himself repeatedly refers to Francis Bacon in the Renaissance: On the first page of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, for example, he and Max Horkheimer quote a passage of Bacon's circa 1592 essay "In Praise of Knowledge" to show how "the father of experimental philosophy" wanted to "establish man as the master of nature"; in his *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, similarly, Adorno refers to Bacon as "the founding father of empiricism" and suggests that the "exuberant" phase of empiricism may have begun with this thinker;[5] and in the introductory text for these lectures, Adorno discusses Bacon's justifiable antagonism to tradition but faults him (and René Descartes), "the two progenitors of modernity," for disregarding the role of tradition in knowledge, given that tradition mediates among its objects.[6] It is hard to overestimate the importance of this kind of thinking for Adorno. "Since my earliest youth," he writes in a note of May 1960, "I knew that everything that I stood for found itself in a hopeless struggle with what I perceived as the anti-spirit incarnate—the spirit of Anglo-Saxon natural-scientific positivism."[7]

In this essay, I explore the role of early modernity in Adorno's ideas by looking closely at the inner formal dynamics of various early modern artworks. I understand my approach as one way of attempting to take up Adorno's own challenge: Drawing on G. W. F. Hegel, Adorno raises the question of whether a critique really places us above an issue—or, instead, merely "not in it."[8] At the same time as Adorno considers the social factors that shape art, he directs us to look *inside* artworks at what he calls their "immanent problems of form."[9] Art, because it is sedimented with the conflicts that society repressed, is "the unconscious writing of history."[10] My task is to show how some early modern artworks attempted to defy emergent forms of reification by pushing outward from within their own locked-in state—perhaps not unlike some of Adorno's own sentences, which have the insistent charge of final utterances at the same time as they strive to express from within, as he says elsewhere, "an element of the tentative, experimental and inconclusive."[11]

In exploring the issue of early modern art's struggle with reification, I build on Hugh Grady's claim that Shakespeare "registered, reflected on, and . . . passionately denounced the historically new forms of reification erupting into a social world in the earliest stages of the permanent cultural revolution we blandly call modernity."[12] My core examples concern epitaphic poetry, which, in mimicking reified objects, presumes to speak from the perspective of a dead corpse or tomb. This poetry exemplifies how, as Adorno says, an artwork both evokes and resists its own objectness: "If it

is essential to artworks that they be things, it is no less essential that they negate their own status as things, and thus art turns against art."[13]

Art as the Unconscious Writing of History

Let's begin with this image of Lucretia, the Roman matron who kills herself after being raped by the king's son, Tarquin. In a detail of a 1530–32 painting, Lorenzo Lotto represents her at the iconographic moment when she is about to plunge a knife into her chest (Figure 1).[14] The artist has emphasized her extreme lack of self-possession: her mouth gapes open; her eyes roll upward; she is naked. This nakedness is traditional at the same time that it makes no sense (her suicide occurs the morning after her rape, in the presence of her father and others whom she has summoned from the war camp). Painfully off-balance, clutching a crumpled sheet to her loins, her wild hair whipping around her body, she stands as though exposed to the elements, almost bestial in her despair. To whom is she calling? What does she see with her upward-turned eyes? Blurring the moment of her rape into that of her suicide,[15] an artistic tradition situates her at the outer edge of the social or the civilized; she becomes in this moment almost an image of the savage. Does she even have language? Note her mouth, which opens but seems to form no words; it makes a mute dark space. If she is screaming, her screaming resembles silence. This is the tragic in the full primitive power that Franz Rosenzweig describes—the subject folding

Figure 1. Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia*. Detail. 1530–32. 96.5 × 110.6 cm. The National Gallery, London. Permission granted.

in on herself, disappearing into the absolute loneliness of her "dumb anguish."[16] Trapped within herself, the victim finds that her experience of brutality defies communication: "The worst is not / So long as we can say 'This is the worst'" (*King Lear*, 4.1.29–30). Even screaming suggests the amelioration of pain.[17] At the extreme of suffering, the oppressed subject is transformed into a kind of object; a person is rendered thing.[18]

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written during World War II, Adorno draws our attention to the moment near the end of the *Odyssey* when Telemachus punishes the maidservants for sleeping with the suitors. Homer compares them to birds caught in a trap. After being forced to carry away the murdered bodies of their former lovers, and then to clean the hall of gore, the maids are penned within a courtyard where, all in a line and with a single cord, they are hanged. Homer writes:

> They struggled with their feet for a short time, not for very long.
> ἤσπαιρον δὲ πόδεσσι μίνυνθά περ οὔ τι μάλα δήν. (22.473)[19]

As in Lotto's depiction of Lucrece's moment of suicide, what the narrative registers in this verse is suffering at the "unspeakable" instant just before it disappears into oblivion,[20] at the exact moment—what Adorno calls the "numb pause"[21]—where the subjects lose consciousness of themselves as subjects and become mere things. These are not just the detached factual records of suffering, which after all the Nazis themselves kept, and which break faith with suffering by treating the victims objectively already as things, but the registering of suffering as experience on the very edge of the communicable. Even if the *Odyssey* ultimately softens the edges of this scene of horror by transmuting it into the "once upon a time" of a fairy tale's yesteryear, the poem also creates a significant pause at this instant. "In being brought to a standstill, the report is prevented from forgetting the victims of the execution and lays bare the unspeakably endless torment of the single instant in which the maids fought against death," Adorno writes.[22]

These examples illustrate, in a possibly overdetermined way, how reified forms of brutality can imprint themselves in art. The things of culture are, Adorno says, saturated with unspoken horrors: "The historical trace on things, words, colors and sounds is always of past suffering."[23] This is a variation of Walter Benjamin's well-known thesis that "there is no document of civilization that is not also a document of barbarism."[24] And yet Adorno also holds onto the possibility that art might make possible a critique of this history—through, as I explore in the following sections, the inner dynamics of its form.

Adorno articulates the following contradiction: Tradition is permeated with brutality, but to forget this tradition is to give in to brutality.[25] Veneration of tradition, no less than indifference to tradition, can blind us to the violent realities of the past. To understand this history demands a kind of immersion that is acutely critical, which "raises tradition to consciousness without succumbing to it."[26] In his 1951 *Minima Moralia*, Adorno provocatively presents the problem of this relationship to the history of art and literature as how *to hate* tradition "properly."[27] But it is also, no less important, how to keep faith with tradition or with the possibility of finally being able to lament suffering, rather than just to perpetuate it. The question is how to become conscious of this ingrained history of barbarism, without merely repeating its mentality.

The artwork is sedimented with historical experience, as are all material things. As such, the art object can be a luxury good that has a place in the market. Further, as a historical arti*fact*, the art object is never entirely distinct from scientific objects or objects of evidence. However, as much as the art object may resemble these reified objects, it may also help negate their untruth. "Thoughts and other dead things might be taken to be object lessons for life," explains Tom Huhn, "because they exhibit the stasis wherein life, for whatever reason, neglected to continue, except in a damaged and damaging fashion."[28] The artwork does not promise any reassuring mollification of this accumulated memory of suffering; rather the artwork holds open the possibility of a nondominating relation to it. In preserving what would otherwise disappear into oblivion, the artwork creates a pause that makes possible a kind of lament, and thereby suggests a different way that the world could be.

Epitaphic Poetry

Starting in the sixteenth century, antiquarians began to collect epitaphs as objects of historical evidence. In one sense, epitaphs are the kind of empiricist object that Adorno associates with reification. A previously living individual is collapsed into a sentence engraved in stone. What once existed in time becomes a static thing. Even when these epitaphs are fictionalized, they convey, in the words of one critic, "a *sheen of facticity*."[29] Renaissance poets not uncommonly wrote epitaphs about real people, but they also played with this form through *epitaphic poetry*, by which I mean literary experiments that test and stretch epitaphic forms. One reason that epitaphs are disquieting is precisely because they play with their own ambiguous objectness—testing the tension between aesthetics and materiality, or

between art objects and any other kind of object.[30] In this essay, I develop these observations by focusing on Renaissance poetry in which suffering seems to collapse into the deathly silence of material things, especially into epitaphs. But first let's return to the Lotto painting.

Let's step back now from the detail of the anguished Lucretia that we examined earlier. It is part of a larger painting, in which, astonishingly, an early modern Lucretia holds this drawing of the ancient Lucretia (Figure 2). The composition offers a study of contrasts: Against this ancient exemplar, the model asserts herself, seeming to declare her own existence in the present in tension with this figure from the past—whether because, as some scholars currently believe, the model's name was Lucretia (the bride-to-be Lucrezia Valier), or because, as other scholars used to believe, she was a courtesan whose very livelihood contradicts Lucretia's ideal of chastity (the portrait used to be called *The Courtesan*).[31] Against the flat, gray, naked, torqued figure in the drawing, the living woman claims her

Figure 2. Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia*. 1530–32. 96.5 × 110.6 cm. The National Gallery, London. Permission granted.

existence in the color, volume, and clothing of life. In contrast to the Lucretia in the drawing who appears lost to herself, beckoning off the frame to absent gods, the modern Lucretia confronts the viewer with a steadfast and emphatically self-possessed gaze, which draws us viewers into the set of relationships under consideration. We know that both the ancient and the modern Lucretia are representations, but it is as if the modern figure were more "real" than the woman in the drawing and mediates our relationship with this ancient exemplar. Note that the drawing is placed oddly in space: The model's arm holds it back behind her, but the drawing also pops forward in relation to the table, as though the drawing were both receding backward as an object of history and also coming forward as an object for identification. Whatever the particularities of the modern model's situation, she presents the possibility to the viewer of a kind of identification that is also an anti-identification.

Of special interest to me is the small piece of paper on the table (Figure 3). The note reads: "NEC VLLA IMPVDICA LV / CRETIAE EXEMPLO VIVET."[32] It is a slightly modified quotation from the ancient historian Livy of the famous words that Lucretia says just before killing herself: "Let no unchaste woman live by the example of Lucretia" (1.58.10).[33] In Livy's account, Lucretia has shifted in referring to herself from the embodied first person to a disembodied third person, almost as though she were already dead. Indeed, in Lotto's painting, the quotation has been made to seem a rubbing from an ancient tomb inscription. The letters are all capital, Roman, and shadowed as though carved into stone. Also, the paper has been folded, as if transported from somewhere, possibly tucked in a pocket or in the bosom of the model's gown. Why are there two separate sheets of paper at all? Instead of the statement being rendered as, say, an emblematic inscription on the drawing, the artist has emphasized a gap: above, the image of Lucretia in the drawing—the very image of subjectivity entering into the silent void of total suffering; below, the record of the inscription carved

Figure 3. Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia*. Detail. 1530–32. 96.5 × 110.6 cm. The National Gallery, London. Permission granted.

into stone—the "timeless" object lesson that her image has been made to represent. By offering these two distinct versions of the event, Lotto has created a distinction between the image of the suffering individual who lacks speech and the record of the aphoristic object-saying. Lotto's painting has in this way opened a space that allows the viewer to become critically aware of this collapse of experience into objects.

Epitaphs are unique for the way that they claim to speak from the position of an object (the tomb) and from the interred dead subject's position of nonbeing. In a scene in John Webster's 1613–14 *Duchess of Malfi*, the widowed Duchess professes her love to her steward Antonio and urges him to defy convention by loving her in return. She does so by contrasting herself with a statuary monument:

> Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
> To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident—
> What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir:
> 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
> Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man! (1.2.359–65)[34]

Against the image of the stony object kneeling at her dead husband's grave, the Duchess attempts to initiate a shared coming-to-life by asserting the force and reality of their mutually embodied existences in the present. In a sense, the tragedy of the Duchess is the story of the failure of this attempt—and her disappearance back into the same tomblike figure of rigidified virtue that she initially resisted. As she is tortured and finally killed by her brother, she becomes the static type of virtue, as opposed to the life-desiring being who earlier put off "all vain ceremony" (1.2.366) for the sake of love, erotic joy, and playfulness in the present. Instead, what she becomes for history is a rigidified object lesson. As her death approaches, her lady-in-waiting tells her that, indeed, she looks "like some reverend monument / Whose ruins are even pitied" (4.2.32–33). The Duchess thus becomes the very thing that she initially asserted herself against—a silent thing, specifically, a statuary monument. The comment closely resembles that of the Steward in William Shakespeare's and Thomas Middleton's *Timon of Athens*, who, accurately or inaccurately, understands Timon's fall as similarly illustrating a known object lesson: "O monument / And wonder of good deeds evilly bestowed!" (14.460–61).[35] In both cases, the main character's capacity for life collapses into a static tomblike thing, in the one case by the main character's choice (Timon) and in the other against her choice (the Duchess).

If the imagery in the *Duchess of Malfi* is tomblike, so is the heroine's famous saying: "I am Duchess of Malfi still" (4.2.137). If Timon writes his own epitaphs (14.720, 17.71–74),[36] so, too, it seems, does the Duchess. Her words of Stoical resistance are epitaphic in expressing the collapse of the living self into a third-person construction. The Duchess transforms herself from an "I" who is a center of consciousness and desire into the Duchess of Malfi, her title and, significantly, the title of the play. It is as though the playwright could actually predict the play's own reception, for in fact this line has remained the most-often quoted line—and, in that sense, has become who the Duchess is "still." Like Lucretia's inscription on the unfolded piece of paper, the Duchess of Malfi's line is an epitaphic declaration that anticipates the stillness of death.

Many epitaphs are built on demonstratives like *here* or *this*.[37] The most common form of an epitaph is, of course, "here lies . . . ," but we also often find other uses of the deictic: "In *this* tomb lies . . . " or "Beneath *this* stone behold . . . ." In his 1605 *Remains concerning Britain*, William Camden quotes dozens of examples of epitaphs that use the word "this" to refer to the tomb on which the words are found: "*This* little stone a great King's heart doth hold"; "Under *this* stone / Lyes John Knapton . . . "; and "*These* lines with golden letters I have fill'd . . . ," and so on.[38] As with the words of Eucharistic benediction, "This is my body" (*Hoc est corpus meum*), Matthew 26:26, an epitaph claims to overcome the space of referentiality by collapsing the distinction between word and thing. "How numerous and how important is the doubt produced in the world by the meaning of this syllable, *hoc* [this]," Michel de Montaigne remarked in regard to the Eucharistic debates.[39]

More so than any other poet of the Renaissance, Shakespeare uses such highly condensed epitaphic forms to test the problematic reification of living subjectivity. Not only are his plays scattered with overt references to epitaphs,[40] but, on the level of form, he also explores what I have been calling an epitaphic poetics through his use of deictics like *here* or *this*. In his 1594 *Titus Andronicus*, for example, Shakespeare evokes the image of extreme suffering through the figure of Lavinia and identifies her, as Lotto did his Lucretia, with the materiality of the historical record. After she is raped and violently disfigured, she stands mutely on stage without hands or tongue, appearing not unlike a ruined statue from the ancient world. Her uncle Marcus oddly compares her lips bubbling with blood to a fountain. Indeed, the imagery of ruins and monuments recurs throughout the play: from the first act (where Titus buries his sons in the family sepulcher) to

the last act (with its oddly anachronistic reference to a "ruinous monastery" [5.1.21]).[41]

Here and elsewhere Shakespeare links living suffering with objects, emphasizing especially their silence. In the scene where Lavinia is presented as an object of suffering, Marcus emphasizes her inability to communicate as her worst suffering: "Sorrow concealed, like an oven stopped,/Doth burn the heart to cinders where it is" (2.3.36–37). Her reification, which may also represent the silent sufferings of the common people,[42] is best expressed when he presents her to her father in the language of an epitaph:

This was thy daughter. (3.1.63)

This epitaphic line, which describes Lavinia as though she were already dead, employs the deictic *this* to emphasize her status as an object—specifically, an object of her father's, that is, within a patriarchal set of relations. Indeed, her brother Lucius responds: "Ay me, *this object* kills me" (3.1.65). Through this complex of associations, Shakespeare links Lavinia's inexpressible suffering with the silent ruins and epitaphs that history preserves. When Lavinia finally does manage to communicate the crimes she has endured, by writing the names of her torturers in the dust, Titus says that he will write these names in brass—a kind of permanent epitaph (Shakespeare writes of "tombs of brass" in sonnet 107), expressing her death before it actually occurs.

In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia is rendered an object by others. But sometimes, Shakespeare uses an epitaphic form to explore the ways that characters render, or anticipate, their own objectification. For example, in his 1602 *Twelfth Night*, Olivia says when unveiling her face for the first time:

Look you, sir, such a one I was this present. (1.5.227)[43]

It is certainly true that Olivia is referring to the disclosure of a painting, as the Arden editions note (she explicitly says that "we will draw the curtain and show you the picture"). But so far as I know, scholars have not remarked that the line's strongly melancholic undertone and effect of eerie self-detachment also derive from Shakespeare's use of the *memento mori* epitaphic trope, the basic form of which is expressed in the beginning of a 1593 epitaph:

Come nere my friends, behould and see
Suche as I am, suche shall you bee.[44]

Whereas the standard epitaph links the condition of a living stranger with the remains of a dead person (you will be like me, i.e., dead), Olivia uses

the epitaphic form to link her living consciousness with her object-like, externalized physical being. This association reflects her understanding of herself as an object of exchange. Olivia also plays on the first-person epitaph's impossible juxtaposition of past ("was") and present ("this present"). As though portraying in miniature the disappearance of her subjectivity, the line begins with an emphatic series of references to the singular being, Olivia, present in the iterative moment—*such*, *a*, *one*, *I*. But by the end of the line, this embodied person has faded into an abstract realm of externalized generalities and categories. She has become an example of the singular person that once was. As a category without content, "this present," fluctuates disturbingly between different presents (the iterative present versus the present of reflection). The *memento mori* trope derives from classical examples, first developing in a situation where people were buried along the roadside;[45] Olivia's line follows the epitaphic form so precisely as to mimic this traditional address of the anonymous stranger: "Look you, sir . . . ." In adopting the epitaphic form, Shakespeare develops the problematic relation of a living person with her own reification in a system of commodified property relations. Shakespeare creates a space for critique by showing how these object lessons are too rigid to be modulated by what actually occurs, that is, by the unfolding realities of the world in its potential interrelations.

Many of my examples have so far involved the female body—and this is surely no accident. In literary history, women have a strange way of representing the body that absorbs suffering. The silence of this body is key: Silence, since the ancient Greeks, is "the adornment of women."[46] When Shakespeare takes up the Lucretia story in his 1594 *The Rape of Lucrece*, he foregrounds the problem of her silence. Although Shakespeare's Lucrece talks more than previous versions, what she articulates is the pain of her silence: "'For more it is than I can well express, / And that deep torture may be called a hell / When more is felt than one hath power to tell'" (1286–88).[47] Lynn Enterline explores how Shakespeare conflates the crime of raping her body with the act of silencing her person.[48]

Shakespeare probes Lucrece's consequent reification on two grounds, both relevant to my analysis. First, she represents, in the words of Oliver Arnold, a commodity in that her husband and father see her rape and death as "crimes against their property."[49] After her suicide, they argue over who has suffered the greater damage to this property: "'Woe, woe,' quoth Collatine, 'she was my wife; / I owed [owned] her, and 'tis mine that she hath killed'" (1801–3). Shakespeare makes this form of commodification crystallize as objects for our analysis.

Second, Lucrece becomes reified as an object of history, as the artifactual object that for Adorno represents another form of reification. I discuss elsewhere the importance of historical material artifacts in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*,[50] which, like *Titus Andronicus* (published the same year), is filled with the language of ruins: For example, Shakespeare compares Lucrece to a "virtuous monument" (391), which, as Colin Burrow notes, may evoke the medieval and Renaissance tomb statues of women sleeping beside their husbands.[51] It is as though the poem itself becomes a kind of tomb in which once-living people have been interred. The word *here* (as in the epitaphic *here lies*) begins about ten stanzas scattered throughout the larger poem.[52] After delivering her famous pronouncement for posterity ("'No dame hereafter living / By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving'" [1714–15]), Shakespeare writes, "*Here*, with a sigh as if her heart would break, / She throws forth Tarquin's name . . ." [1716–17]). In this instant, Lucrece becomes reified as a picture for posterity. Most interestingly, this epitaphic form is echoed in the following stanza—with the addition for the first and only time of the emphatic "even"—to depict the moment when Lucrece stabs herself:

> *Even here* she sheathed in her harmless breast
> A harmful knife. (1723–24)

To register this line as epitaphic is to encounter the exact moment when Lucrece becomes a thing, a moment that will be represented over and over again in the cultural tradition. This reification happens, precisely, "*here*." It is the instant that might remind us of the kicking feet of Homer's maidservants, who "struggled with their feet for a short time, *not for very long*." Shakespeare marks the extreme edge of Lucrece's existence as an articulating subject at the exact instant where she becomes an object. It is like an Ovidian metamorphosis at the unbearable moment of transformation. If Apollo could still feel Daphne's heart "fluttering beneath the bark,"[53] we now witness that terrible moment from Daphne's perspective in the seconds when, ceasing to have any perspective, she is rendered *thing*.

Playing with This

Shakespeare's experiments with aesthetic form may reach their greatest density in his *Sonnets* of 1609, which manage to draw from highly reified and collapsed forms a kind of dynamic inner life. For Shakespeare, literature is not what converts people into things, but what loosens up reified forms of thought and returns them to living experience that constantly

demands interpretive involvement. Reification itself "become[s] eloquent," to use Adorno's phrase.[54]

Throughout the sequence of sonnets addressed to the young man, the speaker struggles with preserving the memory of his beloved. Famously, the speaker eventually asserts the idea that the poems themselves will serve as his beloved's memorial:

> Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme,
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.
> When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
> And broils work out the root of masonry,
> Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn
> The living record of your memory.
> 'Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity
> Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room,
> Even in the eyes of all posterity
> That wear the world out to the ending doom.
> > So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
> > You live in *this*, and dwell in lovers' eyes.[55]

This sonnet (55) makes the claim that whereas physical things like walls and statues and tombs cannot endure, words will last. This notion of poetic immortality is a trope that has a long history. It goes back to the ancient Roman poets Horace (*Odes* 3.30) and Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 15.871–79). The very layout of Shakespeare's poems seems to support this inherited assertion: As Burrow points out, the printer's opening inscription employs, as did Lucrece's inscription on the slip of paper in Lotto's painting, all capital letters with periods between the individual words, in the style of a Roman tomb inscription—as though this book of poems were replacing a physical tomb with a verbal, poetic one.

But Shakespeare's sonnets also work against this reified idea of memory, which preserves the beloved as though in a grand stony tomb. And the sonnets do so on the level of language, on the level of poetic play. If Shakespeare borrowed his themes and tropes from older poets such as Horace and Ovid, the language is his own—and it is here beneath the surface that he uses language to loosen up what's been compacted and rigidified, what's become stony and dead, and release this material back into more supple forms of interrelation and subjectivity. Shakespeare probes historically reified forms in a different way than did Lotto: Whereas Lotto opened up a

new space, triangulating the modern Lucrece, the papers and the viewer, Shakespeare focuses in on old collapsed linguistic forms, activating the verbal life trapped inside.

Shakespeare occasionally makes direct references to epitaphs in his sonnets. In sonnet 81, for example, he considers whether he will outlive his beloved, his "epitaph to make." But through the heavy use of demonstratives Shakespeare also makes key parts of some poems *sound* like epitaphs. Returning to sonnet 55, note the last line: "You live in *this*, and dwell in lovers' eyes."[56] Or take the concluding couplet of sonnet 18: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives *this*, and *this* gives life to thee." Or sonnet 107: "And thou in *this* shalt find thy monument / When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent." Or sonnet 74: "The worth of *that*, is *that* which it contains, / And *that* is *this*, and *this* with thee remains." Most epitaphic lines are in the couplets, but not all. In sonnet 32, it is the fourth line—"*These* poor, rude lines of thy deceased lover"—that is pretending to be, as William Empson long ago noted, "a quotation from a tombstone."[57]

So, on one level, Shakespeare uses such epitaphic lines to further the claim that the poems can serve as equivalents of the beloved. But on another level, that of linguistic play, the poems also work against this reifying tendency, this kind of memory that might be a kind of forgetting, this kind of speaking that might be a kind of silencing—through a much more subtle play of poetic language.

The smallness of the sonnet form may be part of the point in that this smallness already suggests how Shakespeare extracts motion from verbal forms that seem, at least in contrast to the dramas, to have collapsed in on themselves.[58] The sonnet sequence begins with an expression of collapse into the self: "But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes, / Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel" (sonnet 1, lines 5–6). Refusing relationship with the world, the beloved has narrowed in on himself through a Narcissus-like contraction into the self, or even into the reflection of his eye's own pupil. Bradin Cormack points out in his discussion of Latin roots that, in line 11 ("Within thine own bud buriest thy content"), the beginning and ending of the line are almost synonymous. The Latinate con-tent means *hold with*. In this way, "'content' holds a 'with' in it."[59] Both ends of the line express the idea of containment, thus enfolding or—to use Shakespeare's own language—*bury*ing the image of the bud at the center. The idea of collapse into the self as a kind of burial recurs in the last line of this first sonnet, which refers to the beloved's grave. The energy of the poems derives in part from the minuteness of Shakespeare's linguistic

analysis, which draws motion from almost tautologically collapsed verbal structures. Not unlike Adorno, Shakespeare attempts to break through re-ified forms of thought by close attention to the "micrological." Through this method, the particular is "volatized," and "its concretion vanishes."[60] It may be through their meticulous linguistic form that Shakespeare's poems best reveal their humane content.

For the remainder of this essay, I focus on one small example of how Shakespeare uses poetic language to turn the reader away from what is reified, monumentalized, universalized, stony, deadened, always-and-ever-the-same, and to open thought toward what is much harder to pin down, what is ephemeral and interrelational and experiential. In sonnet 98, the epitaphic *this* or *these* or *those* appears twice at the end, in lines 12 and 14:

> From you have I been absent in the spring,
> When proud-pied April (dressed in all his trim)
> Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
> That heavy Saturn laughed and leapt with him.
> Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
> Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
> Could make me any summer's story tell,
> Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew.
> Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
> Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
> They were but sweet, but figures of delight
> Drawn after you, you pattern of all *those*.
> > Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,
> > As with your shadow I with *these* did play.

Thematically, the poem concretizes absence by attempting to convert the surrounding physical world, the flowers, into "figures," or images of the beloved. But these figures, or signs of the beloved's absence, are also what allow him, the beloved, to appear in lively flickering motion, albeit only within the confines of poetic language.

If we look closely at the "those" in the last line before the final couplet and the "these" in the last line of the couplet—we might notice that they both refer to the same thing—the flowers. And yet, apparently, there has been a shift from "those" of line 12 to "these" of line 14, a shift in the nearness of the flowers, which have come closer by the end of the poem. In the first case, the last line before the couplet, the flowers are but figures: "Drawn after you, you pattern of all those." The "after" conveys the sense of the flowers' inferior status as a copy of the beloved: The flowers are

drawn after you. They may also be "after" in the sense of sequence: You were here first, but now you're gone, and the flowers are drawn *after* you, that is, in a temporal sense. The flowers are also "drawn after you" in the sense of being pulled from stasis into motion.

The speaker names the beloved twice: "Drawn after you, you pattern of all those." In the second half of the line, it could be that the beloved is simply being named again in order to give more information about him, but the line also suggests that perhaps the beloved has appeared in fantasy. It is as if the speaker were addressing him directly, in the vocative, as though the beloved had been conjured in imagination: "Drawn after you, *you pattern of all those*." The beloved is nearer than the flowers, "*those*" flowers.

But notice that the final couplet reverses this relation: the flowers are now nearer than the beloved. "Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away, / As with your shadow I with *these* did play." The first word underscores this shift: The initial "yet" suggests a wistful change, which is affirmed when the beloved (the "you") is shown to be at a distance. If the beloved seemed for a moment to have appeared at the end of the last line before the couplet, it was only in the most fragile, tenuous fashion. As soon as he appears, he's gone again. The beloved appeared only in the realm of fantasy and figurative language.

The last line of the poem brings to fruition the subtleties of this shifting. The speaker says, "As with your shadow I with *these* did play." The flowers have again come closer, shifting from *those* to *these*. By becoming the shadow of what's absent (they have become a shadow of *you*, the beloved), they have come nearer. If, by the end of the poem, the flowers have achieved presence, it is as a sign of what's absent, the beloved. Shakespeare achieves in this way a flickering quality between the beloved's substance and image.

An especially delicate trick of this poem's last line is that what the speaker is shown doing—playing—is what the object of his play (a shadow) does. "As with your shadow I with *these* did play." The *OED* offers as one definition of "play" (7b): "Of a thing: to move briskly or lightly, especially with alternating or irregular motion; to change or alternate rapidly, to flicker; to strike lightly on a surface, dance, flutter." Instances cited are Edmund Spenser's 1590 *The Faerie Queene*, 1.1.34, "Thereby a christall streame did gently play . . . ," and Shakespeare's own circa 1591 *Henry VI*, Part I, 5.5.18, "As playes the Sunne vpon the glassie streames, / Twinkling another counterfetted beame." The speaker's mode of engaging with the flickering shadow of "you" (the *those-these* flowers) is, then, itself flickering. In other

words, the way I play with your shadow is itself in the manner of a shadow. The speaker and his beloved become intertwined in this imagery.

If the beloved can never be fully possessed or held in one place or monumentalized for all eternity, if he is essentially ephemeral (being known, as we know each other, only in time), he can nonetheless be experienced through this mimetic playfulness. This realm of poetry is an interpretive territory—maybe necessarily so. A space for contemplation and interrelation opens from within a highly reified epitaphic form. It is as though Shakespeare's poetry were trying to find within the silence of the material object its own form of expression—as though art could do justice to silence by finding in materiality what materiality has suppressed.

To look at the ways that Renaissance poetry lays the groundwork for Frankfurt School aesthetics is, of course, to read history backward, since one period can only "anticipate" another in retrospect. Yet doesn't a strictly empiricist approach do the same—that is, look at the past through its own anachronistic lens? Our increasingly undialectical attention to materiality may have made us less and less able to perceive the play of form, or to see the ways that Renaissance art objects resist the collapse into their own mere thingliness.[61] Contemplating in 1859 the rise of photography, Charles Baudelaire poses the question: "Is it permitted to suppose that a people whose eyes are accustomed to consider the results of a material science as the products of the beautiful won't, at the end of a certain time, have singularly diminished its faculty of judging and feeling what is the most ethereal and most immaterial?"[62]

Adorno raises the question of whether aesthetic experience—or even experience in its fullest sense—is still possible. But to immerse oneself within the history of Renaissance art, when empiricism was first emerging, and to ask of it our own questions, is perhaps to begin to hear a lost set of possibilities rustling beneath the surface: a new future of the past. That's not as paradoxical as it seems because the past only exists for us when (and to the extent that) we discern it. In the Renaissance epitaphic poetry that I've been analyzing, words collapse living people into deathly objects. By re-creating in miniature problems of reification, this poetry helps pry open these problems from within. At these highly charged junctures a new motion can be felt emerging from within the otherwise-dead thingliness of tradition. As Enterline says of Shakespeare's treatment of Lucrece: The narrator desires "to animate Lucrece—not from death, but from the reifying conceits of received poetic convention."[63] Shakespeare's reification un-reifies reification.

I want to retain the difference between aesthetic objects and material objects, even in acknowledging their interrelation—by seeking in epitaphs a place where they *almost*, but not quite, intersect. "Poetry redeems its truth content only when it repels tradition at its closest point of contact," Adorno writes.[64] From the site of greatest similarity leaps forth the difference.[65]

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. For my purposes, reification (*Verdinglichung*) entails turning living processes or interrelations into things. It is almost a truism that attempts to define this term run the risk of slipping into the very kind of thinking that the term is meant to criticize. As though a mini-lesson in negative dialectics, this problem of defining the term shows how the term only works when used critically, as a means of negation. For the intellectual history of the term, with its origins in Hegel (although he does not use the word), Marx, Lukács, and others, see Timothy Bewes, *Reification, or The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2002), as well as Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Verso, 1978). For an account of the term in early modern literary studies specifically, see Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

2. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 191.

3. "Anything that is not reified, cannot be counted and measured, ceases to exist." Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2006), 47.

4. Theodor Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 207.

5. Ibid., 83.

6. Ibid., 207. Adorno writes, "Knowledge deforms its objects as soon as it creates a tabula rasa by objectifying them in a single moment of time."

7. In *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter VIII*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2003), 14. Quoted in Roger Foster, *Adorno: The Recovery of Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 89.

8. Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 1. See the preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Hegel criticizes thinking that refuses to get "involved in the real issue" and that "is always away beyond it . . . instead of tarrying with it, and losing itself in it." I am quoting A. V. Miller's translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 3.

9. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.

10. Ibid., 192, 259.

11. Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 5. See also "The Essay as Form," trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique*, no. 32 (Spring–Summer 1984): 151–71.

12. Grady, *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf*, 56.

13. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 175.

14. Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Lady Inspired by Lucretia* (1530–32), © The National Gallery, London.

15. Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

16. This phrase is from Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), 107. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).

17. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 117.

18. See Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); "Object into Object?: Some Thoughts on the Presence of Black Women in Early Modern Culture," in *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, ed. Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). Also Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), and Simone Weil, "The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force," in *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, ed. Siân Miles (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 184.

19. Homer, *Odyssey*, Perseus Digital Library, ed. Gregory R. Crane. Tufts University. www.perseus.tufts.edu (accessed March 2014).

20. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 62.

21. Ibid., 61.

22. Ibid., 62. See Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Things beyond Resemblance: Collected Essays on Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 43–44.

23. Theodor W. Adorno, "On Tradition," *Telos*, no. 94 (1992): 78.

24. Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–38*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 267. See also "On the Concept of History," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–40*, 392.

25. Adorno, "On Tradition," 78.

26. Ibid., 80.

27. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 52.

28. Tom Huhn, "Introduction: Thoughts beside Themselves," in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.

29. Scott L. Newstok, *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs beyond the Tomb* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 93. See also Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

30. William N. West, "Less Well-Wrought Urns: Henry Vaughan and the Decay of the Poetic Monument," *ELH* 75, no. 1 (2008): 197–217.

31. Jacques Bonnet, *Lorenzo Lotto*, trans. Michael Taylor (Paris: A. Biro, 1996), 136. Cited in Rona Goffen, "Lotto's Lucretia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1999): 746. The flower on the table is a wallflower, which could mean both earthly and sacred love, as Goffen explains. See also Peter Humfrey, *Lorenzo Lotto* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 110.

32. The "A" and "E" are fused together at the end of "LUCRETIAE," as was standard in epigraphs. Thanks to Christopher Baswell for this point.

33. "nec ulla deinde inpudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet." Livy, *History of Rome*, books 1–2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Loeb Classical Library, 1919).

34. John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Leah S. Marcus (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2009).

35. William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, *Timon of Athens*, ed. John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

36. See Robert Darcy, "Shakespeare's Empty Plot: The Epicenotaph in 'Timon of Athens,'" *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 33 (2004): 159–79.

37. Newstok, *Quoting Death in Early Modern England*, 1. Also, Laura Kolb, "Writing Epitaphs for Death: The Work of Herbert's 'Church-monuments' and Donne's 'A Nocturnal,'" *St. John's University Humanities Review* 8, no. 2 (2010): 31–49. For a recent discussion of early modern deictics, see Heather Dubrow, *Deixis in the Early Modern English Lyric: Unsettling Spatial Anchors Like "Here," "This," "Come"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

38. William Camden, *Remains concerning Britain* (London: John Russell Smith, 1870), 386–440.

39. "Combien de querelles et combien importantes a produit au monde le doubte du sens de cette syllable: *hoc*!" Michel de Montaigne, "Apologie de Raymond Sebond," 2.12 in *Essais*, Livre 2 (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1979), 192.

40. See *All's Well That Ends Well*, 1.2.50; *Cymbeline*, 3.3.52; *Hamlet*, 2.2.550; *1 Henry IV*, 5.4.101; *Henry V*, 1.2.233; *Love's Labor's Lost*, 4.2.51; *Merchant of Venice*, 4.1.118; *Much Ado About Nothing*, 4.1.209 and 5.1.293;

Pericles, 4.3.43 and 4.4.32; *Richard II*, 3.2.145; *Timon of Athens*, 4.3.380 and 5.1.188.

41. William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995).

42. Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

43. Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. Keir Elam (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2008).

44. The epitaph is John Trustlowe's in Ravenshaw, quoted in Scodel, *English Poetic Epitaph*, 30. Scodel explains that although the *memento mori* trope declined in England with the rise of Protestantism, it was still used in the sixteenth century. Scodel also cites E.K.'s gloss of Spenser's "Maye" in *The Shepheardes Calender*: "Ho, Ho, who lies here? / I the good Erle of Devonshere." *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 101.

45. Scodel, *English Poetic Epitaph*, 33.

46. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.13.1260a30; Sophocles, *Ajax* 293. Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 21.

47. All citations of Shakespeare's poems from *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

48. Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 152–97. See also Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women* (London: Routledge, 1997), 27–45; and Jane O. Newman, "'And Let Mild Women to Him Lose Their Mildness': Philomela, Female Violence, and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (1994): 304–26.

49. Arnold, *Third Citizen*, 103.

50. Rachel Eisendrath, "'Lamentable Objects': Ekphrasis and the Encounter with Historical Materiality in Shakespeare's 1594 *The Rape of Lucrece*," in *Ekphrastic Encounters: New Interdisciplinary Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. David Kennedy and Richard Meek (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

51. Burrow, *Complete Sonnets and Poems*, 265. For an image of one such monument, an effigy of Eleanor of Lancaster (d. 1372) in the Chichester Cathedral, Sussex, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ArundelTomb2.JPG. This particular effigy was made famous by Philip Larkin's poem "An Arundel Tomb."

52. In *Remains concerning Britain*, 390, Camden quotes approximately three dozen examples that employ some variation of this form in English,

Latin, or French. "*Hic situs est, Hospes* ["Here lies, stranger"], as speaking to the reader," is the ancient Latin scaffolding, he explains, and later epitaphs were built on this basic form: "So we & other Christians began them [epitaphs] with *Hic deponitur* ["Here is put"], *Hic jacet* ["Here lies"], *Hic requiescat* ["Here rests"], in French *Icy gist* ["Here is entombed"]."

53. "trepidare . . . sub cortice" (1.554). Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, books 1–8, trans. Frank Justus Miller, rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass.: Loeb Classical Library, 1977).

54. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 85.

55. Italics mine in all quotations of sonnets.

56. Tom Muir writes about the emptiness of "this" in the couplet of sonnet 55. Muir's probing of ruins, memory, and forgetting in the sonnets informs mine, although I do not see the sonnets as apocalyptically self-obliterating, as he does. See Muir, "Without remainder: ruins and tombs in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*," *Textual Practice* 24, no. 1 (2010): 21–49.

57. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions, 1947), 51.

58. I am grateful to Russ McDonald for a version of this point.

59. Bradin Cormack, "Tender Distance: Latinity and Desire in Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Michael Schoenfeldt (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007), 242–60.

60. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 101. See also Adorno's analysis of Proust's technique, *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 33, 96.

61. See David Hawkes, "Materialism and Reification in Renaissance Studies," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2004): 114–29, and Simon Jarvis, "Adorno, Marx, Materialism," in *Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, 79–100.

62. Baudelaire, *Curiosité esthétiques, Salon de 1859*. Quoted in Marc Fumaroli, *Paris-New York et retour: Voyage dans les arts et les images* (Paris: Fayard, 2009), 12.

63. Enterline, *Rhetoric of the Body*, 190.

64. Adorno, "On Tradition," 82.

65. I am grateful for the help of Christopher Baswell, Bradin Cormack, Allyson C. González, Teresa Jesionowski, Betsy Kalish, Paul Kottman, Scott Newstok, Timea Széll, the anonymous reader of this volume, and the participants of the seminar "Shakespearean Exceptionalism: The Case of the Sonnets," at the Shakespeare Association of America, held in Toronto on March 29, 2013.

How Do We Recognize Metaphysical Poetry?

Andrew Cutrofello

Metaphysical poetry, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed. Or so T. S. Eliot might have written, had he written in the style of Adorno.[1] Eliot believed that metaphysical poetry, which seemed obsolete to Dryden and Johnson, lived on because the moment to bring it back within the "main current" of English literature was missed when Keats and Shelley died young.[2] In his 1921 review of Herbert Grierson's anthology *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, Eliot characterized metaphysical poetry as poetry that expressed the experiential force of thought. Donne was able to write metaphysical poetry because he experienced his thoughts as objects. After Donne, a "dissociation of sensibility" severed the link between thought and experience.[3] In the eighteenth century, it was impossible to appreciate Donne, let alone to write like him. The sentimental poets "thought and felt by fits," while in Keats and Shelley "there are traces of a struggle toward unification of sensibility." Instead of continuing that struggle, "Tennyson and Browning [merely] ruminated," that is, expressed their unexperienced thoughts in unmetaphysical verse.[4] Metaphysical poetry lived on because the spirit of Donne still walked abroad.

However, this critical assessment turned out to be only half of Eliot's story. In his 1926 Clark lectures he argued that in comparison with the metaphysical poetry of Dante and his circle, Donne's metaphysical poetry was metaphysical in a less comprehensive sense. For although Donne gave poetic expression to his experience of his own thoughts, his thoughts were not themselves metaphysical—not, at any rate, systematically metaphysical—as were the thoughts whose experience Dante expressed in the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*. While denying that metaphysical poetry could be reduced to philosophical poetry, that is, to poetry that directly expresses philosophical ideas, Eliot nevertheless privileges a variety of metaphysical poetry with respect to which Donne's variety represents a deviation, if not a falling away. Hence the dissociation of sensibility after Donne turns out to be only a secondary aspect of Eliot's larger account of the process by which metaphysical poetry came to seem obsolete at the end of the seventeenth century. Within this larger critical framework, the efforts of Shelley and Keats to revive the metaphysical tendency in poetry would have to be considered not only with respect to the "struggle toward unification of sensibility" that Eliot perceived in *The Triumph of Life* and the second *Hyperion*, but, more fundamentally, with respect to the character of the thought they brought to bear on this struggle.[5] Instead of simply rehabilitating the School of Donne, Eliot aspired to make sense of the relationship between metaphysics and metaphysical poetry without reducing either to the other. To carry out this critical task it would be necessary to investigate the varieties of metaphysics as well as the varieties of metaphysical poetry. But Eliot only broached this task, while the New Critics largely neglected it. Hence metaphysical poetry, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed.

From another point of view, metaphysical poetry is a seventeenth-century genre that was retrospectively dubbed metaphysical by an eighteenth-century critic. As such, it has led a merely posthumous existence. Perhaps by reexamining its christening and subsequent critical reception we can begin to clarify the sense in which it lives on, awaiting a realization still to come.

In the introduction to *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, Grierson distinguished metaphysical poetry in "the full sense of the term" from the metaphysical poetry of "Donne and his followers to Cowley": "Metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which, like that of the *Divina Commedia*, the *De Natura Rerum*, perhaps Goethe's *Faust*, has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the rôle assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of

existence."[6] Grierson excludes Milton from this list since "Milton was no philosopher. . . . He proved nothing. The definitely stated argument of [*Paradise Lost*] is an obvious begging of the question." On the other hand, Grierson acknowledges that Milton is metaphysical in a "large way" that "Donne and his followers to Cowley are not."[7] Grierson is less precise about the sense in which the term "metaphysical" applies to Donne and his followers. He associates "the metaphysical strain" with "the more intellectual, less verbal, character of their wit compared with the conceits of the Elizabethans; the finer psychology of which their conceits are often the expression; their learned imagery; the argumentative, subtle evolution of their lyrics; above all the peculiar blend of passion and thought, feeling and ratiocination."[8]

As an explication of metaphysicality this is somewhat vague, but no more so than Dryden's critical complaint that Donne "affects the metaphysics," or Johnson's characterization of Cowley and his "race" as metaphysical poets. When Johnson called Cowley a metaphysical poet, he didn't mean that Cowley wrote poetry that was inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence. That was something that Cowley's contemporary Milton did, but Milton was not a metaphysical poet in Johnson's sense. Cowley was metaphysical not because he wrote poetry about metaphysical topics, but because he wrote in a metaphysical manner. His metaphysicality was a matter of form or style rather than of content. To write metaphysically meant to write "wittily." True wit consisted in the ability to bring apparently opposite things into harmony with one another. As such, it went beyond mere wordplay. As Cowley put it in his "Ode on Wit": "'Tis not when two like words make up one noise,/Jests for *Dutch Men*, and *English Boys*. . . . In a true piece of *Wit* all things must be,/Yet all things there *agree*."[9] Johnson criticized Pope for reducing wit to mere verbal cleverness: Pope "depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language."[10] Cowley's wit was both more intellectual and more object-oriented than Pope's. It could be said to have a metaphysical dimension insofar as it deals with things rather than with words. But Johnson calls Cowley a metaphysical poet for a different reason, namely, that Cowley displays an excess of wit. He seeks "rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy." He also writes inelegantly, hiding the "intellectual gold" his wit has mined "in unrefined and plebeian words, that none but philosophers can distinguish it."[11] To grasp his meaning, readers must exercise their own wits. Because Cowley scants fancy and lacks elegance, he is more of a versifier than a

true poet. Fancy and elegance without wit are superficial, but wit without fancy and elegance is (too) metaphysical. Thus metaphysical poetry for Johnson is poetry that dissociates wit (thought) from fancy (sensibility)—a critical assessment that Eliot would have to finesse, if not reverse, in order to maintain that Donne rather than Cowley, and unification rather than dissociation, were truly metaphysical. Hence Johnson's famous critical complaint: "Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. . . . The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions."[12]

We may wonder why it wasn't a distinctive feature of metaphysical poetry as Johnson understood it to draw witty *contrasts* as well as comparisons—for the poet to explain how the right eye of his mistress differed from her left, or why a right-hand glove and its mirror image were incongruent counterparts. For Johnson, wit is exclusively a matter of violently yoking together the most heterogeneous ideas, not of violently dividing the most homogeneous. Drawing distinctions was the prerogative of a different mental faculty, namely, judgment. Distinguishing judgment from wit was something that seventeenth-century English philosophers were doing at the same time that the metaphysical poets were writing their witty poems. As Locke explained in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*: "For *Wit* lying most in the assemblage of *Ideas*, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the Fancy: *Judgment*, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, *Ideas*, wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another."[13] As a natural philosopher seeking to understand the nature of human understanding, Locke was exercising his own capacity for judgment when he not only distinguished judgment from wit but ranked judgment higher than wit. Cowley did the opposite in his "Ode on Wit," wittily showing wit to advance human understanding more than judgment ("Some things do through our Judgment pass / As through a *Multiplying Glass*. / And sometimes, if the *Object* be too far, / We take a *Falling Meteor* for a *Star*").[14] Johnson's complaint that Cowley's amalgamating wit pleased the understanding but scanted fancy differed from Locke's assessment only because he expected poetry to please fancy (as did Locke) and because he found Cowley's wit to be sufficiently judicious to avoid making superficial

or irrelevant comparisons. It was *injudicious* wit that yoked anything and everything together.

By the time Johnson was exercising his critical judgment, the seventeenth-century "quarrel" between wit and judgment had been largely decided in favor of judgment.[15] Amalgamating wit involved yoking together heterogeneous phenomena in the expectation that any similarities that came to light must have some metaphysical significance, even if that significance wasn't self-evident and so had to be interpreted. As Foucault points out in *The Order of Things*, both the strength and the weakness of this model lie in its open-endedness.[16] The world was a metaphysical poem subject to an endless proliferation of interpretations.[17] Metaphysical poets interpreted the world in ever-new ways, lending their poems, as extended parts of the world, to further interpretations. Bacon, like his predecessors, compared apparently different things with an eye toward perceiving hidden resemblances, but he also sought to distinguish things that looked superficially similar. For the classificatory purposes of the new science, comparison became part of the joint activity of comparing *and* contrasting. To amalgamate in this new sense meant to subsume different species under common genera, whereas to differentiate meant to divide genera into distinct species.[18] Amalgamation without differentiation simply mixed things up; it was foolish. Wit had once been the prerogative of the Fool, but now folly had lost its claim to a special type of knowledge.[19] For Galileo, the world was not an ever-expanding metaphysical poem but a structurally stable book written in univocal mathematical prose.

Johnson belonged to this new critical worldview. But so, in a way, did Cowley, whose excessive wit Johnson criticized not because it swung free of judgment, but because it swung free of fancy.[20] The metaphysical poetry that Johnson criticized was highly ironic and by no means committed to a philosophical conception of the world as a metaphysical poem. To identify a poet who belongs to the older paradigm we have to go back to Donne, as Eliot did. Donne's wit is purely comparative, expecting to find genuine metaphysical significance in odd resemblances such as the similarity between the experience of being bitten by the same flea and the exchange of bodily fluids during sexual intercourse. Eliot agrees with Johnson about the dissociated character of the wit of Cowley ("a poor metaphysical"),[21] but he maintains that Donne's wit and fancy were fused: "A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience."[22] In "Andrew Marvell," Eliot places Marvell on the side of Donne; the wit expressed in "To His Coy Mistress" "is not only combined

with, but fused into, the imagination." Marvell's "witty fancy" is contrasted with Cowley's overindulgence not in wit, *pace* Johnson, but fancy.[23] Cowley is a contemporary of Milton's, and well on his way toward Dryden.

By going back to Donne and Marvell, and, ultimately, to Dante and Cavalcanti, Eliot sought "to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling." "The [modern metaphysical] poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."[24] The difference between Dante and Donne was that Dante had a single, systematic thought about a unified world for which he found a poetic equivalent, whereas Donne had fragmented thoughts about a disunified world for which he found a series of poetic equivalents.[25] Both deserved the title of metaphysical poet because they both gave poetic expression to the world as they found it; the difference was that the world that Donne found, or found himself in, was in a state of disintegration.[26] If Dante emerges in the Clark lectures as a truer metaphysical poet, or a metaphysical poet in a more comprehensive sense, it is insofar as his systematic thought about a unified world is explicitly metaphysical, whereas Donne's fragmented thoughts about a disintegrated world are only implicitly metaphysical, the decline of metaphysical thinking being one of the symptoms of worldly disintegration and fragmentation of thought.

William Empson had a different understanding of Donne's metaphysicality. What Eliot took to be Donne's disjointed thoughts about a disintegrated world Empson took to be multiple thoughts about plural worlds.[27] Donne's metaphysical poetry was the objective correlative of Empson's own celebration of poetic ambiguity.[28] Empson's reflections on the nature of poetic ambiguity were later taken up by two very different thinkers who tried to make sense of the relationship between metaphysics and poetry.

Paul de Man credited Empson with showing that "true poetic ambiguity proceeds from the deep division of Being itself."[29] For de Man, a metaphysical poetry worthy of the name would express not a "reconciliation of opposites," but a dissociation of opposites, including that of thought (or spirit) and sensibility: "The ambiguity poetry speaks of is the fundamental one that prevails between the world of the spirit and the world of sentient substance: to ground itself, the spirit must turn itself into sentient substance, but the latter is knowable only in its dissolution into non-being."[30] In his critical response to Heidegger's commentaries on Hölderlin, de Man stresses being's "antithetical" character: "The poet may have varied in his way of naming the two dimensions of Being, which he has designed [or 'designated'?] by several pairs of terms: nature and art; chaotic and organic;

divine and human; heaven and earth; but at no point has he wavered with respect to his knowledge of its necessarily antithetical structure."[31] This is not just a point about ineffability, which for Eliot would disqualify a poet from counting as metaphysical.[32] Nor is it simply a debate with Heidegger about the nature of the limits of metaphysical thinking, and how these limits are expressed in Hölderlin's poetry. It is also a claim about the nature of a poetic practice that would deserve to be called "metaphysical."

José Benardete gives Empson's thesis a different twist. He does so by distinguishing rhetorical tropes from ontological tropes. Rhetorical tropes are expressions that nonliterally designate ways of being, whereas ontological tropes are expressions that *literally* designate ways of being that are "*pros hen* equivocal" with respect to a primary way of being.[33] According to Aristotle, being is said primarily of substance and only secondarily, tertiarily, and so on of the other categories (quality, quantity, relation, etc.). Benardete's suggestion is that these other categories can be thought of as ontological tropes. Their *pros hen* equivocity with respect to the category of substance would be tropological but not rhetorical, at least not if we can distinguish literal and nonliteral expressions or uses of expressions. If "poetics in the broad sense of the term is the study of the non-literal, as opposed to the literal, use of language," as Benardete argues, then de Man's appropriation of Empson's thesis can be restated as the claim that metaphysics is one of the objects of poetic investigation.[34] Benardete puts this proposal to the test by considering the debate between Platonists and nominalists about the nature of abstract singular terms. For a Platonist, an everyday expression such as "the number of apples in this basket" is to be taken as literally referring to an abstract entity, whereas for a nominalist it is to be taken as nonliterally indicating some way in which the apples themselves are being considered.[35] Benardete draws several conclusions from this contrast. First, metaphysical debates often turn on whether an expression is being used literally or nonliterally. Second, and somewhat surprisingly, it is not the "visionary Platonist" but the "down-to-earth nominalist" who insists on construing "the number of apples in this basket" nonliterally, i.e., poetically.[36] Third, "poetry and ontology [or metaphysics] alike may thus be seen to be incipiently emerging in the ambiguous role played by the abstract singular term in our mother tongue."[37] By way of illustration (and further complication), Benardete invites us to consider the use of the abstract singular term "the anger of Achilles" in the first line of the *Iliad*.[38] Does Homer use this phrase literally or nonliterally? If nonliterally, that is, "poetically," then it is a tropological "nominalization" of "the basic sentence, 'Achilles is angry.'" If instead we take "the trope literally and

ontologically rather than non-literally and 'poetically,'" it would then refer not to a Platonic universal, namely, the form of anger, but rather to what D. C. Williams (somewhat confusingly) calls a "trope," that is, a *particular* anger, Achilles' anger.[39] How are we to choose between these two interpretations, the literal and the nonliteral? More to the point, *can* we choose in a way that would be nonarbitrary? Appealing, as de Man does, to Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Benardete argues that "we should probably rejoice in the ambiguity of 'the anger . . . of Achilles' as to whether it is to be taken as involving an ontological or a rhetorical trope."[40] After all, "poetry revels in such ambiguity."[41] To represent "the anger of Achilles" simply as a "reification of a character trait" would be to treat Homer's ambiguous poem as if it were a prosaic realist novel. Against such a reductive reading, Benardete praises "the efforts of the French school to 'deconstruct' the positivistic photo-realism of the nineteenth-century novel."[42] To revel in Homer's ambiguity amounts to recognizing him as a kind of metaphysical poet—a reading that invites us to construe the "ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry" as a quarrel between metaphysics and metaphysical poetry.

According to Benardete, the philosopher "who has trained us to hear the music of ontological commitment in all sorts of discourse" is not Heidegger, but Quine.[43] Quine's dictum, "To be is to be the value of a variable," provides a purely logical definition of a primary sense of being with respect to which all others can be regarded as *pros hen* equivocal.[44] The litmus test for distinguishing between literal and nonliteral uses of linguistic expressions is what a speaker or writer is prepared to quantify over, that is, to speak about in the idiom of logical quantification. Hence what Benardete characterizes as "Quinean poetics" is the art of determining, as far as possible, what objects a discourse includes in its ontology.

Benardete's picture of Quinean poetics would have to be complicated by Hilary Putnam's observation that logical operators such as the existential quantifier are themselves equivocal. Given two disparate models of what there is, the very sense in which they disagree about what there is will be equivocal, since each model will have its own interpretation of the existential quantifier. According to Putnam, we cannot get around this problem by positing a common set of objects that rival conceptual schemes "carve up" in different ways, for there is neither scheme-independent "stuff" nor any scheme-neutral use of the existential quantifier: "What is wrong with the notion of objects existing 'independently' of conceptual schemes is that there are no standards for the use of even the logical notions apart

from conceptual choices."[45] The logical operator "There exists an x such that . . ." is said in as many ways as there are types of discourse. In addition, there is no primary way with respect to which the others would be *pros hen* equivocal. This is not to say that what there is is completely up for grabs. Once we choose a particular scheme we thereby fix a particular sense of the existential quantifier that is univocal relative to that scheme. We also get worldly constraints on what entities we are entitled to posit. Metaphysical pluralism only goes as far as scheme pluralism; it doesn't extend to things as they are in themselves, if only because it eliminates the *concept* of scheme-independent things in themselves. Still, this leaves Quinean poetics in the position of having to acknowledge that "to be is to be the value of a variable" is radically equivocal, and not merely equivocal with respect to a primary sense. The very distinction between literal and nonliteral uses of language would have to be regarded as radically equivocal. Should we then conclude that metaphysics is merely a form (perhaps the highest form) of metaphysical poetry? Or can we still affirm the difference between metaphysics and metaphysical poetry while acknowledging their tendency to mutually interfere with each other?

Perhaps we can begin to answer these questions by going back to Aristotle. In chapter 9 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle famously claims that "poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars."[46] Since being is the highest universal, the highest form of poetry would be poetry that speaks of being. Such poetry would be more metaphysical than other forms of poetry and so more worthy of the serious attention of the metaphysician. On the basis of the serious attention that Aristotle gives to tragedy, we might justifiably attribute to him the view that tragedy is a type of metaphysical poetry (though we would have to factor in his lost book on comedy, keeping in mind that for Hegel comedy is a higher form of art than tragedy). Aristotle remarks that Euripides is "regarded as the most tragic of our dramatic poets," thereby suggesting that Euripides is the most metaphysical.[47] However, he also reports Sophocles' assertion that he, Sophocles, depicted "people as they ought to be, whereas Euripides portrayed them as they are."[48] This could be taken to suggest that Sophocles' characters are more universal, Euripides' more particular. Would Sophocles, then, be more metaphysical than Euripides? Or would Euripides, the more tragic, be more metaphysical than Sophocles? Either way, where would we place Shakespeare? Johnson praised Shakespeare for representing ideal character types rather than particular individuals, whereas Coleridge felt it

was the uniqueness of Shakespeare's characters that brought them to life. Would Johnson's Shakespeare be more metaphysical than Coleridge's, or would Coleridge's be more metaphysical than Johnson's?

Whether one privileges the "Sophoclean" side of Shakespeare, as Johnson does, or the "Euripidean" side, as Coleridge does, the way in which Shakespeare "speaks of being" is difficult to pin down. Michael Witmore has argued that "Shakespeare favoured a view of the world in which order and change are seen to emerge holistically from things themselves (immanence) rather than being localized in certain metaphysically isolated pockets of the universe (punctualism)."[49] Despite its wording, this is a claim about how Shakespeare's dramaturgy works rather than a claim about how Shakespeare actually viewed the world. Witmore is not attributing to Shakespeare what Grierson called "a philosophical conception of the universe and the rôle assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence." But Witmore is right to observe that Shakespeare conveys an overall sense of being, whether it is best expressed in terms of immanence or transcendence, univocity or ambiguity, unification or dissociation. James Bednarz has observed that Grierson pointedly excluded Shakespeare from his anthology of metaphysical poetry.[50] Yet, as Bednarz points out, "The Phoenix and Turtle" can lay claim to being a metaphysical poem insofar as its "allegory becomes so complex that it might justifiably be termed a metaphysical conceit."[51] George Saintsbury noted the poem's anticipation of Donne's metaphysical style. Bednarz goes further in suggesting that Donne may have read it and been influenced by it.[52] Shakespeare would then be the founder of the seventeenth-century metaphysical tradition as Eliot originally conceived it. But what about Shakespeare the dramatist?

In his late essay "Eliot and the Shudder," Frank Kermode recalls a time when it was a New Critical commonplace to speak of Donne and "the metaphysical shudder." Eliot professed to have shuddered at Charmian's last words in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Ah, soldier." Kermode calls attention to another Shakespearean shudder, one that Paulina induces in Leontes, Perdita, and us:

> The repentant Leontes is tormented by faint and presumably deceptive signs of life in the supposed statue of his dead wife, until he says: "Still methinks / There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath?" However fine the workman, statues cannot be made to breathe; but we nevertheless experience this marvellous intermediate phase when stone is magically refined to breath and the revelation of Hermione's living presence, another even greater miracle, will follow.[53]

In this quiet critical remark, Kermode explains why he regards the dramatic Shakespeare as a metaphysical poet of a certain sort. We shudder at Paulina's resurrection of Hermione not because she proves a point, nor because her act is equivocal (though it is), but because through it, she invites us to take part in an event: "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith." Like the messianic "sparks" that made Walter Benjamin shudder at *Hamlet*, Paulina's awakening of faith—or of what Coleridge specified as "poetic faith"—makes us shudder at the realization, however fleeting, of metaphysical poetry.[54]

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed." Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury, 1973), 3.

2. T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 375.

3. Ibid., 380.

4. Ibid., 381.

5. Ibid.

6. Herbert J. C. Grierson, ed., *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century, Donne to Butler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), xiii. Though he doesn't say so, Grierson's list is evidently borrowed from George Santayana's *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1910). Eliot made the connection explicit in his Clark lectures: "If you identify 'metaphysical' with 'philosophical' and limit 'philosophical' to those poets who have given expression to a system or some view of the universe, and man's place in it, which has some philosophical equivalent . . . . Mr. Santayana's three will exhaust the list of metaphysical poets." T. S. Eliot, "The Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, 1926," in *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. Ronald Schuchard, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 48–49.

7. Grierson, ed., *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems*, xv.

8. Ibid., xv–xvi.

9. Abraham Cowley, "Ode on Wit," in *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems*, ed. Grierson, 188–89.

10. Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on their Works*, vol. 1, ed. Roger Lonsdale (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 200.

11. Ibid., 230.

12. Ibid., 200. Cf. Touchstone's remark to Audrey in *As You Like It*: "When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room" (3.3.12–15).

13. John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 156.

14. Cowley, "Ode on Wit," 187.

15. A. J. Smith, *Metaphysical Wit* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

16. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. unidentified (New York: Vintage, 1973), chap. 2.

17. Foucault speaks not of "metaphysical poetry" but of "the prose of the world" (the title of chapter 2).

18. Cf. Kant's distinction between the complementary regulative principles of "aggregation" and "specification" and Darwin's remark that "it is good to have hair-splitters and lumpers." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 603 (A666/B694); Charles Darwin, Letter to J. D. Hooker in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin Volume 6: 1856–1857*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 438.

19. Considered as elemental forces rather than as intellectual principles, wit and judgment could be likened to love and strife in Empedocles. Were wit were the only elemental force, its activity would generate a metaphysical muddle not unlike Anaxagoras' primordial mixture (*migma*) prior to the separating activity of understanding (*nous*).

20. I thank Rachel Zuckert for helping me clarify this point.

21. Eliot, "Clark Lectures," 190.

22. Eliot, "Metaphysical Poets," 380.

23. "We can easily recognize a witty fancy in the successive images ('my *vegetable* love,' 'till the conversion of the Jews'), but this fancy is not indulged, as it sometimes is by Cowley or Cleveland, for its own sake." T. S. Eliot, "Andrew Marvell," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 312.

24. Eliot, "Metaphysical Poets," 381.

25. "With Dante and his circle, the feelings are organized according to an organized view of the universe . . . . with Donne . . . the peculiarity is the absence of order, the fraction of *thought* into innumerable *thoughts*." "In Donne, . . . you get a system of thought and feeling . . . . In Donne you get a sequence of thoughts which are felt." Eliot, "Clark Lectures," 154–55, 182–83.

26. Eliot, "Clark Lectures," 158.

27. William Empson, *Essays on Renaissance Literature: Volume 1: Donne and the New Philosophy*, ed. John Haffenden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

28. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 3rd ed. (New York: New Directions, 1966).

29. Paul de Man, "The Dead-End of Formalist Criticism," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., rev. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 237.

30. Ibid.

31. De Man continues: "Heidegger's proposed identification of language and the sacred fails, in any case, to account for the remainder of the hymn; he keeps on running into the very question he thought he had resolved, but which, for Hölderlin, must remain without answer: if the poet has seen Being immediately, how is he to put it into language?" Paul de Man, "Heidegger's Exegeses of Hölderlin," in *Blindness and Insight*, 261.

32. "It is a postulate implicit in all metaphysical poetry that nothing is ineffable, that the most rarified feeling can be exact and exactly expressed." Eliot, "Clark Lectures," 200.

33. "Both sorts of trope designate ways of being (something or other), the one literally, the other non-literally." José Benardete, *Metaphysics: The Logical Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 42.

34. Ibid., 81.

35. Ibid., 81–82.

36. Ibid., 82–83.

37. Ibid., 82.

38. Ibid., 83.

39. D. C. Williams, "On the Elements of Being: I," *Review of Metaphysics* 7 (September 1953): 3–18.

40. Benardete, *Metaphysics: The Logical Approach*, 85.

41. Ibid., 99.

42. Ibid., 86.

43. Ibid., 83.

44. W. V. O. Quine, "On What There Is," cited in Benardete, *Metaphysics*, 5.

45. Hilary Putnam, *The Many Faces of Realism: The Paul Carus Lectures* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1987), 35–36.

46. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Penelope Murray and T. S. Dorsch, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. Murray and Dorsch (New York: Penguin, 2004), 68–69 (1451b).

47. Ibid., 73 (1453a).

48. Ibid., 93 (1460b).

49. Michael Witmore, *Shakespearean Metaphysics* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 1.

50. James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Truth of Love: The Mystery of "The Phoenix and Turtle"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 163.

51. Ibid., 3.

52. Ibid., 18, 164.

53. Frank Kermode, "Eliot and the Shudder," *London Review of Books* 32, no. 9 (2010), accessed at http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/no9/frank-kermode/eliot-and-the-shudder.

54. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 1998), 158; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 208. For helpful comments on a previous draft of this paper, I thank Paul Kottman, Mena Mitrano, Rachel Zuckert, and an anonymous reviewer for Fordham University Press. I also thank Donovan Irven and Matthew Kroll for inviting me to present a version of the paper at Purdue University under the auspices of the Philosophy and Literature program's "Illuminations" series. I am grateful for the critical feedback I received on this occasion, especially from Geraldine Friedman, Dan Smith, and my exemplary host Chris Yeomans.

Literature, Prejudice, Historicity: The Philosophical Importance of Herder's Shakespeare Studies

Kristin Gjesdal

It is a commonly held that philosophical hermeneutics—hermeneutics as a theory of understanding and method of interpretation—develops as part of romantic philosophy and its reaction to the ahistorical thinking of the Enlightenment.[1] In the following I take issue with this assumption. I suggest that hermeneutics, as a modern philosophical discipline, is solidly planted within the Enlightenment tradition in German eighteenth-century philosophy. This is particularly clear in the early work of Johann Gottfried Herder. In his early work, Herder articulates a hermeneutic theory that is based in a systematic discussion of reason's situatedness in history. As such, he anticipates the most profound insights of romantic philosophy, showing, as it were, how romanticism is itself a continuation of the Enlightenment paradigm.

Herder's contribution to modern hermeneutics has not been adequately appreciated. This is partly because of a twin misunderstanding. First, it has been thought that Herder develops a critical hermeneutics, a set of systematic reflections on the historicity of thought and its impact on interpretation and human self-understanding, only in his later work (*Another Philosophy of History* and the more teleological writings such as the *Letters on*

Humanity).[2] Second, it is assumed that the theory Herder develops in this period is fairly similar to the position later associated with Gadamer and the ontological turn.[3] Both of these assumptions are wrong. Herder's early work—as it develops in response to the Enlightenment and anticipates the later paradigm of romantic philosophy—is driven by a fundamental awareness of the historical conditionedness of the interpreter. Further, his hermeneutics, still far from the framework of post-Heideggerian philosophy, is oriented around an epistemic rather than ontological (or existential) agenda. While recognizing that prejudices make up enabling as well as limiting conditions of knowledge, understanding, in his view, is a problem of overcoming illegitimate and unreflected sets of beliefs. Herder's hermeneutics does not give rise to a discussion of the authentic ways in which human self-understanding is realized through engagement with the great works of the tradition, but occasions a theorizing of the conditions under which the historically situated interpreter gains the reflective distance needed for self-critique and liberation from unsound prejudices and a more adequate understanding of the text or expression in question.

In this context, Herder's work on Shakespeare proves particularly important. Throughout the 1760s, Shakespeare's theater was a topic of much discussion in Germany. Although some were fascinated by Shakespeare's recently translated dramatic works, the critical audiences asked if these plays, clearly violating the dominant understanding of art, could pass as art. Thus the reference to Shakespeare provides all that Herder can hope for: It is an example that engages a broader, enlightened audience, concerns critics as well as philosophers, rests right at the heart of the newly developing discipline of aesthetics, and is an issue that invites systematic and critical reflection on the cultural-historical conditionedness of reason. It is with these concerns in mind that Herder turns to Shakespeare. And, further, it is through his work on Shakespeare that Herder develops the hermeneutic turn that has been hinted at, yet not fully brought out, in his earlier work on literature and taste.[4]

Herder's essay on Shakespeare is available in two drafts as well as a final version. The availability of the drafts makes it possible to study the step-by-step development of Herder's thought. In the years between 1770 and 1773, Herder does not change his assessment of Shakespeare—or, for that matter, of the reigning critique of Elizabethan drama. What changes, though, is Herder's attempt at analyzing *why* Shakespeare's tragedy has been misunderstood as well as his effort to carve out an alternative, more adequate theory of understanding.[5] Herder's work on Shakespeare—as it progresses from an emphasis on the singularity of the work (the first draft),

through a focus on its historicity (the second draft), and all the way to the last version's emphasis on the historicity of the interpreter—should not be read only as a literary aesthetics but also as a contribution to hermeneutics, indeed a contribution that can help us understand how the later debate about Shakespeare, such as we encounter it in A. W. Schlegel, among others, could find its shape and articulation as, at one and the same time, a theory of and an exercise in interpretation.

I begin with an analysis of the first draft and then trace the development of Herder's hermeneutic position through the second and third versions of his essay on Shakespeare. In the course of drafting and redrafting the essay Herder develops a claim about the individuality of the work of art, a thesis about the inherent historicity of symbolic expression, and, finally, an analysis of the epistemic challenges of prejudices brought about by the historical-cultural situatedness of the interpreter. I close by offering some general remarks on the relevance of Herder's insight and the differences between his epistemic position and the ontological focus that dominates post-Heideggerian hermeneutics.

Genius, Individuality, and Symbolic Expression: The First 1771 Draft

In the first draft of "Shakespeare," Herder addresses the position of the poet and critic Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg. Against a rigid, classicist paradigm in art,[6] Gerstenberg seeks to vindicate the aesthetic relevance of Shakespearean theater. Gerstenberg, however, was not alone in this endeavor. At the time, there were two main strands of defense. First, it was claimed that Shakespeare's dramatic works did indeed meet the standards of Aristotelian poetics, if only the *Poetics* were read in the right way. Second, it was suggested that in order to get beyond the classicist rejection of Elizabethan drama, it is not Shakespeare's work, but Aristotle's *Poetics* that must be subject to reinterpretation. If the *Poetics* is seen as a descriptive rather than a normative account, Aristotle's work could be taken to illuminate or even be used to defend the aesthetic promise of the English playwright. It is the latter rather than the former strategy that is reflected in Gerstenberg's work.[7]

Herder sympathizes with Gerstenberg's wish to take Aristotle's poetics back from the classicists, thereby launching a reappraisal of Shakespearean drama (*W*, 2:522). With regard to Gerstenberg's arguments, however, Herder is less impressed. If Gerstenberg pursues the right *end*, he nonetheless approaches it with the wrong *means*. On Herder's account,

Gerstenberg's defense is marred by two problems. Gerstenberg, he argues, gets Aristotle wrong. Further, he is not convinced by the deeper, aesthetic premise that Shakespeare and Aristotle can at all be judged in light of each other. In this context, it is the second, more principled point that is of interest.

While Gerstenberg is engaged contra orthodox classicism in a defense of Shakespearean drama, he does not analyze the most fundamental (classicist) premise of the German Shakespeare debate: the idea that one can judge a modern work of art in terms of standards deriving from ancient Greek poetics.[8] At this point Herder's argument represents a fundamental shift of orientation. Instead of debating the particular affinities between Shakespeare and Aristotle (from the point of view of the literary critic), Herder questions the relevance of such a comparison in the first place (from the point of view of the philosopher).

Against the tenors of Gerstenberg's defense, Herder musters three arguments. He develops (a) a claim about the singularity of the work of art, (b) a suggestion about the historical content of Shakespeare's drama, and (c) an effort to sublate the potential tension between the singularity claim and the general description of Shakespeare's drama as historical in content by discussing the unique relationship between innovation and tradition as it is realized in creative genius. Each of these points is deserving of a more detailed discussion.

(a) Classicist poetics is typically perceived as striving for a definition of drama. This definition, in turn, is related to criteria of genre.[9] Herder, however, argues that Shakespeare's drama cannot be pigeonholed by such criteria. Rather, it is characterized by the fact that it transcends traditional genres. It is—along the lines of Polonius's poetological reflections in Hamlet[10]—tragic, comic, historical, and pastoral all at the same time (*W*, 2:524). Herder, significantly, does not concoct a novel genre into which Shakespeare's work would fit and in light of which it could be aesthetically validated. At a principled and theoretical level, he questions the helpfulness of universal genre definitions. Shakespeare's work, he claims, is unique. Moreover, each of Shakespeare's plays is unique to the extent that it needs, in Herder's words, to name itself—that is, to implicitly or explicitly articulate the poetic ambitions by which it should be measured (*W*, 2:524).

Herder extends this point to literature as such. The perception of literature through rules or fixed (genre) definitions risks reducing the work to a faint version of itself (*W*, 2:524). Hence it is not only Shakespeare's drama, but also Greek tragedy that is misunderstood within the classicist paradigm. Just as it was in the case of Elizabethan art, Greek tragedies

neither could nor should be lumped together under a general label or be taken to exemplify a set of universal aesthetic norms. Each tragedy must be studied as distinct and individual, and appreciated in its specific style and manner (*W*, 2:525).

(b) Having questioned the usefulness of abstract genre definitions and universal norms in aesthetics, Herder proceeds to offer an alternative reading of Shakespeare—one that transcends the understanding of Elizabethan drama in light of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the genre definitions it licenses. In working out his own account of Shakespeare, Herder makes no attempt at drawing a sharp distinction between the formal aspects and the content of his plays, both of which were targeted by the classicist critics.[11] Instead, he suggests that Shakespeare's drama presents the audience with a history (*Geschichte*) that is far more complex than the well-structured plot recommended by Aristotelian poetics (*W*, 2:525).

Herder does not offer a precise definition of the term "history."[12] Within the framework of his essay on Shakespeare it assumes at least three different meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the past (*W*, 2:525). On the other hand, it refers to the particular narrative or plot of a given drama (*W*, 2:525). In some cases, it refers to both of the above, that is, to the way in which the past is preserved in the narratives of tradition (as "dramatic history," *W*, 2:535). Yet the term *Geschichte* is central to Herder's argument, so central, indeed, that it is placed in relative opposition to a traditional reference to drama (*W*, 2:528).[13]

The introduction of the term *history* might be helpful from a literary point of view (in that it contributes to the reevaluation of Shakespearean drama).[14] From a philosophical standpoint, however, it produces a possible inconsistency. For even though the term *history*, in the threefold meaning of the term, might aid the reevaluation of Shakespeare, it also represents a general(izing) category and thus jeopardizes the claim that every work must be treated as singular in the sense of giving itself its own name and standard.

This inconsistency is overcome only by the introduction of Herder's next point: the description of Shakespeare's work as *both* individual *and* reflective of its historical context. In Herder's understanding, it is the notion of artistic genius that offers such a mediating position. Genius, for Herder, is not simply an ability to produce original works of art. It is the ability to rework the available resources of a given tradition in an individualized and novel way.

(c) True to the rhetoric of his time, Herder describes Shakespeare's creativity in the language of aesthetic genius (*W*, 2:526).[15] Genius is a force

or spontaneity; it is not viewed as a quality of the work (as an object of aesthetic appreciation). Creativity—which is not exclusive to art, but part of all symbolic production—is connected to individual perception and feeling. Yet creativity is not opposed to taste and culture. It is opposed, rather, to imitation and stifling aesthetic forms. That is, in Herder's work, genius is associated with a certain relation to the historicity of the symbolic resources: It is defined by its capacity to expand the prevalent symbolic tradition and create novel expressions that, in turn, are recognized by the critical audiences as aptly reflecting their self-understanding.[16] The work of creative genius is both individual and expressive of a shared culture and tradition. In Herder's view, the classicist paradigm advocates an ideal of imitation and fails to account for these dimensions of art: the individuality as well as the historicity of expression (which, for Herder, are closely related)—and, importantly, it fails to account for the intrinsic relation between the two, that is, for how tradition exists only in perpetual renewal. In Shakespeare's drama, by contrast, we encounter no imitation of this sort (*W*, 2:526).[17]

As already mentioned, Herder, in this essay, initially uses the term *history* to describe the narrative structure and/or the historical reference point of Shakespeare's drama: Shakespeare's drama does not present an idealized world of heroes and demigods, but reflects historical events, be they real or hypothetical, recounted truthfully or shaped by poetic imagination.[18] By introducing a notion of creative genius, Herder can argue that it is not just Shakespeare's narratives or the historical reference of his work but also the very creation of it that emerges as historical. Shakespeare's drama is historical in that it brings out novel expressive possibilities and thus expands the field of thinking and action, that is, the realm of symbolically mediated reason. Shakespeare does not imitate tradition. In drawing on the resources of tradition, genius responds to his or her own time—and yet he or she does so in a genuinely innovative way.[19] Genius does not consist in the ability to express the eternal harmony of nature (as the classicist would have it).[20] Nor does it consist in a simple return to the past, or a rejection of it (as the romantics would later be taken to argue).[21] Genius, rather, is a capacity to articulate, in a concrete, particular, and sensuous form, a given historical framework as it progressively expands the pool of available symbolic resources. This is why the introduction of the category of genius, as defined by the young Herder, solves the potential tension between the singularity claim and the general claim about Shakespeare's theater evolving around "history." It suggests that the appeal to history (or historicity) need not be limited to the content of Shakespeare's drama or tradition as

such, but could also refer to art's capacity to contribute to the dynamic development of culture.[22] And it suggests that the work of art is not simply particular—in the sense of being torn from the tradition—but a synthesis of the particular and the universal, that is, individual.

In this way, Herder's reference to creative genius solves the tension between the singularity claim (that each work articulates its own "standards") and the universalizing claim (that Shakespeare's tragedies present "history"). Yet the reference to genius is not unproblematic, for, despite Herder's seeking a new description of art—the work being unique yet reflective of its tradition—the category of individual, creative genius typically refers to a distinctly modern frame of mind. Herder, however, is committed to an explanatory model that sheds light on ancient as well as modern drama. Hence, he needs to re-craft the essay and highlight, from the beginning, how tradition is kept alive by innovation and change. He must emphasize, as a shared feature of premodern and modern tragedy, the historicity of art, hence freeing not only Shakespeare's theater in particular, but also symbolic expression in general, from its ahistorical configurations. At this point, Herder's argument is substantially redirected. At stake is a shift *from* a focus on the tension between individual work and generalizing aesthetic models, on the one hand, *to* a focus on the historicity of symbolic expression, on the other. This shift, in turn, is made possible by—but does not culminate in—the reference to aesthetic genius. Furthermore, it represents a first step in the direction of a hermeneutic turn in Herder's theory: If the work of art is understood as the work of genius, it is viewed as intrinsically historical and in need of understanding, rather than something to be judged by reference to a set of a priori aesthetic rules.[23] Although Herder's emphasis on the historicity of the work is not a sufficient criterion for a fully fledged hermeneutic philosophy, it is nonetheless a necessary condition—and, as such, is completed with his discussion, in the second draft, of the historicity of the work and, in the final version, of the interpreter.

The Historicity of Symbolic Expression: The Second 1771 Draft

Although Herder's introduction of creative genius redirects the focus from the problem of rules and generalizations in aesthetics (the tension between individual creation and universalizing rules) to the idea that drama (or symbolic expression in general) reflects its historical context and initiates historical-aesthetic change, this point remains underarticulated and is introduced ad hoc toward the end of the first draft. In the second draft, his argument moves from a negative critique of generalizing models of art and

symbolic expression to a positive account of the intrinsic historical character of art in particular and symbolic expression in general.

In this context, Gerstenberg's work, with its attempt at defending Shakespeare by reference to rules gleaned from Aristotle's *Poetics*, no longer makes up the polemical foil. Herder now addresses a number of new literary issues, including the question of whether an author needs to be true to the historical material and the claim that Shakespeare's characters are too diverse to create a unified aesthetic whole. He develops the idea, already implicit in his appeal to *Geschichte*, of Shakespearean drama as a unity-in-difference. In explaining this point, however, the second draft is considerably longer and in certain respects less structured than the first draft. Yet it is possible to isolate and analyze three steps that bring Herder from a worry about universalist theories of art to a full-fledged account of the historicity of art in particular and symbolic expression in general. He discusses (a) how Shakespeare's drama escapes rule classification, (b) how it offers a concrete reflection of humanity, and (c) how it, in doing so, is reflective of modernity as such.

(a) According to Herder, Shakespeare's drama challenges the idea of a stylized, rule-driven theater and presents the most vivid scenes and characters on stage. The plot of a Shakespeare play cannot be easily summarized. Nor is it possible to identify a central topic around which Shakespeare's theater revolves. Shakespeare, Herder claims, presents us with the multiplicity of history itself. A reading of his work along the lines of genre, rules, and universal concepts would leave us with an effigy; his drama would, in Herder's words, be as lifeless as dried flowers (*W*, 2:531).

In the first draft, Herder insists that each Shakespeare play must give itself its own standards—indeed, there are as many standards as there are situations in the piece (*W*, 2:542). In the second draft, this is emphatically repeated (*W*, 2:532). There is, Herder suggests, no one set of rules for drama, not even for each particular drama, but an infinite number of potential standards or rules (*Regelkanon*) responding to the various aspects of the individual plays. In Herder's image-laden lexicon, Shakespeare's drama does not present us with a beautiful painting, but with a full display of light similar to those created by the sun reflecting in a drop of water (*W*, 2:532).

(b) Herder's critique of the desire for transtemporal genre definitions has been read as a plea for a nationally, regionally, or locally oriented aesthetics that would reduce the meaning of the work to its immediate historical surroundings, viewing it as intrinsically bound up with a cultural or

even national spirit.[24] This, however, is wrong. As it emerged in a German language area that was not yet unified (but, indeed, also in France), the Shakespeare debate was fueled by nationalist sentiments.[25] Yet as Herder sums up and further refines this debate, he offers a critique of the nationalist reception of Shakespeare. Herder, in this context, makes three important points.

First, if Herder is influenced by the British and their celebration of Shakespeare's aesthetic genius, he is not, for that reason, blinded by their contributions. In fact, he opens the second draft by suggesting that Shakespeare might be better understood by a foreigner than by his fellow English. The English, he points out, typically celebrate Shakespeare as their national poet. They fail to see that Shakespeare's work does not belong to one particular national or linguistic culture, but to humankind as a whole (*W*, 2:530). If Shakespeare should be understood as the national poet of the English—or, at a principled level, art understood as national art—such an argument would not have made sense.

Second, Herder claims that there is no such thing as cultural purity. This argument follows from his account of the linguistic mediation of culture. In *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (published in 1772, just prior to the final version of "Shakespeare"), Herder criticizes the notion of human beings as *Nationaltiere*: "If human beings were national animals so that each such animal had invented its own language for itself quite independently and separately from others, then this language would certainly have to display 'a *difference in type*,' such as the inhabitants of Saturn and of the earth may perhaps have vis-à-vis each other" (*PW*, 158). Intercultural interaction is enabled by the fact that in the diversity of languages there is nonetheless a unifying linguistic orientation (human being expressing itself symbolically). By definition, a culture draws on other cultures, be they past or contemporary. Not even the art of the ancient Greeks was closed off and self-sustained (like the classicists would have it), but borrowed from Egypt and other cultures. Herder criticizes Winckelmann for judging Egyptian art on Greek premises,[26] but also reminds the classicists of the fusions of culture at the very heart of the Greek art they so admire (*APH*, 21).[27]

Third and finally, Herder, right from his earliest work, advocates the importance of multilateral cultural exchange. That is, he not only argues that cultures de facto are impure, but also that they de jure benefit from exchange with other cultures. In his reflections on translation Herder emphasizes the benefits of engaging other cultures on their own terms.[28] Intercultural exchange aids in expanding the interpreter's horizon of

understanding.[29] It tunes the interpreter to an infinitely rich spectrum of human possibilities and establishes a critical space in which unreflected aspects of her or his own field of practice and reasoning can be scrutinized.

Against this background, Herder, in his second draft, introduces the idea that Shakespeare's drama presents us with the history of not just the Elizabethan era but also of humanity as a whole (*W*, 2:532). In Shakespeare's drama, the audience encounters examples of the infinite possibilities of human existence, a panoply of different points of view and practices (*W*, 2:535).

What previous critics considered a weakness—for example, that Shakespeare did not remain entirely truthful to historical events or that his plays were too crowded and the characters too diverse—is in Herder's view a strength. The fact that Shakespeare presents us with a multitude of events and characters, that he poetically processes the historical material, does not indicate a lack of unity. The unity presented in his drama, however, is not one that can be conceptually summarized, but that of humanity as realized in and through a plurality of thoughts, actions, expressions, and experiences. At this point, the historical situation in which Shakespeare's drama emerges cannot be distinguished from the stories or histories he produces. His drama is, in short, the drama of modernity.[30]

(c) By this move, Herder shifts his focus from an analysis of the *work* (its having a unity despite the lack of universal genre definitions) to the *experiential outcome* of historical-aesthetic interpretation, a topic that he had already touched on in short pieces such as the essay on taste[31] and would further explore in *Another Philosophy of History*.[32] Shakespeare, he suggests, gives form (*Gestalt*) to a tradition to which the reader herself or himself belongs. Shakespeare could not have written as the ancient Greeks did without, concomitantly, betraying the cultural and historical horizon of his own world—and, by implication, that of his audience. In order to write like the Greeks, he would have had to step out of his own historical context and evoke a life-form long gone. This is neither possible nor desirable. Thus, Shakespeare must change the form as well as the content of drama. Thus, Shakespeare's drama reflects his time (*W*, 2:548). If one judges Shakespeare by Sophocles' standards, one is bound to overlook the intrinsic historical nature of symbolic expression—Sophocles' as well as Shakespeare's—but also the genuine possibility of self-reflection that the modern audience is afforded through Elizabethan theater. The fact that Shakespeare's drama does not easily lend itself to genre definitions, the fact that it traverses literary styles and conventions, is indeed part of its intrinsic historicity.[33] With this claim, Herder anticipates what Hölderlin

would later refer to as the inaccessibility of Greek nature, that is, of Greek spirit as it presented itself to the Greeks.[34]

In the second draft, Herder goes beyond the reflection on the historical differences between the Greeks and the moderns. By introducing the element of self-understanding in art, Herder conceptualizes the epistemic challenges and cultural gains of engaging with temporally distant works in a hermeneutically responsible way. Hence, the second draft transcends the framework of the first in that it reflects on the historical situatedness of the work and the way in which it affords self-understanding and self-reflection (by understanding the work better, the interpreter also gains a more adequate understanding of his or her own situatedness within tradition).

However, if the text is situated in history, as Herder's point about self-understanding presupposes, then, we may assume that this is also the case with the reader. That is, if the text, as we learn from the second draft, does not inhabit a timeless point of nowhere, but is part of a given, historical culture, then this also applies to the interpreter. The interpreter's outlook, too, is shaped by his or her historical and cultural context. The very same point that makes for the historicity of literature, its emerging from a concrete cultural context, all the same enables and limits the horizon of the interpreter. Hence, Herder must proceed to address the problem of prejudice in understanding. This makes up the philosophical challenge of the third and final version of the Shakespeare work. In its final form, Herder's essay is no longer a treatise on the historical forms of tragedy, but an inquiry into the hermeneutical problem of prejudice.

Prejudice and the Historicity of the Interpreter: The Final 1773 Draft

The final version of Herder's essay takes advantage of the groundwork laid out in the drafts and presents by far the most worked out and well-crafted argument. It further elaborates the difference between ancient and modern drama, as well as the general point about the historicity of art. However, in the final version, Herder also expands his focus. In the first draft, he asks, "How do we best understand Shakespeare's drama?" In the second draft, he proceeds to raise the question "How do we best conceptualize the difference between ancient and modern theater?" He responds to these questions by emphasizing, respectively, the singularity of the work and its being situated in the intersection between innovation and tradition (thus, potentially, affording the interpreter a better understanding of his or her culture). In the third version of the essay, he conducts a reflective

turn, taking into account the position of the philosopher theorizing the nature of drama in particular and art more universally. "Why," he asks, "is it that both ancient tragedy (and, for that sake, philosophy) and modern drama have been misunderstood?" His response not only mirrors the previous essays' reflections on the reception of Greek and Elizabethan tragedy in French and German eighteenth-century culture, but also involves thoughts on the epistemic status of the interpreter.[35] The situatedness of the interpreter is an enabling condition for understanding, yet all the same it constitutes a potential limitation for hermeneutic work. It is only when Herder has taken into account the historicity of the interpreter as well as the text that we can speak of a fully developed hermeneutic consciousness in his work.[36]

True to the central focus of the essay, Herder's argument is backed up by an analysis of the nature and historical development of Greek and Shakespearean drama. Again, I proceed by isolating the various steps of his argument. Herder (a) points out that the interpreter's image of the past, be it ancient Greek or modern culture, is often reflective of the concerns governing the age and, thus, is expressive of conscious or preconscious prejudices. Furthermore, he shows (b) how the cementing of prejudices is part of tradition itself. Finally, he asks (c) how, in historical work, illegitimate prejudices can be criticized and overcome. Each of these points is in need of further discussion.

(a) With regard to Greek drama—as a paradigm case of the historicity of art—Herder reiterates three points that have already been made in the previous drafts, but in the final version he fleshes each out in greater detail and with new argumentative rigor.

First, Herder reminds the reader that drama is inherited from the Greeks and passed down as a core element of the Western tradition. Throughout this mediation, the idea has gradually taken shape that Greek drama can be laid out in terms of certain rules, which are, in turn, explicated in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Greek drama, however, is not a universal, rule-bound category. Wishing to combat the classicists on their own grounds, Herder traces the development of ancient tragedy from its simplest beginnings to its more elaborate Sophoclean form.[37] On this reading, Sophocles' work does not represent the timeless, paradigmatic case of Greek drama. It is viewed, rather, as the outcome of gradual, historical change.[38] Herder's insistence on the intrinsic historicity of Greek drama echoes the thrust of his first draft. However, in the final version, Herder is willing to draw a more radical conclusion from this insight and theorize the relationship between ancient and modern philosophy.

Next, Herder combines the main points of the second draft (Shakespeare's modernity and the historicity of art) with his newly won insight into the role of prejudice. What we moderns perceive as the rule-bound nature of Greek drama is in reality not a question of rules, but reflects the living content of Greek culture. Greek drama has been passed down through tradition, and modern readers approach it with a certain familiarity. Yet despite its continuous mediation in tradition, modern readers are not even close to understanding Greek culture. Instead, we typically cling to reductive and simplifying images of ancient drama that have been cemented over the centuries. We modern readers entertain an image that reflects our own tradition to the same or an even stronger degree than it reflects Greek culture. What Herder's contemporary audiences deemed the artifice (or rules) of classical tragedy was, for the Greeks, their nature— that is, their immediate way of realizing their humanity (*S*, 9). Furthermore, their second nature did not, as the classicist took it, involve a process of simplification, but shows increasing complexity and elaboration (*S*, 11). This, Herder worries, has been covered up by a historical reception that tends to see Greek antiquity as unified and static.

Tradition presents us with the works of the past, but all the same removes us from them.[39] Herder's hermeneutics represent an effort to reflect on the procedures through which the interpreter gets beyond false prejudices *and* a discussion of the benefits to be reaped from such an enterprise.

Finally, Herder insists that modern audiences cannot take for granted that their grasp on Greek tragedy reflects Greek tragedy as it was. It might as well reflect the misconceptions, additions, and elaborations of a long-spanning tradition. Hence the focus of the historicity thesis shifts from the *work* (as laid out in the second draft) to the *interpreter* and his or her tradition. Herder clarifies this point by discussing the reception of Aristotle's *Poetics*. In doing so, he refers not only to the history of drama and art but also to the history and self-understanding of philosophy, that is, our thinking about art and culture.

Not only Sophocles, but Aristotle, too, should be read in light of his own time. When approaching Aristotle "without prejudice and from the standpoint of his own time," we realize that what he values in Sophocles is very different from what the classicist appreciated in his work (*S*, 12). Aristotle, Herder claims, does not celebrate the eternal harmony or the simplicity of Sophocles' drama. He expounds on the "variety" of Sophocles' poetry and, equally important, sees him as an innovator. In Aristotle's interpretation, innovation was "the essence of this new poetic genre" (*S*, 13). According to Herder, Aristotle is interested in Sophocles' transformation of drama,

which made him into something of a "new Homer" (*S*, 13). Sophocles is not judged by the criteria of the past. Nor is he judged by a set of allegedly timeless and universal standards. He is, rather, assessed in light of his ability to express, in a unique way, his own time. And if we appreciate how Sophocles expressed and transformed his tradition, we should also realize that Aristotle "philosophized in the grand style of his age, and that he bears no blame at all for the restrictive and infantile follies that have turned him into the paper scaffolding of our stage" (*S*, 13).

Whether this interpretation of Aristotle is at all adequate is a question that transcends the scope of this essay. My point is simply, first, to emphasize that Herder, by shifting the focus from what Aristotle is *saying* (about Sophocles and Greek drama) to the question of what he is *doing* when treating Sophocles' drama in a given way (as a novel contribution to classical tragedy), shows how strong an interest he takes at this point in the historical dimension of philosophy as well as art. Second, I have emphasized how Herder expands his focus to include the reception of Aristotle and a discussion of how a series of prejudices has misinformed our judgment of Greek and modern poetics. How we look at Greek tragedy and philosophy is, in other words, not only a question about our judgment of the past, but also a reflection of the critical self-understanding (or lack of such) of the present.

(b) In his study of tragedy, Herder contemplates the changing of taste over time and across cultures, but he also, and more importantly, adds to his discussion of the particular work a set of more or less systematic reflections on the situatedness and the prejudices of the interpreter. His discussion of prejudices brings the focus back to Shakespeare, but it also completes Herder's hermeneutic turn. This involves two steps: a shift from a critique of specific prejudices (pertaining to the reception of classical and Elizabethan drama) to reflections on prejudice as such, as well as a discussion of how prejudices make up an inherent part of the tradition, thus enabling as well as delimiting the work of the interpreter. A bit more will have to be said about each of these points.

According to Herder, both Shakespeare's defenders and his critics have been held back by unhealthy prejudices. Even though Shakespeare's work has been expounded on "by the multitudes who explain, defend, condemn, excuse, worship, slander, translate, and traduce him" (*S*, 1), Herder sets out to "show that both sides have built their case merely on *prejudice* [*Vorurteil*], on an illusion that does not really exist" (*S*, 3–4). In both cases, Shakespeare's work is observed through the lens of classicism and is thus reduced to "nothing but caricature" (*S*, 4). Herder certainly wishes to get

away from the prejudices of classicism—though he himself is rather one-sided in his review of this aesthetic paradigm. Yet more important than getting around a particular set of (classicist) prejudices is the effort to discuss the general impact of prejudice on understanding.

The most dangerous of all prejudices is that of imagining that one's own point of view is untainted by the historical and cultural context in which it finds its shape. Hence, the chief mistake of classicist aesthetics is neither to approach nonclassical art with measures derived from classical literature nor to misread Greek tragedy, but, rather, to believe that its own point of view is universal and free of prejudice.

Prejudices take shape and solidify through the very same tradition that uncovers and mediates the past to the interpreter.[40] Greek and Elizabethan tragedy offer two prominent examples of this. In Herder's words: "It is from Greece that we have inherited the words *drama*, *tragedy*, and *comedy*; and just as the lettered culture of the human race has, on a narrow strip of the earth's surface, made its own way only through *tradition*, so a certain stock of rules, which seemed inseparable from its teaching, has naturally accompanied it everywhere in its womb and its language" (*S*, 4–5). Prejudices result in a projection of one's own values or understanding of a given subject matter onto a work that is derived from a different historical and cultural context—thus potentially affirming or criticizing a straw man rather than engaging in a genuine encounter with a position that possibly deviates from the basic beliefs of the interpreter.[41] This risk not only figures in the interpretation of art but also, in equal measure, in philosophical work. Aristotle's *Poetics* is a case in point. Although Aristotle's work is passed down in tradition, it is, at the same time, preserved and possibly also distorted (*S*, 12).

(c) How, then, is the interpreter to proceed in order to reflect on, be aware of, and possibly also challenge his or her prejudices? Herder's recommendation is unambiguous and harks back to the theoretical framework worked out toward the end of the first draft. The only way for the interpreter to challenge his or her prejudices (and here we sense the fundamental difference between Herder's and Gadamer's notions of prejudice) is by trying to situate the work within its own time or context of origin (*S*, 12). In the Shakespeare essay, Herder does not offer much to show how such a situating of the work in its original context should take place.[42] Instead, he proceeds to discuss what may be gained from such a procedure.[43]

Through critically investigating one's own prejudices in the encounter with the expressions of temporally or culturally distant lifeworlds, the interpreter not only gains a better understanding of the work at stake, but also

of himself or herself and his or her own culture. Hence the purpose of the final version of the Shakespeare essay is not only to validate the work of the English playwright but also to reflect on the cultural self-understanding of the German-speaking world. When Herder, in 1765, voices the need for an anthropological turn in philosophy (*W*, 1:132 and 134), this does not simply indicate an interest in the study of other cultures but, through such study, also involves the encounter with one's own prejudices in approaching temporally or culturally distant horizons. That is, it implies a historicist-hermeneutic turn: historicist in the sense that the understanding of a given work from past (or distant) cultures cannot be taken for granted but requires scholarly interpretative work,[44] and hermeneutic in the sense that the interpreter, throughout this process, analyzes his or her own prejudices on a given subject matter and continuously subjects them to critical examination, thus gaining understanding of a temporally and/or critically distant text as well as a more reflected understanding of himself or herself and his or her own culture.[45]

At a concrete and practical level, this is why it matters to Herder that the German audiences are able to read Shakespeare without categorizing or rejecting his work in terms of classicist standards. The Shakespeare essay seeks to demonstrate, performatively and theoretically, why such a reading is at all worthwhile. At this point, it is also possible to see why Herder, in recommending a historically sensitive interpretation of Shakespeare paired with a historicist hermeneutics as such, approaches Elizabethan drama by way of a discussion of Greek tragedy: He wishes to counter the reigning prejudices about drama in particular and art in general by genealogically tracing drama back to its early beginnings. Hence, the Shakespeare essay, in its third and final version, is not only or primarily a work on literature, but, at a most basic and fundamental level, an essay on understanding.[46]

Having discussed the argumentative structure of the Shakespeare essay in its three extant versions, I find that two significant questions have been left unanswered: Why has the hermeneutic importance of the Shakespeare essay been overlooked by major strands of hermeneutic philosophers as well as readers of Herder's work? And why, beyond the historical framework of eighteenth-century scholarship, is it worth returning to Herder's hermeneutics? I would like to end the essay by offering a preliminary response to these questions.

One reason that the philosophical importance of Herder's Shakespeare essay has been neglected could be that its readers have focused only or predominantly on the final version of the essay.[47] However, such a focus

avoids the question of why the essay, in its original form, was repeatedly deemed in need of re-crafting. This question is especially urgent in light of the fact that Herder's assessment of Shakespeare and his critics essentially remains the same throughout the drafts. However, although Herder's view of Shakespeare remains unaltered, his hermeneutic position gains increasing depth and sophistication. It moves from asking how the uniqueness of Shakespeare ought to be understood, via an elaboration of the historicity of the work, to an inquiry into the nature of interpretation in general and prejudices in particular. Whereas the first two drafts emphasize, respectively, the particularity and the historicity of the work, the final draft highlights the constitutive historicity of the interpreter. Against this background it is clear that the misunderstanding of Shakespeare is ultimately rooted in a more fundamental misunderstanding of interpretation.

A second point worth mentioning is the tendency, among philosophically minded readers, to assume that Herder's engagement with Shakespeare amounts to little but literary history or, at most, poetics. This, however, is plainly false. The young Herder's literary analyses were produced almost twenty years before Kant published the *Critique of Judgment*. For Herder and his generation, art is not a subject of pure aesthetic judgment in the Kantian sense of the word. Rather, art is the predominant form through which the Enlightenment audiences encounter culturally distant life-forms, and even the predominant form in which they encounter their own tradition (works of the past). As much as art is viewed as beautiful, it is also treated as a historical object—and thus as an object that generates scholarship as well as epistemological queries about the nature of understanding and the way in which prejudices tend systematically to hamper the outlook of historical interpretation.[48]

Why, then, is it worth returning to the young Herder's work on the historicity of understanding? Since the publication of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer has been allowed to almost solely define the concerns and commitments of hermeneutics.[49] Gadamer is, in my view, right in emphasizing the constitutive role of prejudices. He is not right, however, in claiming, first, that the Enlightenment tradition in hermeneutics had no notion of the enabling function of prejudices in understanding and, second, in concluding from his own emphasis on the enabling role of prejudices that understanding is, fundamentally, self-understanding: that is, a participation in the ongoing mediation of the truths of the great works of art.[50] For Herder, all understanding has an element of self-understanding, but it cannot, for that reason, be reduced to it. Understanding is, primarily, about understanding others, and only to the extent that this process triggers

critical self-reflection—which it necessarily ought to and constitutively can do—does self-understanding play a role. For Gadamer, though, self-understanding is about the interpreter getting a deeper, more fundamental grasp of his or her own situatedness in tradition. The work of tradition asks him or her to live more authentically, bids him or her to "alter her life."[51] This conception of understanding is problematic in that it allows little room for reflective (independent or impartial) assessment of the validity of the truths conveyed by the works of the past.[52] It is also problematic because it is an open question whether Gadamer, with this identification of understanding and self-understanding, really manages to make good on his idea of *Bildung* as an education in tradition and culture that is made possible through conversation with the works of the tradition. That is, whereas Gadamer pays attention to the conditioned character of historical and hermeneutic work, he is, when judged from a Herderian point of view, less sensitive to the fact that every text is produced in a given historical period and answers questions that were felt to matter within this particular world (or answers questions that are still ours, albeit in a way that is no longer plausible, acceptable, or aesthetically contemporary).[53] Herder, by contrast, focuses on this dimension of hermeneutics in the second draft of "Shakespeare," and it remains a defining premise for the discussion of prejudice in the final version. This is precisely why he claims that history (with its search for the uniqueness of the past) and philosophy (with its quest for universal questions) must work together in order to avoid philosophy's becoming a merely abstract discipline and history's becoming a discipline without relevance or direction.[54] For Gadamer, questions that we can no longer take as ours—say, the question of whether Shakespeare's tragedies count as art—can be addressed only in an inauthentic way (*TM*, 374). For Herder, this is precisely the kind of situation in which the prejudices of the interpreter are typically at their most persistent, and he urges that the interpreter seek to acknowledge the questions addressed by a text as rational or valuable within its own historical framework. Further, Herder insists that the interpreter needs to distinguish between the meaning of a given text and its truth-value, be it existentially or epistemically coined. Only then can he or she gain knowledge about the past as past—and thus engage in a real dialogue (if such a dialogue proves possible). From a point of view like Herder's, Gadamer's model, which sees tradition as an ongoing answer to questions that remain valid and philosophically pertinent, is ahistorical. Herder's hermeneutic model, as it unfolds through his early work on Shakespeare, is valuable because it reveals alternative ways of addressing the interrelatedness between understanding and self-understanding, thus

making sure that our engagement with the resources of the past does not end up being stifling, but, as Gadamer himself would put it, a genuine, ongoing conversation.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

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1. In Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, the beginning of modern hermeneutics is led back to Schleiermacher's romantic philosophy. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2003), 184–97. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *TM*. The text in which Gadamer discusses Herder, *Volk und Geschichte im Denken Herders* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1942), centers on Herder's notion of folk culture and does not address his theory of interpretation. For a more thorough discussion of this point, see my "Aesthetic and Political Humanism: Gadamer on Herder, Schleiermacher, and the Origins of Modern Hermeneutics," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2007): 275–96.

2. It is symptomatic that even a judicious reader like Robert Norton reasons that Herder's work on literature from 1772 is an "example of the young Herder's ideal of historical analysis at its practical best. But it was the last time that he would limit his investigation of the problem of history solely to art or aesthetics. Excited by the prospects that opened before him, Herder began to add more concrete detail to his theoretical plans in his next major work, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* of 1774. This essay also marks the beginning of a new era in Herder's intellectual life, for after its publication he began to devote himself increasingly exclusively to history." See Robert Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 80–81; see also ibid., 76. Also the Deutscher Klassiker edition suggests that Herder's work on Shakespeare is fundamentally a contribution to *literary* theory. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Günter Arnold et al., vol. 2, ed. Gunter E. Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), 1169 ("Überblick"). Further references to *Werke* will be abbreviated *W*, followed by volume and page number.

3. Hans Dietrich Irmscher, among others, argues that Herder represents an early version of Gadamerian philosophy. See Hans Dietrich Irmscher, "Grundzüge der Hermeneutik Herders," *Schaumburger Studien*, Heft 33, Bückeburg, 1973, 17–57.

4. See Johann Gottfried Herder, "Fragment of a Treatise on the Ode" and "Essay on a History of Lyrical Poetry," in *Selected Early Works*, ed. Ernest A. Menze and Karl Menges, trans. Ernest A. Menze with Michael Palma (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1992), 35–53 and 69–85.

5. Another important contribution is the slightly earlier "Über Thomas Abbts Schriften" (1768). This text, however, does not so much address the problem of prejudices and the epistemic conditions of understanding as the nature of (historical) meaning. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 167–78. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *PW*, followed by page number.

6. Both Gerstenberg and Herder viewed classicism as a strictly rule-oriented, deductive approach to art. For a more nuanced discussion of classicist aesthetics, see Frederick C. Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

7. Gerstenberg had already pleaded that Shakespeare's tragedies should be read as "lebendige Bilder der sittlichen Natur" and thus moved the English playwright away from what Herder perceived as the mechanical rule-following of the Francophile critics. Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, *Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Litteratur* (1766), the 15th through the18th letters, reprinted in *Shakespeare in Germany, 1740–1815*, ed. Roy Pascal (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 55–71 (the quote is from page 57).

8. It should be noted that the reference to Aristotle was not internal to Shakespeare's plays, but, rather, part of the particular, classicist mind-set that dominated aesthetic discourse in France and Germany at the time.

9. Early on, Herder had been interested in such a project, but also in the coupling of artistic media with the different senses. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sculpture*: *Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream*, ed. and trans. Jason Gaiger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See also Rachel Zuckert, "Sculpture and Touch: Herder's Aesthetics of Sculpture," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 3 (2009): 285–99.

10. This point, too, is borrowed from Gerstenberg. See *Briefe*, *Shakespeare in Germany*, 66.

11. That is, he casts modern dramatic action, which lacks an overall dramatic unity in light of which it assumes meaning, as *Begebenheit* rather than *Handlung* (*W*, 2:548).

12. Herder's style was a source of aggravation for Kant, who vents his frustration in his review of *Ideen*. See "Review of Herder's Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind," in Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 2005), 201–20. For a discussion of Herder's philosophical style, see Hans Adler, "Herder's Style," in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, ed. Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2009), 331–50.

13. Herder's use of the term "Geschichte" is analyzed in Hertha Isaacsen, *Der junge Herder und Shakespeare* (Berlin: Verlag von Emil Ebering, 1930), 19–30.

14. It allows, for example, for the inclusion of ghosts, witches, people of all classes, and other character types that were not in line with the aesthetic sensitivities of classicist drama. Furthermore, it allows for a reevaluation of Shakespeare's language, which was often subjected to drastic measures of "improvement" in the German translations. See *W* 2:524–26.

15. Here Herder follows Edward Young, among others. Young had been emphasizing the originality of Shakespeare and claimed that "the first ancients had no merit in being originals: they could not be imitators. Modern writers have a choice to make, and therefore have a merit in their power." See Martin William Seinke, *Edward Young's "Conjectures on Original Composition" in England and Germany* (with the original text) (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1917), 47 and 64–65. Young's work had been translated into German in the late 1750s and *Conjectures* was published in German in 1760. See also John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 240–41.

16. In anticipation of Kant's famous claim that the work of genius is exemplary, Herder views genius as the power to create exemplary expressions. For Kant's point, see *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §46.

17. Thus Herder's emphasis on feeling one's way into an author's original work in the essay on Abbt. See "On Thomas Abbt's Writing," *PW*, 174.

18. This question will play a more important role in the second draft. The debate over historical truthfulness in poetry was part of the English reception of Shakespeare.

19. For a helpful discussion of Herder's notion of genius, see Peter Michelsen, "Regeln für Genies: Zu Herders "Fragmenten" "Ueber die neuere Deutsche Litteratur,"" in *Johann Gottfried Herder 1744–1803*, ed. Gerhard Sauder (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 225–237.

20. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 326–31.

21. Gadamer repeats this misunderstanding, which can be led back to Hegel's polemical account. See *TM*, 58–60. See also Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik* (diss., Bonn: Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität, 1956).

22. For Herder, historical culture is linguistically constituted and language historically mediated. In this respect, Herder's view of art is related to his assertion of the historicity of language. This connection is emphasized in *W*, 1:181. As soon as language is viewed as historically constituted, it follows that it is not studied as an object or a thing, but, rather, as a function. Again, there is a parallel between Herder's philosophy of art and his philosophy of language. This also sheds light on Herder's bracketing, in this period, of his interest in sculpture in order to focus on tragedy, poetry, and other linguistic arts. Language, furthermore, is genuinely human precisely in its historicity. According to Herder, neither God, nor animal, but only human being could invent language (*Treatise on the Origin of Language*, PW, 87 and 96).

23. For an extrapolation of this point, see Hans Dietrich Irmscher, *Johann Gottfried Herder* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001), 84. My reading of this point differs from Irmscher's, who argues that Herder's insistence on the need for interpretation of the work of genius is a sufficient condition for us to speak of a hermeneutic turn in his work.

24. See, for example, Friedrich Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1920).

For a more recent ascription of such ideas to Herder, Bhikhu Parek's argument is worth noting. Parekh worries that even though Herder can account for intercultural diversity, he lacks a viable notion of diversity within a given culture. Again, the young Herder's work on Shakespeare demonstrates that such a reading does not hold. See Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 73.

25. See Robert S. Mayo, *Herder and the Beginnings of Comparative Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 31.

26. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*, trans. Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin (Cambridge: Hackett, 2004), 15. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *APH*.

27. See also John Zammito, "Herder and Historical Metanarrative: What's Philosophical about History?" in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, 70–71.

28. In a text from 1764, Herder writes: "How little progress would we have made, were each nation to strive for learnedness by itself, confined within the narrow sphere of its language." "On Diligence in the Study of Several Learned Languages," in *Selected Early Works*, 31. See also "First Collection of Fragments," *Selected Early Works*, 109.

29. Here translation plays an important role. Yet in Herder's view translation can never replace the original. In *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1766–77), he writes, " When I find my way back to my native land again,

then I feel sorry for those who want to read Homer in a translation, even if it were as correct as possible. You are no longer reading Homer, but something which approximately repeats what *Homer* said inimitably in his poetic language" (*PW*, 41). In this context, it is worth keeping in mind how Shakespeare's work, when being translated into German, was heavily edited (rendered in alexandrines, monologues cut out, and so on). For a discussion of these issues, see Susan Bernofsky, *Foreign Words: Translator-Authors in the Age of Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 1–45. For a discussion of the claim that Herder aspires toward a translation of the tone of the original work and not only its letter, see Gerhard Sauder, "Herder's Poetic Works, His Translations, and His Views on Poetry," in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, 305–30.

30. I discuss this point in more detail in "Reading Shakespeare, Reading Modernity," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 9, no. 3 (2004): 17–31.

31. In this essay from 1766, Herder reflects on how the study of history dissolves the prejudice that one's own time is the best of all and that "the current taste is the only one." See "On the Change of Taste," *PW*, 255.

32. See *APH*, 56–57. Here Herder discusses, among other things, the differences between engagement with art and mere philosophical-didactic lectures on other cultures and one's own.

33. In *Kalligone*, Herder leads this insight back to Edward Young and praises him for realizing that to imitate the ancients is ultimately to do something different from what they did (*W*, 8:652). This point, though, was already spelled out in the first draft, but also in the Fragments, where Herder claims that ancient works could not have been produced by moderns, just "as little as we Germans will ever receive a *Homer* who is in all respects for us that which Homer was for the Greeks" (*PW*, 42).

34. Hölderlin, too, places this in the context of the hermeneutic challenge that "what is familiar must be learned as well as what is alien." See letter no. 236 (to Casimir Ulrich Böhlendorff), in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 150.

35. With this turn to prejudices, the understanding of other traditions becomes important for the conceptualization of understanding as such, including the understanding of the interpreter's own tradition. For Gadamer, however, this insisting on the foreign even in one's own tradition reflects an illegitimate objectivization of tradition. See *TM* 165–67 and 174.

36. Yet the full depth of this hermeneutic consciousness is visible only when the final version of the essay is read against the background of the drafts. In the first draft, Herder grapples with the problems of general

definitions and rules in philosophy of art. In the second, he touches on the historicity of human reason. Only in the final version does he conduct a fully reflective turn by asking how this shapes the interpreter's outlook. In this sense, Herder develops a universal hermeneutics: He is not interested in the interpretation of a particular kind of text (ancient texts, the Bible), but in the conditions of possibility for interpretation as such.

37. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Shakespeare*, trans. Gregory Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 8–17. Further references to this translation will be abbreviated *S*.

38. This point will later be crucial for Hegel's treatment of Sophocles in his *Aesthetics*. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1212–25.

39. This insight is also reflected in *Sculpture*, where Herder ponders how the moderns at one point viewed Greek sculpture through the moral lens of the Middle Ages and its dislike of nudity and erotic poses. See *Sculpture*, 49–51.

40. Herder here anticipates Kant's critique of prejudices. I discuss the hermeneutic relevance of Kant's notion of prejudice in *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123–127.

41. At this point it gets particularly clear how Herder differs from Gadamer, who emphasizes that an interpreter cannot understand a question he or she would not himself be asking (*TM*, 374).

42. This is discussed in the Abbt essay (*PW*, 167–77).

43. The topic is to some extent new with the Shakespeare work but is followed up in *Another Philosophy of History*, where Herder discusses his idea of *Bildung*. See *APH*, second section.

44. As argued by Jens Heise, the plurality of culture is intrinsically connected to its existence in time. See Jens Heise, *Johann Gottfried Herder zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1998), 19.

45. This might sound like a familiar Gadamerian topos. I do, however, discuss the fundamental differences between Herder and Gadamer at the end of the essay.

46. Such a suggestion does not underestimate the close connection between Herder's critique of a rule-governed aesthetics, on the one hand, and his critique of universal history, on the other. For an overview of Herder's critique of Schlözer's universal history, see Robert S. Leventhal, "Progression and Particularity: Herder's Critique of Schlözer's Universal History in the Context of his Early Writings," in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Language*, *History*, *and the Enlightenment*, ed. Wulf Koepke (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1990), 25–46.

47. Hertha Isaacsen's *Der junge Herder und Shakespeare* is an important exception, though the study is concerned with Herder's reading of Shakespeare's drama rather than the historical-hermeneutic philosophy to be gleaned from the text.

48. Again, *Another Philosophy of History* is a case in point. See for example the first section, where Herder anticipates Hegel's understanding of Egyptian art. Herder, however, insists on judging Egyptian art in light of its own standards (*APH*, 3–21).

49. This is even more so after a number of Anglophone philosophers have turned to Gadamer in order to escape the framework of traditional post-Cartesian epistemology. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), chap. 8. See also John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 115–19; John McDowell, "Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism," in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnswald, and Jens Kertscher (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 173–94; and Robert B. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), chap. 3.

50. As Gadamer puts it, "To reach an understanding . . . is [to be] transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were" (*TM*, 379).

51. "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics" (1964), in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 104. Gadamer at this point draws on a poem by Rilke. See Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992), 503.

52. This is particularly clear in Gadamer's casting the interpreter's relation to tradition as a matter of play (*TM*, 101–10).

53. When Gadamer speaks of the necessity of temporal distance for understanding, he is, characteristically, thinking of the mediating force of tradition. Hence he writes: "Time is . . . no gulf to be bridged, [but] it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted." This position is presented as an alternative to the "naïve" historicist assumption that "we must transpose ourselves into the spirit of the age, think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance towards historical objectivity." Against the idea of such advancement, Gadamer musters the normative notion that "we understand in a *different* way, *if we understand at all*" (*TM*, 297).

54. See "How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People" (1765) and "On the Change of Taste" (1766), *PW*, 3–33, 247–57.

Reaching Conclusions: Art and Philosophy in Hegel and Shakespeare

Paul A. Kottman

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
> And what strength I have's mine own . . .
> . . . Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so that it assaults
> Mercy itself and frees all faults.
> As you from crimes would pardoned be,
> Let your indulgence set me free.
>
> —WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest* (Epilogue)

In what might be called the epilogue to his lectures on fine art, and immediately after naming Shakespeare in conclusion, G. W. F. Hegel addressed his audience directly. Echoing Prospero's valediction at the end of *The Tempest*, Hegel declared:[1]

> Now, with the development of the kinds of comedy we have reached the real end of our philosophical inquiry. We began with symbolic art where personality struggles to find itself as form and content and to become objective to itself. We proceeded to the plastic art of Greece where the Divine, now conscious of itself, is presented to us in living individuals. We ended with the romantic art of emotion and deep feeling where absolute subjective personality moves free in itself and in the spiritual world. Yet on this peak comedy leads at the same time to the dissolution of art altogether . . . and subjective personality alone shows itself self-confident and self-assured in this dissolution.
>
> Now at the end we have arranged every essential category of the beautiful and every essential form of art into a philosophical garland, and weaving it is one of the worthiest tasks that philosophy is capable of

completing. For in art we have to do, not with any agreeable or useful child's play, but with the liberation of the spirit from the content and forms of finitude, with the presence and reconciliation of the Absolute in what is apparent and visible. My one aim [throughout these lectures] has been to seize in thought and prove the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art, and to follow it through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization. I hope that in this chief point my exposition has satisfied you. And now when the link forged between us generally and in relation to our common aim has been broken, it is my final wish that the higher and indestructible bond of the Idea of beauty and truth may link us and keep us firmly united now and for ever.[2]

At one level, anyone who has taken part in a lecture course will recognize what Hegel is trying to accomplish with these last words. He is clearly seeking applause. Hegel's plea ("I hope . . . my exposition has satisfied you") is every bit as transparent as Prospero's (" . . . release me from my bands / With the help of your good hands / . . . or else my project fails, which was to please").

Lest we mistake this for narcissistic neediness, however, we should note that neither Hegel nor Shakespeare/Prospero is asking for an appreciation of who they are as individuals; nor are they soliciting an acknowledgment of their role in this particular context (professor, philosopher, actor, artist).[3] If either were the case, then the applause could have been solicited at the outset of the performance, or at any time, rather than at its shared conclusion.[4] Instead, both Hegel and Shakespeare/Prospero seek acknowledgment that a concluding stage of a collective process has been reached. The applause they seek, in other words, would amount to a demonstration of its actually having been earned in the wake of some prior development or shared activity.

In this essay, I want to claim that both Hegel's and Shakespeare's epilogues aim to demonstrably reflect—rather than merely assert or describe—provisional conclusions to historical activities (art and philosophical "science," respectively) that are, in virtue of such conclusions, attempts to render these practices intelligible from within.[5] I want to suggest, further, that bringing an activity—like drama or teaching philosophy—to a conclusion "from within," or "as part of" its own doing, is a crucial test of our freedom and rationality, an attempt to assess our own answerability for what we do. To this end, I discuss ways in which these epilogues—these "reached conclusions"—hold clues not only to what Hegel is doing with Shakespeare or modern drama in the *Lectures on Fine Art* but also

for Hegel's broader philosophical ambitions and Shakespeare's artistic self-understanding.

   Everything I have to say about all of this will, however, be made clearer if I begin with a few observations about Hegel's remarks on Shakespeare both in this specific passage and more generally. So, let me start there.

I

Discussions of Hegel and Shakespeare—or "Hegel on Shakespeare"—typically explore what Hegel had to say about certain works by Shakespeare or about Shakespearean (or "modern") drama generally, or about tragedy or comedy. The goal being to explain how Hegel's reflections help us better understand Shakespeare, or modern dramatic art, or how interpretations of Shakespeare might help us elaborate or revise aspects of Hegel's philosophical system.[6]

   Intriguingly, however, Hegel himself does not discuss or interpret Shakespeare in much detail in his *Lectures on Fine Art*.[7] Hegel does, of course, make a number of what we could call interpretive remarks about a number of plays by Shakespeare (as well as other poetic works) in the aesthetics lectures and elsewhere.[8] Hegel also names titles of works and characters, and mentions specific scenes or plot points in his discussion of romantic poetry, for instance.[9] And to some extent he interprets individual plays, such as *Macbeth*, when he claims that "ambition" becomes Macbeth's pathos without devouring his "far-reaching individuality."[10] Nonetheless, the defense of that particular interpretation of *Macbeth* is not Hegel's chief aim in that discussion.

   Indeed, not only is Hegel not firmly wedded (I suspect) to that particular interpretation of *Macbeth*, but also (and more important) Hegel understands his own view of Shakespeare's drama—his own discernment of "the principle of subjectivity" or "the subjective inner life" in Shakespeare—to be a viewpoint in whose very achievement Shakespeare's artistic practice plays a crucial role, rather than a wholly external or theoretical "take" on Shakespeare. What Hegel wants to show, then, is how his own philosophical standpoint on art "seizes in thought and . . . prove(s)" the history of fine art itself ("the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art . . . through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization"). The principle of subjectivity, or a character's inner life, is not just a philosophical principle or social reality that is nicely illustrated, exemplified, or expressed or in the work of Shakespeare.[11] Rather, for Hegel, it is one of the achievements of Shakespearean drama to have helped bring subjectivity to

life—to have "enlivened" our inner lives in ways that are intertwined with, but not reducible to, how "the right of subjectivity" emerged historically in religious practices (like the veneration of the saints and increased attention to the story of Christ the man) or political history (the way intimate aspects of domestic family members' lives started to count as properly political concerns).[12]

Although Hegel often refers to Shakespeare's plays and other artworks as "examples," such works are not, for him, instantiations of philosophical truths or insights achievable independently of such artworks (and then retroactively made applicable to them). Artworks and practices are not perspicuous instances of some other actuality that is "really" under consideration; they are the reality (*Wirklichkeit*). Artists do not imbue their works with some separable meaning or knowledge, in Hegel's view. Content and form are realized together, just as (for Hegel) intention and action are inseparable. His philosophy of art is not just an external philosophical standpoint from which to view art—rather, it is continuous with what the art itself has been doing: expressing, reflecting, evaluating, and enlivening norms and concepts (such as subjectivity).[13] This is not to say that Hegel sees himself as an artist, or that he thinks his philosophy is doing just the same thing as art. Rather, it means that Hegel regards aesthetic expression to be just as indispensable for philosophical reflection as philosophical reflection is for the completion of aesthetic expression—bearing in mind that the relation between art and philosophy is itself embedded in the historical development of both. It is this mutual indispensability that is on display in the epilogues invoked at the outset.[14] More on this in a moment.

Next observation: There is a propinquity of practical substance—not only of form or rhetoric—between the epilogues of Hegel's *Aesthetics* and Shakespeare's *Tempest*.[15] In his epilogue to his *Lectures on Fine Art* Hegel *does* something with Shakespeare that he does with no other artist that he mentions in the course of the aesthetics lectures: Hegel imitates Shakespeare, by which I mean he displays a logical and practical affinity between his activity (teaching philosophy, reflecting on art) and Shakespeare's or Prospero's (drama, art, theater)—in dramatic form as well as verbal content. Indeed, Hegel mimics Shakespeare's drama at, arguably, its own most self-reflexive moment: Prospero's epilogue, so often heard as Shakespeare's valedictory reflection on his own dramatic work.[16] Moreover, Hegel imitates Shakespeare in the act of concluding a series of lectures that he holds up as doing distinctly philosophical work—as if simultaneously insisting on the necessity of such imitation for a reflective, philosophical attention to the course of art's realization (*Realisation*). Furthermore, this reflects

the core of Hegel's ambition in the lectures, namely to demonstrate or in some way reenact (rather than merely report or describe) the emergence of modern art out of classical and symbolic art—the achievement, that is, of a provisional freedom in human affairs, or Spirit's view of itself as self-determining. If this is to be demonstrated, then it must be achieved (and hence, reenactable) from the point of view of a historical subject (us, Prospero's audience, Hegel's students) as something like a dramatic education.[17]

Furthermore, as if for emphasis, Hegel imitates (educatively reenacts) Shakespeare even as he explicitly disavows further analytical discussion or detailed interpretation of Shakespeare's work. Immediately before pronouncing the epilogue cited at length above, Hegel claims that "the modern world has developed a type of comedy which is truly comical and truly poetic," and then elliptically adds—as the very last sentence of the entire lecture course, before beginning the epilogue: "As a brilliant example of this sort of thing, I will name Shakespeare once again, in conclusion, but without going into detail."[18] Students of Hegel's *Aesthetics*—two volumes, 1,237 pages in its English translation—may cackle at that last remark. After all, Hegel saw no reason not to "go into detail" with regard to other artworks and practices. He treats his students to lengthy and intricate discussions of Doric and Ionic columns, obelisks, the Memnon statues, for instance, and to long discussions of anatomical details in classical sculpture.[19] It is assuredly not a philosopher's lack of patience with the details of artworks that explains Hegel's reluctance to "go into detail" about Shakespeare. Nor—given the sheer length and ambition of Hegel's lecture course—can we believe that it is somehow Hegel's eagerness to finish speaking that can explain his reticence to go "into detail" when it comes to Shakespeare. Still less can we believe that Hegel was somehow uninterested in the textual details of Shakespeare's drama—quite the contrary![20]

And yet, intriguingly, Hegel does not "cite" Shakespeare here, the way he—on the previous page!—cited Molière's *Tartuffe* or the way he had quoted from Shakespeare earlier in the lectures, when he wanted to praise Shakespeare's skill at portraying his character's capacity for self-distancing, or the way he cites (in altered form) Schiller's poem "Freundschaft" at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or even the way he obliquely refers to Sophocles' *Antigone* in his discussion of Greek *Sittlichkeit* in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.[21] In the epilogues under consideration we seem to have moved from citation (even oblique citation) into—I am suggesting—something closer to practical imitation or "dramatic education." What to make of this?

2

One explanation might emerge if we consider that Hegel's most detailed formalist analyses of particular works—such as those just mentioned—occur in the pages he devotes to symbolic art and classical art: namely, to those modes of art that Hegel regards as characterizing art's past, such as Egyptian obelisks or the heads of Hercules in Greek sculpture.[22] It is as if Hegel thinks such formalist analysis can offer appropriate explanatory criteria for those (past) art forms, whereas what Hegel calls romantic, or modern, art calls for a different kind of "science."[23]

Recall that the defect that Hegel saw in symbolic art was the indeterminacy of its Idea—its attribution of the source or meaning of human practices to something beyond human consciousness—and the corresponding "mysterious sublimity" of its products. The limitation of classical art, in contrast, was its "restrictedness" to the "sphere of art," by which Hegel meant—I think—the way that classical art restricts itself to finding an appropriate embodiment of spirit, the right concrete form for the "infinite subjectivity of the Idea." Hegel saw this in classical art's presentation of the human form, especially in classical sculpture as the sensuous presentation of spirit. Classical art limits itself to efforts at finding an appropriate formal embodiment of spirit (the human form of classical sculpture), and hence is restricted in (or *to*) its own activity, and hence cannot be really free. And, if art is not free—if it is restricted to its own sphere—then it is not an adequate presentation of *Geist* as free.[24] Put another way, the problem for classical art (and for the Greek world, in Hegel's account) is whether freedom could be actualized other than by beauty—whether it also imbues other social practices, even if that entails the dissolution of that beautiful world.[25] However, what it could mean for art *not* to restrict itself to the sphere of art—for art to transcend itself from "within its own sphere," as Hegel puts it—is not immediately clear.[26]

Further, the distinction between symbolic, classical, and romantic art is revealed only in light of a historical vantage, or achieved self-awareness. Hegel's distinctions between symbolic, classical, and romantic art are not primarily chronological distinctions, then, or an attempt at periodization; they are distinctions that adhere only in virtue of a perceived achievement or practical demonstration of those distinctions. This means these achievements must be both artistic, and what Hegel calls scientific in his characterization of his philosophy of art (which is one reason why the history of art can now be seen as inviting or calling for philosophical reflection). If "symbolic," "classical," and "romantic" name art forms or practices that

develop historically out of each other in that order, then this is not because that development just so happened to go that way, but could have happened otherwise; it is a necessary development (which, from our vantage now, could only have happened in that order).[27] So, while we can always debate or revise the particulars of the chronology—say, by reevaluating the particulars of Greek or Egyptian or Indian art—the point of such a reevaluation would not be just a better periodization or chronology, but must entail, if we are to take seriously the historical character of the development, the recognition that certain practices (like painting on canvas or symphonic music or Shakespearean drama) were not always there, and their historical emergence calls for explanation, not just chronological dating.

Hegel's historical-developmental account is meant to provide just such an explanation. And so when Hegel turns to romantic or modern artistic practices—Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Bach's *Saint Matthew's Passion*, or Rembrandt's portraits—he tends to turn away from formal analysis of specific artworks or features and toward a consideration of these as reflective historical practices or self-critical processes (rather than as a collection of exemplary artworks, like *Antigone* or the Bacchus statue). Because Hegel thought that "our whole spiritual culture is (now) of such a kind that (the artist) stands within the world of reflection and its relations and could not by any act of will and decision abstract himself from it," we ourselves cannot stand back from modern artistic practices (Shakespearean drama, say) and give a formalist account of specific art products—the way Hegel thought he was in a position to analyze the relation between form and Idea in the Egyptian pyramids or the Greek Bacchus statue. Put another way, when Hegel surveys modern art (broadly construed), he sees its distinctiveness not in this or that characteristic feature, but in a basic question it poses: Namely, *is* it an artistic practice at all? Modern art, Hegel thinks, is a practice that raises the question of its own status and legitimacy as a practice—and in this sense, at least, manages to transcend classical art's restrictedness to its status as art. The point I wish to emphasize here, however, is that Hegel's practical *method* for teaching or philosophizing about art likewise demands a different explanatory mode for modern (romantic) art, as compared to the more formalist approach appropriate to classical or symbolic art.

By the same token, although classical and symbolic art share common features or techniques—again, because both classical and symbolic art practices just *are* attempts at giving sensuous form to the Idea—there is no exhaustive list of characteristics or features that add up to modern art

(like Shakespearean drama) because its expressive possibilities have not yet been exhausted or reified as emblematic works or appropriate sensuous forms.[28] This is why Hegel sees Shakespearean drama or Rembrandt's portraiture as art forms—as ongoing art practices that are made manifest in a particular body of work (Shakespeare's or Rembrandt's) without having been paradigmatically concretized in any particular work or generically appropriate mode. There are, we might say, no representative masterpieces in romantic art—no work that can be said to exhaustively express what any sociohistorical form of life thinks it is. Indeed, modern artists are perhaps distinguished from (anonymously made, or collectively made) masterworks of the past by the fact that modern masters leave behind no representative masterpiece; they rather show themselves to be capable of producing many definitive works, or works in progress. (Artists whose names we know—from Rembrandt to Picasso and Joyce or Proust—are masters inasmuch as they keep reinventing themselves through developments or self-corrections, not just by reflecting on a technique—as in Michelangelo's *Prisoners*—but also by putting their entire self-conception as artists, their commitment to their art, into question.) Rather than approach romantic art as characterized by certain features or formal characteristics, then, Hegel tends to explain the romantic arts as the emergence of distinctive practices, which remain ongoing and potentially self-legitimating—the same way we think of painting on canvas or symphonic music as art forms that arrived on the world stage at a particular place and time, and which continue today insofar as they have not yet fully exhausted their expressive capacities.[29] Again, the point is not just to establish a precise date or origin for painting on canvas or for orchestra music. Such matters are subject to debate, and we can change our minds about the particulars. The larger point is that art practices and artistic mediums emerge historically and unfold through historical developments that can be retrospectively examined. The point of changing our minds about the particulars or dates would be the new historical self-understanding such a change of mind would amount to (and not just a different chronology).

One measure of this vitality of modern art for Hegel—I am suggesting—is that he does not think that he can currently furnish a formalist account of, say, *The Tempest* that would have the same explanatory force as his accounts of the formal properties of the Egyptian pyramids or the Greek columns.[30] We cannot (at this historical juncture, any more than in Hegel's Berlin) say why Shakespeare shaped his dramas thus, because the collective self-conception (or "Idea," in Hegel's parlance) to which Shakespearean drama gives form is still being articulated and worked out in our

own contemporary practices (artistic—but also political, social, economic, familial, affective, and philosophical).[31] Because modern art can no longer, *on its own* (within the restricted sphere of art), claim to satisfy any spiritual need—that highest vocation is what Hegel regards as past—whatever satisfactions or occasions for understanding it offers are now necessarily intertwined with other reflective social practices (including the teaching of philosophy, or what Hegel calls scientific treatment).[32]

It is worth remembering, too, that Hegel goes out of his way to distinguish his own "scientific way of treating art" from that of Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica*, or Henry Home's *Elements of Criticism*, along these very same lines. Although these earlier works of art theory "contain much that is instructive" in "single instances," says Hegel, they also resemble the "non-philosophical" or "empirical" sciences in that they present "rules and prescriptions in accordance with which works of art had to be produced."[33] That is, such theories of art tend to consider the formal particularities of artworks irrespective of their historical development—irrespective, that is, of transformations in their content as well as their form. For Hegel, a properly philosophical science of art would manage to connect its own emergence (as science) to the transformations in the form and content of art, over the course of its specific developments. This science must be historically systematic rather than formalist, categorical, or analytic.[34]

And because, when it comes to modern art, this means accounting for art's intertwinement with other social practices, that too requires a demonstration that—for reasons just given—cannot be formalist or descriptive.[35] Hegel thus thinks he has to show and not just tell what it is for art to transcend itself from within its own sphere—where "showing" must also mean demonstrably achieving the intertwinement of art and the philosophy of art as historical-reflective practices. Or, at least, I want to suggest that this is the horizon in which to best understand the dramatic-educative character of Hegel's epilogue, as well as the relation in which Prospero's epilogue stands with respect to Shakespeare's art.

3

Now let me turn back to the two epilogues cited at the outset. I am arguing that both Hegel's and Shakespeare's epilogues demonstrably achieve—rather than merely assert or describe—provisional conclusions (though not once-and-for-all endpoints) to historical activities (art and philosophy) that are (partly in virtue of such conclusions) capable of understanding themselves, of reflecting on themselves, of explaining themselves. Philoso-

phy and art are self-explaining, self-legitimizing practices; they turn out to require no transhistorical source of legitimacy in order to continue as practices.

Building on this, I now suggest that both Shakespeare (or Prospero's) "Art" and Hegel's "philosophy of art" present themselves as ongoing social practices that can be seen as constituting the conditions for their own self-understanding.[36] The concluding stages of their development do not lie outside the history that is coursed (both in Hegel's lectures and in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*). Instead, both epilogues reflect, from *within*, on the conditions and limits of the activities they bring to a provisional close. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, for instance, it is as if Prospero has spent all those years studying or practicing his art in order to learn how (or what it would mean) to give it up. We should likewise see Hegel's philosophy of art as a process in which philosophy reflects practically on the limits and conditions of that philosophy (in this case, the history of art) as something internal to it, rather than as something beyond it. This is why Hegel keeps reminding his students, from the opening stages of his lectures, that art is not some irrational other to philosophy, but that the history of art itself helps make philosophy a self-constituting science. (All of this resists easy summarization. This is why, as I am trying to suggest, something like a demonstrative education is required.)

Another difficulty lies in explaining how art or philosophy could even qualify as demonstrably educative practices for Shakespeare and Hegel. Hegel considers these, along with religion, to be domains of what he calls Absolute Spirit.[37] And Shakespeare seems to make Prospero—whose art is, apparently, all-powerful and keenly aware of itself as such—an allegory for the fate of human artistic practices *tout court*.[38] But what do Shakespearean "Art" or Hegelian "Absolute Spirit" denote? What, if anything, makes these practices (art, religion, and philosophy—or any other candidate we might want to add to the list) different from the sorts of practices and institutions that Hegel analyzes as "objective spirit"?[39]

I understand "objective spirit" in Hegel to be the normative, rule-based activities through which human societies organize themselves—everything from explicitly articulated legal systems to informal social practices in their cultural or historical specificity. We might think of objective spirit, in other words, as the sphere of collectively deliberated reasons for doing (or not doing) things, where those reasons obtain only by being acted on. Thus, objective spirit—since it needs rule followers (or rule breakers)—also presupposes subjective spirit—namely, the way in which self-conscious individuals are formed in relation to those social rules and norms.[40]

Of course, Hegel's account of objective and subjective spirit is more complicated and detailed than this cursory description can capture. I offer it only to get into focus what Hegel was getting at when he spoke of art, religion, and philosophy as dimensions of Absolute Spirit. Why, after all, does Hegel think philosophy and art are not just rule-based normative practices (hence, just part of objective spirit) in relation to which, say, individuals might (as part of subjective spirit) be formed as artists or philosophers? Likewise, we might ask: Why does Prospero not treat his art the way that, say, sailors treat sailing, or kings treat ruling, or actors treat playing a role? What entitles Prospero to address us, to break open the very meaning of a role-based activity? In one sense, of course, the practices that Hegel characterizes as Absolute Spirit are also objective, social practices. Yet Hegel seems to think that they are not just culturally specific practices. (I am suggesting that *The Tempest* expresses similar things about learning or practicing art.)

First of all, this is because art and philosophy are activities whose products or works not only signal or hint at the endurance of a particular set of practices, or social world—the way that raising a red lantern might be one sign of a traditional Chinese society's vitality. Art and philosophy (though not only these) can also install authoritative norms for a community.[41] They manifest not just the endurance of a particular social world, but—instead—something like what any particular social world thinks it is in virtue of its endurance.[42]

Second, the activities that Hegel characterizes as Absolute Spirit are different from objective spirit in that they not only give us reasons to act but also afford us the chance to see ourselves as agents connected in a fundamental way to our past actions. That is, they are activities that allow for a kind of reflective distancing through which we, as individual subjects, can come to some provisional understanding of our role in the life of a particular social world, and in such a way that this provisional understanding allows us to transform that world (via the practice of art or philosophy).

This latter qualification matters, since after all we can also achieve a reflective distance from certain practices by, say, stopping the practice (the way that the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade is, minimally, a reflective self-distancing from the practice itself; or, more modestly, the way a bad habit becomes the object of reflection as soon as one ceases the habit), or by carrying on with the practice in a self-styled, parodic fashion (the way Renaissance courtiers went on wearing swords and thereby drawing attention to the empty formality of swordsmanship at court). When we

self-consciously stop or continue a practice, we are also seeing ourselves as agents in relation to those practices. But, and this is the point I want to underscore, by achieving a reflective distance from whatever we do only in virtue of stopping, starting, or self-consciously parodying the practice, we fail to deeply transform the practice itself in light of our reflection or new self-understanding. And by failing to wholly transform the practice itself (from within), we show that activity to have been unfree, unreasonable—something from which we need to achieve a certain distance in order to more fully see ourselves as agents.

Let me try to put this point differently. To interrupt or abolish a social practice—like foot-binding or dueling or the Atlantic slave trade—is to claim that the practice should not continue; but the cessation itself cannot explain the (prior duration of the) practice to which it puts an end.[43] Indeed, the cessation just signals that the practice now appears irrational, immoral, indefensible, or unintelligible other than as something that should be stopped. The cessation, that is, signals that any continuation of the practice threatens sense.[44] However, marking a threat to sense does not yet provide us with a way of warding off the threat. For, if we have no way of making sense of why we ever did what now seems to us irrational (foot-binding, dueling), then we have no way of seeing the meaning of our having stopped. That is, we have not yet connected the duration of the activity to its cessation. Indeed, the cessation is required inasmuch as we are unable to make that connection (between past endurance and present disavowal) intelligible. We are left not knowing how we got here. Hence the way in which such cessations are usually treated, implausibly, as the historical discovery of some moral fact (equality, dignity) to which our ancestors were somehow blind.

Of course, we could simply deem such practices (e.g., the slave trade or foot-binding) to be expressions of some particular social world or to be the result of a historically contingent power dynamic. No doubt a number of historical facts or ideological motivations could be uncovered or realized. But to explain foot-binding just by assuming it to be expressive of the values of a given social world only presses the real question we want answered: How did those values come to be held as such, and what does it say about us such that we ever held them to be values? Can we connect who we are to who we have been or say how we got here from there? Such questions, I am suggesting, turned out not to be answerable by means of foot-binding or dueling—and their inability to explain themselves, as it were, is part of the causal explanation for their cessation. But if our activities turn out not to be self-explanatory, if nothing we do can be responsive

to questions we have about that doing, then we will find ourselves unable to give reasons for anything we do (we would be left pointing at contingencies and causal processes).

Making sense of what we do—thereby seeing ourselves as acting rationally or freely (rather than just driven this way and that by forces beyond our reckoning)—thus requires a reflective stance on at least some of our practices, earned through something other than the cessation or continuation of those practices—something other than either their objectification as past or their subjectification as a continuous experience. Or so I now want to argue.

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Here, I think we can productively return to the epilogues themselves as concluding (though not 'stopping' or merely parodic) moments that are only possible within an activity that remains neither only subjective nor only objective. The epilogues, I propose, manage to do something other than present Hegel or Prospero as either carrying on (by, say, ironically or cynically playing the role of philosopher or artist) or ceasing altogether (breaking away, giving up, breaking with the past). Rather, they reach their own conclusions.

Whether an activity—such as drama or teaching philosophy—can be brought to a conclusion from within, as part of its own doing, ought to be seen as a crucial test of our freedom and rationality (a test of Spirit's self-determination as Absolute, to stick with Hegel's way of talking). Achieving a conclusion to an activity—rather than just stopping or being impeded by external factors or offering self-styled parody—demonstrates the freedom of that activity by showing it to be self-limiting, self-determining. At the same time, achieving such conclusions can also make some kind of sense of the activity that is being brought to its close, if these conclusions manage to appear demonstrably earned by whatever is being done. Perhaps only if we can bring our activities to a close in this way, can we make sense of them as both rational and free.

To make clearer what I mean, let me contrast these epilogue-conclusions to the kind of practical self-awareness—call it skill or technique—that characterizes the way in which an accomplished orator will know when and how to stop speaking or the way an accomplished sailor will bring a ship into port. In the case of technique—as with the teleological character of craftsmanship described by Aristotle, for instance—the end of the activity lies outside the scope of the activity itself.[45] By bringing a ship into port,

one simply stops sailing. One cannot cease sailing by continuing to sail, any more than one can stop speaking by continuing to speak. Indeed, inasmuch as knowing how and when to stop an activity belongs to what it is to do that activity skillfully or properly, the art of the activity entails its own self-restriction or self-restraint.

This is the point, remember, that Hegel also wished to make about the historical limits of all classical art. Namely, that the historical limitation of classical art is its practical restrictedness to its own sphere, to its own status as art (to technique or craft, we might as well say). Hegel's point is not that there are historical limits to the material-practical production of classical art, as if the limits in question were somehow decided by periodization or chronology. Just think of neoclassical revivals. The point, rather, is that such art can still be skillfully produced today precisely inasmuch as such art restricts itself (no matter the date on the calendar) to its own status as art or craft. It is this practical self-restriction of classical art to its own sphere that, for Hegel, marks classical art's historical limit.[46] The persistent possibility of neoclassical revivals down to our own day shows classical art to be past—unable to enter the broader stream of historically transforming practices (economic, political, philosophical, social) without losing its "classical-ness." Classical art or symbolic art, we might say, are artistic practices that fail to adequately thematize their own conclusion—they can only carry on or stop.[47]

Classical and symbolic art are past, as I suggested earlier, only from a historical-philosophical vantage point that can plausibly see art as having transcended itself from within its own sphere (as having become something other than symbolic, or restrictedly classical, as genuinely transformed by new social realities and objective historical transformations). And—equally—such a historical vantage point is only possible if human activities (like art) have indeed developed beyond their own self-restrictedness. A historical vantage from which modern art can be said to have any reality at all is, to put it another way, possible only if modern art really does realize itself as entwined with other historical practices—rather than just maintain itself by defending its own status (or by knowing when to stop). Likewise, art can be said to have transcended itself from within its own sphere only if such a historical vantage really turns out to have been achieved. Everything hangs, in sum, on whether we can see our activities as having developed in ways for which we can now give some retrospective (historical-narrative-philosophical) account from a vantage that is not outside or above or beyond those same activities—but from a vantage that is in part their direct outcome.

   This is why both Prospero-the-artist and Hegel-the-philosopher
foreground their respective activities as entailing some sort of historical
development or process or realization in which they themselves are im-
plicated. In Prospero's case, this is manifest not only in the historical ret-
rospective on past events that he divulges to Miranda, Antonio, Caliban,
Ariel, and others over the course of *The Tempest*—but also in the way in
which everything Prospero does in the play is performed with an acute
sense of timing or historical occasion.[48] In the case of Hegel's *Lectures on
Fine Art*—or, more generally, in the case of the systematic ambitions of
Hegel's *Encyclopedia*—a historical-narrative horizon structures even the
most seemingly analytic-categorical distinctions.[49] Again, both Hegel and
Prospero ask for applause in order to affirm a culmination of these respec-
tive developments—to affirm their having been developments or processes
in view of which some sense can be made of the present moment ("Now at
the end . . . "). Moreover, both Prospero and Hegel look back on these pro-
cesses as involving both whatever happened along the way (objectively) in
view of some historical context—words and deeds that express a particular
society's values and beliefs, its roles and norms—and as involving the par-
ticular viewpoints and experiences of participating agents (subjectively: we
in the audience to both play and lecture, for instance).
   But both Hegel and Shakespeare (or Prospero) seem to think that what
they are doing—as dramatists, artists, or philosophers—can somehow
render both the objective and subjective sides more intelligible to each
other. That is, they seem to think that the social activities in which they
are engaged—art, drama, philosophy, teaching—are capable of arriving at
some kind of self-understanding through the activity itself. And they seem
to think, further, that this feature of what they are doing merits the special
attention for which the epilogues call. (Hence, the "here is what we have
been doing" tone of Hegel's last words to his students.)
   It is true that some kind of practical self-reflection is also afforded in
what Hegel called classical art. For instance, a Greek temple, on Hegel's
account, presents some understanding of itself as a freestanding structure
built according to rational design and not the demands of nature, inasmuch
as it self-consciously displays the fluting of the columns ("look! I am a
column, cut by intentional design to this height and width"). Likewise, as
already intimated, it is true that one can become aware of the role one is
playing in a given social context just by carrying out that role. An actor can
even start to act and speak in a self-conscious or stylized way.[50]
   However, the kind of self-understanding or self-reflexivity that Hegel
and Prospero think they have earned in their epilogues is, I think, of a

different order. Both think that they have not only arrived at a point at which they, and we, can now see better what we have been up to all along (making art, teaching philosophy). They also think—unlike the Greek column or our self-aware actor—that new possibilities within the practice, beyond either carrying on or stopping altogether, are now available in light of the historical vantage achieved in the epilogues. For the epilogues show how we can transform or direct our activities from within, how we can do more than carry on with tradition or stop altogether. In this sense, they demonstrate the way in which a provisional freedom and self-directedness of our practices can be achieved.

Perhaps the best way to conclude this essay, then, is with a reminder of how teaching itself has come to mean something other than a relation between teacher and pupil, master and apprentice, in which mastery of a skill is either transmitted, or else seen as no longer worthy of repetition. Teaching in the humanities is no longer authorized solely by the tradition it transmits, or by reference of the mastery of a skill set embodied in its teachers. Of course, we still practice and teach art (or philosophy) within something like a teacher-student framework. But the value of whatever is taught is now wholly dependent on its reception. Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* exist for us, quite literally, thanks to Hegel's students; and this is not just a contingent feature of their transmission, I think, but a fundamental feature of those lectures, of Hegel's philosophy. Just as Prospero accosts us on our way out of the playhouse, to find out what we are going to do next, so too, Hegel's students discover that the success or failure of the lectures they have followed lies not on the syllabus's last date, but in the "higher and indestructible" bond reached in a course's conclusion.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. The two "epilogues" have been compared before; I ask the reader to entertain the plausibility of the comparison. See Robert Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 142–43, and Katrin Trüstedt, *Die Komödie der Tragödie: Shakespeares "Sturm" am Umschlagplatz von Mythos und Moderne, Rache und Recht, Tragik und Spiel* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2011), 65. I also discuss Prospero's speech in light of Hegel's Aesthetics, in Paul A. Kottman "The Charm Dissolves Apace: Shakespeare and the Self-Dissolution of Drama," in *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy*, edited by Jennifer Ann Bates (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), chap. 1.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1236–37. The authenticity

of this text—based on lecture notes from the last three lecture courses—is not an issue I take up here. It seems worth saying, however, that the lecture notes on which critical editions of Hegel's *Aesthetics* are based are roughly as much "Hegel's" as the texts on which critical editions of Shakespeare's *Tempest* are "Shakespeare's." (Just as Hegel's Lectures were published several years after his death, so the first edition of *The Tempest* appeared in the First Folio of 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death.) For a recent assessment of the textual issues, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); see also the discussion in Allen Speight's review of this publication: https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/58639-lectures-on-the-philosophy-of-art-the-hotho-transcript-of-the-1823-berlin-lectures/.

3. Following an interpretive tradition that seems to have begun with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, I provisionally conflate Prospero and Shakespeare, but leave for another discussion the interesting questions raised by this conflation.

4. I once saw the tenor Luciano Pavarotti appear on stage before the start of an opera to bask in the ovation of an audience that had yet to hear him sing that evening. In that case, the ovation was clearly an acknowledgment of Pavarotti and his career, not of the performance in which we were about to share. So our participation in the evening's achievement was not implied by our applause. However, I am suggesting that our participation and collective progress is essential to the meaning of Hegel's and Shakespeare's epilogues.

5. By this, I mean what Hegel describes in terms of the standpoint of reason (*Vernunft*) as distinct from what he calls the understanding (*Verstand*).

6. The single most helpful essay on Hegel and Shakespeare remains A. C. Bradley, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (New York: St. Martins, 1965). See also the essays by Henry and Anne Paolucci on Shakespeare and Hegel reprinted in their *Hegelian Literary Perspectives* (Smyrna, Del.: Griffon House, 2002). See also Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 279–88. More recent contributions include Jennifer Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010); J. M. Bernstein, "Tragedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Sara Macdonald, *Finding Freedom: Hegel's Philosophy and the Emancipation of Women* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008). I have also made attempts, in *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); in "Defying the Stars," in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2012); and in "The Charm Dissolves Apace."

7. And in the passage just cited, Hegel distinguishes his "one aim" from what he calls "mere criticism of works of art."

8. See, for example, the remarks on *Macbeth* in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 182–301, or the writings collected in *Hegel on Tragedy*, edited by Henry Paolucci (New York: Doubleday, 1962).

9. This is to say nothing about the broader status of what Allen Speight calls Hegel's "literary borrowings" in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and other works (which include borrowings from Shakespeare). However, my focus here is on ways in which Hegel's philosophical activity requires a "Shakespearean" dramatic aesthetics. For helpful discussions of literature in Hegel, see Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Robert Pippin, "The Status of Literature in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *Inventions of the Imagination: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Imaginary since Romanticism*, ed. Richard T. Gray, Nicholas Halmi, Gary Handwerk, Michael A. Rosenthal, and Klaus Vieweg (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Benjamin Rutter, *Hegel and the Modern Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 212–69; and Gustav-H. H. Falke, *Begriffne Geschichte* (Berlin: Lukas, 1996).

10. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:1227.

11. In his fine book on Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art*, Benjamin Rutter says this well when he notes that, for Hegel, art is not "a match for the culture, a mirror in the road, but the matrix for its self-understanding as a coherent form of life." *Hegel and the Modern Arts*, 2.

12. Hegel makes this point in the very same passage. He notes that in "the religious sphere" and "the political sphere" the "interests of individuals" are less and less "absorbed" by the "substantial elements" of family, church, state—but that dramatic-poetic-artistic works establish "the right of subjectivity" as "the sole subject-matter" in a way that is not reducible to the increasing privileging of subjectivity in, say, the objective political arena. Shakespeare, in short, can show us what subjectivity *is* or *can be* in ways that political history or religious traditions on their own cannot. See the discussion in Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:1223–24.

13. For a discussion of this "enlivening" or "life" (*Lebendigkeit*) see Pippin, "Status of Literature in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*." Pippin also notes that "two familiar disputes about the 'dispensability' of art in the modern age and the dispensability of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* for (Hegel's) 'system' are deeply linked" (109).

14. Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that art "invites" a philosophy of art and that the philosophy of art is itself a result of art's own development as a historical practice (especially, its having become modern). For instance: "The

philosophy of art is a greater need in our day than it was in the days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is." Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:11.

15. Of course, Hegel's echo of Shakespeare could be taken as nothing more than a means to summarize his main points, or as a way to show his love of Shakespeare—or Hegel could just be ending with a "citation" the way many orators do. But I am not convinced that these "rhetorical" strategies explain what Hegel is doing here. There is, I think, a logical as well as a rhetorical affinity.

16. That Shakespeare's *Tempest* was already being read as an allegory for Shakespeare's reflection on his own artistic practice is evidenced in Goethe's reworking of *The Tempest* in *Faust II*, which was being composed in the years that Hegel was lecturing on art in Berlin (and meeting fairly regularly with Goethe). For a recent assessment, see Charlotte Lee, "'Durch Wunderkraft Erschienen': Affinities between Goethe's *Faust* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," in *Modern Language Review* 107, no. 1 (2012): 198–210. This reading had already been proposed by Coleridge, who called Prospero "the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest." See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures 1808–1819 On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2:269.

17. Consider Josiah Royce's suggestion that Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a bildungsroman, or Hegel's own frequent characterizations of his enterprise as the self-education of consciousness. See Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), 147–50.

18. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:1236, my emphasis.

19. The discussions are not as long as those found in, say, Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art*, but they are nonetheless striking for their attention to detail.

20. Hegel's interest in Shakespeare was hardly fleeting—it was a lifelong fascination. Hegel grappled with Shakespearean drama from his earliest writings through his Berlin lectures on art in the 1820s. By "earliest writings," I mean not only the remarks on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* from Hegel's early text "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," but also—as mentioned—the very earliest text of Hegel's to have come down to us, a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, composed when Hegel was a teenager. Terry Pinkard, in his biography of Hegel, recounts that "One of [Hegel's] teachers, a Mr. Loeffler, gave him at the age of eight a present of Shakespeare's works translated by Eschenberg, with the advice that although he would not understand them at that point, he would soon learn to understand them. (Hegel recorded

years later in his teenage diary a laudatory remembrance of Loeffler when he died.)" Pinkard further claims that Hegel read some Shakespeare in English: "[Hegel] took great interest in the offerings in the various theaters in Paris. He was even able to see the great English actor Charles Kemble, and the legendary Irish actress Henrietta Smithson, perform Shakespeare at the newly opened English Theater in Paris; he followed the plays by reading along in the English editions he had procured." See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5, 551–52. For more on the claim that Hegel read Shakespeare in English, see Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination*, 20.

21. Hegel quotes a German translation of Shakespeare in a section of the *Lectures on Fine Art* called "Symbolism of the Comparative Art-Form." The earliest text by Hegel to have survived is a "rewriting" of *Julius Caesar* called "A Conversation of Three" written in 1785. See *Miscellaneous Writings of G W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002). But in those instances Hegel seems to have been most interested in evidencing the way in which Shakespeare's language reveals the achievement of a kind of self-reflection, or self-distancing from the immediacy of passionate feeling—hence "the freedom" to present one's own "fate to oneself in an image." See Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:418–20. As Pippin has observed, Hegel's citations of "literary texts" (Schiller's "Freundschaft" is Pippin's main focus, in part because Hegel alters the citation of Schiller) can be taken to "serve an appropriately double purpose . . . the *citation* gives evidence for the indispensability of the living, aesthetic dimension of experience for any philosophical account of norms . . . and the *alteration* . . . gives evidence that the completion and *Aufhebung* of aesthetic representation by philosophical reflection is just as indispensable." The citation, in other words, shows that the last word "turns out to be neither Schiller's nor Hegel's alone, making a case by its very presence for the indispensability of a reflective and philosophically informed attention to historical and living *geistige Wirklichkeit* for any genuine philosophy worthy of the name." Pippin, "Status of Literature in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," 119.

22. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:731. Similarly, the passages in which Hegel cites Shakespeare directly occur in these earlier sections of the *Lectures*.

23. Even where Hegel's discussion of romantic art—as, for instance, in Flemish painting—seems detailed, it turns on a discussion of thematic content that is being "worked out" in a painterly practice that spans numerous works: for instance, Christ's childhood or maternal love.

24. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 78–79. Hegel also refers to the "infinite subjectivity of the Idea" as "absolute inwardness" that "cannot freely

and truly shape itself outwardly on condition of remaining moulded into a bodily existence." Ibid. Passages such as these can make it seem as though, for Hegel, the "defect" of classical art was its sheer embodiment or sensuousness, and that modern art achieves an "inwardness" (in music or poetry) that is not restricted to the sphere of embodied sensuousness. But, I think, Hegel's meaning is rather that classical art restricts itself to external, sensuous embodiment—and, hence, fails to fully enliven spirit's freedom. The relative unrestrictedness of modern art does not entail, on my reading of Hegel's meaning, that the freedom of *Geist* somehow entails the overcoming of sensuous embodiment *tout court*. This becomes clear, especially, once we see that by inwardness (as in the inner life touched by music) Hegel still means inwardness as bodily movement (the stirrings of the heart, say)—though this "inwardness" cannot be presented by means of external embodiment alone (the outward appearance of the human body).

25. For good discussions, see Terry Pinkard, "Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art," in *Hegel and the Arts*, edited by Stephen Houlgate (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press), 12–16; and especially Julia Peters, *Hegel on Beauty* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

26. Hegel writes: "Romantic art is the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself." Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:80.

27. It is in this sense that the historical and systematic ambitions of Hegel's philosophy intertwine. Note: Hegel's point is *not* that this historical necessity was somehow "driving" the history of art from the beginning in a teleological or divinely guided process. Rather, inasmuch as we can now see the development from symbolic to classical to modern as having been unavoidable, the "necessity" adheres in our sense-making practices as retrospectively reflective (art, philosophy) and not in anything "beyond" or "above" those practices.

28. For a start, it is up to us to discern, decide, or debate what will even count as features of modern-romantic art. For instance, if Shakespearean tragedies all shared certain inherent, generic characteristics, then it would be difficult to distinguish between *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and *Othello*—but of course we all know that each of these is an entirely different play; each brings to light new features or expressive possibilities for Shakespearean tragedy, helping us to better discern the art form as such, to better see its purview or expressive task. Shakespearean tragedies show what they are, as an art form, in light of one another. For the same reason, though it is unconventional to say so, we should probably regard Shakespearean tragedy not just as a finite, canonical collection of plays by William Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and so forth) but as a novel, modern artistic practice— instanced with special power in a range of works by Shakespeare, but still

practicable by others afterward. Shakespeare may have been the first, or the most successful or the most indispensable, to work in the medium of Shakespearean tragedy, but he was not the last. See my "What Is Shakespearean Tragedy?" in *The Oxford Handbook to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

29. This finds an interesting parallel in Ingrid Vermeulen's account of the emergence of modern art history (in Winckelmann and others). See my remarks on Vermeulen in notes 2, 5, and 41 in the introduction to this volume.

30. None of this means that such a formal analysis of modernist works like Shakespearean drama is, in principle, impossible. Rather, the point is that to the extent to which we are still working through the same collective self-conception—the same "Idea"—as Shakespeare, we are not yet in a position to see modern art as a collection of reified or "past" forms.

31. There is also running debate among Hegel's readers about the dispensability of modern art, in general and for Hegel. The contours of this debate are nicely presented in the introduction to Rutter, *Hegel on the Modern Arts*. I suppose my remarks here place me in the company of those Rutter calls the "optimistic" readers of Hegel; but I will have to wait for another occasion to qualify that placement.

32. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:11

33. Ibid., 15–16.

34. Following Kristin Gjesdal's suggestions in her contribution to this volume, I believe that J. G. Herder's "Shakespeare" essay might be taken as anticipating this "science" with his hermeneutics. In the *Encyclopedia* Hegel's account of art seems analytical rather than historical, but—as Robert Pippin points out—the historical distinction between symbolic, classical, and romantic structures the account in the *Encyclopedia*, too. See "The Absence of Aesthetics in Hegel's Aesthetics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 395n4.

35. One example of this intertwinement would be the way in which Shakespeare's dramatic art—like all of Elizabethan-Jacobean theatrical culture—was necessarily bound up with the economic activity of the playhouse, the liturgical activity of the city, the power politics of the Royal Court and of London, the itinerant traveling of players, the artistic life of scholarly centers like Cambridge and so forth.

36. Both are processes or developments that cannot be formally described from the outside, in the third personal. Is a plot summary of the *Tempest* even possible, for instance, in the same way one can call to mind the *mythos* of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*?

37. Art "only fulfills its supreme task when it has placed itself in the same sphere as religion and philosophy, and when it is simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of spirit." Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:7.

38. Everything Prospero "does" in the *Tempest* is so peculiar, when compared to what the other characters in the play "do" (gather wood, sail ships, conduct politics, engage in economic activity, instrumentally pursue various goals). What *is* Prospero doing, achieving, bringing about?

39. Art, religion, and philosophy are—after all—*also* social practices that belong to the sphere of objective spirit. That is, they are all culturally specific rule-based practices that have been followed in certain societies at certain times.

40. Elsewhere, I have argued that Shakespearean drama might be fruitfully understood as presenting the historical failure of crucial regimes of "objective spirit"—military life, family or kinship roles, economic activity, monarchical rule, feudal life—as suffered through (or, *as*) the "subjective experiences" of individual human beings (Hamlet or Lear). Paul A. Kottman, *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

41. Shakespeare makes this patently clear by setting the *Tempest* not just in a particular social world ("Milan" and "Naples" seem intentionally vague historical locales in this play), but on a island where something like the fate of human sociality itself seems to need to be worked out.

42. A persistent question for those interested in the law is whether certain laws—say, those guaranteeing freedom of speech—are just specific cultural mores that signal the local vitality and customary morality of some historical community or whether the rule of law also installs or founds normative ways of life by animating principles (morals) that can find allegiance beyond the confines of any particular community whose vitality it signals.

43. The examples of foot-binding and dueling are analyzed in Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011). Unlike Appiah, however, I understand the demise of these practices to entail not a moral revolution, but rather the way in which these practices become unsustainable because of their failure to explain themselves, to make any sense at all of the suffering they cause. They look like moral revolutions only retrospectively, in light of that failure.

44. Just as, conversely, to carry on with a social practice in a self-conscious manner—as in Renaissance courtier culture—is to be unable to make sense of what it would mean to stop the practice or radically transform it, and hence to live out a social life in which hypocrisy or some kind of self-

alienation or even self-hatred becomes endemic. See my analysis of Hamlet and Laertes and the self-alienation of courtier life in chapter 2 of *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare*.

45. In *poiesis*, for example, *energeia* (actuality) is external to *dynamis* (potentiality) such that the accomplishment of, or conclusion to, such activities lies outside the activity itself, or marks its end. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1050a30–35.

46. This is why Hegel does not think that classical art is the same thing as, say, the Greek world. Classical Greece, rather, can be characterized by its commitment to beautiful artworks—its having held (what Hegel is calling) classical art in such high regard.

47. Or, undergo periodic revivals—as in neoclassical movements.

48. For instance: Prospero, "Now does my project gather to a head:/My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time/Goes upright with his carriage. How's the day?" (5.1.1–3).

49. Think, for instance, of the "symbolic, classical, romantic" categories in the *Aesthetics*, or of the role of "world history" in Hegel's "system." And then there is also the retrospectively grasped "development" of Hegel's own lecture course, to which he refers over and over.

50. This is, again, a point that Hegel had made earlier—precisely with reference to Shakespeare.

"All Art Constantly Aspires to the Condition of Music"—Except the Art of Music: Reviewing the Contest of the Sister Arts

Lydia Goehr
For David Rosand

> Musick is certainly a very agreeable Entertainment, but if it
> would take the entire Possession of our Ears, if it would make
> us incapable of hearing Sense, if it would exclude Arts that
> have a much greater Tendency to the Refinement of humane
> Nature: I must confess I would allow it no better Quarter than
> *Plato* has done, who banishes it out of his Commonwealth.
>
> —JOSEPH ADDISON, *The Spectator*, 1711

> . . . but a silent Harmony is not true Music.
>
> —JOHANN MATTHESON, 1713

I

W. J. T. Mitchell opens his essay "Going Too Far with the Sister Arts" by noting Emerson's remark "that [in Mitchell's words] the most fruitful conversations are always between two persons, [and] not three."[1] Mitchell uses this remark to explain why, when the sister arts have "set out to argue," poetry and painting have "held the stage," leaving the art of music "something of an outsider to the conversation." Mitchell explains music's outsider status in two ways: that music has renounced the contested "territory" of poetry and painting, of "reference, representation, denotation, and meaning," and that music's exclusion from the conversation has suited a "war of signs" construed according to a basic binary opposition between word and image. To the extent that this war has sought a resolution, it has drawn on a unifying semiotic theory that still, in Mitchell's way of putting things, has found no place for music.

One might think that by beginning this way, Mitchell would return music to the conversation. But he doesn't, at least not in this essay. He retains music as an outsider, prompting one to wonder why he mentions

music at all. Still, he does remind his readers that, although music has been excluded, "all the arts" have long been held "to aspire to the condition of music." He says no more, leaving one wondering what his reminder might mean. Perhaps he means that, in the quarrel of the sister arts, being an outsider is not to music's disadvantage, or that, construed somehow as "a condition," perhaps a divine or metaphysical condition, music affords a way of thinking about art that helps a semiotic theory that wants to overcome the alienation of image from word. To assign music this role would not be an odd thing to do; it has long been assigned this role in the history of the *paragone*—the contrasting and competing arts. As the old song goes, verbally and visually meaningless the art of music may be, yet construed as a harmonizing metaphysical condition, music carries the true significance of all the arts as, indeed, of the entire world. Nevertheless, as I will show, there is a deep problem in construing music as a *condition*, given how often it has meant excluding and denigrating music construed as an *art*.

When Mitchell wrote in 1987 that "all the arts may aspire to the condition of music," he had in mind what Walter Pater had written a century earlier, in 1877. Pater had looked back to the paintings of the Italian Renaissance, specifically to the "School of Giorgione" so that he could declare that not "all the arts" but "all art," and not that "all the arts may aspire" but that "all art constantly aspires to the condition of music." Only having made this statement had Pater then written that to the condition of music's "perfect" and "consummate moments," "all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire."[2] The transition between "all art" and "all the arts" and the idea of "constant aspiration" were both crucial to Pater's argument. If, as he presumed, music *has* a certain condition, then music need not constantly aspire to attain it. This means in turn that "all the arts" refers to "all the *other* arts," and music retains its outsider status. If, however, all art, and thereby *every* art also *constantly aspires* to a general condition of *art*, as Pater claimed in addition, then music is included as one of the sister arts. At the end of this essay, I show how Pater's view moves in subtle ways between the exclusionary and inclusionary claims so that he can hold onto both. This is not an original claim among Pater scholars and especially among those who have situated Pater's work in a Victorian context.[3] I, however, set the claim, with much greater historical breadth, against the persistent and singularly intriguing matter of what it has meant for *all* the arts when music, with one hand, has been raised to a *condition* and, with the other, demoted as an *art*.

Pater produced his argument when, as he saw it, the art of music had consummated the condition not just of music but of all art, the condition

amounting to an "indivisible unity" of an artwork's content and form. Yet his argument misleads if one thereby assumes that, already in the Renaissance, the art of painting was aspiring to music regarded as an art, because, in this period, the art of music had not yet reached this consummate condition. Pater was assuming the terms of a modernist teleological narrative, according to which, for much of its history, when music was regarded less well as an art, it tried to raise its status by aspiring to what the other arts were already achieving within the territory of reference and representation. Only when the art of music renounced this territory, more or less around 1800, was it accepted as a fine or beautiful art on its own terms— the terms that unified its form and content—after which all the other arts turned around to emulate it. However, to this teleological narrative, Pater offered a twist. The subtle historical incongruity between his "premodernist" Renaissance examples drawn from the "School of Giorgione" and his nineteenth-century, romantic-modernist aesthetic claims allowed him to show how painting, without relinquishing the territory of representation, could aspire toward the unifying condition of music before the art of music had actually achieved this condition. This had the consequence, first, that aspiring to the condition of music was not, as it might seem, to praise or rank music above the other arts, and second, that although the art of music would finally meet a condition to which all the other arts aspired, the condition of music could also be seen in a way that separated it from music regarded as an art.

My essay outlines a competitive discourse about the sister arts that extends back past the Renaissance to antiquity. It juxtaposes earlier and later claims in part to show that the watershed years around 1800 made a difference, but not that great a difference, with regard to the particular tension between treating music as a condition and as an art. For reasons mostly of space, I do not treat in any detail the competitive claims of the other arts, of poetry, painting, sculpture, or architecture, to be the highest art; nor do I situate Pater's work in the very rich field of Pater scholarship, musicological and art-historical. This essay only selects, more or less chronologically, some particular moments and examples—and mostly painterly ones— that show the impact of the distinction between "music" considered as a condition and as an art. This way, I reveal both the tension in Pater's so oft-quoted statement and the oddness of the claims of the competing arts. Many read Pater's work with regard to issues pertaining either to music or to the other arts; I read it, according to the paragone, on both sides.

The arts, variously conceived, have long been ranked and placed into hierarchies, even if "the sister arts" have not always been "systematized" as

a distinct class of "fine arts" for the West.[4] Music has been placed some-times at the bottom and sometimes at the top, but also sometimes *beyond* the top, "orphaned" as Robert Schumann once used this term, as though it were without father, mother, or even sibling.[5] One reason that music has had this odd history, and one rather different from the "other" arts, is that it has been either inflated or deflated with the aim sometimes to identify and sometimes to separate the condition and the art. The more the condi-tion of music has been identified with music as an art, the less the other arts have had a claim on the condition, which is why perhaps Pater was so eager to prove in the 1870s that they still did. But the more that the condi-tion has been separated from music as an art, the more the other arts have been able to claim without paradox, as poetry and painting claimed in the Renaissance, that they have the capability to aspire to the condition in ways subtly different from and arguably even better than the art of music.

Consider, now, that if we declare that poetry and painting aspire to the condition of music, or that sculpture and architecture so aspire, we seem to be saying something substantial. Yet what are we saying beyond tautology, if we can meaningfully say it at all, that the art of music aspires to the condition of music? Are we saying, teleologically, that music aspires to be itself, to be perhaps free or independent, or to realize its essence as an art? But if so, why then wouldn't we say of poetry or painting that each similarly aspires to its own essential condition? Some of course have said this: that poetry aspires to a condition of "lyricism" or "*Poesie*," and paint-ing to a condition of Art (with a generalizing and capital A) as though Art were exhausted by the art of painting. If, after this, we still say that paint-ing and poetry aspire to the condition of music, are we not now saying that they aspire to a condition that is not their own? Or is the point that the condition of music applies to all the arts because in the end it is just what makes art essentially Art? But if this is correct, why then is the sister art of music excluded from the conversation—because it is a condition? Or, put differently, why is it included only then to demote it as a sister art? And what, further, is meant by "aspiration" if not that an art can fail either generically or given a specific example? And if this, can music as an art fail to meet its own condition? And if it can, might this happen when it "mistakenly" tries to step into the "territory" of the "other" sister arts, of reference and representation? Many have articulated music's failure as an art in these latter terms and thus its success in reaching the condition of music as depending on its renouncing this territory. But does this now mean that all the other arts ought also to renounce this territory, to relin-quish their powers of reference and representation to achieve a condition

more "musical"? Or might it be that they ought rather constantly to aspire to reach the condition of music from within this territory, given that the territory of reference and representation allows them to be the particular arts that they are? But then, finally, why not let the art of music reenter this territory too, to see if it can constantly try to mean in ways that the "other" sister arts mean without this compromising what makes music the particular sister art that it is?

<div align="center">*2*</div>

Attending to music as an art and as a condition helps clarify the confused role that music has had in the contest of the sister arts: the "musical" terms with which and for which the "rival arts" have competed. The confusion has been productive, destructive, and sometimes even deadly. When the condition of music has been most separated from music as an art, the consequences for this art and for all the other arts have often been severe enough that those who have produced art have been exiled from a city or punished by death. Exile or death has followed from when the condition of music has been treated as a normative standard to guide artists as to how to act as citizens and how to produce their art. The condition of music has specified the "correct" character, value, and meaning of all art produced. Nonetheless, artists of all sorts have often found ways to resist the disciplinary or standardizing tendency of the condition. They have found ways within their arts to reconstrue the condition to suit themselves, perhaps to produce arts that simultaneously challenge or even mock the condition while seeming obediently to oblige it. In different terms, the two sides of the Platonic legacy, the moralizing or censorious and the strategic or ironic, have long inflected a history in which the arts have competed both with one another over their terms as art and with a condition that has too often been articulated as though suspended above them in judgment.

So suspended, like a laurel branch, the condition of music has been conceived of as a standard, principle, or law drawn variously from metaphysics, morality, divinity, and, eventually, a more modern aesthetic theory. Deriving from the ancient notion of mousikē, the condition of cultivating the mind, body, and soul has allowed all the sister Muses to inspire all the arts to aspire to the parental Apollonian condition—without exception. With this derivation, the condition of inspiration has far extended the sister arts to stand for a complete cosmological harmony and order to which all human activities have had constantly to aspire, even philosophy, and

perhaps philosophy most of all, as Plato often tells us. To comprehend how the ancient quarrel of philosophy and the arts inflected the later quarrels of the sister arts is to understand, first, how the condition of mousikē became uniquely the condition of music, but, second, how it also became the broader condition of the museum that allowed most of the sister arts to enter through its doors before ever it allowed the art of music to enter. In this essay, I treat the first development more than the second, given that I have already treated the second extensively elsewhere.[6]

In 1985, the French philosopher Michel Serres made this exemplary statement: "La musique, venue de toutes les Muses, ne peut passer pour un art; elle somme tous les arts. Aucun d'entre eux ne réussit, à son tour, s'il n'a la musique; elle garde chacun d'eux et le fait exister." "Music, which comes from all the Muses, cannot be held to be an art; it is the summation of all the arts. Without music, not one of them can achieve its goal; music watches over them all, it is the condition of their existence."[7] Serres illustrates his claim, given here in the published translation: "Without [music], poetry is at best pedestrian; architecture, a pile of stones; sculpture, inert matter; and prose, mere noise." Where, we may ask, is music in this list? Surely if music as an art were without its music—i.e., without the condition of art's existence—wouldn't it be pedestrian, dead matter, or mere noise? Serres would likely say yes. In fact, he does say yes, yet the English translation adapts the sentence when he does so. Serres writes: "Elle-même retombe dans les notes, le calcul plat, sans elle-même"—"She [Music] herself relapses into notes, flat/banal calculation, without herself." The printed translation reads: "Eloquence deprived of rhythm and the modulations of singing evocation collapses into gibberish and boredom." In referring to eloquence instead of music, the translators subtly accommodated Serres's seemingly conflicted claims, both that music "cannot be held to be an art," and that music is an art, subject, as all the arts, to the condition of music. Still, Serres would have been clearer in his double claim had he written, "Music, which comes from all the Muses, cannot be held to be only an art; it is also the summation of all the arts," or even better, "Mousikē, as standing for all the Muses, is not exhausted by music as an art, but is the condition of all the arts including 'la musique.'"

Yet Serres does not write this way because he doesn't have to. He can identify mousikē with *la musique*—the condition with the art—because it is now common to do so, given how many have done so before him. But precisely this identification has licensed music's exclusion from the conversation as the translators unwittingly exclude it, or it has encouraged

thinkers like Serres to find ways for all the arts to be "musical," since, on his view, without "music," they are all meaningless, pedestrian, or commonplace. Indeed, they are not even *art*.

Serres's view of what makes art art is motivated by his interest in the early Siren song of the Muses and in the "musical" and "mythic" figures of Apollo, Orpheus, and the like. He notes that originally there was no Muse specifically of the art of music, because, had there been, the sister muses would have lived in a mutual jealous rage, each trying to claim the closest relationship to their sister: *la musique*. Always therefore a condition and *not* a sister, he continues, music lived among the Muses, bringing them to accord, ensemble, and even following a Rousseauean line to social assembly or contract. After this, as a condition of pacification and community, music worked by secret and mysterious ways corresponding to a universal and metaphysical law of proportion and harmony, which, after antiquity, came also to be associated, as, say, in Leibniz's view, with the divine attributes of a monotheistic (and Christian) God.

In writing of music first off as a condition, Serres allows the terms of melody, harmony, and rhythm to attach themselves naturally to some sort of divine or higher metaphysical law, which in turn raises a tense question: Do such terms attach literally to the art of music and only metaphorically to the condition, or vice versa? And does it become a normative assumption that there is finally no distinction between "the literal" and "the metaphorical," if and when music as an art, or indeed any other art, "consummates itself" in and as the condition? When Pythagoras first plucked those strings, did he discover in the intervallic resonances his concept of universal harmony or did he find only an illustration of a concept or conviction that he already had? But if the latter, would he not then have been able to design his experiments, as many Renaissance thinkers later did, by means of arts other than the art of plucking strings? For does not the perspective or symmetry of design or the arrangement of colors in a painting, or the rhythmic ordering of words and stanzas in a poem, or the placement of stones, wood, and glass in a cathedral resonate also with the harmony of nature and the world? Serres thinks so, and so do many, many others.

Although offered in 1985, Serres's view of how something commonplace is transfigured into art by means of "music" may be read as resuming other contemporary views, say, Arthur Danto's view, as articulated in 1981 in his book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Serres's view draws on an age-old mysticism and metaphysics of mousikē and music to explain the condition that makes all the arts art. Danto's view secularizes and discards this mysticism by teleologically reading the metaphysics as a "disenfran-

chising" history of what has been claimed about art until the moment when art realizes its own essence (in the 1960s), after which the condition of art's existence becomes a much more deflated but philosophically and artistically acceptable condition of how art meaningfully exists in an art world that is saturated by history and theory but no longer by a musical divinity. Read this way, Danto's view, as Mitchell's, excludes music only insofar as music is regarded as an inflated condition. The obvious next step is then to reintroduce music into the art world as a bona fide sister art.

3

In a moment before dying, Socrates asks after the meaning of an instruction given to him in a dream: that he ought to practice mousikē (*Phaedo* 60e). He asks whether, by this term, he should engage in what the poet-musicians do or whether he should continue to do as he has done lifelong: in name, philosophy. In setting up the choice, he grants that there is both a common and a higher meaning of mousikē. He considers composing a common song, but when he realizes that he is without inspiration in this task, he borrows a verse from Aesop. For Socrates, to borrow a song is preferable to composing one: It fits his view that to aspire to the condition of mousikē is to strive for excellence in one task alone, and he is a philosopher not a verse maker. It also suits his strategic need to identify with an ugly man who survives on the common street by his verse, fable, and wit, until brought, as Aesop, to his death.[8] To make a claim on mousikē is to evidence one's attempt to harmonize body and mind, and to show, most significantly for the present essay, that the instrument, medium, or means of one's chosen or natural task or art accords with its end. Aesop's song suited his life; by borrowing it, Socrates evidenced what was "musical" about his own life despite any merely common or ugly appearance to the contrary. By borrowing the song or the fable, the commonplace meaning of music was reattached, in reflection, to the divine meaning of "mousikē" at the moment of the philosopher's death.

Another moment, this one from *The Republic* (399e), finds Socrates borrowing from a myth about a musical contest that later comes to play an extraordinary role in the quarrel of the sister arts. Socrates borrows the judgment issued by the divine Apollo, when Apollo punishes the satyr Marsyas (here, conflated with Pan), when, with hubris, Marsyas threatens a disharmony in the city by playing a Phrygian or Lydian type of music on a common wind instrument. Socrates uses Apollo's judgment to distinguish instruments of the musical art to be retained in the city from those to be

left outside the city walls. In part he bans wind instruments and retains instruments with strings, but then acknowledges that stringed instruments, when they have too many strings, can also produce a discordance. He thus leaves us wondering what exactly the perfect instrument is.

Surely it is the one that Apollo uses in the contest, but what instrument is this? Is it really an instrument of the musical art or one transfigured, as we see in Socrates' arguments, to serve a higher condition? The contest of Apollo and Marsyas may be read variously, but here I read it as showing how the art of music comes to be so severed from the condition of music that the art is first demoted before it can be raised, if it can be raised at all. To so interpret the contest is not to focus on the hubris that leads Marsyas, a lowly human or satyr, to challenge a god; it is to invert the contest's meaning so that we may understand why Apollo, like Socrates, agrees to enter into a contest with someone common or low when the god's victory is guaranteed. The guarantee is stamped by the fact that, as well as being a participant, Apollo assumes the position of the judge, suggesting thereby that the interest in the contest is not in who wins but in how the inevitable victory is achieved. The achievement, however, does not follow a straight path: It follows from rhetorical yet "noble" tricks, employed by those in the know, to expose the opponents' tricks that are (allegedly) but mere crooked and artful deceptions. To turn a common contest into one that reveals something noble or divine involves a subtle renegotiation of its terms: here, one that turns a common music into mousikē.

In the contest, the judges are the Muses, of whom Apollo is their leader—*Apollôn mousêgetês*—but there are other judges who join them so that there will be at least one, named Midas, who renders the allegedly incorrect judgment. On the common street, Marsyas produces the better music, or at least the common audience is taken in by his tune. He performs well since he has all the talent of a performing artist. Midas is so taken by Marsyas's performance that he declares him the winner. Apollo then punishes Midas for being taken in by only the mere or artful appearance. He gives Midas the ears of an ass. Yet why does Marsyas's music sound better than Apollo's music to Midas's ears? Because when Apollo plays, what he plays can neither be heard nor comprehended by those whose ears are deaf to the divine. Not able or wanting to win by the art of music, Apollo displaces the art by a condition of metaphysical or divine truth. He turns his stringed instrument "upside down," as one version has it, which means, as I am reading it, that he inverts to reveal the true ordering within the total concept of music. He transfigures his stringed instrument into a perfect Pythagorean symbol of universal harmony, rendering his instru-

ment qua instrument now redundant as an instrument of art.[9] Or to the extent that he continues to play an instrument, he shows that to which all should now constantly aspire, to grasp the symbol or condition above the art. Contrarily, when Marsyas turns his pipe upside down, he finds that he has turned his apparent music into a merely pedestrian production of wind: mere noise.

Apollo could have stopped here, but he doesn't. He shows Marsyas also that, with his own beautiful mouth freed from an all-too-human-looking instrument, he can speak divine words through poetry and song, and presumably, had he had more time, he could have produced divine images through the arts of sculpture or painting. Contrarily, Marsyas, with his mouth full (as Oscar Wilde once put it with his usual wit)[10] cannot speak the name of the divine, rendering Marsyas impotent. Having won the contest, Apollo takes charge of the punishment: thereby becoming participant, judge, and executioner. As we learn from many later poems and paintings, by hanging Marsyas upside down and by taking his skin, Apollo displays his intent to invert equally the instrument of the musical art and the body of the musician. By cutting beneath the surface, Apollo reveals Marsyas to be a corporeal bellowing windbag although, in some accounts, he thereby offers the terms of his redemption through the revelation of Marsyas's strings. Were Marsyas to focus less on wind (charm) and more on producing harmony (truth), he would reveal his potential to be divine. Such a doubled image is also offered of Socrates when, in the *Symposium* [215b], he is presented by Alcibiades as the ugly Marsyas on the outside, who, even if speaking constantly through his windpipe with words that confuse his would-be lover, might be harboring something divine on his inside.

The contest between Apollo and Marsyas suggests a development that either severs the art of music from the divine condition or redeems the musical art via its transfiguration into the condition. There is also a second development, one that opens up a space for the other arts to enter the contest so that they, too, may aspire to and reach the condition. However, to write this way makes it seem as though the art of music has always had a special or prior claim on the condition or that it was always a singular or unified art with which the other arts could compete. This is not the case. The contest also tells of how putting wind against strings was to put two sorts of musical activity together—wind and string performances—that were not, in any sense, on an even keel: that, with different instruments, very different modal and national melodies could be produced, and sometimes ones that accompanied poetic verse and others that did not. Yet this is, and always was, all very tricky. First, because perhaps, in the contest, there weren't

two different instruments at all, but only one, the pipe, the other being the strings of transfiguration. And second, because had Marsyas brought a friend along—his student Olympus—he could have asked him to sing while he piped, which means that Apollo would have had to devise another trick. Of course, Apollo had infinite arrows in his quiver, though this is no longer our concern. We only need to know that, in this early period and in the early myths, there was no umbrella concept of music that covered everything that we now count as music as an art to the exclusion of all else. There was, rather, an umbrella concept and condition of mousikē on which so much more than music as an art could and did make a claim.

4

Consider Titian's famed painting *The Flaying of Marsyas* (Figure 1). Here we see a self-portrait of the painter identified with the unlikely figure of Midas. Though depicted with the ears of an ass, the figure still apparently has eyes insightful and even melancholic enough to watch and understand Apollo who is seemingly doubled up as participant and executioner. Bolstered by at least one version of the myth and suggested by some modern interpreters of the painting,[11] the visual ordering of the instruments—the pipes above the strings and with the string player looking up at the pipes—indicates a certain remorse on arguably Apollo's part for his having won as he won. Might Marsyas have impressed not only Midas's common ears but Apollo's divine ears as well? Had Marsyas really produced only a noisy wind, would the contest have ever gotten off the ground? The thought of remorse fits what may also be said about Socrates: that, while devising arguments to deflate the arts for the good of the state, he hears in Homer something divine in his fully embodied and performed art. To the extent that Titian identifies with this Apollonian remorse, he does, I am suggesting, by identifying with the critic who perhaps recognizes something that the other judges do not: namely, *all* in an art that makes art art. Perhaps Midas knows how to judge an art also as an end activity in itself and not only instrumentally as an aspiration toward a higher condition. If art—the making and the product—is always also an embodying and embodiment of the condition, then the production matters as much as the aspiration, and perhaps, for the artist, it matters more. It is not only that one aspires; it is also how one aspires or the medium and means by which one aspires. Thus, even if the contest questions whether Marsyas has the "that"— the aspiration at all—Titian is more preoccupied with the "how," how the aspiration shows itself in art, and, now, in his specific art of painting.

What Apollo shows by destroying and transfiguring the art of music with the knife, Titian repeats with the brush. Yet he does this, competitively, to displace the contest between music and mousikē with a contest, first, between the painter-artist and the god, and, second, between the arts of painting and music. By transfiguring music as an art according to the terms of painting, painting shows, first, its own and its maker's aspiration to the higher condition of divine harmony to prove its value as an art and, second, its equality to, if not also its superiority over, the performed actions of the musical art.

Figure 1. Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *Flaying of Marsyas*. 1570–75 . 212 × 207 cm. Archbishop's Palace. Photo credit: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, N.Y.

   Another painting, an earlier painting by Raphael may be read to a simi-
lar end. It is not, however, Raphael's own *Apollo and Marsyas*, but his *Cecilia*
of 1514 (Figure 2). It shows Cecilia on her ecstatic way to becoming a saint.
But is her sainthood—the purification of her soul and body—achieved at
the expense of music as an art? Given that she is said to be the patron saint
of music, this is a pressing question. First, we are shown all the instruments
of the musical art falling to the ground. Broken, they can no longer be used
and are revealed to be merely the material out of which they are made. If
music as a condition is withdrawn from the instruments of the art, the
instruments cease to be musical and become merely commonplace things.
To give music a proper place in the passage toward sainthood, it must be
converted as Cecilia is converted, rendered a medium suitable for trans-
mitting only the pure and heavenly harmony. Raphael finds this medium
in the angelic choir that Cecilia hears with her right ear directed upward.
Yet though this medium must be pure as heaven is pure, Raphael retains
something of music's earthly means of production: namely, the songbooks.
We do not need to see what the books show—words or notes, or both—
nor must we believe that the angels need songbooks to sing the heavenly
song. The mere presence of the books is enough to suggest that Raphael,
true to his times, is looking in the art of music for something beyond its
instruments that might prove that music, though a purely temporal art in
performance, has an endurance or permanence suitable for embodying the
eternal harmony. By focusing on the means of the musical art, Raphael
again displaces our attention not away from the sacred but still toward the
secular. He asks us to attend less to music's and more to painting's ability
to raise a musical means of music's production to render painting itself a
purified and enduring medium. Through the visual transfiguration of the
musical art, he aims to prove painting's capability to transfigure and thus
contain or embody the eternal harmony in secular forms. He wants to show
how painting internalizes into its own enduring visual embodiment the dy-
namic passage of a woman who once engaged the musical art as an earthly
art, but who will now, in her sainthood, sing only the heavenly song.
   Through what early theorists term "*invisibilia per visibilia*," or Leonardo,
a "longing for harmony," or Goethe and Pater, much later, a yearning for
"affinity," or, even later, Serres, a transfigurative and aesthetic "mingling"
of all the senses, any art may aspire to what the condition of music de-
mands: that the only means and meanings that count for any given art
are those that can be enduringly contained by the pure medium, this way
rendering the containment—the artwork—an end in itself.

Figure 2. Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), *Saint Cecilia*. 1516–17. 220 × 136 cm (87 × 54 in).
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna. Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource, N.Y.

5

Many painters, especially in the Renaissance, who aspire to the condition of music, are influenced by a Pythagorean-Platonism as articulated by the early Christian philosopher Boethius. Boethius offers a tripartite ranking of the concept of "*musica*."[12] First there is *musica mundana*, the unifying harmony of the cosmos among its many diversities, movements, and modulations; second, *musica humana*, standing for how poets tell of persons who move and are moved morally in the world with respect to their bodies and souls; and, third, *musica instrumentalis* designating the melodic and rhythmic movement of voices, strings, winds, and timpani. In this schema, does Boethius favor music over the other arts? Yes, as a condition but not so obviously as an art.

In defining "the musician" (*musicus*), he argues that every art and discipline is ennobled the less it has to do with the hand and labor of craft. Nobility lies in knowing over doing, understanding over skill. Physical labor is only "the handmaid" to reason who is "the mistress." How much more admirable, he writes, is "the science of music" than "the musical deed." "*Quanto igitur praeclarior est scientia musicae in cognitione rationis quam in opere efficiendi atque actu!*" He accordingly distinguishes a music yielded by playing instruments, another by inventing song, and a third: the judgment. The judge alone, he maintains, can speculate on what the practitioners do, since the latter are without reason. They are but servants to those who speculate as philosophers. Whereas instrumental musicians are "entirely consumed" by their physical or corporeal effort—their mouths and hands are full—the singing poets invent either from a natural instinct or inspiration. For these reasons, he concludes, the lower two classes must "be separated from music [*segregandum est*]," leaving the judge who measures the rhythm and melody of a song as a whole as the true musician (*veri musicus*), because only in wholeness is music finally justified as rational.

To say that all the arts and all human actions aspire to the condition of music is for all, in this schema, to aspire to please the judge: the metaphysical or divine disciplinary conditioner that constantly looks down on practitioners, and practitioners especially of the arts, either to exclude them or to put them in their place, or to redeem them by destroying or inverting their lowly means into something higher. The history that follows this conditioning of the human world is as much one of violence and destruction as of purification and deliverance. All these characteristics are contained, as Socrates explains in his dialogue on names (*Cratylus* 405), by a singular name, and that name is Apollo. Boethius justifies his schema inter-

estingly by analogy to what we remember in the erecting of monuments: We acknowledge the glory and the triumph that comes from authority and reason and not, he says, the labor and slavery that gave the monument its mere corporeal form.

In the notes of Leonardo da Vinci, which later give to the entire debate the name "paragone,"[13] Boethius's schema is endorsed but then inverted for the sake of art (in a way foreshadowing later Marxist critiques of the concealment of mechanism and labor). First, "la musica" stands for a liberal art or science to which all the arts aspire—a mathematics and geometry of proportion and harmony. Second, its stands for a practiced art or a producing sister art, which Leonardo can then declare to be both the "youngest" and "unhappiest," by comparison at least to painting. And third, although spirit or reason remains the mistress to which the deed of art is but the handmaid, without the deed, Leonardo rightly reminds us, there would be no art.

In comparing painting with music, Leonardo argues that if "la musica" is put among the liberal arts (*arti liberali*), "either you should put painting there too or else take music away" (*o tu vi metti questa, o tu ne levi quella*). Or, if you insist on maintaining painting as a merely mechanical art, then you must downgrade music to the same. Continuing, he plays on the double meaning of the term "music" with the aim to raise the status of both arts, though painting now above music. Whereas music as an art can be debased to its manual labor or mechanism, the science or measure of music cannot. So why not claim the same of painting? Thinking of what produces imperfection in music regarded as a sister art, he argues that its harmony is less noble than painting's, meaning that what painting offers to the eye is superior to what music offers to the ear. Music, he maintains, shares with the energetic art of poetry the ability to produce in sound and tempo only something that "dies" at the very moment of its birth. That music's earthly temporality might mirror the eternal temporality, or that poetry, in expressing its Ideas without manual labor, might best approach a pure medium of the mind, are reasons reduced in significance when, in Leonardo's vision, we come to see the harmonious measure that painting achieves, first, when it rewards the eye with a perfect proportion and tempo of a human figure and, second, when it rewards the mind with a beauty and nobility that neither passes away in transience nor is destroyed.

Leonardo acknowledges that paintings may materially be destroyed when buildings or walls that house the paintings fall by fire, weather, or war. He also notes that many of the ancient artworks that didn't survive were preserved by sketches and descriptions in texts that did survive. Yet

he has few qualms in drawing on Plato's worry that writing, as notation, is but a merely mechanical means or manual matter, so that he may conceive of poetry and music as living and energetic arts that only temporarily address the ear, whereas painting and sculpture enduringly address the eye through the plastic simultaneity of their parts. To address the eye means more, in his claim, than plasticity or enduring physicality: It also means a staging or dynamic movement that shows us not only that a model is represented but how it is represented. It shows us how something external becomes internally contained and reoriginated as art. For Leonardo, this movement is made more transparent in painting than in sculpture, in the representation of a three-dimensional model in a two-dimensional plane. Yet he does not think that this representation falls into either an empty abstraction or a mere conventionality, the latter of which he associates with the verbal signs of poetry. Through the simultaneity and harmonious measure of its parts, in a way true to both art and nature, painting displaces, he writes, that which it externally represents. It retains the natural proportion of the model's form so as to move us away from the particular beauty and toward a general harmony that is both whole and rational. In Leonardo's claim, therefore, painting as an art reaches the condition of mousikē/musica, a perfect internalized and embodied union of medium and means, content and form, that displaces, better even than the ancient sculptures of Apollo, that which is represented in nature or the world. As the art of design and science of perspective, painting meets what, or most of what, Pater later specifies as the unifying condition of music to which all art aspires—including, for Leonardo, the still unhappy sister art of music.

<center>6</center>

Many early arguments appeal to a condition of music—harmony, proportion, order, reason, and endurance—to measure one sister art as standing above or below another. Many artworks refer to or represent instrumental musicians or singing poets as indicating with their ears, eyes, fingers, or bows to what the artworks themselves aspire to as art while setting aside the instruments as "broken" or "fallen" in a world of transience, imperfection, or sin. Dividing music into its "liberal-divine" side and its "mechanical" or "instrumental" side is a dominant way the "other" arts elevate their own status. But with this, the agonistic question arises whether the art of music can stage the same division in music's concept. With word and image, poetry and painting, it is said, can reflect on the art and condition of music, but can music, as a pure "art of tone" reflect or self-reflect, as we

may now begin to say, on its own condition? Can it step into the territory either of reference or representation to reflect on its own capability as an art? Or is it enough to make the point performatively, for example, when, in music's performance, instruments are shown as thrown away to convey an upward mobility toward the "silence" of the heavens or when musicians are removed from sight, so that, concealed behind a screen or under a stage, they are separated from the purely sounding medium that is now delivered in aesthetic isolation to the ear? All these proposals are considered the more the "art of tone" seeks its way, sometimes separately and sometimes in union with its sister arts, to meet a condition of "mousikē" that, over the centuries comes to be termed either "musicality" or, to further compound the confusion, simply "music."[14]

During the eighteenth century, the art of music is caught between seeking the terms of its independence and the terms that will continue to ally music to the "other" arts. Tending toward becoming a language of emotion or passion, music confronts what poetry confronts: whether its potential semiotic capability renders it a merely conventional language of signs, or whether, through or despite its conventional signs, it maintains a direct or immediate relation to nature. Or, tending toward workhood and objecthood, the art of music seeks increasingly the terms of its permanence or endurance, without, however, its compromising its energetic temporality. Or tending toward reconciliation, music seeks a union with its sister arts, housed as opera under the total roof of architecture: the "frozen music" par excellence. All these tendencies contribute to what I have called an "imaginary museum of musical works," a museum that not only tries to bring the time of art to an eternal standstill, but does so in such a way as to suggest that, by entering this museum, one enters a world that is entirely permeated by the condition of music.[15]

In an influential treatise of the early sixteenth century, *De Harmonia Musicorum Instrumentorum Opus*,[16] Gaffurius reminds his readers, as Serres later, that although many say that all the muses were born from the head of Apollo, it was more important that they were taught by him because this is how and why Apollo himself was named or came to contain the condition of mousikē/musica. Gaffurius then describes the divine numerical and proportional qualities of Apollo's instrument in a way that suits all the arts. Nearly three centuries later, in 1785, the German philosopher Herder takes up the same mantle, although he seeks, as many of his contemporaries also seek, to bring the contest of the sister arts to an end in a proclamation finally of their Enlightened equality. Still, he cannot resist downgrading the art of music on his way.

Herder stages a contest, a *Göttergespräch*, or "divine dialogue," in which "the condition of music" is again the judge: Apollo.[17] The contest is staged to show that the freer and more independent music has become, the more this sister art has shown a hubris in identifying itself with a music conceived as a condition for all the arts. Figured as the father, Apollo generally aims to pacify his competing daughters. He allows painting, poetry, and music—image, word, and tone—to run through their (Lessing-like) claims as to what each can achieve or mean in virtue of their plastic or energetic mediums and by their mimetic ways of representation, reference, and expression. With these claims, Apollo evidences no particular favor; on the contrary, he shows pride in their different abilities, until suddenly he sees fit to chide his daughter music for thinking that, without words or by means solely of instruments—as a *Tonkunst*—music can mean without needing the meaning that is given by the other sister arts. When Tonkunst pleads that, by its instrument alone, it can produce a perfect accord with what Apollo plays on his, he tells Tonkunst in no uncertain terms that he could just as much have proved his separation from music as from all the other sister arts had he taken up the metaphysical brush or the pen. No sister art has a special claim on him. He wants them all only to sit with him, circling around him in a dance, but always a little below him as obedient daughters.

Behind the curtain of this contest, however, Herder is laughing in the shadow of Socrates at the pretensions of any judge who thinks that he can really so dictate the terms of the sister arts. He describes these critics elsewhere (and with a nice mixture of Apollonian-Marsyan terms) as Apollonian "windbags," who with all their inflated talk manage to murder anything that rightly goes by philosophy's name. There are two sorts of windbag: the barbarous aestheticians who now, he says, rule the roost in Germany and the pedants who preoccupy themselves in the "empty controversy" that constantly aims to determine the superiority of one sister art over another. "It is a pity," he continues, that "instead of simply elaborating the *difference*" between painting, poetry, and music, theorists indulge in "the empty fancy to determine an art's priority of one to the other. A mere order of rank between completely different things boils down to a schoolboyish contest [*ein schülerhafter Wettstreit*] of the kind," he adds bitingly, "that the arts were recently obliged to enter ceremoniously into some years ago under the supervision of a magistrate of world-wisdom [*Weltweisheit*]."[18] Although Herder has in mind a particular magistrate now forgotten, one Wolfgang Ludwig Gräfenhahn from Bayreuth, he reveals his willingness elsewhere to name the far better known Mastersingers of

Nürnberg. It is inconceivable that Richard Wagner was not a little inspired by Herder's humor when he came later to compose one of the most agonistic, comic-tragic operas ever produced about the conditions of producing a truly inspired art.[19]

<div align="center">7</div>

Given the enlightened status of the fine arts more or less around 1800, one would think that contests over their disciplinary ranking would subside. To the contrary: Their contest remains acute for artists, critics, and philosophers. However much the condition of music is articulated in the more secular or enlightened terms of "the aesthetic," it never loses its spirit (*Geist*). This spirit continues to sever for all sorts of ends its more disciplinary Apollonian side from its more ironic or satyr-like side, a side that is associated increasingly with Marsyas's brother-in-kind: Dionysus. With the two sides in play, the "spirit of music" continues to give the rule and inspiration to the arts, but it also serves as a spirit for contemporary society as a whole to retrieve something from antiquity that it believes it has lost. At this moment, too, the question regarding specifically the art of music becomes more urgent not less, whether, as the "highest art" or as separated entirely from all the other arts because it has finally reached its condition as music, it can mean as well or as fully as the "other" arts can mean as art. Propelled above the arts to a condition or spirit, what music achieves as an art continues to be a problem as it has always been. The urgent recognition of the problem gives rise to the "the philosophy of music," as we still know it today.

Having moved through all "the other arts," according to what each can achieve in the world experienced through representation, reference, and (Platonic) Ideas, Schopenhauer concludes the third book of his *World as Will and as Representation* by turning to the "one art" that has so far been "excluded from consideration"—namely "music." Although he describes music as standing entirely "apart from all the other" arts, and as belonging alone to the world experienced from the most truthful and profoundest perspective of Will, he finds that music has limits as an art. He argues, for example, that no actual music heard in the world is entirely pure, given how its movement of unfolding must take a dissonant path before resolving itself. And no music, he shows, can reflect on or render self-conscious the relation in which art in general stands to the will, as the other arts can. In the world of representation, the other arts remain captivated by how the will is objectified or articulated and seek constantly or endlessly

to rearticulate the will in works of art. Yet these arts are limited too, for the experience of beauty they afford is never such as to separate those who experience the works from a bondage to the will in anything more than a temporary way. Does music then have the advantage in having relinquished this search? Only in part, and this is the point. Finding limits on both sides, of music and the "other" arts, Schopenhauer eventually turns away from all the arts toward morality and toward a pure philosophy. He does not find in Raphael's *Cecilia* a subtle philosophical reflection on music or painting as arts. He finds instead an object of aesthetic experience that allows him to set aside all the symphonic and dramatic torments of the world equally. Still, out of the artwork then steps the most metaphysically musical of moral saints: Cecilia, to lead him in silence into the final movement of his own metaphysical symphony.

In a fragment on "Music and Words" of 1871,[20] Nietzsche grapples with Schopenhauer's view, mixed up now with Wagner's. Whereas music can "father" or "beget" ideas and images within song or opera, so as to elevate poetry and painting to the "mysterious castle" of music, poetry and painting cannot elevate themselves by themselves. Nietzsche asks us to contemplate Raphael's *Cecilia* as she listens "enraptured, to the harmonies of the angelic choirs. "No sound," he remarks, "issues from this world"—the world presumably of the painting. But imagine, he continues, that by a miracle we could hear the music: Would not all the figures in the painting, even the angels, leave our sight, "pale and vanish like shadows?" We would no longer see with the eyes of Raphael, he concludes: We would rather, "even as the instruments of this world lie broken on the ground, be conquered by something higher"—namely, music. After this, Nietzsche presents arguments that we know from his *Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* regarding how the Apollonian vision finds or gives way to a more profound and shattering Dionysian musical expression. Yet the example of the painting asks us to consider whether, in imagining the actualizing of the angelic song, our ears would be filled with a music that was given by its art or a music given only by a metaphysical or moral thought. Would we hear a music such as produced by Beethoven or Wagner, a music with or without words, or a music that, born out of the spirit, or *Geist*, of music, is such as to produce a thought or feeling of total and living community? For the early Nietzsche, it is no longer a matter of either/or. An art of music reborn "out of the spirit of music," be it a symphony or a musical drama, is, in his times, the only true containment or vessel of this spirit, surpassing now both metaphysics and morality. The "spirit of music" conveyed through music's art, is what Nietzsche now identifies with "the aesthetic"

as justifying life as a whole. But, in this life, all the other arts are included: poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, and dance.

Not that far from Schopenhauer as some may think, and two decades earlier, the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick resists any move that drives the contest of the sister arts toward their union if this means compromising the autonomy or freedom of spirit that each art and each artwork should have on its own terms. Like Schopenhauer, Hanslick begins: Although music "alone among the arts" still seems "incapable of achieving [the] objective" or autonomous "standpoint," it now has the capability to do so, given his "revision" of its aesthetic estimation.[21] Music, he explains, has long been burdened by a "false" theory that has tried to reduce music to a merely communicative or imitative language of human feelings. If all music has to do is promote feelings in human subjects, it deserves to be treated as any other merely pleasure-promoting form. If, however, it is to achieve the status that has rendered the other arts aesthetic ends in themselves, it must articulate for itself a medium that cannot be reduced to a merely instrumental means.

Hanslick thus describes this medium as constituted by purely instrumental tonal forms that define the genres of the symphony and sonata, but then and more important by forms that are, in "specifically musical" ways, "moved" by the spirit or power (*Gehalt*) that renders them purely beautiful. Following an argument that Herder and many others offer before him, the medium of music cannot be merely empirically regarded as a mere language of sounds, such that it can be found outside the musical art; it must be conceived of purely aesthetically, so that the experience it affords, even if it has to do with emotion, is entirely different from any mere effects found in the everyday world. The experience, as he describes it, is of a mysterious kind, resonant with the "chemistry" that Goethe finds in the "elective affinities" that draw unalike or different things into a likeness—a yearning—that is not however an identity. Hanslick finds this Goethean chemistry contained in the spiritual movement and power (*Gehalt*) that is sandwiched so as to become the paste or *spiritual content* between music's tonal material and its forms, to render music's pure aesthetic medium an "inseparable unity" captured by the phrase "*tönend bewegte Formen*." The musically moving medium that moves listeners to so intense a degree alone renders music the beautiful and "specifically musical" art that it is. By specifying the aesthetic medium under the terms of a work's inseparable unity of form and content, Hanslick produces what he regards the first adequate philosophy of music. At its core, the art of music qua aesthetic medium is identified with the condition of each musical work, such that to

this compounded condition all the other types of artwork, be they poems, paintings, sculptures, or buildings, now constantly tend and aspire.

8

With this view in mind, Walter Pater, finally for us and explicitly for him, begins his own account. Pater, too, sets music apart from the other arts. Whereas all the other arts constantly aspire to the condition of music, the art of music does not itself have to aspire, since the art is or just has (now) reached its proper condition. Music, he writes, "most completely realizes" itself in its "perfect identification of matter and form." In its "consummate moments," the end "is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, all the other arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire." In music, Pater adds, and not "in poetry," we find "the true type or measure of perfected art."[22]

However, declaring music's perfection of itself as an art does not persuade Pater to deem it the most perfect of the arts. Most of his argument turns on showing how all other arts aspire to music's condition without this compromising what makes them the particular arts that they are. In the 1870s, he sees a movement toward an abstraction and formalism whereby all the other arts seem willingly to relinquish (as Mitchell later puts it) the territory of reference and representation, believing that, by doing so, they will mean as music now means, which means now not to mean referentially or representationally! Pater, however, does not entirely accept this relinquishing of territory. He looks back instead to what some Italian painters demonstrated in the Renaissance: namely, a capacity to transfigure and contain an external model or meaning such that the work itself becomes self-contained, unified, and indivisible. But precisely with such a capability, he then shows, an artwork may be seen also to point or yearn toward something beyond its own limits without this compromising the internal unity in any way.

For Pater, the artwork is neither "empirical" nor "mere." That which unifies form and content is a pure aesthetic movement that he terms a "handling." In this matter, he follows Hanslick and preempts Serres in declaring that the "mere matter" of a poem or a picture is "nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling," though by "mere matter," he finds not, as Serres does, words, noises, or bricks, but rather, with Hanslick, the external or everyday events or objects, incidents, or characteristics in their common particularities, which, only when represented or, better, con-

tained by an artwork, become wholly "penetrated" and thus transfigured by form.

One painting Pater looks at, he attributes to Giorgione, though many now think that it was painted by Titian. *La Fête Champêtre*, or *The Concert* (Figure 3), shows a pastoral musical scene that instructs us in what it means for a painting to assume a musical subject matter, but then how this matter is transmuted into a formed content unique to what painting achieves: (in my terms), a pictorial play between space and time, distance and nearness, a feminine nature rewarding a male urban desire, yet a play also harmonized by color and by imaginative intersensorial synthesis given to those who grasp what is produced by those in the image who play musical instruments. Having understood the transmutation of the musical subject matter into a self-contained painterly form, one henceforth knows, following this argument, how to look at any painting "musically" for its unbroken accord of form and content, whether or not the subject matter actually shows or engages the art of making music.[23]

Figure 3. Titian, *Pastoral Concert*. 1509. 105 cm × 137 cm (41 × 54 in). Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo credit: Art Resource, N.Y.

Pater demonstrates a Platonism—a striving toward—that everywhere inflects his thought: that there is as much meaning in the "how" as the "that" of aspiration, if not more meaning.[24] For Pater, the art of music meets its condition now by definition, by fulfillment or perfection of its nature. For Socrates, the arts meet the condition of mousikē, if ever they do, only when the artists are rewarded by the gods with inspiration. But neither construal counts as an artistic or human achievement, which is Pater's point when he writes that one of the "chief functions of aesthetic criticism, dealing with the products of art, new or old," is "to estimate the degree in which each of those products approaches . . . musical law" (15). But what, rhetorically put, does aesthetic criticism do if its object is a product of the musical art, for, with nothing to approach, there is nothing to criticize?

To temper the rhetoric, Pater turns the tables around. Each and every fine art, including music, has its own "incommunicable element," its own "untranslatable order of impressions," and its own "unique mode of reaching" what he terms "imaginative reason." To reach this is what all arts do when any work of art is engaged as an end in itself. In this claim, the musical work is the exemplar for all other sorts of artworks to follow. Yet Pater also argues that even if a musical work shows the consummate unity of form and content, the free engagement of our imaginative reason is encouraged by all types of art equally and by each type of art in its own particular way. Pater rejects what he describes as the most profound of errors: to subsume all the separate arts under a generalizing aesthetic or metaphysical law of art, even, in some sense, the law of the musical work. One art is not as another art is; nor is any art a "mere translation" or "supplement" of a higher thing. But there is a dialectical twist: All arts are alike in their being also unalike as particular and singular types of art. And in this dissimilarity, as Herder argued before him, the ranking of the arts, including music, really makes no sense.

Following Hanslick's bid to prove music an autonomous art, freed from a dependence on any other art, Pater draws on the condition of music, we may finally say, to prove every art's independence. The achievement of any art is singular, dependent on how it finds its particular unification of content and form. But if this is correct, it also means that no art, qua particular type of art, exhausts all that art can be, even if there is a competitive aspiration for each type of art to exhaust the general concept of art.[25] To reduce the competitive instinct, Pater explains how each art benefits from another art by borrowing or aspiring to qualities that it does not have, just as, as I wrote above, Socrates borrowed from Aesop to show an aspiration toward something "musical" that philosophy could not frame or contain

in its own terms. Each art aspires to extend its capability beyond the limits of its own medium so that, as Pater writes, it can "partake" in "all art" as a whole. One art may join another art, as in song or opera, but, more important for Pater, each singular art engages what the German Romantics described as the "great *Anders-streben*," the striving or yearning, or the electing of an affinity, of one thing to take on qualities of or to reach a union but not an identity with another thing. Each art, Pater writes, thus aims "to pass" into "the condition of some other art," without however becoming what it is not: namely, the other art. An "alienation" from its own medium is thus wanted and necessary in his view, but only under the condition that the alienation remains "partial." This means that an art's assumption of something other to itself must finally be contained within itself so that its unity is not compromised. By striving from within itself to "the other," each is lent, as Pater puts it, "a new force." For an art to aspire beyond its limits is thus for the art to remain true to what it can do within its medium while aspiring to a condition that is perhaps higher, perhaps more general, or simply equal but other to itself.

The idea of limits (*Grenzen*) is drawn as much from Socrates as from later theories offered by Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Kant, and Hegel. It is a core idea of the modernist aesthetic, as is made explicit later on in a context of modernist crisis by the art critic Clement Greenberg and the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno. Hence, a painting or a poem aspires to the condition of music without compromising its medium—its limits—just as many of the "most delightful cases" of music, Pater writes, seem "always" to be "approaching to figure, to pictorial definition." The condition of music, which is its indivisible form and content, does not therefore exclude an aspiration of any artwork to something that is more than itself. It only must exclude the aspiration for that more or extra to be regarded as external. Just as, for the German Romantics, a fragment is partial or limited yet suggestive of the whole, so an artwork is construed here in terms of what it internally aspires to beyond itself. In this argument, it is incorrect to read the term "extramusical" as nonmusical or outside or external to the musical territory or domain. It is to be read, as the romantic-modernists read it, with an ancient twist—as "*aussermusikalisch*"—as more than the art of music, that is, as the art of music or painting or poetry aspiring to a (higher) condition.[26] Pater thus describes the tension between what remains external to the work and what is more within the work understood as a constant effort or continuous struggle for the former to surpass the latter, such that any distinction between form and content within the work is obliterated. In these romantic dialectical terms, and this is the final point, the musical

work participates in the struggle and the achievement just as much as any other sister art. All the arts, therefore, constantly aspire to what every artwork finally wants to *be as art*: singular regarding its medium, particular as a work, and exemplary of art as a whole. Music, having been excluded from the discussion of the other arts is ultimately reincluded by Pater as just another sister art.

9

I have traced a particularly Platonist history of some of the main moves between mousikē, musica, and music in terms of the elevation and deflation of music as an art. Elevated to a condition, music as an art, or no longer considered an art, has had to confront its status as a sister art to its both advantage and disadvantage. Silenced or broken, it has variously been denied its instruments, embodiment, notation, producers, sight, touch, and even its capacity to mean in a worldly way. Yet without its externalization, or what Adorno sometimes called its articulation, it has served as that to which not only the arts but humanity as a whole is meant to aspire.[27] The denial of music's articulation has come from those who have wanted to separate themselves from music, compete with music, or ally themselves with music; it has come from within and without the musical world. The denial has belonged predominantly neither to an earlier nor to a later historical period; the watershed moments have not, in this story, made a significant difference. What is written about music today often repeats the movement of the concept of music between music's status as a condition and as an art as though the two were either identified or separated in an eternal cosmic tension. Of course, that masterpieces of art—in all the areas of art, including music—have been produced on the foundation of broken instruments must give us pause if, following my essay, one thinks that one ought to reject music as a condition for the sake of retrieving music as a complete art. However, allowing all of music as an art back in, as is the tendency of much theory today, obliges us to rethink the first questions we tend especially as philosophers to ask: after the definition, status, or meaning of "music" in relation to the "other" arts.

In the twentieth century, many key figures, Greenberg, Adorno, Danto, Fried, Clark, Mitchell, and Serres, to name just a few, have defended the specificity of medium of the art and the singular artwork against the tendency to break down the barriers between the arts altogether. Or they have urged the breakdown to fight the Platonist and then theological inheritance of a discourse of clarity and confusion, which, although in the

eighteenth century was rearticulated in terms suitable to the Enlightenment concept of the aesthetic, never lost its disciplinary or disenfranchising force. Many thinkers have also continued to ask which of the arts has been, to use Greenberg's phrase, "the chief victim" in a comparison of the arts that has always also been a contest.[28] To speak of a chief victim is, however, to use the wrong language if it inclines one to believe that the arts have not contributed to their own alienation as arts in favor of an elevation or inflation of their defining concepts. For arts to aspire to a condition that is philosophical or theological has demonstrated the enormous capability of the arts. But sometimes the aspiration has come with an extreme cost to all that makes an art art.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Going Too Far with the Sister Arts," in *Space, Time, Image, Sign: Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. James A. W. Heffernan (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 1–15.

2. Walter Horatio Pater, "The School of Giorgione," in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 124, 127.

3. See Elicia Clements and Lesley Higgins, eds., *Victorian Aesthetic Conditions: Pater across the Arts* (London: Palgrave, 2010); also Patricia Herzog, "The Condition to Which All Art Aspires: Reflections on Pater on Music," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36, no. 2 (1996): 122–34.

4. Cf. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics," in two parts, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 no. 4 (1951): 496–527, and 13, no. 1 (1952): 17–46.

5. Cf. Lydia Goehr, "Music Has No Meaning to Speak of: On the Politics of Musical Interpretation," in *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 177–90.

6. Cf. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), chaps. 5–6.

7. Michel Serres, *Les cinqs sens: Philosophie des corps mêlés*, I essai (Paris: Grasset, 1985), 129; *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (I), trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 1985), 122.

8. Cf. Leslie Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

9. Cf. Jane McIntosh Snyder, "The Harmonia of Bow and Lyre in Heraclitus Fr. 51 (DK)," *Phronesis* 29, no. 1 (1984): 91–95. For further background, see Edith Wyss, *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Images* (Newark: University

of Delaware Press, 1986), and John T. Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

10. Oscar Wilde appealed to the Apollo-Marsyas contest more than once, for example, in concluding his portrait of Dorian Gray.

11. Cf. David Rosand, "'Most musical of mourners, weep again!': Titian's Triumph of Marsyas," *Arion* 17 (2010): 19–43.

12. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. Calvin M. Bower (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), bk. 1.

13. For the history of Leonardo's notes, see the introduction to Claire J. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Section 29 of Leonardo's notes corresponds to my discussion.

14. I have traced the specific concept of musicality in relation to arts other than music in chapter 2 of my *Elective Affinities: Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

15. See note 6 above. Ruth Tatlow recently showed me a perfectly illustrative statement coming from a quarrel over the concept of "harmony" around 1713 between Johann Heinrich Buttstett and Johann Mattheson (see her "Theoretical Hope: A Vision for the Application of Historically Informed Theory," 51–52, *Understanding Bach*, 8, 33–60 © Bach Network UK 2013, https://www.academia.edu/3093583/Theoretical_Hope_A_Vision_for_ the_Application_of_Historically_Informed_Theory?auto=download; http:// www.bachnetwork.org/ub8/UB8_Tatlow.pdf. Mattheson charged Buttstett: "But Mr Organist, as you are so keen to prattle on about Distinctions and Explanations [*Distinctionibus und Explicationibus*], why don't you distinguish excellently between what is properly called Harmony and Harmony in Music [*Harmoniam propriè sic dictam, & Harmoniam in Musicis*]? All your images, your grand and mighty Clavis B, the proportions of the Mercy Seat, of the Incense Altar etc demonstrate a Harmony, but a silent Harmony is not true Music [*eine Harmoniam mutam, non vero Musicam an*]. It may make a three or six-fold species of Musical Harmony, but so long as a thing does not sound, I cannot call it Musical Harmony [*so lange mir ein Ding nicht klinget, kan ichs nicht Harmoniam Musicam nennen*.] I will with the help of God in my third volume deal in more detail with Harmony, and be able to see how far the properties of this word can be stretched into music [*wie weit sich des Wortes Eigenschafft in Musicis erstrecke*]. All the panes in the windows have a Harmony, but nonetheless have no music in them, unless you call the noise music, when someone dubs a Cavalier a knight and smashes the window [*Alle Scheiben in den Fenstern haben eine Harmonie, aber deswegen steckt keine Music darinn, es sey denn, daß man den Lerm vor Music halten wolte, wenn etwan ein Cavallier daran zum Ritter wird und die Fenster einschlägt*]."

16. Franchinus Gaffurius, *De Harmonia Musicorum Instrumentorum Opus* [1518], trans. Clement A. Miller (Middleton, Wisc.: A-R Editions, 1977), 197.

17. Johann Gottfried von Herder, "Ob Malerei oder Tonkunst eine größere Wirkung gewähre?" trans. "Does Painting or Music Have a Greater Effect? A Divine Colloquy," in *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Gregory Moore (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 347–56.

18. Herder, *Selected Writings*, 155–56.

19. For an agonistic reading of Wagner's opera, see my "—wie ihn uns Meister Dürer gemalt!: Contest, Myth, and Prophecy in Wagner's Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 64/1 (2011), 51–117.

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Music and Words," trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, by Carl Dahlhaus, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 109–10.

21. Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Wiesbaden: Brietkopf und Härtel, 1989). 3; trans. Geoffrey Payzant, *On the Musically Beautiful* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 2. I have discussed the Goethean influence on Hanslick in my *Elective Affinities*; see note 14 above.

22. All quotations are drawn from Pater's essay "The School of Giorgione."

23. This argument is also developed by Klaus Krüger, "Der stumme Klang des Bildes: Gemalte Musik," in *Schweigen /Silence*, ed. Andreas Beyer and Laurent Le Bon (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2013).

24. For more, see Pater's lectures *Plato and Platonism* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006).

25. Cf. T. W. Adorno's essay, "Art and the Arts," in *Can One Live After Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 368–87.

26. I have discussed this concept of the extramusical in my *The Quest for Voice: On Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 1: "Secrecy and Silence: An Introduction to Music and Its Metaphor."

27. T. W. Adorno, *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction: Notes, a Draft, and Two Schemata*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), "Notes 1."

28. Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," with replies by T. J. Clark and Michael Fried, in *Pollack and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Routledge, 2000), 60–112, esp. 64.

The Beauty of Architecture at the End of the Seventeenth Century in Paris, Greece, and Rome

Maarten Delbeke

The emergence of the notion of beauty in French architectural discourse in the second half of the seventeenth century invigorated a debate about a set of closely related topics, such as the place of architecture among the arts of imitation, the authority of models provided by antiquity and nature, and the legitimacy of aesthetic judgments. This essay looks at a number of related contributions to this debate and distinguishes two approaches: one that sought to identify an "idea" of beauty, governing all the arts and based on the imitation of nature, and the other that approached beauty as a matter of pleasure and taste. This essay argues that the brothers Perrault recognized problems inherent in the first view and formulated an alternative by adopting ideas that issued from the ongoing debate about literary style and ornament. In so doing, they made available for architectural theory a rich body of proto-aesthetic reflection that dealt with matters of appropriateness, of clarity of meaning, of the social embeddedness of culture, and of the legitimacy of aesthetic judgments. If this approach to architectural theory was not picked up by the budding institutions of architectural education, Giambattista Piranesi's response to the Perraults, nearly a century later, shows how it would open up the possibility of thinking about archi-

tecture as an art form with its own peculiar beauty, distinct from the other arts yet equally rooted in nature.

The "Idea" of Beauty in Architecture, 1650–72

In 1650 the French *homme de lettres* Roland Fréart de Chambray published the *Parallèle de l'architecture antique avec la moderne*, a comparison, modeled on Plutarch's parallel *Lives*, of the five architectural orders retrieved from a select sample of ancient buildings and ten modern Italian and French architectural treatises.[1] The preface of the work explained how the comparison should help undo the errors and misunderstandings about the proportions and ornaments of the orders that had accrued over time and retrieve an idea of beautiful architecture from the purest sources, the three Greek orders.[2]

The *Parallèle* was meant to contribute to a French doctrine of the visual arts, an effort supported by Fréart's translations of Andrea Palladio's *Quattro libri dell'architettura* (first Italian edition 1570) published in the same year, and Leonardo da Vinci's treatise on painting (1651).[3] In 1662 Fréart would publish his *Idée de la perfection de la peinture*. As the preface of the *Parallèle* attests, the project to formulate a coherent artistic doctrine took root in Rome in the 1630–40s, when Fréart de Chambray and his brother Chantelou visited the city under the auspices of Richelieu and his superintendent Sublet de Noyers. There they frequented the circles where the notion of the "idea del bello" was developed, around Cassiano dal Pozzo, François Duquesnoy, and Nicolas Poussin.[4]

This doctrine would find its most influential expression in the text *Idea* by the Roman art critic Gianpietro Bellori, first read to the Accademia di San Luca in Rome in 1664 and published as the preface to his *Vite* of 1672.[5] Bellori argues that the three visual arts—painting, sculpture, and architecture—pursue beauty by means of a perfected imitation of nature, guided by the idea. The idea is not a Platonic ideal but the perfection of the models found in nature according to the sound principles of art.[6] These principles restore the defects that time and contingency inflict on nature and impede the flourishing of beauty.

With regard to architecture, Bellori hews closely to Fréart. In the *Parallèle* the latter author mobilized the "idée" as an invective against ornamental excess in general and "Roman" license in particular, manifest in the unwarranted invention of the Tuscan and composite order, vulgar expansions of the Greek canon.[7] Fréart further expanded the condemnation of improper and excessive ornament already formulated in the twentieth

chapter of the first book of Palladio's treatise. There, Palladio dismissed scrollwork and other ornaments that do not represent elements of the wood construction on which stone architecture was said to be modeled or do not refer to natural models, as when columns are not tapered and monolithic, like trees.[8]

Similar criticism can be found in Bellori's *Idea*. In a passage directed against probably Gianlorenzo Bernini, Francesco Borromini, and Martino Longhi, Bellori deplores how contemporaries neglected the only recently restored standards of architecture, using "nonsense of angles, broken elements, and distortions of lines, . . . they break up bases, capitals, and columns with fakery stuccoes, fragments, and disproportions."[9] Thus, like Fréart, Bellori puts forward the idea of architecture to weed out what he viewed as contemporary errors. And like his French counterpart, he identifies this idea with the norms and best proportions of Greek architecture.[10]

When they cast Greek architecture as the paradigm of architectural beauty, Bellori and Fréart had to break new ground by explaining what the idea of beauty in architecture consists of and why it is found in Greek architecture. That Greek architecture had attained a high degree of perfection was a critical commonplace already found in Italian authors such as Alberti, Raphael, and Vasari.[11] Yet Bellori and Chambray now explicitly attributed to Greek architecture an ideal beauty; it was no longer a stage in a process of historical development that could allow for other architectural forms to attain perfection.[12] Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the concept of beauty had played no central role in architectural theory, whereas proportion and decorum were considered key notions.[13] The Renaissance treatise presenting the most developed theory of beauty, Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (published in 1486), received little attention until the end of the century.[14] Each in his own way, Fréart and Bellori addressed anew the question of architectural beauty.

In the absence of a well-defined notion of architectural beauty, Fréart elaborates on architecture's long-standing association with proportion and visual harmony, suggesting that the "true and essential beauty of architecture . . . results mainly from symmetry," which Fréart defined as "the union and cooperation of [all parts] together, which come to form as it were a visible harmony."[15] He then simply states that the three Greek orders are of "a particular beauty," implying that they are the paradigms of visible harmony.[16]

A more explicit statement on architecture's beauty can be found in Fréart's translation of Palladio. In his version of the chapter on "abuses," it is stated that "this way of building, which goes entirely against what nature

teaches us, and despises that pure simplicity with which we see that she produces all things, abandons entirely all that is true, good and beautiful in architecture."[17] Compared to the Italian original, Fréart introduces a number of changes that amount to restating how architecture should be modeled on nature. Palladio had written that "one cannot help but disapproving of this way of building, which, by distancing itself from that which the nature of things teaches us, and from that simplicity, that is observed in the things she creates, almost creating another nature, leaves behind the true, the good and the beautiful way of making."[18] In Fréart's translation, "nature" replaces "the nature of things," and the notion that "almost another nature" can be made following the principles found in nature is absent. Palladio's "true, good, and beautiful way of making" has become "that what is true, good, and beautiful in architecture." In other words, Palladio argues that nature shows how things are made, and that this way of making should be imitated. Doing so, the architect will adopt a true, good, and beautiful method and produce a different, second nature. Fréart's translation suggests that truth, goodness, and beauty are qualities intrinsic to nature. Architecture should aim to incorporate these qualities by following the laws of nature in general, not by probing the nature of particular things.

That good art, including architecture, ought to imitate nature is a theoretical commonplace of early modern art.[19] At the same time, sixteenth-century debates such as the *paragone* (about which was the superior art) had made it clear that architecture does not easily fit the categories that regulate the arts of imitation, such as painting and poetry.[20] Sixteenth-century architects, too, were at pains to extrapolate Vitruvius's limited indications on architecture's mimetic relation to nature into a fully fledged theory of imitation.[21] After all, architecture imitates nature at two removes: not by reproducing natural forms or objects but, for instance, by attaining the same level of organic unity as animals or plants, as Alberti would have it, or by adopting proportions found in nature and applying them to the dimension of building elements, as suggested in Vincenzo Danti's *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni*, or by imitating primitive building practices or reflecting the laws of gravity, as with the tapering column in Palladio.[22] Once architecture adhered to such a principle, it was implied, it would be beautiful.

Contrary to these earlier indirect definitions of architectural beauty, Fréart's translation of Palladio suggests that the beauty of architecture is rooted in a universal principle, nature, that underlies the beauty of all works of art. Defining such a principle is the explicit aim of Bellori, who

proposes a single, universal idea of beauty valid for the three visual arts. Earlier Roman theorists of the idea had focused mainly on painting.[23] Expanding this idea to architecture required Bellori to resolve the difference between architecture's relation to nature from that of painting and sculpture. His solution to this problem indicates some of the limitations of the idea as a founding principle for architecture.

Bellori's text demonstrates that the idea is easily recognized in painting and sculpture, which imitate reality directly. Our author measures the success of a painting and a sculpture by the degree to which it appears to be lifelike. Numerous ekphrastic poems illustrate how excellent works of art produce a superior reality that forcefully strikes the beholder, especially when they achieve the lifelike depiction of the human figure in action. Architecture is a different matter. After several pages about painting and sculpture, Bellori writes, "Not to forget architecture, it too employs its most perfect Idea." He cites the first-century philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who "says that God, like a good architect, constructed the world of the senses from the ideal and intelligible world by looking at the Idea and the example he intended."[24] Bellori's next examples are not buildings but poetic descriptions: Diana's cave from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Arminda's garden from Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, and Ovid's description of the Palace of Helios.

These poetic descriptions are Bellori's only references to specific buildings. At the most basic level, they prove that God and the poet follow a design—an idea—when they devise their virtual constructions. As in all other arts the sound pursuit of the idea will engender perfection. Of Ovid's palace of Helios Bellori writes that "the very abodes of the gods were devised by poets with the skill of architects, arrayed with arches and columns, which is how they described the royal palace of the Sun and Love, transporting architecture to heaven."[25]

It is striking that Bellori illustrates the idea of architecture with descriptions of buildings rather than actual examples. If poetry proves to Bellori that some paintings and statues attain the idea, in the case of architecture it works the other way around. The poetic descriptions reveal a perfection which suggests that the idea also exists in architecture, even in the absence of natural models. In the words of Aristotle, quoted by Bellori, if a building were a natural thing, nature would execute it no differently than architecture, and would be constrained to use the same rules to give it perfection.[26] Conversely, the idea of architecture can be gathered from the poetic representation of perfect yet virtual designs. In fact, the buildings in question are fictional and divinely ordained: Philo's Temple of Jerusalem

and Helios's palace. The other examples, a cave and a garden, are not even architecture proper but pertain to nature. Poetry acts a an intermediary to uncover the architectural idea present in these models. When further on in the text Bellori advances Greek architecture as the perfect model, it this architecture assumes the same function as the poems about the buildings of God and Nature, a kind of intermediary like the second nature Palladio referred to. This intermediary is as invented as a poem about Helios's palace; at the time of Bellori's writing, Greek architecture was known only indirectly, by means of the remnants of its Roman emulation.

Bellori, like Palladio before him and French authors after, argues that the principle of rational creation binds architecture to nature.[27] Yet *Idea* also shows that defining architectural beauty in terms of an idea common to the visual arts and rooted in the perfected imitation of nature requires models, principles, or intermediaries that transfer nature's qualities onto architecture. This operation generates new questions. Which models should be derived from nature to learn and understand this creative process: craft, primitive shelter, the human body, poetry, or an ancient canon? And what determines the validity of these models: Why should Greek architecture be closer to nature than Roman, or carpentry than stone cutting? Finally, if architecture is at a certain remove from nature, to what extent do nature or the models that transfer its qualities onto architecture help shape the design of buildings? If columns imitate trees, how treelike should they look?

These questions would allow Claude Perrault to challenge the idea of architecture in his translation of Vitruvius's *De architectura* (1673) and his *Ordonnance des cinq espèces de colonnes* (1683). In the *Ordonnance* Perrault wants to understand how architectural design principles become authoritative in order to justify his own design system for the five orders. Perrault agrees with Fréart that architecture is validated by its beauty. Yet he argues that beauty is a matter of judgment, and seeks to understand what determines the aesthetic appreciation of architecture. In so doing, he questions whether beauty depends on the imitation of nature and, as a consequence, whether architecture imitates natural models.

The Authority of Aesthetic Judgment in Claude Perrault and Pierre Nicole

Like Fréart's *Parrallèle*, Claude Perrault's *Ordonnance des cinq espèces de colonnes* is an attempt to unclutter the five orders from two centuries of alleged misinterpretation. Contrary to Fréart, however, Perrault did not

seek to promote a canon but claimed to establish rational principles for determining the proportion and ornaments of the orders. In order to legitimize his model, in the preface of the *Ordonnance* Perrault examined in great detail how and why buildings are deemed beautiful. It opens with the declaration that "the ancients rightly believed that the proportional rules that give buildings their beauty were based on the proportions of the human body,"[28] but then proceeds to refute the idea that the beauty of buildings depends on the degree to which their dimensions adhere to an ideal system of ratios. Rather, Perrault argues, these ratios are a matter of convention. This being the case, Perrault believes that his own system of the orders is more authoritative than previous examples because it is easier to understand and more logical to apply. As such, it lays claim to the kind of primitive purity that Fréart attributed to the Greek orders.

Perrault explains why proportional systems are conventional by making the distinction between arbitrary and objective causes of beauty. The "presence in works" of "convincing" or "objective reasons" "is bound to please everyone," regardless of time or place. Arbitrary causes, in contrast, depend on custom or "accoutûmance," a consensus among the elite of a given time and place about what is beautiful. This consensus is also called taste.[29] Rules of proportion have been shown to vary over time, Perrault points out, which suggests that they depend on momentary preferences and belong with the arbitrary causes of beauty.

To emphasize the extent to which human opinion about the beauty of architecture depends on taste, Perrault points out that people entirely disregard potential rational arguments for architectural beauty. He writes, "The reasons that ought to carry the greatest weight in regulating architectural beauty" fail to explain many architectural features that people find beautiful. The "reasons" Perrault refers to are the imitation of nature and the human body, of "the first building," of particular plants or objects, and finally of crafts such as carpentry. If these referents guaranteed beauty, "the more exact the imitation, the greater would be the beauty [of buildings and their elements]."[30] Yet history shows the exact opposite: an unending quest for new architectural forms that leaves those original models ever further behind. Conversely, buildings have been judged beautiful for reasons that have nothing to do with the alleged origins of architecture or the application of rational principles, but everything to do with custom and taste. As a consequence, the imitation of original models—whether nature, the body, or primitive constructions—does not validate the beauty of architecture.

Perrault thus distances himself from the advocates of the "idée de la beauté." The beauty of architecture is not guaranteed by the imitation of nature, however such imitation might be achieved, but by adhering to contemporary taste. In order to be successful, the architect should acquire this taste. An arduous task, since taste is shaped by rules and principles that lack objective or rational foundations. It is purely a matter of authority: "the result of a disposition not to doubt the truth of something we do not know if it is accompanied by our knowledge and good opinion of the person who assures us of it."[31] This authority confers a semblance of objectivity to aesthetic judgments.

By building his notion of architectural beauty on these premises, Perrault connects architectural theory with a different intellectual tradition than that used by Fréart and Bellori, who, as we have seen, thought of architecture as one of the visual arts. Władysław Tatarkiewicz was the first to point out that Perrault's distinction between positive and arbitrary beauty is indebted to Pierre Nicole's *Traité de la vraie et fausse beauté* (1659).[32] The *Traité* was originally published as the preface to a collection of epigrams and is concerned with prescribing rules for that particular literary genre. In order to found and legitimize these rules, Nicole examines the beauty of language in general and of metaphor in particular. He identifies the beauty depending on taste as a cushion between the beauty inherent in eternal truth and the fickleness of human customs. Perrault incorporates Nicole's literary theoretical conception of beauty in his reflections on architecture. In so doing, he opens a new path to thinking about the beauty of architecture. To understand his approach, it is necessary to have a closer look at Nicole's *Traité* and to identify the key issues there.

Nicole argues that beautiful eloquence is achieved when an expression corresponds with things according to the nature of the thing but also with regard to the human nature to whom it is addressed.[33] This principle is rooted in the very nature of beauty, which consists of the same two elements: the beauty inherent in things and the beauty recognized by human nature:

> The general rule is that beauty is that which agrees with the nature of the thing, and equally with ours. In effect, if a body, for instance, that has a part too many or too few is held to be ugly, it is because it moves away from nature, which demands the integrity of its parts and rejects what is superfluous. . . . However, it does not suffice for a thing to be beautiful to go together with its own nature, if it does not agree equally with ours. Because our nature consists of a soul and a body endowed

with senses, which all have their given penchants and aversions, by which [our nature] is attracted or repelled.[34]

In principle, true beauty is a matter of pure reason, independent of time and place.[35] Yet beauty is ultimately judged by a contingent reader or listener, a point Nicole duly emphasizes. The judgment of the contingent reader or listener depends on how expressions are perceived rather than how they are related to "things" per se or intended by their author:

> Moreover, *and I would like that this point*, which few authors have observed to perfection, *receives due attention*: in order to adjust the words to things, one should not consider the things such as they are in themselves, or how they are in the spirit of he who speaks, *but such as the discourse will represent them in the spirit of listeners or readers*.[36]

As a consequence, writers should adopt the taste of the moment. Language tends to follow "l'usage," and "l'usage" is largely determined by human opinion. Nicole states: "Because still it only depends on the fancy of men to decree that one term is used more often and is more elegant than another, yet it is natural to be hurt by unusual and improper words, and to love those [words] that are proper and in use."[37] "Opinion" is an inherently arbitrary yet authoritative mechanism that affects the human perception of language to the extent that it is natural to feel hurt by improper usage. In other words, listeners or readers wish expressions to seem natural, but what they consider to be natural changes according to opinion.

Still, language that follows opinion too closely runs the risk of becoming inaccessible to future generations. At the same time, human nature does have an innate craving for variety, which drives those same opinions. Nicole suggests that the author should avoid catering to this craving by means of excessive novelty, such as neologisms or unusual expressions. True variety depends on a judicious exploitation of the sonority of language, so that ideas are communicated in way that is clear and pleasing to the ear (Nicole refers to Cicero's *iudicium areum*), and on a moderate use of metaphor, which alternatively excites and soothes the human mind.[38]

Nicole's distinction of the eternal aspects of beauty from those contingent on human nature and of expressions reflecting the nature of things from those that please human expectations is reiterated in Claude Perrault's distinction between positive and arbitrary causes of beauty. In particular, Perrault adopts Nicole's point that fancy, opinion, and taste help determine what is perceived as naturally beautiful. In the *Ordonnance* Perrault stresses that the human beholder collapses the positive and arbitrary

aspects of his or her judgment into one seemingly unassailable apprecia-tion of a building.[39] And in the preface to Perrault's translation of Vitru-vius's *De architectura*, published ten years before the *Ordonnance*, Perrault argues that Vitruvius has become so authoritative because people are in desperate need of arguments that buttress their necessarily arbitrary ideas about beauty. His statement, in this preface, that "because Beauty has no other foundation than fancy, which makes that things please according to whether they are in keeping with the idea that each has of their perfection, we require rules that shape and rectify that idea" recalls a previous quote from Nicole: "Because still it only depends on the fancy of men to decree that one term is used more often and is more elegant than another."[40] If Perrault is more adamant than Nicole in declaring the "inventedness" of authority "that stands in for positive reason" in all that depends "of chance, of will, and of familiarization," both authors share the conviction that the judgment of viewers and readers is shaped by their own, contingent cir-cumstances yet invariably cast as based on absolute truth.

By adopting Nicole's ideas, Perrault introduces a different approach of beauty in architecture than through the visual arts and their idea. Nicole's *Traité* roots beauty in the permanent negotiation between eternal, beauti-ful truths and their contingent, human expression. At the same time, Ni-cole recognizes that it is the human desire for beauty that spurs on this negotiation. Finally, Nicole points out that people seek certainty about their judgments and tend to present them as incontrovertible and rational. Perrault takes this conception of beauty on board. In so doing, he fertilizes architectural theory with a sustained reflection on aesthetic judgment.[41] Yet Nicole's influence is not limited to this aspect of Perrault's theory. With its notions about the nature of language and its relation to human ideas and desires, Nicole's *Traité* participated in a vigorous debate on the role of figurative language in the communication of truth. This debate in-volved diverging ideas about how human nature is affected by beauty, how beauty should be achieved, and how ornament relates to beauty. These lin-guistic ideas, intimately related to Nicole's notion of aesthetic judgment, would engender opinions about architecture too.

Metaphor, Beauty, and Truth

Nicole's *Traité* adheres to the principles of the *Logique* of Port-Royal, where figurative language is considered one of many unfortunate conse-quences of humankind's fall from grace. Because humanity has forfeited utterly transparent and universal forms of expression, it requires language

to mediate between inner ideas and the outside world.[42] As we have seen, Nicole intends to determine the extent to which language in general, and figurative language in particular, should play to human desire in order to communicate eternal and universal truths in a changing world. In doing so, he proposes the perceived beauty of an expression as the measure of its success. Annie Becq has argued that this turns the *Traité* into an early example of the increasingly commonplace identification of beauty and truth in the French proto-aesthetic discourse that developed in the late seventeenth century.[43] In particular, the *Traité* contributed to the lively French debate about the relation of figurative language to reason. Some time after the first edition of the *Traité*, the Jesuit Dominique Bouhours, an opponent of Port-Royal, would write in his *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671) how "beautiful" French language follows human thought "step by step": "Beautiful language resembles a pure and clear water that has no taste; that runs from the source; that goes where the natural slope carries it; not those artificial waters that are brought with violence into the gardens of the greats; and make a thousand different figures there."[44] Bouhours did not share Nicole's distrust of figurative language in expressing truth—he deemed it sheer necessity. But he did adhere to the ideals of clarity and indeed naturalness, such that figures should emerge from ideas as if guided by nature alone and not by artifice. Like Nicole, Bouhours believed that clear and intelligible expressions are beautiful.[45]

With the *Entretiens*, and his later work *La manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, first published in 1687, Bouhours participated in the budding *Querelle des anciens et modernes* and the related long-standing debate with Italian authors about the legitimate use of literary ornament.[46] One of his interlocutors was the Roman Jesuit Sforza Pallavicino, whose *Trattato dello stile* (first published in 1646, *princeps* main edition in 1662) examined in detail the role of figurative language in scientific discourse. Pallavicino's ideas on style are partly based on a similar premise as Nicole's: It is humankind's innate craving for variety that necessitates figures of speech. Like Nicole, Pallavicino defends a style in which excitement alternates with periods of rest.[47] But unlike the Jansenist, Pallavicino does not consider literary style the price to pay for human weakness. Even the most valuable truth requires sugarcoating to be appreciated, the Jesuit writes; after all, given the choice, everyone would prefer a golden drinking cup over a simple wooden one.[48] As a consequence of such human desire, Pallavicino recognizes, like Nicole, that language is historically contingent: Desire calls for novelty, and the quest for novelty gently transforms language over time.[49]

With the *Trattato dello stile* Pallavicino attempted to harness figurative language (and its inherent historicity) in the service of the communication of truth. This endeavor was prompted by the enthusiastic embrace of metaphorical language across a wide range of genres in contemporary Italian literature. Recognizing its attractions, Pallavicino attempted to give metaphor and its pleasures an instrumental role in communication.[50] In so doing, he entered in a silent polemic with an author well known to Bouhours and whose ideas were antithetical to Nicole's: Emanuele Tesauro, whose *Cannocchiale aristotelico* (*princeps*, main edition, in 1670, first edition in 1654, and written from the 1620s onward) provided an exhaustive classification and discussion of metaphorical language.[51] The *Cannocchiale* aimed to explain the working and making of *argutezza*, to be translated (imperfectly) both as wit and witticism, the quintessential quality of lively figures of speech.[52]

At the outset of the *Cannocchiale aristotelico* Tesauro distinguishes verbal and symbolical argutezza. Rather than limiting the purview of his treatise, this distinction suggests that argutezze are not constrained to spoken or written language but pervade literally every product of natural, human and divine creativity: everything can be construed as a form of figurative, witty expression. Tesauro's "symbolical" argutezze are material objects, including paintings, statues or inscriptions. Argutezze constitute a particular—and superior—category of figures of speech, "figure," and these, too, issue from a general principle that is not confined to the word. When Tesauro defines what a "figura" is, he roots the use of figures in humankind's innate craving for pleasurable variety, and therefore "all that, which to alleviate the boredom of the listener, differentiates the words, or the sentences, or the enthymemes, from the naked, clear, and everyday style: it is called rhetorical SCHEMA, and FIGURE."[53] As we have seen, Nicole attributes this same craving with stirring humankind's invention of ever-new words and turns of phrase. Tesauro finds proof of this desire in the fact that not a single human artifact is merely functional. He first enlists the decoration of boats, where oars are gilded and prows sculpted as lions when the simplest of wooden contraptions would suffice. The second example is architecture: A house requires nothing more than solid walls and a closed roof, yet an inn "which not goes out of itself with ornaments" will be disdained. Likewise, drinking cups tend to be made of crystal and gold rather than wood—the example Pallavicino also used in his *Trattato*.[54] Tesauro adduces marble floors and fashionable clothing as still further proof of the human desire for "figure," which extends to language and engenders figures of speech.

At first Tesauro does not seem to condone this human tendency. He attributes the penchant for an inn with a "crest, with decorated frontispieces" rather than a humble roof to "superbia," or pride. A similar point is made in the *Logique* of Port-Royal, where sumptuous house decoration is credited to the despicable urge of owners to keep up appearances and to bask in the splendor of the surroundings.[55] But despite his misgivings about the morality of figures and ornaments Tesauro recognizes that they are inevitable and eventually embraces them, because they are inherent in human sociability and graceful communication.[56]

As already suggested by the curt dismissal of what amounts to the primitive hut (the simple construction with solid walls and a watertight roof), architecture contributes significantly to the production of argutezza. Tesauro celebrates it as the human endeavor that produces perhaps the most lasting form of argutezza: "[Wit] appears in so many ornaments that elegantly jest on the facades of sumptuous buildings: leafed capitals, arabesques of friezes, triglyphs, metopes, masks, caryatids, terms, modillions: all stone metaphors and mute symbols, that add beauty [*vaghezza*] to the work, and mystery to the beauty."[57] When enumerating the means to make witticisms, too, Tesauro extols "the jests of friezes, capitals, metopes, modillions, because buildings that are not less beautiful than solid not only protect their guests, but send them into ecstasy [*rapiscano*]," again pointing out that the pleasurable effect of figures greatly surpasses the benefits of usefulness.[58]

Tesauro's relish in the blatant artificiality of figurative expressions is what distinguishes him from the three other authors discussed here. Yet they all share the view that literary style is rooted in human nature and its unquenchable thirst for variety. This thirst accounts for the historical contingency as well as the sheer necessity of figures of speech in language. Nicole, Bouhours, Pallavicino, and Tesauro are all concerned with how an expression will affect a subject, and this concern shapes their view of how language works. What distinguishes our authors is how they define and value the effect of successful figures. Tesauro's is a poetics of marvel, *meraviglia*, where viewers or listeners are "sent into ecstasy," thanks to the power of the artifice of argutezza.[59] Pallavicino believes that marvel assists in bringing across important truths, and calls for a moderate, subservient use of ornament. In his poetics, as in Tesauro's, beauty plays a secondary role, as a side effect of or conduit to marvel. In Nicole, and later Bouhours, beauty takes center stage, as the quality an expression should aspire to.

Nicole's *Traité* thus participates in a theoretical reflection on how usage determines the effect of figures of style (ornaments) on the beholder

and listener. Perrault adopts this aspect of Nicole's thought, which has further implications for architectural theory. Tesauro's inclusive approach to "figure," which extends to architecture, makes it particularly clear that the uneasy relation of architecture with other arts under the tutelage of the idea of beauty can be replaced by a parentage based on a shared purpose and effect: so that the beholder marvels at the an unexpected play of ornaments. Tesauro recognizes that this parentage goes hand in hand with propagating an inventiveness and artificiality that far exceeds the primitive fulfillment of human needs. Although they recognize that linguistic primitivism is unproductive and even impossible, Pallavicino, Nicole, and Bouhours censure Tesauro's view as excessive. They defend an aesthetic ideal in which the judicious handling of ornament marries clarity with beauty in order to appear natural. This view of the function of ornament dovetails with Claude Perrault's conception of architectural beauty, as is demonstrated in Charles Perrault's *Parallèle des anciens et modernes*.

The *Parallèle* consists of dialogues among the President (champion of the ancients), the Abbot (partisan of the moderns) and the Knight, which vaunt the superior merits of the moderns over the ancients. The second dialogue, published in 1688, treats architecture, sculpture, and painting. It is set in Versailles and after the Président guides an extended visit to the premises, he initiates a debate about the merits of those who invented architecture and ornament.

The interlocutors agree that buildings require ornament; it is inconceivable that a building would have "no columns, or pilasters, or architraves, or cornices, and that it is all uniform."[60] The requirement of ornament in architecture is likened to the necessity of figures of speech in rhetoric.[61] The President believes that this sheer necessity bestows the ultimate honors on the ancients, who invented and codified ornament.[62] The Abbot, however, sees no particular merit in the invention of ornaments, except in their appropriate use. Use is a matter of custom. The constructions of primitive people, too, are ornate, he argues, although according to their own taste and capacities, and their ornaments changed when usage so demanded.[63] To underscore his point, the Abbot reiterates Claude Perrault's ideas about positive and arbitrary beauty in architecture.[64] The distinction is tested against the rules of proportion in architecture. Proportion is a habit of human perception, so the Abbot states, not an inscrutable secret of nature accessible only to architects.[65] In order to understand which principles should govern proportion and ornament, in the absence of a natural standard, the Chevalier ventures an analogy between architecture and poetry: "So it is just like in poetry, where rhyme and the measure of

verse should be kept, as if the meaning and the argument do not restrict anything, and where the things one says should be as sensible and natural as if they had no rhyme or measure to observe." The Abbot concurs: "It is the same."[66] Here, the *Parallèle* explicitly joins the debates on architectural and poetic beauty that we have traced so far, now as part of a distinctly "modern" artistic program: Because it is conventional and custom-based, ornament engenders the beauty that stems from clarity and is seemingly natural. Primitivism and archaism are flawed and therefore ineffective, as would be the imitation of a putatively unchanging nature.

The Peculiar Beauty of Architecture

Elsewhere in the *Parallèle* Charles Perrault has the Abbot defend the "idée de la beauté" in painting and sculpture, thus separating architecture, where this idée does not apply, from its sister arts.[67] In this respect, Perrault ran counter to budding contemporary academic architectural theory. Under the force of the attack on ideal proportions in the Vitruvius translation and the *Ordonnance*, the *Cours d'architecture* (1675–83) of François Blondel, the official account of the teachings at the Académie d'Architecture founded by Colbert in 1672 with a curriculum based on Fréart's *Parallèle*, incorporated an extensive discussion of beauty. Blondel, too, testifies to the importance of contemporary literary criticism in shaping the conceptual framework of architectural theory, for instance when Alberti's *concinnitas* (the principle of harmonious and organic composition that engenders beauty) is compared with the je-ne-sais-quoi.[68] But contrary to the Perraults, Blondel sought to explain how the imitation of nature is at the root of architectural beauty. In so doing, he pursued the path laid out by Fréart and Bellori, and his approach would dominate architectural discourse from the early eighteenth century onward, until architecture would be considered fully one of the fine arts.[69]

Yet the discussion that played out in the pages of Perrault's *Parallèle* was picked up later, most notably by an Italian architect at odds with French classicism. In 1762 Giambattista Piranesi published *Della magnificenza ed architettura de'Romani*. The *Magnificenza* examines the historical development of ornament to account for the hellenization of Roman architecture. According to Piranesi, the capricious and effeminate ornaments of the Greeks infected the majestic and masculine Tuscan buildings of the Romans.[70] To argue his point, Piranesi traces the origins of architecture. Architecture, he writes, evolved from the primitive buildings of first people.[71] This first architecture very soon reached the point where

it accommodated most of humankind's needs. But the inborn desire for novelty and variety inspired builders of all regions and ages to decorate their buildings.[72] Piranesi denotes this endless process with the word *dirozzamento*, "disuglification" or "disprimitivation."[73] In other words, if architecture certainly originated from the first human dwellings—"architecture has been instituted in such form that it shows that architecture imitates the first manner of building of humankind"—the long historical development of architecture has removed architectural design inevitably from these primitive roots: "But with that I do not intend to signify that since then nothing else has been invented, or that nothing else has been added to these first inventions."[74] The primitive hut is a valid explanation of the historical origins of architecture but not a design model. Piranesi argues that contemporary architectural design in general (or, for that matter, Roman and Greek design) and ornament in particular cannot be regulated by referring to an original, primitive building. After all, this building was definitely *rozzo*, ugly.

Piranesi's argument is indebted to the *Ordonnance* and the *Parallèle* in its dismissal of the relevance of primitive models for contemporary artistic practice.[75] Like the Perraults, Piranesi argues that ornament indicates the distance traveled from these primitive models, since humanity thrives on the beautification of its artifacts; the beauty of architecture results from humankind's craving for novelty. Piranesi even shares their misgivings about this process, since it easily leads to decay, as when Greek design affected Roman architecture.

But Piranesi pushes the ideas of his predecessors to new conclusions, in a way that at once repositions nature as the model of architecture and vindicates the peculiarity of the architecture's beauty. As we have seen, Tesauro treated architectural ornaments as signifiers, on a par with literary metaphors. He expanded the classicist myths of origin about architectural structure and ornament that we encountered in Palladio to cast architecture as a witty game of ever-new figures that enliven buildings. The Perraults, too, saw close parallels in the way literary and architectural ornament appealed to a beholder. Although deeply sympathetic to these stances, Piranesi attacked the equation of poetry and architecture on which they were founded, on the ground that hearing a poem is something altogether different from experiencing a building.

His statement on the matter was prompted by Pierre-Jean Mariette's criticism of the *Magnificenza*. Mariette, an art critic and connoisseur, furthered the cause that Fréart had advanced a century earlier by arguing that the Roman taste for excess and luxury was a perversion of the original

elegance and simplicity of Greek architecture. Piranesi responded to Mariette with the *Parere su l'architettura* (1765), a dialogue on ornament in architecture between the characters Protopiro, cast as a critic of Piranesi, and Didascalo.[76]

In the dialogue, Piranesi examines the analogy between architecture and poetry to dislodge rigorist criticism of excessive ornament. At the outset of the dialogue Protopiro attempts to distinguish the "clutter . . . found around doors, windows, arches, and other openings and walls," such as "festoons, fillets, masks, paterae, heads of stags and oxen . . . , the labyrinth frets, the arabesques, the hippogriffs, the sphinxes" from the elements of architecture proper, in order to send the clutter back to "the realm of poetry."[77] In so doing, he argues along the lines of Palladio, Fréart, and Bellori, who considered only artifacts and forms rooted in nature and the original act of building as legitimate sources for architectural design. Protopiro's remark also recalls and dismisses Tesauro, who praised architecture for its capacity to load buildings with all kinds of poetic inventions.[78]

Didascalo attacks his adversary by assuming the same antiprimitivist stance as Tesauro or the Perraults. Following Claude Perrault's line of reasoning, Didascalo argues that few elements of architecture have identifiable origins in a primitive model.[79] In fact, any attempt to identify such primitive models would annihilate architecture: "Take note: buildings with no walls, no columns, no pilasters, no friezes, no cornices, no vaults, no roofs. A clean sweep." Moreover, Didascalo points out, it is unclear how the imitation of primitive models could lead to rich and sophisticated forms of architecture. In Didascalo's words, "How can a simple prototype remain entire and unified at the very moment of being halved, varied, and rearranged in a thousand ways, in short, when the simple becomes composite, and one becomes as many as you like?"[80]

These remarks appear to be indebted directly to Charles Perrault's *Parallèle*, where it is stated that architecture is unthinkable with "no columns, or pilasters, or architraves, or cornices, and that it is all uniform."[81] Both Perrault and Piranesi use the enumeration to make the same point: Architecture without ornament is unthinkable, because ornament appeals to the innate aesthetic sensibilities of humanity. In the *Parere*, along the lines of the *Magnificenza* and the *Parallèle*, Didascalo also argues that the whole history of architecture illustrates how humanity craves for ever more appealing and ornate architecture. The Scythians and the Goths waged war on the Romans so that they could exchange their primitive huts for sumptuous buildings.[82] This process should not be explained as a long history of

ever more refined (and eventually perverted) imitation of primitive forms, but as an enduring quest for pleasing architectural compositions.

When it comes to identifying the source of architecture's aesthetic success, however, Didascalo distances himself from his seventeenth-century predecessors by challenging the validity of the analogy between architecture and poetry. He emphasizes repeatedly that buildings are perceived entirely differently from poems. A building presents itself to the eye as a whole, whereas a poem generates a sequence of mental images; a building benefits from visual complexity, whereas a profusion of literary ornament confuses reader or listener.[83] As a consequence, nature stands in another relationship to architecture than to the other arts: It does not proffer models to imitate, but displays the laws of successful visual composition. In this capacity, as the paradigm of a pleasing, variegated visual appearance, it guides the development and application of architectural ornament. Conversely, architecture is distinguished from the other arts by its ability to emulate the visual composition of nature. This capacity bestows architecture with its own particular beauty.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. Frédérique Lemerle, "Fréart de Chambray ou les enjeux du Parallèle," *XVIIe siècle* 49, 196 (1997): 419–53; idem, "Une querelle des Anciens et des Modernes en architecture," in *Architectes et architecture dans la littérature française*, Colloque international, 23–25 octobre 1997, ed M. Bertaud, *Travaux de littérature* 12 (1999): 37–47.

2. Roland Fréart de Chambray, *Parallèle de l'architecture antique avec la moderne suivi de Idée de la perfection de la peinture*, ed. Frédérique Lemerle and Milovan Stanic (Paris: ENSBA, 2005), 55.

3. On the agenda of the Palladio translation see, besides Lemerle, Claude Mignot, "Palladio et l'architecture française au XVIIe siècle: Une admiration critique," *Annali di architettura* 12 (2000): 107–15, esp. 109–10. On Fréart's treatises on painting, see Oskar Bätschmann, "Fréart de Chambray et les règles de l'art," in *La naissance de la théorie de l'art en France 1640–1720: Revue d'esthétique*, ed. Christian Michel and Maryvonne Saison, 31/32 (1997): 61–69.

4. Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin. Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 23–63; Olivier Bonfait, ed., *L'idéal classique: Les échanges artistiques entre Rome et Paris au temps de Bellori (1640–1700)* (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art. Collection d'histoire de l'art de l'Académie de France à Rome 1, 2002); Daniela Del Pesco, "Paul de Chantelou, Paul Fréart et Charles Errard: Successi e

insuccessi dal Italia," in *Rome-Paris 1640: Transferts culturels et renaissance d'un centre artistique*, ed. Marc Bayard (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art. Collection d'histoire de l'art de l'Académie de France à Rome 11, 2010), 141–74; Sabine Frommel and Flaminia Bardati, eds., *La réception des modèles "cinquecenteschi" dans la théorie de l'art français du XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2010).

5. Fernando Bollino, *Teoria e sistema delle belle arti: Charles Batteux et gli "esthéticiens" del secolo XVIII*, Studi di estetica 3 (Bologna: Sezione di Estetica dell'Istituto di Filosofia dell'Università di Bologna, 1976.), 125–38.

6. On Bellori's "idea," see, for instance, Elizabeth Cropper, "*L'idea di Bellori*." In *L'idea del Bello. Viaggio per Roma nel Seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori* (Rome: De Luca, 2000) vol. 1, 81–86, with literature; Elisabetta di Stefano, *Bello e idea nell'estetica del Seicento* (Palermo: Centro internazionale di studi d'estetica, 2007. Aesthetica Preprint 97), esp. 27–44.

7. As Lemerle and Mignot have shown, Fréart was equally concerned with the French uptake of the architecture *all'antica* as with the perceived imperfections of the Italian treatises.

8. Andrea Palladio, *I quattro libri dell'architettura* (Venice: Bartolomeo Carampello, 1581), book 1, 51–52.

9. Gian Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors, and Architects: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, trans. A. Sedgwick Wohl, intro. T. Montanari, notes by H. Wohl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 62a–b.

10. Ibid., 61b.

11. See Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. J. Rykwert, N. Leach, and R. Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), VI.3, 197–98; Francesco P. Di Teodoro, *Raffaello, Baldassar Castiglione e la Lettera a Leone X* (Bologna: Minerva, 2003), 73 and related comments.

12. See Alina Payne, "Vasari, Architecture, and the Origins of Historicizing Architecture," *Res* 40 (2001): 51–76.

13. Milovan Stanic, "Les tribulations du beau idéal en France aux temps de Bellori," in *L'idéal classique*, ed. Bonfait, 22. Interestingly, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, as a historian of aesthetics, identifies the theory of architecture, and in particular the writings of Claude Perrault and François Blondel, as the first to engage with aesthetics in the seventeenth century; see "Objectivity and Subjectivity in the History of Aesthetics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24 (1963): 167; also "L'esthétique associationniste au XVIIe siècle," *Revue d'esthétique* 13, no. 3 (1960): 287–92.

14. Françoise Choay, *La règle et le modèle: Sur la théorie de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 225–42; Werner Szambien, *Symétrie, Goût, Caractère: Théorie et terminologie de l'architecture à l'âge classique 1550–1800* (Paris: Picard, 1986), 62.

15. Fréart de Chambray, *Parallèle*, 54. On the association of beauty and proportion, see Thomas Leinkauf, "Der Begriff des Schönen im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert: Seine philosophische Bedeutung und Hinweise auf sein Verhältnis zur Theorie von Poesie und Kunst," in *Renaissance-Poetik: Renaissance Poetics*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 53–74.

16. Fréart de Chambray, *Parallèle*, 55.

17. Andrea Palladio, *Les quatres livres de l'architecture: Mis en françois* (Paris: E. Martin, 1650), 49.

18. Palladio, *Quattro libri*, 51.

19. Władysław Tatarkiewicz, "L'esthétique du grand siècle," *XVIIe siècle* 78 (1968): 21–39.

20. Alina Payne, "Alberti and the Origins of the Paragone between Architecture and the Figural Arts," in *Alberti teorico delli arti*, ed. Arturo Calzona, Francesco Paolo Fiore, Alberto Tenenti, and Cesare Vasoli (Florence: Olschki, 2006), 347–68.

21. See Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 77–88 (Alberti), 154–69 (Spini), 224–35 (Scamozzi).

22. See Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, IX.5, 301–2; Vincenzo Danti, *Il primo libro del Trattato delle perfette proporzioni (1567)*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento*, vol. 1, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1960), 238–39.

23. Di Stefano, *Bello e idea*.

24. Bellori, *Lives*, 60b–61a.

25. Ibid., 60b.

26. Ibid., 61a.

27. See the examples cited in Henri Coulet, "La métaphore de l'architecture dans la critique littéraire au XVIIe siècle," in *Critique et création littéraire en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1977), 300–303.

28. Claude Perrault, *Ordonnance for the Five Kinds of Columns after the Method of the Ancients*, trans. I. Kagis-McEwen, intro. A. Perez-Gomez, Texts and Documents (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1993), 47.

29. Ibid., 50–51.

30. Ibid., 51–52.

31. Ibid., 51. Here it should be noted that, as Di Stefano has argued, the doctrine of the "idea del bello" emerged in support of the claims of the connoisseur to be equally apt at judging art as the artist.

32. Tatarkiewicz, "L'esthétique," 32–33. Later authors who have explored Perrault's debt to Nicole include Wolfgang Hermann, *La théorie de Claude Perrault* (Liège: Mardaga, 1980), 36; Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981),

43–47; Alain Guiheux and Dominique Rouillard, "Échanges entre les mots et l'architecture dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle à travers les traités de l'art de parler," *Les Cahiers de Recherche architecturale* 18 (1985): 25; Antoine Picon, *Claude Perrault ou la curiosité d'un moderne* (Paris, Picard: 1988); Maria Luisa Scalvini and Sergio Villari, "Presentazione," in *Claude Perrault: L'ordine dell'Architettura. Aesthetica Preprint* 31 (Palermo: Centro internazionale di studi d'estetica, 1991), 9.

33. Pierre Nicole, *La vraie beauté et son fantôme et autres textes d'esthétique*, ed. Béatrice Guion (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1996), 57: "Truly beautiful eloquence is that which agrees with the nature of the things themselves as well as with the inclinations of our senses and our soul"; see also ibid., 65, 71. On Nicole, see Annie Becq, *Genèse de l'esthétique française moderne 1680–1814* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 51–54, 101–2; and Béatrice Guion's introduction to her translation and critical edition.

34. Nicole, *La vraie beauté*, 55.

35. Becq, *Genèse*, 52.

36. Nicole, *La vraie beauté*, 65–67, my emphasis.

37. Ibid., 71.

38. Ibid., 73–75.

39. Perrault, *Ordonnance*, 51, 53.

40. Claude Perrault, *Les dix livres d'architecture de Vitruve, corrigez & traduits nouvellement en François, avec des notes & des figures* (Paris: J.-B. Coignard, 1673), preface, n.p. Also cited in Rykwert, *First Moderns*, 42.

41. This is also suggested by Guiheux and Rouillard, "Échanges," 25, but they conclude that there is no direct influence on architectural theory from literary theory. It should be noted that theories of music similarly discussed the question of custom on taste and aesthetic judgment, and that the analogy between music and architecture played an important role in the debate about proportions.

42. See Fernand Hallyn, "Port-Royal vs. Tesauro: figure, signe, sujet," *Baroque* 9–10 (1974, 1976, 1978): 76–86.

43. Becq, *Genèse*, 45–94.

44. Dominique Bouhours, *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671), ed. Bernard Beugnot and Gilles Declercq (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), 116. See also Nicholas Cronk, *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (Charlottesville, Va.: Rockwood Press, 2003), 53.

45. On Bouhours, see also Sophie Hache, *La langue du ciel: Le sublime en France au XVIIᵉ siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), 275–83.

46. Corrado Viola, *Tradizioni letterarie a confronto: Italia e Francia nella polemica Orsi-Bouhours* (Verona: Fiorini, 2001), 61–76.

47. Compare Nicole's position with that of Sforza Pallavicino, *Trattato dello stile e del dialogo del padre Sforza Pallavicino* (1662), Reggio Emilia, 1824, photographic reprint (Modena: Mucchi, 1994), chap. 5, 35. Both authors probably rely on Cicero, yet the similarities are striking.

48. Pallavicino, *Trattato dello stile*, chap. 4, 26. See Eraldo Bellini, "Scrittura letteraria e scrittura filosofica in Sforza Pallavicino," in *Il vero e il falso dei poeti: Tasso, Tesauro, Pallavicino, Muratori*, by Carlo Scarpati and Eraldo Bellini (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1990), 99–102.

49. Maarten Delbeke, *The Art of Religion: Sforza Pallavicino and Art Theory in Bernini's Rome* (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2012), 188–92.

50. See Bellini, "Scrittura letteraria," and Giovanni Baffetti, *Retorica e scienza: Cultura gesuitica e Seicento italiano* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1997).

51. On Pallavicino's disagreement with Tesauro, see Bellini, "Scrittura letteraria," 160–66. On Nicole and Tesauro, see Hallyn, "Port-Royal vs. Tesauro."

52. On the *Cannocchiale aristotelico*, see Pierantonio Frare, *"Per istraforo di perspettiva": Il "Cannocchiale aristotelico" e la poesia del Seicento* (Pisa: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 2000); Carlo Scarpati, "La metafora al di là del vero e del falso in Emanuele Tesauro," in *Il vero e il falso dei poeti*, by Scarpati and Bellini, 35–71; Jon Snyder, *L'estetica del barocco* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2005), 99–139.

53. Emanuele Tesauro, *Il Cannocchiale aristotelico* (Turin: Bartolomeo Zauatta, 1670. Ristampa anastatica, Savigliano: Artistica Piemontese, 2000), 122–23.

54. Pallavicino, *Trattato dello stile*, chap. 4, 26.

55. *La logique ou l'art de penser: Neuvième édition* (Amsterdam: Veuve de Paul Maret, 1718), 112, mentioned by Hallyn, "Port-Royal vs. Tesauro," 81, yet as entirely antithetical to Tesauro.

56. In fact, Baldassare Castiglione makes a similar point in *Il Cortegiano*, when he writes that even if men initially made slated roofs on their buildings to keep out the rain, they immediately recognized that a house "senza il colmo [non] aver potesse dignità o bellezza alcuna." Quoted in Di Teodoro, *Raffaello*, 221. See also the quote at note 73 below.

57. Tesauro, *Il Cannocchiale*, 86–87.

58. Ibid., 33.

59. See the use of the verb "rapire" in the quote at note 58.

60. Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des anciens et modernes en ce qui regardes les arts et les sciences: Nouvelle édition augmentée avec quelques dialogues* (Paris: Jean Baptiste Coignard, 1693), 87.

61. Ibid., 88.

62. Ibid., 92.

63. Ibid., 88–90. See also the discussion of this passage in Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 190–91.

64. Charles Perrault, *Parallèle*, 94.

65. Ibid., 100–109.

66. Ibid.,110.

67. See Max Imdahl, "Kunstgeschichtliche Exkurse zu Perraults Parallèle des Anciens et Modernes," in Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des anciens et modernes*, intro. Hans Robert Jauss. *Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der Schöne Kunste: Texte und Abhandlungen*, vol. 2 (Munich: Eidos Verlag, 1964), 79.

68. François Blondel, *Cours d'architecture enseigné dans l'Académie royale d'architecture* (Paris: Lombard Roulland, 1675), bk. 5, chap. 3, 731.

69. For an excellent discussion of the institutional and intellectual stakes in the debate between Perrault and Blondel, see Anthony Gerbino, *François Blondel: Architecture, Erudition, and the Scientific Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2010). For the position of architecture among the fine arts, see Kevin Harrington, *Changing Ideas on Architecture in the "Encyclopédie"* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1985).

70. Lola Kantor-Kazovsky, *Piranesi as Interpreter of Roman Architecture and the Origins of His Intellectual World* (Florence: Olschki, 2006), 193–222.

71. Giambattista Piranesi, *Della Magnificenza de'Romani*, in John Wilton-Ely, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Le opere polemiche: Roma 1757, 1561, 1765, 1769* (London: Gregg International, 1972), xciii–xcvii §lviii–lix; also clv §lxxxviii.

72. Ibid., lxix §xlv; cliii §lxxxviii.

73. Ibid., xcvii §lx: "From this process of civilisation [dirozzamento] of architecture two things emerge: that which necessity requires, and that which luxury has introduced."

74. Ibid., xciii–xcv.

75. For Piranesi's debt to the Perraults, see Kantor-Kazovsky, *Piranesi*, 144, 232–35, 242–45.

76. John Wilton-Ely, introduction to Giambattista Piranesi, *Observations on the Letter of Monsieur Mariette with Opinions on Architecture, and a Preface to a New Treatise on the Introduction and Progress of the Fine Arts in Europe in Ancient Times*, trans. C. Beamish and D. Britt, intro. J. Wilton-Ely, Texts & Documents (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002.) 40–1; Kantor-Kazovsky, *Piranesi*, 227–29; also Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. P. d'Acierno and R. Connolly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 43–45.

77. Piranesi, *Opinions on Architecture*, 103.

78. Tesauro is not mentioned by name, and whether Piranesi knew Tesauro's *Cannocchiale* is unclear. It is possible that, in his comments on architecture, Tesauro had recourse to the same architectural literature that shaped the debate Piranesi engaged in. It should be noted that Inigo Jones's Roman sketchbook from 1615 contains a passage in which he recommends completing the design of a building by "cloath[ing]" it and "consequently [making] a hoole Story wth all ye ornamentes," which are then enumerated in great detail; see Caroline van Eck, ed., *British Architectural Theory, 1450–1750: An Anthology of Texts* (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2003), 24.

79. Piranesi, *Opinions on Architecture*, 103.

80. Ibid., 106.

81. See supra note 60.

82. Piranesi, *Opinions on Architecture*, 106.

83. Ibid., 111–13. This point is made to contradict Julien-David Leroy and deeply indebted to the conceptualization of the notion taste that condensed in Montesquieu's essay on that topic; see Maarten Delbeke, "L'ornement et la beauté chez Piranèse et ses interlocuteurs," in *Questions d'ornements XVe–XVIIIe siècle*, ed. R. Dekoninck, C. Heering, and M. Lefftz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 59–69.

Strokes of Wit: Theorizing Beauty in Baroque Italy

Jon R. Snyder

I

Few, if any, artistic and cultural movements in the West have been contested as bitterly and for as long as the Baroque. There is little agreement among scholars over what it was, and even the source of the term "Baroque" today remains uncertain. What is beyond controversy is the fact that, in the first half of the eighteenth century, critics began to apply this term pejoratively to works of seventeenth-century anticlassicism, especially those from Italy.[1] Throughout the 1600s well-heeled foreigners flocked to the peninsula to revere its antiquities, explore its cities, admire its landscapes, and absorb the art of the Renaissance. Most of these northern European tourists did not take, however, more than a passing interest in contemporary Italian culture, with the exception of music, and few likely noticed that in the Po valley of northern Italy there appeared, only a few years apart, two hugely ambitious apologies for anticlassical art: Emanuele Tesauro's *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (The Aristotelian spyglass, 1654 first edition) in Turin and Marco Boschini's *La carta del navegar pitoresco* (The map of painterly navigation, 1660) in Venice.[2] We have no conclusive evidence today that these

two writers knew of each other's work. Both were, however, admirers of Giovan Battista Marino (1569–1625), certainly the most famous—as well as controversial—Italian poet of the age, although by the midway point of the Seicento his reputation was on the wane.[3] The principles of Marinist poetics, which constitute the cornerstone for the Baroque rethinking of the arts, connect these two points along the "continual periphery" of Seicento Italian culture.[4] Although unlikely bedfellows in many ways, Tesauro and Boschini further Marino's frontal assault on the rule systems of classicism. In so doing, these writers put to work in their respective treatises the aesthetic premises on which rest Marinism and, by extension, the Baroque itself, while pushing these toward a position concerning art so extreme that few thinkers anywhere in Europe would follow for more than a century to come.

The Seicento witnessed the first full-fledged crisis in modernity of the core critical-aesthetic principles inherited from classical antiquity, such as proportion, harmony, unity, decorum, and so on, that had long governed, guaranteed, and stabilized Western thinking about artworks.[5] Prior to this crisis, the arts in Italy had generally engaged the logic of "representation," although the latter was by no means to be understood as a passive reflection of, or transparent window onto, reality. Starting in the later years of the sixteenth century, however, the centrality of mimesis—and all that was predicated on this selfsame notion—in the production and evaluation of contemporary artworks began ever more insistently to be called into question. The system of rules and genres that had been derived in large part from the study of classical antiquity and that was grounded in the logic of verisimilitude (i.e., representation) was increasingly the target of painters, poets, sculptors, architects, musicians, and critics. Although classicism was very far from spent as a cultural force, it was to be gradually challenged by a rival movement that in its own time had no banner other than "the modern." Appearing in print long after this epochal cultural turn had occurred, both *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* and *La carta del navegar pitoresco* exalt the shock value of the "new" in the arts, dissolving the borders traditionally separating genres, arts, and disciplines in favor of the transgressive and the extreme, without laying claim to the unity, harmony, or decorum that supposedly distinguished both nature and its greatest imitator, namely ancient art.

The treatises are in agreement, moreover, that the two most prominent arts of the age are poetry and painting. If Tesauro's inquiry favors the former and Boschini's the latter, both poetry and painting play a central role in these thinkers' respective accounts of early modern anticlassicism. In

seventeenth-century Italy, poetry still clung to its long-held privileges, asserting supremacy among the arts, but the visual field in point of fact provided the essential paradigm for the Baroque.[6] Thus the intermingling of painting and poetry in these two treatises is inscribed in a particular cultural logic of the age, namely hybridization, and is far from being a nod in the direction of traditional treatments of the arts. Tesauro and Boschini follow in Marino's footsteps as theorists of *concettismo*, or "wit," even though they adopt different critical vocabularies—*argutezza* for Tesauro and the more conventional *ingegno* for Boschini—in addressing the topic. Yet wit, which emerges in the seventeenth century as the constitutive element of anticlassicism, through them extends its domain to the furthest reaches of art, far beyond anything that Marino himself could have imagined. To speak of these two treatises in terms of Marinism alone, however, would fail to account for their respective relations to the broader forces then attempting to revolutionize knowledge in Seicento Italy. The entanglement of the new trends in art with the latest trends in science in particular typifies the mid-century moment, which, as Paula Findlen has observed, "has alternately been defined as the age of the Baroque or the scientific revolution, when it was of course both of these things."[7]

<div align="center">2</div>

A critical term common to both *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* and *La carta del navegar pitoresco* is *la macchia*, whose etymological root lies in the Latin *macula*, indicating a stain, a blotch, or a spot, most often irregularly shaped, on a given surface. According to the 1623 second edition of the great dictionary produced by the Accademia della Crusca in Florence, "It is a mark or coloring on the surface of bodies that differs from the latter's own color, for which it is considered accidental [rather than essential]."[8] Perhaps the most influential use of the term in seventeenth-century Italy was to designate sunspots, or *macchie solari*, in the wake of Galileo's writings. By the beginning of 1612 Galileo and his correspondent Marco Velseri freely employed the term *macchia* to refer to this unpredictable solar phenomenon, the observation of which was to become a cornerstone of the early modern scientific revolution.[9] There were numerous other possible uses of the term *macchi*a in seventeenth-century Italian, ranging from a "flaw" to an impenetrable and hostile "wilderness," most of which generally possessed a pejorative sense. The accidental quality of any given macchia means that its appearance was not planned or designed. Rather, a macchia resembles the residue of a prior event that occurred spontaneously and seemingly

at random, like red wine stains found on a white tablecloth after dinner. Something must have "happened" to introduce unintentionally into the order of things an element of disorder, randomness, or even chaos, leaving behind a partial record of what had earlier occurred (such as spills, drips, splashes, and so on). The macchia is by its very nature incomplete and fragmentary, often little more than a trace indicating an absence, nor does its shape or form directly reflect or represent the event that preceded it and that it registers (the true causes and nature of sunspots were unknown to early practitioners of the New Science). In other words, in its appearance and function the macchia would seem to stand opposed to those stabilizing principles of mimesis that had long governed classicism.

In the case of sunspots, their mutations (like the rotation of the sun) defied explanation within the inherited Aristotelian scholastic framework of celestial physics, which held that the outer heavens were beyond change and therefore devoid of the accidental. Seventeenth-century artists and art theorists increasingly made use of the term *macchia*, moreover, to denote a seemingly accidental event or state, similar to the shifting sunspots revealed by the New Science. Filippo Baldinucci's *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* (1681), while drawing extensively on the definitions given in the Accademia della Crusca's dictionary, notes that "painters use this term to indicate the quality of certain drawings, as well as of some paintings that are made with extraordinary ease, with such harmony and freshness, but without use of much pencil or color, and in such as way that it almost seems as though the *macchia* has appeared on the sheet or canvas by itself, rather than because of the artist's hand."[10] By the second half of the Seicento the meaning of macchia—when referring to painting—had modulated, giving it a positive valence, particularly as the opposite of the diligently finished painted surface.[11] According to Baldinucci, the painterly macchia appears as spontaneous, and thus may seem wholly devoid of artistic intentionality, but this, as he points out, is nothing other than the illusion projected by the "extraordinary ease" and "freshness" of the artist's hand in creating a picture "without use of much pencil or color." With little drawing or painting, and no apparent forethought, the image arises on the canvas as if casually and quickly sketched or brushed, although this of course describes the effect that it produces on the viewer rather than the reality of the painter's effort. When understood in this sense, the macchia would seem to valorize the very qualities of spontaneity, velocity, irregularity, and vividness that are integral to the Baroque vision of art that Boschini and Tesauro share.[12] The presence of macchie of these different sorts permeates Seicento culture in Italy and, I argue in this essay, marks its discourse

on art and wit. As Boschini remarks wittily, if somewhat cryptically: "The painter forms without form—or rather with deformed form—the true form in semblance, seeking thus the art of painting."[13]

This is, however, not to imply that there are no differences between *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* and *La carta del navegar pitoresco*. Tesauro's treatise engages the New Science with the aim of appropriating it, even if it goes no further than the field of optics and associated applied technologies (lenses, mirrors), while manifesting no apparent interest in underlying questions of mathematics or physics. To put it another way, if John A. Schuster can speak of the "recruitment" of the Baroque into seventeenth-century natural science, we may instead say that Tesauro recruits the New Science into his visionary version of the Baroque.[14] The reason for this strategic move is clear from the outset. By incorporating its discoveries and instruments into a discourse that is almost entirely focused on the domain of contemporary high culture, Tesauro aims to aestheticize the New Science, thus transforming it into a fundamentally Baroque phenomenon. Perhaps he could not do otherwise. For he sees the scientific revolution as driving no wedge between the natural and the artificial, or between mathematical and poetical-magical modes of knowledge. On the contrary, the former mode serves to confirm the discoveries of the latter, rather than to call them into question. Traditional historical narratives of the so-called rise of science would tend to view Tesauro's totalizing project as a retrograde exercise in wishful thinking, destined for failure with the emergence and consolidation of scientific rationalism in the course of the long Enlightenment. Today, I would argue, we may more productively view it instead as embodying the contradictions that imbued the study of culture and nature alike in the Baroque era. Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris analyze the shared dilemmas of the high culture and New Science of the seventeenth century in this same perspective, noting that

> essentially mediated, . . . the knowledge provided by the New Science, with all its marvelous success, could no longer lay claim to direct [empirical] acquaintance with the objects of nature. In their stead, it produced its own objects: distant stars; infinitesimal magnitudes; the spring of air and the collision of particles. This, for the Baroque savant, was perhaps the most baffling paradox of all: objective knowledge relied on the mind's creative, "*poetic*," engagement, or in other words—on the imagination.[15]

Section 3 of this essay addresses this paradox of the "objective" yet "poetic" in relation to the role of the macchia in Tesauro's treatise.

Boschini's approach, in contrast, remains grounded within the domain of art theory and the evaluation of specific paintings. There is no challenge to—indeed there is no direct mention of—the New Science in his work, which seems to show not the slightest interest in the transformation of natural philosophy and scientific knowledge then under way in Italy and in Europe. However, it would be short-sighted to attribute this to personal ignorance on the part of Boschini or to the presumed cultural decadence of Venice during the decline of its once-great empire. His project in *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, as noted above, undercuts—in favor of an aggressively modern art of "form without form"—many if not most of the principal tenets of pictorial representation long championed by classicism. As he remarks in the treatise, "There is old painting, and there is modern painting,"[16] thus suggesting that contemporary modes of representation differ fundamentally from all that came before. It could certainly be argued that this same maxim is applicable by extension to all that is modern in seventeenth-century culture, including the revolutionary New Science. "Is it of the earth or the heavens?" Boschini wonders aloud about the most avant-garde modern art, before concluding: "I don't know where [it belongs]."[17] Indeed, the Venetian poet-critic relies, to a far greater extent than does Tesauro, on the concept and figure of the macchia, a term freely shared with seventeenth-century Italian astronomy, despite the semantic divergences noted above. In the final section of this essay, I argue that, by programmatically subordinating nature to artifice, Boschini furthers the Baroque project, with all of its uncertainties and tensions regarding the relationship between objective and creative truth.

3

Emanuele Tesauro (1592–1675) was almost eighty years old when the definitive version of *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* appeared in print in 1670.[18] Tesauro was a pious Piedmontese nobleman who left the Jesuit order in 1634 but remained a lay priest, serving at the Savoy court in Turin as historian, playwright, epigraphist, emblemist, panegyrist, preacher, and polemicist. More than a courtier, he was truly a "man of the world" who moved with ease between the different milieus of Italian absolutism. The author of a lengthy list of works, Tesauro was a formidable presence in the culture of Piedmont and Lombardy for most of the seventeenth century. Unusually, although he wrote and published extensively in the 1620s and 1630s, his literary star began to rise well after age fifty, with the appearance of the three-volume *Panegirici* (1647, but revised and republished several times in

Tesauro's lifetime), followed almost two decades later by the highly successful three-volume *Inscriptiones* (1666, but reprinted at least six times before the end of the century). Between these two monuments of erudition and rhetorical bravura—numerous other publications must be left unmentioned here—there appeared his provocatively titled 700-page treatise, putatively on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, which constitutes perhaps the high-water mark in Italy of Baroque thinking about the art of wit.

Tesauro's theories in his treatise defy any attempt at a neat synthesis or summary. *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* is a multiform "open book," as the author calls it, or a maze that lacks any center.[19] Wit (*argutezza*) is the spark that generates conceits in a genuinely creative intellect; these conceits may then be communicated with others through an acute figure of wit (*acutezza*). This figure of wit, most frequently a metaphor, possesses a sharp point that pricks the mind of the listener, reader, or viewer, provoking a novel thought or perspective that fills the mind with wonder and delight, and rewards the witty creator of the figure with the public's approval. As the author writes with what is for him unusual concision: "Novelty . . . generates wonder: wonder, delight: and delight, applause."[20] Nothing in this formula deviates in the least from the long-established program of Marinist poetics (and in his youth Tesauro knew the great poet at the Savoy court in Turin). Tesauro presses onward, however, to explain that metaphors of wit compress space and accelerate time. Conceits not only connect far-flung and disparate objects or propositions into a single figure, but are always expressed "rapidly" or "in a flash," so that in these high-speed, highly compacted metaphors we are able "see" more than one thing at once, as if gazing into a perspective-box of the sort popular with painters and the public in the mid-Seicento.[21] Tesauro remarks in fact that "metaphor packs all [the objects] tightly together in a single term: and almost miraculously makes you see one inside the other. Thus your delight is greater, in the same way that it is more curious and pleasurable to see many objects through the peephole of a perspective device, than to have those objects pass in succession before your eyes."[22] In peering through this metaphoric peep-hole, readers, viewers, or listeners seem to discover—almost voyeuristically—the secret life of things and the hidden relationships between them. Moreover, the estrangement of these objects from their usual context through the well-formed metaphor of wit overcomes the normally distracted perception that we have of these, because we have long been habituated to seeing them in a routine or automatic way. Through metaphor even the most banal objects can acquire a compelling new dimension, because anything can transform itself suddenly into something else. Wit thus enables through

figuration and metaphorical transference—namely the spectacularization of one object by means of another—a more complex knowledge of the universe; it founds an essentially visual modern epistemology.[23]

After the original publication of *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, Tesauro continued to revise and expand his work for another sixteen years. In the 1663 revised edition, the author inserted an elaborately engraved allegorical frontispiece or *antiporta* (Figure 1), today considered one of the most remarkable book illustrations to have appeared in seventeenth-century Italy. Although at first glance it may seem like an exercise in Baroque excess, this image was designed by him on the basis of a precise iconological program, probably with the intent to offer the reader an interpretive key to the treatise, although nowhere in it does the author mention this engraving. A closer look at the frontispiece indeed reveals several salient points of intersection between Tesauro's theory of wit and the Seicento term *macchia* that bear in important ways on our understanding of the Baroque.

There are three allegorical figures—Aristotle, Poetry, and Painting—in the frontispiece, of which the largest in size is Poetry. She is seated at the left side of the frame with a laurel wreath upon her head, wearing a simple and unadorned dress from which her naked bosom emerges. Propped against her right hip is a stringed instrument (a *viola da gamba*)—Apollo, Greek god of poetry, was also the god of music—and in her right hand Poetry holds a bow. Resting against her right thigh is a star-dotted heraldic shield bearing the motto *trement urbes et regna* (cities and kingdoms tremble), which appears to be taken from Marcus Manilius's *Astronomica* (4.551), one of the most important surviving ancient works on astronomy. Other coats of arms are scattered on the ground in front of Poetry. The most prominent one bears the double-headed eagle, the symbol of the Holy Roman Empire; lying together with it is the ancient Roman imperial eagle, along with the famous motto *S.P.Q.R.* Tesauro also pays due homage in the frontispiece to the House of Savoy, at whose court he served for much of his life. Visible behind the respective figures of Aristotle and Poetry are two heraldic shields (one bears the figure of an elephant, and the other a centaur) referring to the valor of the great Savoy dukes of the past.[24] Thus the viewer is asked to grasp the indissoluble continuity between past and present, which will turn out to be a central theme of the treatise.

Poetry holds in her left hand a long spyglass or telescope, which she points toward the sun with the assistance of Aristotle, who stands behind her while looking in the same direction and supporting the instrument with both hands. Dressed in flowing robes, the ancient Greek philosopher now appears conversant in the latest technological innovations of the

Figure 1. Emanuele Tesauro, Frontispiece, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*. 1670.

seventeenth century. In fact, he seems to be speaking to Poetry, around whose spyglass is wrapped a cartouche displaying the words *egregio in corpore* (noble in body). Both figures gaze at the sun, which shines brightly but whose surface displays irregular dark spots, and the viewer naturally assumes that this is what the two are discussing. The allusion to Galileo's pathbreaking astronomical discoveries seems certain, although the great scientist's name is nowhere to be found in the treatise. Here Tesauro deliberately concocts, very much in the vein of Galileo's notion of *novantiqua*, an anachronistic alliance between the symbol of modern science (the telescope) and the greatest authority of ancient as well as scholastic philosophy.[25] In this context the near-total absence of the "natural world" in the frontispiece is noteworthy, for it is reduced to the sun and its sunspots. Everything else crowding into the packed frame figures as part of a human-made emblem or allegory, so that nature itself seems marginalized, if not wholly distanced, by art and artifice. This resonates with echoes of the New Science, for which "the immediacy of the senses" is replaced by "fundamentally mediated" knowledge through instruments, so that "nature could only be approached by art."[26] In this most representative part of the frontispiece, embodying the very title of the treatise, Tesauro accords to this notion—namely, that nature can be approached only through art—every possible privilege.

At the center of the frame stands a painter's easel. On it rests an oval canvas, already set in its frame, with the allegorical figure of Painting seated before it. In her left hand, instead of a spyglass Painting holds a palette, together with three paintbrushes and a maulstick, while with the brush in her right hand she applies the finishing touches to the image on the framed canvas. Her painting represents a most unusual object: a conical catoptric mirror, in which is reflected the motto *omnis in unum* (all in one). Any seventeenth-century viewer with even slight knowledge of current trends in art and technology would have realized at once that this conical mirror serves to give a recognizable shape to an anamorphic image. Indeed, we see Painting's brush at work completing not the representation of the catoptric device itself, but rather the weirdly distorted image that lies on a flat surface at the base of the mirror. The letters *o* and *m* in particular, whose reflection appears at the apex of the cone (the motto must be read from top to bottom), are so elongated in the flat anamorphic image that they do not resemble letters of the Roman alphabet, but rather loose threads or ink smears scattered randomly on the surface supporting the mirror. Painting stares intently at the canvas, while seeming to ignore the actions and words of the allegorical figures facing her.

Beneath the central part of the allegory itself yet another motto is visible: *egregio inspersos reprehendit corpore naevos* ([one] may criticize the blemishes scattered on a noble body). This excerpt from Horace's *Satires*, 1.6.67, which is echoed in the cartouche on the telescope, is once again intended to link the heritage of classical antiquity to contemporary Europe.[27] For the Horatian "blemishes" are to be understood, in the context of the frontispiece, as those same sunspots at which the respective figures of Aristotle and Poetry gaze. As if by magic, an ancient poetic text describes proleptically the operation of the telescope, emblematic of the New Science. We are now in a position to understand that Tesauro's "Aristotelian spyglass"—forged from fragments of classical rhetoric and poetics, now welded to a new framework—is an instrument with an essentially critical function, forcing us to see things as we have not seen them before, namely the "blemishes" or asymmetrically shaped secrets of the universe that have been kept hidden from us until now by our own (deficient) senses. Surprising new discoveries that set fire to the imagination will be made with this particular kind of spyglass, which, like the optical device held up by Poetry, was unknown to the ancients. As with the sunspots first seen by Galileo and other astronomers, these new discoveries made through the "Aristotelian spyglass" will belong first of all to the visual field of knowledge. The transformative linguistic power of Poetry is inseparable from the faculty of vision in Tesauro's frontispiece (she holds the optical instrument to her eye, after all), as well as in his promotion of the art of wit to the core of modern epistemology.

Painting works instead with her brushes to capture on canvas the avant-garde optics of the conical catoptric mirror. In Tesauro's allegory, the sunspots viewed by her sister Poetry are meant to be compared to the macchie painted on the flat surface in front of the catoptric cone. Although a visual and verbal pun on the term *macchia* is deliberately included here, that is not all there is. The difference between the two types of "stains" is a fundamental one. If the sunspots are natural objects transformed by the faculty of wit and the mediation of a scientific instrument into figures that can be comprehended by our intellect, the painted macchie are wholly artificial, for Painting is shown in the act of creating them with her brushstrokes. Buried deep in the text of *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* is the following passage: "Another man, in speaking of a learned professor who was of deformed and base appearance, remarked: 'this is an ugly catoptric figure, which should be viewed in the cylinder,' alluding to those figures that on a flat surface appear to be blotches [macchie] but in the cylindrical mirror seem well-proportioned and beautiful."[28] Only the reflected image of these macchie

can make them "well-proportioned and beautiful," transforming them aes-thetically through the new optical technology from bizarre blotches or sketchy brushstrokes to legible letters and words forming an elegant motto ("all in one"). The motto itself self-reflexively describes the effect of the mirror, which shows "all" of these apparently random marks as unified ele-ments of a single image and a single text; in it images become words and words become images.[29] Still later on in the treatise, when speaking of this emblem (which was that of the Accademia dei Solinghi in Turin) Tesauro resorts to the same terminology in order to describe the performance of the "conical mirror": "That which on the flat surface seem to be blotches [macchie], when reflecting together [in the mirror] above them, become perfect and extremely well-composed figures."[30] In his 1657 panegyric ti-tled "The Cylinder," moreover, he employs identical terms to refer to this same famous cylindrical mirror, "at whose center . . . colorful images are found, which outside the mirror appear as formless and distorted blotches [macchie], [but] within its crystalline bosom are given right and most per-fect form."[31]

In the frontispiece Tesauro thus confirms an essential connection be-tween the observation of sunspots and the anamorphic version of the motto *omnis in unum*. Both are shown to be concerned with macchie—irregular or asymmetrical traces—that may be deciphered through the mediation of the innovative optical technologies endorsed so fervently in *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*.[32] Nature has hidden from the unaided eye the sight of the spots on the sun's surface, but in modernity these can now be detected with the telescope; in parallel fashion, the macchie applied to the canvas by Painting are deliberately nonmimetic distortions, in order to hide from the viewer their true meaning, which can nevertheless be recovered thanks to the mi-raculous conical catoptric mirror, a copy of which was brought to Turin from Paris shortly after its invention circa 1627.[33] All the elements in the frontispiece participate in the same allegorical scene and contribute to its overall meaning. Although throughout the treatise Tesauro freely employs the vocabulary of painting (some of his preferred terms include "painting" and "to paint"), he in fact does not devote much space to considering that art in his tome, which is after all concerned expressly with rhetoric and poetics. In the frontispiece, however, Painting plays a central role because, among other things, her brushwork can supply strong visual support for Tesauro's claim that the operations of wit are not limited to poetry alone, but are to be found in all kinds of human undertakings, including those of the New Science. Painting's canvas provides an allegory within the al-legory, or, to put it another way, the self-reflexive representation—the

frame (literally) within the frame—compelling the viewer to contemplate the macchie, compare them to their counterparts in the heavens, and to see them all as part of the workings of wit (argutezza), whether human or divine.[34]

Tesauro's frontispiece is an exemplary setting-into-work of wit that is at once textual and visual; these two domains are, like the sister arts of Poetry and Painting, inseparable for him. As he remarks early in *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, the term "wit" (argutezza) is not restricted to poetry alone, but may be "applied to painted or sculpted objects, and to actions signifying any witty conceit, which may be called figural, metaphorical and witty actions and objects."[35] The governing conceit of the frontispiece has to do not only with the novel paradox of the Aristotelian spyglass, that is, the seamless continuity of antiquity and modernity or of classicism and anticlassicism, but also with a particular play on words, or a figure of wit (acutezza), whose meaning can be grasped only by a subsequent reading of the treatise, where the second sense of macchia (i.e., as a painterly blotch or stain rather than as a sunspot) is made evident.

The sunspots (macchie solari) are made present to us through the double work of wit, which first overcomes the vastness of space through the invention of the spyglass, and which then "re-presents" the sunspots through visual and textual representation (precisely as the cartouche is entwined around the barrel of the telescope).[36] Rather than approach these celestial macchie on an empirical basis, Tesauro depicts them in the frontispiece as part of a vital communicative process encouraging us to understand nature as a maker of "natural metaphors, figural conceits, witty symbols and . . . emblems." Here we can see that, despite his debt to Galileo, Tesauro is unwilling or unable to see the achievements of the New Science as belonging to a domain separate from that of the creative and poetic powers of the imagination. As I have tried to suggest, this is not so much a failure to grasp the nature of the scientific revolution as a recognition of its essentially Baroque outlook on nature. The mind of nature, including its faculty of wit, is revealed to humans through such "natural metaphors," which are not made of words per se, but are transposed into human language through the act of interpretation, which requires us in turn to exercise our own imaginative wit in order to grasp the underlying conceit. Thus, for instance, because flowers are "elegant figures and lively works of wit from nature's ingenuity," it follows that "if the witty conceits of poets are called 'flowers,' then nature's flowers are to be called witty conceits."[37] For Tesauro, the fundamentally creative exchange between the respective "minds" of nature and humankind occurs in and through these metaphors, which constitute the

beauty of the universe as we perceive it. Painting's allegorical actions in the frontispiece provide not only a play on the double meaning of *macchia*, but analogically represent Painting to be "like" nature in the deployment of figures—sometimes seemingly illegible to the naked eye—that can be decoded and reconstituted only by the observer's wit.

In the frontispiece, this relationship between nature and Painting is a reversible one, as the presence of the conical mirror at the center of the frame suggests. In so many words, nature and Painting reflect each other. Although both nature and Painting are artists, paradoxically neither is "natural."[38] The universe is a divine work of art, as every human work of art is the universe in microcosm, and uniting both is the irresistible intellectual force of the witty conceit. Once pricked by the "acute" point of the figure of wit (*acutezza*), the viewer, reader, or listener—by replicating the conceit in his or her own mind—participates in this same cognitive process. Wit leaps across space and time by way of figuration, in endless celebration of the overwhelming vitality of creativity and of the vivid, life-enhancing images that it generates. Joining together in mutual ecstasy, "one faculty of wit may awaken another, as firewood heaped together burns with a greater flame than if kept separate."[39] The spark of "genius" at the source of all wit thus triggers a conflagration that is, for Tesauro, the essence of the beautiful itself, and whose glow illuminates an aestheticized universe of signs.[40]

4

Marco Boschini (1613–78) was a Venetian artist, antiquarian, art critic and consultant, cartographer, and merchant, as well as the author of several important publications about art and architecture in the Serenissima. Boschini was personally acquainted with most of the Republic's leading contemporary painters, as well as with the living descendants of the great Venetian artists of the sixteenth century, such as Tintoretto and Veronese (in his youth Boschini served an apprenticeship in the workshop of Palma the Younger). He was in the circle of the Accademia degli Incogniti, Venice's most renowned academy and a magnet for artists residing in or visiting the city: *La carta del navegar pitoresco* contains a prefatory letter of endorsement from Giovan Francesco Loredano, the academy's founder and central figure.[41] Boschini's knowledge of the vast treasure trove of paintings located in Venice and on the Venetian mainland was unmatched, and he was often called upon to serve as a guide for visiting artists and dignitaries, including (or so it would seem) Diego Velázquez in 1651.[42] The interlocutors in *La carta del navegar pitoresco*—Boschini (*il Compare*) and a noble "senator"

(*l'Ecelenza*) from out of town—journey by gondola around the city and lagoon to view the works of the Venetian masters and their epigones. Hopping like tourists from church to palace to monastery, the two men treat Venice as a public open-air art museum whose artworks no longer have the sacred or secular functions for which they were originally intended.[43]

Although the influential Italian art historian Roberto Longhi called him "the greatest critic of the century," Boschini's corpus has attracted relatively limited attention from scholars of early modern art theory, with the notable exception of Philip Sohm.[44] This may be attributable in part to the eccentric literary design of *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, Boschini's critical masterpiece composed in the vein of the Baroque master-poet Marino.[45] Not only is Boschini's text entirely a verse dialogue composed in Venetian, but it consists of 5,370 rhymed quatrains (filling nearly 700 pages), divided into eight cantos—each called a "wind"—corresponding to a navigational wind rose divided into eight sections.[46] In his preface, the author is unapologetic for this unusual linguistic choice: "Am I, as a Venetian in Venice talking about Venetian painters, supposed to disguise myself?"[47] Moreover, in his treatise he launches a no-holds-barred polemical assault on Giorgio Vasari, the sixteenth-century Tuscan author of the *Vite* (Lives of the most eminent painters, sculptors, and architects, 1550 *editio princeps*), generally considered today to be the founding work of the discipline of art history. Vasari's distinct bias in favor of Tuscan art, to the detriment of the Venetian school, is subject to Boschini's withering scorn and contempt, for in fact the "perfection" of Venetian painters such as Titian and Tintoretto is such that, he contends, "there is nothing comparable to it in all the world."[48] Perhaps, in zealously overstating his case, Boschini becomes a "propagandist" for Venice, as Philip Sohm argues, but his discourse on Venetian painting is anything but superficial.[49] Indeed, there were few more intriguing contributions to the debate on art and artists in seventeenth-century Italy, when painting was itself "a deeply theorized kind of knowledge."[50]

Boschini was nevertheless an untimely figure, and *La carta del navegar pitoresco* expresses a sense of belatedness, not only in regard to the bygone golden age of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, but also concerning the debate over the legacy of Italian Baroque art. His mammoth text appeared too late to slow the further decline of Marinism in Italy, but too early to have an impact on the subsequent development of the philosophy of art in Europe. *La carta del navegar pitoresco* would resonate with a wider audience only centuries later, although some of his guidebooks to the art of Venice and its territories were reprinted well into the eighteenth century.

Undoubtedly the choice of Venetian as the language of the treatise played a role in this story of neglect, but so did the eccentric—at times radically so—ideas of its author.

Like Tesauro, Boschini begins his book with an image of two mythological divinities, in this case the God of Poetry and the Goddess of Painting. In the preface, he observes that there are many severe judges packed together upon "a hard bench, who would have me put on trial for my life in the court of Apollo and of the goddess of Painting for the crime of *lèse-majesté*, contending that I write of both poets and painters."[51] Although this double subject might strike some classicist contemporaries as a breach of the accepted rules of art criticism and theory, for our author it is instead a necessary first step in the direction of a discourse on art in modernity. Boschini's is not just a flamboyant essay in praise of Venetian painting, but a verse tour de force that sets-into-work the poetics of wit (ingegno). Its simultaneous engagement with two art forms is among the treatise's most distinctive traits, and not only in the field of early modern art theory. As Anna Pallucchini notes, "There is nothing else like Boschini's work in Italian literature,"[52] which cannot be said for any other work of art theory produced in early modern Italy.

Devoted primarily to practical criticism of pictures, *La carta del navegar pitoresco* nonetheless contains a relatively coherent body of remarks of a more speculative nature concerning art and artistic creation.[53] In this it goes well beyond Marino's *La Galeria* (1620), which, although containing many poems about specific paintings and sculptures, does not offer much (if any) reflection on art theory.[54] In terms of concision, range, and balance, there may certainly be superior writers on the art of painting in early modern Italy, from Vasari to Bellori, but there is no other critic who so openly defies conventional stances toward the work of art in Italy and Europe, whether rooted in Neo-Aristotelian or Neoplatonic doctrines. Like Tesauro, Boschini had in his youth fully absorbed the lessons of Marinist poetics, and in *La carta del navegar pitoresco* he integrates them into his reflections on the radically altered status of the artwork in the Baroque. He sees sixteenth-century giants Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Bassano as anticipating this new aesthetic, particularly in their later works.[55] At the same time, however, Boschini also devotes an extensive section of his verse treatise (the seventh "Wind") to contemporary seventeenth-century painters active in Venice and its territories. These latter artists—however minor they may appear, even to the author—sustain and extend the practices of the *maniera* first developed by the great Cinquecento precursors, without substantially modifying those practices.[56] This is not just a matter

of preference, in Boschini's eyes, for certain technical aspects of painting over others. The Venetian school puts into practice the very principles of the new aesthetic, which are coextensive with modernity itself, and which arose in Venice earlier than elsewhere in Europe.

I do not intend to argue here for the originality of Boschini's theoretical insights into painting, whether in his promotion of "free" painterly brushwork (or *machia*, as he spells it in Venetian) or his outspoken anticlassicism. No doubt he borrowed liberally from the conceptual framework established by his predecessors and rivals.[57] *La carta del navegar pitoresco* lacks, moreover, "a rigid interpretive frame" offering "clarity, and consistency, and an orderly progression of ideas."[58] Since it unfolds over eight days as a verse dialogue whose interlocutors are wandering around Venice from artwork to artwork, that might be too much to ask, for dialogues are often made of digressions, repetitions, and discursive dead ends. Most of the Venetian or Italian terms in the treatise referring to the activity of painting—*machia*, *maniera*, *trato*, *colpo*, *impasto*, *velare*, and so on—were already familiar enough to readers of early modern Italian art theory.[59] And few would not have recognized the basic philosophical terminology—*arte*, *natura*, *scienza*, *belezza*, *virtù*, and so on—that the author employs, even if here it is provided in the Venetian language. Furthermore, the terms that Boschini borrows from seventeenth-century Marinism and usually translates into Venetian, including *marevegia*, *bizaro*, *piaser*, and *non so che*, among others, set *La carta del navegar pitoresco* in an intertextual network of writings with which contemporary readers would already more than likely have been acquainted. What instead distinguishes *La carta del navegar pitoresco* is its recombination of all of these into a cluster or constellation of terms and concepts circulating around the term *machia*.[60] Just as for Walter Benjamin, in his *The Origin of the German Baroque Mourning-Play*, a constellation "simultaneously groups together and is revealed by the cluster of individual stars," so the treatise reconfigures familiar elements in such a way that these reveal the identification of the Venetian maniera with modern painting, and, ultimately, with modernity *tout court*.[61] Even if lacking the philosophical polish of Pietro Sforza Pallavicino (1607–67), for example, or the psychological acuity of Baltasar Gracián, Boschini not only "imbued brushwork with theory and made it carry more ideas and emotions than previous art writers had thought possible," but "took a symptom of style and made it into style itself."[62] Whether his analyses can be said to represent accurately the pictures of the early modern Venetian masters is not my concern here, for, as often as not, they serve him as an occasion for discussing the Baroque as a *style* of vision and thought.

For the Venetian poet-critic, the supreme art of the modern age is (oil) painting, to which all the other arts are ancillary, because no other aesthetic activity can equal painting's engagement of the faculties of both the intellect and the senses, not to mention its dependence on the creative power of wit (ingegno). If Venetian painting stands alone at the apex of this art form, Boschini contends, it must be understood in relation to the singularity of the democratic Venetian Republic.[63] The artistic freedom expressed in the dazzling brushwork of modern Venetian painters, he notes, is inseparable from the civic and political freedoms enjoyed by citizens of *la Serenissima*: "In short, the Venetian style / Brings with it the same freedom / Enjoyed by anyone living in this city, / Our homeland, that keeps subjection far from us."[64] In the seventeenth century Venetian painting and the Venetian state differ fundamentally from the art and politics of the rest of the peninsula, which by and large are bound to other codes, such as classicism and absolutism. These practices of liberty—pictorial and political—are intrinsic to a city that constitutes at once a unique body politic and a uniquely beautiful aesthetic object. The poet-critic in fact sees even the plan of the city, with its crazy-quilt of canals surrounding largely human-made, irregularly shaped islands, as being a "painting" (*CN*, 28) in its own right, like so many vigorous brushstrokes and stains of color on a canvas that together form an equally complex maze of paint and attain the same end result: beauty. The Venetian state and its republican institutions are the dynamic creators of this urban architectural masterpiece, which has defied not only time, but the very laws and limits of the relationship between stone and water. This one-of-a-kind city has in turn enabled the practitioners of the Venetian style to achieve perfection in painting by refusing—like the builders of the city in the lagoon—to be subject to the tyranny of nature and its laws.

As a living work of art Venice is so perfect that, as Boschini remarks hyperbolically, the city may be said to have not only defied nature, but to have seduced and conquered it. In *La carta del navegar pitoresco* the city and nature have exchanged the roles traditionally assigned to them in Western theories of art, for now nature is secondary and art (which is the same as saying "Venice and its maniera") is primary, rather than vice versa, as was the case in conventional models of mimetic representation. According to Boschini, the artifice of the Venetians is now the "example" and the "model" for nature itself, which finds its own "monument" in the artifice of Venice.[65] In connecting the dots, as readers of *La carta del navegar pitoresco* are sometimes left to do, we are led to conclude that nature is no longer autonomous or original, but is paradoxically a copy of the art of Titian, Tintoretto, and company, rather than vice versa. The truth of

nature is nothing other than a simulacrum of that of Venice, which is "the source, the spring and the river / That once produced, has produced or will produce the selfsame truth through paintbrushes."[66] Indeed, for Boschini modern painting is that art that is authentic only insofar as it reforms and transforms nature into its own image:

> And here we turned to talking about Painting,
> Created by our genius and sympathy:
> That virtue esteemed and revered by all,
> Nature's rival and competitor,
> Or rather [its] true artful reform
> That surpasses reality in many places,
> And transforms form with such art
> That it is more lovely than nature.[67]

This, according to the author of *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, is indeed the "living science" (*CN*, 286) of the great Venetian painters and their followers. It would seem possible to consider the New Science—which brought sunspots (macchie solari) into human consciousness through the innovation of the telescope—in this same perspective, that is, as "Nature's rival and competitor" and "true artful reform": Boschini's art theory is inseparable from the Baroque vision of nature. The following passage from the fifth "wind," recounting an anecdote in which a blind man compares a portrait in marble to a portrait in oil, articulates the theoretical foundation of the "artful style" and its use of the machia:

> I wish to remind your Excellency of that blind man who, in a bygone era in which there was a great controversy between painting and sculpture, remarked: "Here I recognize a hand; here I touch a foot; here I can make out an eye, and here I feel an eyelash; and here, nothing?" He said: "O what a marvel! Painting is truly sorcery!" I myself say the same thing. What I see, in short, is this: I see lines, marks, pockmarks, moles, wrinkles, fine and coarse hairs, but from [up close] here I can see everything, and there's nothing there. I see an impasto, a disdainful brushstroke, a certain something, ineffable and wondrous, that starts to stir under my gaze, so that it seems right to me to say: This is the most beautiful [art]. In the end this involves effort, a desire to create with time, patience, and love, and perhaps every painter with a good eye can get even as far as that. But to arrive at the style and the forceful brushstrokes of, for instance, Veronese, Bassano, Jacopo Tintoretto and Titian, by God, that's something to drive you out of your mind.

[. . .]

Nature with such art competes in order to make herself immortal;
and in many places, with stains in stone and wood, strives to imitate
figures. And even if she does not attain perfection, at least nature ap-
proaches the true way by imitating the Venetian style, considering that
use of blotches to be beautiful and good.[68]

Significantly, Pallucchini identifies in this passage an allusion to Gali-
leo's letter of 26 June 1612 to Cigoli defending the superiority of paint-
ing to sculpture; she argues that it is linked, moreover, to the sole place
in Boschini's treatise in which Galileo's name appears and his telescope is
invoked.[69] As if he too were examining an oil portrait (no specific picture
is named in the above passage), Boschini describes his hypothetical experi-
ence of viewing a lifelike painted image of a human face and head, rich in
verisimilar details such as "lines, marks, pockmarks, moles, wrinkles, fine
and coarse hairs."[70] On stepping close to the canvas, however, the illusion
vanishes in a flash, and, like the blind man in the anecdote about the contest
between two-dimensional painting and three-dimensional sculpture, the
speaker discovers that "there is nothing there."[71] Or rather, there is only
the flat painted surface with its blotches and smears of paint and visible
brushstrokes. No figuration is visible to the eye at such close range.

Boschini peers at the impasto (a very thick layering of oil paint) on the
canvas, which displays the "disdainful" brushstroke(s) left by the artist in
the act of its creation. The Venetian poet-critic can make out no recogniz-
able image there, however, only "a certain something, ineffable and won-
drous." This "*un certo che*," which we may identify with the seventeenth-
century aesthetic category of the *non so che*, *je ne sais quoi*, or *nescio quid*, is
an elusive and indefinable principle of representation that may be experi-
enced in the encounter with the modern work of art, but that cannot be
articulated in rational terms. The intellectual and sensual complexity of the
experience of the work may move us, but it defies any attempt to reduce
it to a unitary or logical proposition.[72] Evidently Boschini refers here, by
this certain "wondrous" something (un certo che), to the fluid machia or
stainlike sketch that is at the very basis of the Venetian maniera.[73] Although
it may seem to be utter confusion from the perspective of a viewer whose
eye is only inches from the canvas, it is nothing of the sort if the machia
was made by the hand of a modern Venetian painter. Skillfully and rapidly
applied to the canvas, the sketchy brushwork is not confined within dis-
tinct contours or borders, but is like a flood or burst of energy that leaves

in its wake an indeterminate, agitated painted surface. This is not dissimilar to the multitude of G. W. Leibniz's "small" or "minute" perceptions or sensations, which we do not consciously perceive in themselves, but which combine together to create a distinct effect on us akin to the *non so che* (Leibniz's example is that of the roar of a breaking wave, which is in fact made up of innumerable droplets of water crashing into one another, each of which makes a tiny sound that our ear cannot distinguish; we hear them and do not hear them, just as, according to Boschini, we see and do not see the figures on the canvas).[74] The brushwork's ineffable quality, which makes it overflow the boundaries of the traditional categories of aesthetic analysis, is experienced insofar as it seemingly "begins to stir" when the viewer gazes at it closely enough, almost as though it had a life of its own. The paint on the canvas continuously represents and replicates the prior action of the painter's gesture in applying it. Other than the magic of the *machia*, there is no fixed rule and no technique for producing the ineffable (*un certo che*), which is the deepest desideratum of art and the essence of the beautiful for Boschini ("questo è 'l più belo"). The maniera of the Venetian masters consists not in figuration but feigned motion, not in imagery but expressive energy, not in diligently painted surfaces but rapid, free brushwork.

With the tables turned, and nature consigned to a permanently subordinate role, it cannot be surprising to readers of *La carta del navegar pitoresco* to learn that, in its endless effort to emulate art, nature too "strives" to become a painter of *machie*, not on canvas but in "stone and wood" (i.e., verisimilar shapes that in fact occur naturally in these materials). In these enigmatic objects—and Baroque connoisseurs coveted them for their collections[75]—is proof positive that nature is hard at work copying from the Venetian style. Such an enterprise can of course never attain perfection, Boschini dismissively remarks, for nature lacks the true creative intelligence required of the painters of the maniera. Throughout the treatise it is clear that the author's sympathies lie, above all, with the art of Jacopo Tintoretto, whose paintings Boschini holds to embody the authentic Venetian style. If Tintoretto's cutting-edge artistry anticipates and defines the modern in painting, it is owing first and foremost to his powerful faculty of wit, from which the originality of his work flows, rather than to his training or his eye: "A more tremendous mind / was never seen in painting / . . . because his way of working was to stay always far away / from the practices and forms of all [other] painters."[76] And this creative faculty of wit is precisely what nature lacks. The best that the latter can ever hope to do is

to follow the lead of Venetians like Tintoretto, by embracing the activity of painting with strokes and stains or blotches—albeit in stone and wood rather than on canvas—as the essence of the "beautiful and good" in the realm of art.[77]

Boschini advances the Baroque's far-reaching claim to the proposition that nature, indeed, imitates art and its truth.[78] As a world-system, set into motion by the Maker, nature must constantly re-create and renew itself in order to avoid entropy and maintain a state of equilibrium. But this essentially autotelic, automatic activity is far less original and inventive than what painting in the *maniera veneziana* achieves as the highest kind of artistic practice. For the modern Venetian style of painting not only conveys on canvas what is in the order of nature, but also what is not, that is, artifice. Thus "it [painting] is the very order of the world; it is a treasure / That contains nature and artifice within itself."[79] Its artistic products provide the viewer with more than a representation of the world and the things in it (or what has happened in it), because they always also foreground the creative act itself. Thanks to the incorporation of machie, with their free, sketch-like brushwork, the making of the picture is always a part of its account of an object or figure, and this is something that nature cannot do, lacking the self-reflexive intelligence and faculty of wit of Venice's master artificers, as exemplified by Tintoretto. The double dimension of modern Venetian painting—reflection (of nature) plus self-reflection (of art)—is the proof of its essential superiority to nature and naturalism, and explains Boschini's above-mentioned remark that the *maniera artificiosa* is at once the "imitator" and the "model" of nature, which can only strive without success to try to equal the Venetian style.[80]

Speaking of the *Miracle of Saint Mark*, Boschini remarks in a marginal gloss that this is "the most beautiful painting by Tintoretto, or rather, I'd say, in the whole world."[81] Curiously, here Boschini seems to take a page from Tesauro's book, mentioning Aristotle as an authority whose work, like this great painting by Tintoretto, "astonishes us" with its insights into "the living, the real and the divine." But his true interests lie elsewhere. In the following passage about the world's "most beautiful painting" the Venetian poet-critic puts forth a striking series of propositions concerning the modern Venetian reversal of the traditional relationship between nature and art:

We can well see the truth of that conceit, according to which art holds sway over nature. Thanks to Tintoretto's great prowess, it isn't so much

in the drawing. But oh yes, here this time we see living and not painted truth!

   [. . .]

   This is a wonder without end. Here is the living, the real and the divine; this is the creative act taken to extremes; this is all of that excess which astonishes us; this is that painting which confounds the true; this is like Aristotle or Homer, of whom we don't know what words of praise to use. Here we'll surely be lying if we still want to call this a "painting." Because it is reality, or, rather, superior to reality; and even nature can learn from it. This is painting that is in motion. But is it sorcery? No indeed, because that sin may not be committed in sacred places. Is it of the earth or the heavens? I don't know where [it belongs]. But what does that matter now? It's both a painting and a true thing; it's at once reality and style; it's the sorcery of a magical talent.[82]

Tintoretto's famous picture generates "wonder" and "astonish[ment]"—central criteria of Marinist poetics—in the mind of the viewer, whose enthusiastic reception provides the truest measure of success of the artwork and the wit of the artist. In order to earn the viewer's accolades, modern painting must shock and delight the eye and mind through virtuoso manipulation of the painted surface, which means to Boschini above all else the deployment of machie and free brushwork. In this case, the *Miracle of Saint Mark* represents motion in such a way that it seems to be occurring before our very eyes ("painting that is in motion"). As any reader of the treatise ought to know by now, the techniques favored by Tintoretto—to which Boschini returns over and over again—tend to dissolve solid contours or outlines, emphasizing instead the visible yet sketchy traces on the canvas of the painter's frantic brushstrokes or bold machie. If the picture appears to convey motion, this occurs both at the level of the scene represented (i.e., the content of the image) and that of the paint as applied to the surface of the canvas. The viewer perceives both (the illusion of) motion in the gestures of the painted figures and (the traces of) the artist's energetic application of the paint with free brushstrokes. In this way, this quintessentially modern painting becomes "living . . . truth," or rather, it "confounds the true" by displacing "reality" (Boschini idiosyncratically transforms the adverb *dasseno*—meaning "really"—into a noun) from its formerly central role in art, thereby showing painting in the authentic Venetian style to be in fact "superior to reality."

   Tintoretto's key achievement in *Miracle of Saint Mark*, Boschini concludes, is to push the act of painting "to extremes" (*questo è strafare*). The verb *strafare* literally means "to overdo" something, usually in a pejorative

sense. The artistic "excess" or surplus that this visionary Venetian painter incorporates into the picture takes it far beyond the conventions of mimesis or of naturalism, and this frame-breaking excess is precisely what reveals the truth of artifice in modernity. As discussed above, for Boschini this same truth is found in the dual function of the Venetian *maniera*, from which "even nature can learn," and which here he calls "at once reality *and* style." By this the Venetian poet-critic does not mean to reject outright representational art, which is aimed at producing a naturalistic illusion, but rather to say that the act of production of the painting, as realized in its "style," has also become painting's legitimate subject of representation in the modern age. Art, in its most authentically modern form, has abandoned the old Renaissance ideal of *sprezzatura*, of "artlessness" or the "art that is not art," which points the viewer away from the work's two-dimensional status.[83] Tintoretto's painting instead celebrates its witty self-reflexivity or aesthetic estrangement-effect, which compels the viewer to see it as artifice as well as a mirror of nature, while insisting that the former has greater cultural weight than the latter. As soon as nature in its turn starts to imitate ("learn from") art, however, then we can no longer hope to assign ontological priority to our experience of reality (what Boschini calls *il dasseno*). Indeed, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish one from the other. Even as the Venetian *maniera* recognizes the artwork as a supremely aesthetic object, it also—in a profoundly Baroque touch—acknowledges the aestheticization of existence itself in modernity.[84]

NOTES

1. Among many studies, see Vernon Hyde Minor, *The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), who attempts to chart the shift away from the presumed "excesses" of the Baroque and toward "good taste" in France and Italy in the waning years of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth century.

2. Emanuele Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico, o sia idea dell'arguta et ingeniosa elocutione che serve a tutta l'arte oratoria, lapidaria, et simbolica, esaminata co' principi del divino Aristotele* (Turin: Bartolomeo Zavatta, 1670), now an anastatic reprint (Savigliano: L'Artistica, 2000); Marco Boschini, *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, ed. Anna Pallucchini (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1966); the complete title is *La carta del navegar pitoresco, dialogo tra un senator venezian deletante, e un professor de pitura, soto nome d'Ecelenza e de Compare, compartì in oto venti, con i quali la nave veneziana vien conduta in l'alto mar dela Pitura, come assoluta dominante de quelo a confusion de chi non intende il bossolo dela calamita* (Venice: Baba, 1660). Unless otherwise noted, all further

references will be to the 2000 anastatic reprint of Tesauro's treatise (*CA*) and to the 1966 critical edition of Boschini's treatise (*CN*); all translations are mine.

3. We know that G. W. Leibniz, who so greatly influenced Baumgarten's thinking about the aesthetic, read and approved of Tesauro's treatise. The quintessential Baroque philosopher, Leibniz traveled through Italy in 1689–90. He was familiar with the work of Sforza Pallavicino and, above all, Marino, especially the *Galleria* and the *Lira*. See Giuseppe Alonzo, "La 'bibliotheca' italiana moderna di G. W. Leibniz," *Le forme e la storia* 5, no. 1 (2012): 55–70.

4. I borrow this term from Giuseppe Alonzo, *Periferia continua e senza punto: per una lettura continuista della poesia seicentesca* (Pisa: ETS, 2010). See also Francesco Guardiani, "Le polemiche secentesche intorno all'*Adone* del Marino," in *I capricci di Proteo: percorsi e linguaggi del Barocco, atti del convegno di Lecce, 23–26 ottobre 2000* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002), 177; Guardiani argues that the debate over Marino's poetry—particularly the *Adone*—was not only fierce but endured from the poet's death in 1625 until the founding of the Arcadian Academy in 1690, and thus characterizes a key dimension of the literary and artistic culture of this entire period in Italy.

5. Jon R. Snyder, *L'estetica del Barocco* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 21–22.

6. See, for instance, Christopher Braider, *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth: Hercules at the Crossroads* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 42: "The Baroque marks at once the apogee and the crisis of early modern visual culture."

7. Paula Findlen, "Agostino Scilla: A Baroque Painter in Pursuit of Science," in *Science in the Age of Baroque*, ed. Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, International Archives of the History of Ideas 208 (New York: Springer, 2013), 154.

8. Bastiano de' Rossi, ed., *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (Venice: Jacopo Sarzina, 1623), 485.

9. Galileo Galilei, *Istoria e dimostrazioni intorno alle macchie solari e loro accidenti comprese in tre lettere scritte all'illvstrissimo signor Marco Velseri* (Rome: G. Mascardi, 1613).

10. Filippo Baldinucci, *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* (Florence: Santi Franchi, 1681), http://baldinucci.sns.it/html/index.html: "I Pittori usano questa voce per esprimere la qualità d'alcuni disegni, ed alcuna volta anche pitture, fatte con istraordinaria facilità, e con un tale accordamento, e freschezza, senza molta matita o colore, e in tal modo che quasi pare, che ella non da mano d'Artefice, ma da per sè stessa sia apparita sul foglio o su la tela." Baldinucci was a member of the Accademia della Crusca.

11. See Philip Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 148–53.

12. Although owing much to the "artless art" of *sprezzatura* first described by Castiglione in *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*), the essentially irregular features of the *macchia* distinguish it from the diligently polished "perfection" of the courtier's art. On *sprezzatura* see Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 71–80.

13. Marco Boschini, *Breve istruzione*, premessa a *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziane* (1674), in *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, ed. Pallucchini, 750.

14. John A. Schuster, "What Was the Relation of Baroque Culture to the Trajectory of Early Modern Natural Philosophy?" in *Science in the Age of Baroque*, ed. Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, International Archives of the History of Ideas 208 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 28–30.

15. Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, "Baroque Modes and the Production of Knowledge," in *Science in the Age of Baroque*, 7. For an analogous approach to the interrelationship between science and religion in seventeenth-century Italy, see Eileen Reeves, "Kingdoms of Heaven: Galileo and Sarpi on the Celestial," *Representations* 105, no. 1 (2009): 61–84.

16. Boschini, *La carta del navegar pitoresco* (Venice: Baba, 1660), 559: "Ghe xè pitura vechia, e ghe xè moderna."

17. *CN*, 286.

18. *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* was subsequently reprinted in 1674 in Venice, but with only a few very minor changes to the text.

19. Tesauro calls the treatise "un Libro aperto" (*CA*, 740). More detailed discussions may be found in Monica Bisi, "Visione e invenzione: la conoscenza attraverso la metafora nel *Cannocchiale aristotelico*," *Studi secenteschi* 47 (2006): 57–87, now in *Il velo di Alcesti: metafora, dissimulazione e verità nell'opera di Emanuele Tesauro* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2011), 17–61, and Alessandro Benassi, "Lo 'scherzevole inganno': figure ingegnose e argutezza nel *Cannocchiale aristotelico* di Emanuele Tesauro," *Studi secenteschi* 47 (2006): 9–55.

20. "La Novità . . . genera maraviglia: la maraviglia, diletto: il diletto, applauso" (*CA*, 250).

21. See Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), figures 365–68, 372–73.

22. "La Metafora, tutti [gli obietti] à stretta li rinzeppa in un Vocabulo: & quasi in miraculoso modo gli ti fà travedere l'un dentro all'altro. Onde maggiore è il tuo diletto: nella maniera, che più curiosa & piacevol cosa è mirar molti obietti per un'istrafóro di perspettiva, che se gli originali medesimi successivamente ti venisser passando dinanzi agli occhi" (*CA*, 301).

23. I have elsewhere written in some depth, as have others, about Tesauro's complex theory of wit (argutezza), and for lack of space here must refer the reader to it for further information: see *L'estetica del Barocco*, 106–35.

24. The heraldic elephant with the motto *Infestus infestis* (hostile to the troublesome) was the device of the sixteenth-century duke of Savoy, Emmanuel Philibert, whose astute military and political leadership made the duchy one of the most important states in Italy. The other heraldic shield, displaying the motto *opportune* (timely) together with a centaur about to crush a crown beneath its hooves, refers to the 1588 seizure by Charles Emmanuel I, duke of Savoy, of the marquisate of Saluzzo from Henry III, King of France. See, for instance, Cesare Cantù, *Gli eretici d'Italia: discorsi storici* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 1866), 3:371n.

25. Galileo Galilei, N*ov-antiqua sanctissimorum patrum & probatorum theologorum doctrina de Sacrae Scripturae testimoniis, in conclusionibus mere naturalibus, quae sensatâ experientiâ, & necessariis demonstrationibus evinci possunt, temere non usurpandis* (Strasbourg: Elzevir, 1636).

26. Gal and Chen-Morris, "Baroque Modes and the Production of Knowledge," 7.

27. In Horace's satire, these "blemishes" are the birthmarks on his body. The established text of this poem, however, gives a slightly different reading than that used in the frontispiece: "Atqui si vitiis mediocribus ac mea paucis / mendosa est natura, alioqui recta, velut si / egregio inspersos reprendas corpore naevos" (*Satires* 1.6.65–67). Here is Neil Rudd's translation of this modern version of the text: "Yet if my faults are not too serious and not too many, / if my nature, apart from such blemishes, in other respects is sound / (just as on a handsome body you might notice a few moles)." See *The Satires of Horace and Persius*, trans. Neil Rudd, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 2005), 27.

28. "Et per contrario; di un'Huom savio e dotto in catedra; ma disformato e vile in parenza; disse un'altro: Questa è una figuraccia catroptica, da veder nel Cilindro. Alludendo a quelle figure, che in piano paion macchie; ma nello specchio Cilindrico, proportionate & belle si ci presentano" (*CA*, 581).

29. Lina Bolzoni, "Il 'libro figurato' del Seicento: due esempi," in *I capricci di Proteo: percorsi e linguaggi del Barocco: atti del convegno di Lecce, 23–26 ottobre 2000* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002), 482, points out that "not only does the reader become a spectator, but in relation to the literary work is also asked to adopt the new scientific and technical perspectives made possible by science and technology."

30. "Cioè lo Specchio CONICO; in cui quelle, che nella piana superficie paion macchie; unitamente riflettendo in alto, divengono perfette, & compostissime Figure" (*CA*, 677). It is worth adding here that the emblem of the

Solinghi is represented as being in the process of completion in the frontispiece: The image in the mirror (*omnis in unum*) appears to be missing nothing, yet Painting's brush is still working—or is finishing work at that very instant—on the anamorphic inscription itself.

31. "Nel cui centro accogliendosi le colorate Imagini, che fuor dello Specchio paiono informi e scontorte macchie; nel suo seno cristallino ricevono diritta e perfettissima forma." As cited in Valeria Merola, *La messinscena delle idee: Emanuele Tesauro e il "teatro di maraviglie"* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2008), 198.

32. See, for, instance, *CA*, 89–90: "Ma io non sò se Angelico ò Humano ingegno fù quello dell'Olandese, che pur' a' nostri giorni, con due *optici Specchietti*, quasi con due ale di vetro, portò la vista humana per una forata canna, la dove uccello non giunge. Con essi tragitta il mar senza vele: ti fà veder di presso le Navi, le Selve, & le Città, che fuggono l'arbitrio della pupilla: anzi volando al Cielo in un lampo; osserva le macchie nel Sole . . . & ciò che Iddio ci nascose, un picciol vetro ti rivela" ("but I don't know if the intellect of that Dutchman was angelic or human who, in our own day, with two small optical mirrors almost like two glass wings, by means of a tube with openings at both ends took human sight where birds cannot go. With these [mirrrors] the sea can be crossed without sails; they let you see up close ships, forests, and cities that are beyond the power of our pupils. Indeed, by flying to the heavens in a flash [the telescope] can view sunspots . . . and a small glass reveals to you that which God hid from us").

33. See *CA*, 679 for a brief narrative account of the arrival in Turin of this mirror.

34. "Quanto hà il mondo d'ingegnoso: ò è Iddio, ò è da Dio. Dipoi acciochè lo stile della Divina Maestà non senta punto del triviale: ma da nobili figure si sollievi inguisa, che la sublimità generi maraviglia, & la maraviglia veneratione" (*CA*, 59). "Whatever wit the world has either is God or is from God. Hence so that the Divine Majesty's style has nothing trivial about it, it should arise from noble figures in such a way that the sublimity generates wonder, and the wonder reverence."

35. "Così gli stessi Nomi si possono applicare agli Obietti Dipinti ò Sculti: & alle Attioni significanti alcun Concetto Arguto: lequali chiamar si possono Attioni & Obietti Figurati, Metaforici, & Arguti" (*CA*, 8).

36. In fact, in his first letter to Welser Galileo has to explain at some length that the sunspots are not an optical illusion or trick produced by the telescope. See Galileo Galilei, *Istoria e dimostrazioni intorno alle macchie solari e loro accidenti comprese in tre lettere scritte all'illustrissimo signor Marco Velseri* (Rome: Giacomo Mascardi, 1613), 11–12.

37. "Tutte queste, oltre mill'altre, son pur Figure eleganti, & vivaci Argutie dell'ingegnosa Natura. Peroche, sicome le Argutie de' Poeti si chiaman Fiori: così i Fiori della Natura, si chiamano Argutie" (*CA*, 73).

38. Significantly, the term *artista* never appears in *Il cannochiale aristotelico*, though *arte* is extensively employed, and we can find many occurrences of *poeta*, *pittore*, and so on.

39. "Un Ingegno sveglierebbe l'altro, come più legne unite fan maggior fiamma, che separate" (*CA*, 548).

40. Wit defies the laws of nature, even bringing the dead back to life: "Le cose Mutole parlano: le insensate vivono: le morte risorgono: le Tombe, i Marmi, le Statue; da questa incantatrice degli animi, ricevendo voce, spirito, e movimento; con gli Huomini ingegnosi, ingegnosamente discorrono. Insomma, tanto solamente è morto, quanto dall'Argutezza non è avvivato" (*CA*, 2). "Mute things speak; inanimate things come alive; the dead return to life; tombs, stone-carvings and statues receive voice, spirit and motion from this enchantress of human minds; they speak wittily with men of wit. In short, anything is dead only inasmuch as it is not revived by wit."

41. *CN*, 9–10.

42. See *CN*, 76–79 for an account of Velázquez's 1651 visit to Venice.

43. Philip Sohm, *Pittoresco: Marco Boschini, His Critics, and Their Critiques of Painterly Brushwork in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 188n, points out that a number of artistic travelogues had appeared in print earlier in the seventeenth century, starting with Zuccaro's *Passaggio per l'Italia* (1608).

44. See Roberto Longhi, "Letteratura artistica e letteratura nazionale," *Paragone: rivista di arte figurativa e letteratura* 3 (1952): 12. See also Sohm, *Pittoresco*, and *Style*, 144–64.

45. Marino was the author of the rambling, monumental verse work titled *Adonis* (1623), 40,000-plus lines in length.

46. See the still useful essay on Boschini's poetry by Lucia Lopresti (aka Anna Banti), "Marco Boschini scrittore d'arte del secolo XVII," *L'Arte* 22 (1919): 13–33.

47. "Mi, che son venezian in Venezia, e che parlo di Pitori veneziani, ho da andarme a stravestir?" (*CN*, 8).

48. "Vuolla che comenzemo a zavariar / Sora la perfezion de sta Pitura? / Lengua mortal non ghe sarà in Natura, / Che possa de sto quadro rasonar. / Questo xe quel Tesoro, che no gh'è / Da far el parangon in tuto il Mondo" (*CN*, 284). "Do you want us to start to rant / About the perfection of this painting? / There is no human language in existence, / That could serve to discourse about this picture. / This is that very treasure for which there is nothing / Comparable in all the world."

49. Sohm, *Style*, 144. Compare *CN*, 7: "Insuma la Natura insegna a pugnar per la Patria." Maarten Delbeke provides an invaluable summary of the seventeenth-century philosopher Sforza Pallavicino's contribution to this same ferment in *The Art of Religion: Sforza Pallavicino and Art Theory in Bernini's Rome* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2012). For an introduction to some of the key thinkers of High Baroque aesthetics outside of art theory, see my *L'estetica del Barocco*.

50. See Paula Findlen, "Agostino Scilla: A Baroque Painter in Pursuit of Science," in *Science in the Age of Baroque*, 148.

51. "[Overo de veder tanti Satrapi] in la sedia dela rigidezza a formarme processo adosso *de vita*, *et moribus* davanti al Tribunal d'Apolo, e dela Dea Pitura, col acusarme de *crimine laesae Maiestatis*, adusendo che abia opinion de Poeta e de Pitor" (*CN*, 6).

52. Anna Pallucchini, "Introduzione" to *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, lxxiii: "Non c'è nella letteratura italiana nulla di affine all'opera boschiniana."

53. "La Pitura non è come le altre Virtù, che per via de libri se possa adotrinarse, né adotorarse; però me inzegnerò de star saldo più che poderò sul ton de l'Arte, senza fare el Filosofo" (*CN*, 8). "Painting is not like the other virtues, which one could learn about or master through books; I will try to hold as fast as I can to the tone of art, without playing the philosopher."

54. G. B. Marino, *La Galeria* (1620; Venice: Ciotti, 1635).

55. It is worth noting here that in the first decade of the 1600s Marino was in Venice long enough to have seen many of these paintings.

56. *Maniera* is a widely employed but essentially untranslatable arthistorical term originating in the sixteenth century in Italy. Perhaps the most useful, if periphrastic, translation into English is S. J. Freedberg's "stylized style." See S. J. Freedberg, "Observations on the Painting of the *Maniera*," *Art Bulletin* 47 (1965): 187–97.

57. Sohm, *Style*, 145.

58. Ibid., 147.

59. Sohm, *Pittoresco*, 153.

60. From this point on I follow Boschini's preferred spelling (*machia*) of this term in his treatise.

61. For a superb and lucid exposition of Benjamin's notion of the constellation, see Peter Osborne and Matthew Charles, "Walter Benjamin," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/benjamin/.

62. Sohm, *Style*, 158–59. I refer the reader once more to Delbeke, *Art of Religion*, for a detailed treatment of Pallavicino's writings.

63. Sohm, *Style*, 152.

64. "In suma la Maniera Veneziana / Porta con sì l'istessa libertà, / Che porta ognun che vive in sta Città / Patria, che tien l'obligacion lontana" (*CN*, 98).

65. Boschini seems to employ the term "simulacro" here in the sense of a "monument" rather than a "statue." See, for instance, all three seventeenth-century editions of the Accademia della Crusca's *Vocabolario* (1612, 1623, 1691).

66. "E si come Venezia è una Pitura / De pulizia, che tuti, chi la vede, / Come fu Marte i resta presi in rede, / Schiavi di così nobile fatura, / Così quel'artificio, che deriva / Da l'istessa Città, dai so peneli, / Fa so schiavo in caena tuti queli, / Che sta Pitura osserva cusì viva. / Qua ghe xe la minera, el fonte e 'l fiume, / Che produse, ha produto, o produrà / Coi peneli la istessa verità" (*CN*, 28).

67. "E qua se messe in tola la Pitura, / Cosa de nostro genio e simpatia; / Virtù stimà da tuti e riveria, / Emula e concorente de Natura, / Anzi vera reforma artificiosa, / Che supera il dasseno in molte parte, / E reduse la forma con tal arte, / Che de Natura l'è più graciosa" (*CN*, 24).

68. *CN*, 327–28. For the sake of clarity and concision I have set my translation of Boschini's verse into prose here (the original passage is too lengthy to include in these notes).

69. There is still disagreement among scholars over the authenticity of this famous letter (*pace* Panofsky). The passage mentioned (*CN*, 554), not coincidentally, also treats the debate over the relative merits of painting and sculpture.

70. See, for instance, Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespearean Beauty Marks," in *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 18–48, who argues that the Bard of Avon's plays and poems mark a turn away from the Renaissance ideal of featureless, flawless beauty and toward a modern aesthetic sense of the body's distinctive, singular, and indelible marks of identity—a development that finds an extreme endpoint here, inasmuch as, for Boschini, in true painting there is in point of fact nothing other than these marks.

71. Pallucchini rightly points out that this anecdote would seem to be drawn from Galileo's letter to Cigoli, which supports the superiority of painting (*CN*, 327n).

72. See Richard Scholar, *The Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi in Early Modern Europe: Encounters with a Certain Something* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Stefano Velotti, *Storia filosofica dell'ignoranza* (Bari: Laterza, 2003), 103–18.

73. Sohm, *Style*, 148–50.

74. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), lxxvii.

75. See, for instance, Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Aberrations: An Essay on the Legend of Forms*, trans. Richard Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). The artist and naturalist Agostino Scilla, in his remarkable *La vana speculazione disingannata dal senso* (Naples: Andrea Colicchia, 1670), 50, criticizes this vision of nature's artistry while employing the term *macchia*: "Appunto come veggiamo in un muro rustico, ed antico, nel quale (e nelle nuvole ancora) possiamo determinare figure umane, animali varij, e cose infinite; ma sarebbe pazzia, così l'affermarle perfetti disegni delle cose, che rappresentano, come anche l'averle per impressioni ivi insinuate per altre simili cose, essendo elleno realmente faccende, ed operazioni del caso, favorite dalla nostra determinazione, la qual più ad una, che ad un'altra cosa le rassomiglia. Non ho veduto (ancorché, come dissi, ne abbia osservato infinite) alcuna gioia ad un tal segno puntuale, che di essa si possa dubitare, che sia fattura dell'arte, secondo l'intenzione di Cardano. Dicasi egli quel, che si vuole, della sua agata rappresentante Galba l'Imperadore, che io non lo credo. Dirò sì bene, che può essere accaduta in quella pietra qualche macchia, che più ad un volto umano, che ad un'albero rassomigliasse; ma che sia stata delineata con tanta aggiustatezza, ch'esprimesse Galba? Oibò." "Exactly as can be seen in an old country wall in which (and in the clouds as well) we may make out human figures, various animals, and an infinite number of things. It would however be madness to consider these to be perfect drawings of the things that they represent, just as it would be to think that these are impressions made there by other similar things, inasmuch as they are in truth the outcomes and workings of chance, favored by our determination that they more closely resemble one thing than another. I have not seen (although, as I said, I have observed an infinite number of them) a single jewel displaying any precise indication that there could be any doubt that it is the result of art, according to Cardano's definition. Let him say what he wishes about his agate representing the Emperor Galba, but I don't believe it. I will certainly say that some stain or blotch [macchia] looking more like a human face than a tree could have occurred in that stone; but that it was shaped with such skill to make it look like Galba? Come on." See also Paula Findlen, "Agostino Scilla: a Baroque Painter in Pursuit of Science," in *Science in the Age of Baroque*, 119–55.

76. "Un cervel più teribile de quelo / Non fu mai visto certo in la Pitura / . . . Perché el so far è sempre stà lontan / Da l'uso e forma de tuti i Pitori" (*CN*, 223).

77. The contemporary painter-naturalist Scilla takes a jaundiced view of such claims.

78. Lopresti's 1919 essay, although lamentably devoid of any contextual perspective on Baroque aesthetic thought, makes this point as well: "[Boschini] would lend himself very well to supporting the most extreme modern aesthetic hypotheses, such as in his assertion that nature imitates the Venetian *maniera*" (31).

79. "L'è 'l decoro del Mondo; l'è un tesoro, / Che in si contien Natura e l'Artificio" (*CN*, 25).

80. "Oh strada mile volte gloriosa, / Che rapresenta superficialmente / Con machie de colori e vaghe tente / La Natura! oh maniera artificiosa!" (*CN*, 330–31). "O road whose glory is thousandfold, / That represents with surfaces, / With blotches of color and lovely shades, / Nature! o artful *maniera*!" In using the term *artificios[o]* Boschini plays here, as he so often does, with the semantic matrix enmeshing art-artful-artificial.

81. "El più bel quadro del Tentoreto: falo: digo del Mondo" (*CN*, 284).

82. *CN*, 285–86. For the sake of clarity and concision I have set my translation of Boschini's verse into prose here (the original passage is too lengthy to include).

83. See note 11 of this essay.

84. See Pallucchini, *CN*, 211n.

Goya: Secularization and the Aesthetics of Belief

Anthony J. Cascardi

A great many accounts of Goya's career begin with an outline of his beginnings as a young painter in Zaragoza under the tutelage of José Luzán, his travels to Italy, and his subsequent return to Spain, where he enjoyed the support of his brother-in-law Francisco Bayeu, in Zaragoza and in Madrid. In Madrid, the neoclassicist painter Antón Raphael Mengs, then official court painter, reigned supreme in the world of official art and served as the de facto arbiter of taste. These early years are treated primarily for their biographical interest, and with but a few exceptions (including some surprising images in Goya's Italian sketchbook that I have occasion to mention below) there is little reason to regard them otherwise. Goya's career as an artist of consequence begins with his first court commissions—with the paintings he made between 1775 and 1792 as "cartoons" for tapestries that were to hang in various royal residences—once his formidable talent had already gained some recognition. From there it is common, and not entirely mistaken, to chart the evolution of a body of work that grows increasingly difficult and more modern as it grows increasingly dark.

For one understanding of Goya's work, the tapestry cartoons are indeed an important place to begin, not least because they model many of the

subjects that Goya returns to with a far more critical eye over the course of his later career. But there is more to Goya's work than the story of an artist's darkening view of the world can tell, and more also than can be explained in terms of Goya's refusal of the obligatory cheerfulness of his tapestry commissions on occasions when he was free to work as he wished. I say this in full view of Goya's own statements about the importance of invention in art, both in his announcement for the *Caprichos* in the *Diario de Madrid* on 6 February 1799 ("inventadas y grabadas al agua fuerte por Don Francisco Goya [invented and engraved in aquatint by Don Francisco Goya]") and in his earlier speech to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, where he famously proclaimed that "there are no rules in painting." As he went on to say on that occasion, it is less important to adhere to convention than to recognize talent and to allow it to flourish freely (to "reward and protect he who excels in [the arts]; to hold in esteem the true Artist, to allow free rein to the genius of students who wish to learn them, without oppression, nor imposition of methods").[1] This statement is largely about Goya's aversion to academic pedagogy and makes sense in the context of the academy's expressed interest in reform. But there is something beyond the endorsement of raw talent and unstructured learning that needs to be taken into account when gauging Goya's commitment to invention. To say that the *Caprichos* are invented means of course that Goya did not have prior models for the images. But equally important to grasp is the way in which Goya himself began to confront a series of inherited assumptions regarding the making of images, assumptions of the most fundamental sort. His works often incorporate particular views of the world as part of their thematic content; that is one basis for their critical work, and it is especially important in works that address the social world, including the *Caprichos*. But in addition to this, I want to suggest, Goya came relatively early in his career to reflect on the means by which any view of the world, including any view put forward under the guise of art, is constructed—invented—rather than "natural," and invented in ways that are often concealed.

This awareness may well have been enabled by the fact that eighteenth-century perspective was not as normalizing as one might assume. Yet it was precisely the invented and constructed nature of the work of art that was largely concealed by the three traditions that provided the most important contexts for Goya's early works: the tradition of religious painting, largely neoclassical in its formalism; the tradition of picturesque naturalism that forms the background for many of the tapestry cartoons; and the tradition of late baroque illusionism, best exemplified by Tiepolo's large-scale

frescoes. The tapestry cartoons seem to accept as normative the world as it presents itself to the members of established society. The point of departure for the cartoons is the normative ideal of a transparent gaze, even though it is one that Goya began to question almost from the start. Hence one prominent Goya scholar, Valeriano Bozal, could write of the picturesque background of these works that "the painter . . . ought to paint as if the image were the direct product of his gaze—an attentive, interested, and pleasant gaze—which, rather than eliminate liveliness, valorizes it."[2] My argument in what follows here suggests that Goya did not take the image-space of secular art for granted but in fact understood it as a construction, and perhaps even as a fantasy, sustained on painting's side by techniques of sculptural modeling and coloration inherited from the traditions of religious art and baroque illusionism. The contrast between "sacred" and "secular" domains, and, more important, the idea of a passage from one domain to the other, leads to a recognition that there are contradictions within secular space, the most important being that it seems never to be fully demystified.

To understand something about how Goya came to reckon with the constructedness of the image, I proceed with a discussion of his religious paintings and a related body of his works that poses questions about the power of belief in aesthetics and otherwise. The main body of Goya's work belongs to the secular tradition, but he seems to have understood that secular space had to be won before it could be called into question: It was won through a process of secularization that involved, among other things, a recognition of the necessary tensions between aesthetic plausibility and religious belief. With this came a self-consciousness about such things as perspective, composition, and the beholder's standpoint, all of which reveal themselves as innerworldly constructions, not as divinely ordained for nature. Goya seems to have been deeply engaged with such questions despite the fact that, roughly from Alberti onward, the reigning principles of image-making assumed the naturalness of a secular point of view. As Norman Bryson pointed out in *Image and Gaze*, Albertian perspective served to normativize the set of techniques by which painting could support the fiction of a "natural standpoint."[3] To understand that the "naturalness" of the beholder's standpoint is itself constructed implied something quite different from the acceptance of Albertian principles. In Goya (though certainly not in Goya alone) the representation of a natural-looking image carries with it an awareness that the image was itself a product of invention and that it has a social and material basis. It is hardly surprising to see Goya move rapidly away from the picturesque naturalness that informs

the tapestry cartoons, since that aesthetic was designed to conceal these very facts.

Moreover, the process of secularization is one that seems never to be complete. Various forces that may be associated with the spirit seem to persist, in many forms, even within an apparently autonomous, fully secular space. The spirit world has a demonic afterlife that invariably throws the secular world off-kilter, reminding it of its own precarious status as a contradictory collection of provisional and sometimes obscure, even irrational, practices and beliefs. As Goya was also quick to recognize, this was something that the members of secular society seemed surprisingly unable to see. The persistence of "official" religion within an increasingly secular world tells only part of the story; equally important is the way in which the winged demons of desire and self-deceit reoccupy the place of pretty angels, or in which sublime miracle scenes present themselves as the occasions of bloody horror.

A work that can provide a particularly insightful point of entry into some of these questions is the fresco ceiling in the church of San Antonio de la Florida in Madrid (Figure 1). Goya completed the fresco in 1798, when he was already fifty-two, then deaf for six years, and at a high point in his artistic powers and prestige. The date of the work is of interest because it places the fresco as contemporaneous with the *Caprichos*, which were executed in 1797–98 and published in 1799. His success as a painter of cartoons for royal tapestries had earned him a significant reputation. There is speculation that the commission for the work in San Antonio may have been obtained through the intercession of one of his most prominent "enlightened" friends, Jovellanos, but Goya was by this time sufficiently well established to have secured it on his own. On the central dome of the church Goya represents the climactic scene from the key miracle in the life of Saint Anthony of Padua. The scene as Goya renders it is significant both because it is a secular setting of a miraculous event and because the work poses important questions about perspective, construction, and belief in painting.

According to popular legend and church accounts, including one that had just recently been translated into Spanish,[4] the "background" story of the miracle is as follows. Anthony of Padua received news that his father, in Lisbon, had been accused of murder. In response, Anthony requested permission to take leave from his monastery in order to intercede on his father's behalf. The story has it that the future saint made a miraculous flight to Lisbon and, once there, became the central actor in a dramatic courtroom scene. Confronting the trial judge, the saint demanded that the

Figure 1. Francisco Goya, *Miracle of Saint Anthony*, *San Antonio de la Florida*. Partial view. 1798. Royal Chapel of Saint Anthony of La Florida.

victim's corpse be produced for questioning. Turning then to the corpse, Anthony asked the dead man to say for certain whether or not his father was the murderer. The corpse rose to reply "no," and then sank back into his coffin, while the assembled courtroom crowd was seized with fear and awe.

The central dome on which the miracle of Saint Anthony is painted (some 5.5m in diameter) is only a part of the overall decoration of the church of San Antonio. The central dome is flanked by four spandrels and four archivolts, where Goya painted angels who appear to "reveal" the miracle scene by retracting curtains (Figure 2). But these angels seem incongruous, if not irrelevant to the way in which Goya handles the image on the central dome. They are not set within an illusionistic version of heavenly space, as conventions of religious painting might have required, but are rather decorative ancillaries to a secular scene. The images inhabit different aesthetic regimes: The decorative angels in their peripheral, relatively constrained theatrical spheres, and the miracle in a central, open-air

space. The two are scarcely in visual dialogue at all; indeed, the angels seem oddly to reveal a terrestrial scene that rises physically *above* them. One of the best commentators on Goya's religious paintings, Fred Licht, remarks that there is something odd about the arrangement, something "sardonically heavy-handed in the way [these] shabby and rather dusty theatre-prop wings are stuck to the shoulder blades of Goya's angels, just as there is something awkwardly prosaic in the fall of the draperies, which no longer flutter as if animated by the free winds of the heavens but fall to the ground like badly hemmed costumes."[5]

Within the central dome itself, the sky above the miracle is left virtually blank. Moreover, the scene of the miracle forms only a part of the large central dome. The greater part of the dome is devoted to a series of figures who form a circle around its perimeter. What is often said about

Figure 2. Francisco Goya, *Miracle of Saint Anthony, San Antonio de la Florida*. Detail. 1798. Royal Chapel of Saint Anthony of La Florida.

these figures is quite true, as far as it goes: that Goya removed the miracle of Saint Anthony from the context of the religious sublime so as to concentrate on a broad cross-section of "ordinary" Madrid society. This is a work that largely refuses the aesthetics of religious wonder even though it is a miracle scene. Notwithstanding the dramatic gestures of a few of the figures, which recall the theatricality of baroque imagery, with all its rhetorical emphases, this is a work in which a great many internal spectators seem to pay little attention to the miraculous event. Moreover, the circular composition makes it almost impossible to imagine the image as having a magnetic, visual center. As I suggest below, all these factors raise questions about the power of belief, both in relation to the implied force of the miracle and in relation to the task of painting.

Given the historical context and situation of the fresco, the incorporation of a group of figures drawn from contemporary society is hardly surprising. The work is secular in this ordinary sense. From its humble beginnings in the sixteenth century as little more than a devotional shrine, the church of San Antonio de la Florida had a history as the people's place of worship. Legend has it that the simple sixteenth-century shrine was frequented by ordinary women who would stop there to pray on their way to the Manzanares River to do the daily washing. Some critics have remarked that women of this type figure directly in Goya's painting; the suggestion is that the work was meant to acknowledge, if not to flatter, the ordinary churchgoers of Goya's era. The edifice near the Manzanares where Goya painted the frescoes toward the very end of the eighteenth century was the result of numerous reconstructions and displacements on the site of the original shrine. A second chapel had been built, and the amplified structure was elevated to the status of church. Subsequently, the architect Churriguera was commissioned to construct a permanent and elaborate structure out of brick. Then, during the course of various improvements to the city of Madrid under Charles III, plans were made to improve the route on which that church stood, and so a new one was ordered built, still respecting the original place and traditions of worship, even while the structure was conceived on a substantially larger scale. The resulting neoclassical edifice where Goya painted his frescoes was opened in 1798, though not consecrated until 1799, a year after Goya had finished the work. He was working among the people who worshiped there, just after the builders had completed the construction of the space.

In his landmark study of the frescoes, Hans Rothe described the scene of the central dome as a "popular gathering" ("festejo popular").[6] More recently, Robert Hughes characterized it as "vernacular."[7] The scene

impresses both because of the diversity of the individual types represented in it and because of the intensity with which they are rendered. There is energy in the brushwork and in the handling of the paint itself (a topic to which I return below), as well as a power of insight into the differences among social types that goes well beyond convention. The women who are grouped in constellations of twos and threes appear to be young *majas* (stylish women); a haggard *celestina* (go-between) stands nearby. There is also an older man beside the saint (who some speculate may be the accused man, Anthony's father), as well as a younger woman who attends the miracle scene at close range (the saint's mother, perhaps), a toothless beggar, an aged man with a white beard, shadowy figures fleeing in the background, a blind man with a staff, a boy who straddles the painted railing in trompe l'oeil fashion (Figure 3) and, at a point in the circle directly opposite the saint, a figure who stands up high on a ledge, his hands outstretched and

Figure 3. Francisco Goya, *Miracle of Saint Anthony, San Antonio de la Florida*. Detail. 1798. Royal Chapel of Saint Anthony of La Florida

raised as if in wonder or awe, or in imitation of a priestly gesture that rhymes with the figure of the woman who faces the saint directly. He has been dubbed the "ecstatic one"; his secular clothing and his mystical posture seem to demonstrate the effects of spiritual forces working at a distance within the secular world.

But other details seem purposely to avoid spiritual connotation. Several critics have compared the white cloth that Goya drapes over the railing to the banners that might be seen hanging over the wall of a bullring (Figure 4). And yet there is no attempt to set this scene in any particular location. The central scene and the surrounding figures are placed neither in Lisbon, where legend has it that the miracle took place, nor in Madrid, where these figures belong socially. (If a bullring is the suggestion, the scene could just as easily be imagined as set in either place.) The background of the image is a landscape with rocks that rise up as bulks of color, verging on sheer abstraction. There is a tree, whose form is vaguely reminiscent of the earlier tapestry cartoons, especially in the way in which the limbs and leaves are outlined; but this tree bends to cover the curvature of the dome, not with the wind. The sky is vacant of anything heavenly; indeed, the space that rises up to the central cupola is remarkably bereft of allusion of any sort.

Figure 4. Francisco Goya, *Miracle of Saint Anthony*, *San Antonio de la Florida*. Detail. 1798. Royal Chapel of Saint Anthony of La Florida.

The principal element in the foreground of the work is the painted railing, which is set significantly above the lower edge of the dome, as if to "contain" the entire spectacle. But from what, or from whom are these figures being held back? What space does the railing divide? The effect is theatrical and wholly secular. "Above" and "below" seem to have no spiritual meanings here. Nor is this railing anything like the architectural elements of so many painted baroque ceilings, which help sustain the illusion of a heavenly space, often pictured in the form of a sky with billowy clouds where weightless figures reel and tumble, relatively free of care. Goya invokes, but mostly in order to invert and finally to refuse, the kind of illusionism that would make the painted figures in this fresco appear to defy the laws of gravity by floating in space. The posture of the risen victim suggests that it is gravity, as much as death itself, that the miracle must overcome. This miracle scene is indeed set on a *terrestrial* plane, and yet it is paradoxically located *overhead* in relation to the spectator standing in the church. This paradox is confronted directly in the composition of the image. Consider the boy who has climbed on top of the railing and straddles it. One cannot easily say where this boy would land if he were to fall. Indeed, the image as a whole seems to refuse any analysis that would be coherent both with the figures within it and with the beholder's position beneath it. All this goes to say that the narrative of the secularized miracle stands in tension with the visual space in which it is constructed and with the standpoint from which it must be viewed. Those, it seems, are among the irreducible aesthetic facts it presents.

As a point of comparison, consider Tiepolo's fresco ceilings. In the course of his book *Tiepolo Pink*, Roberto Calasso described these works as "airy and intoxicating." This is quite true: It is precisely their airiness that makes Tiepolo's frescoes seem so invulnerable to doubt. "The sweeping range, the invincible sense of lightness, a coefficient of antigravity"[8] make them part of a visual world that counts on principles of belief that simply do not hold in Goya's work. How else, other than by an aesthetics of belief, might one explain the exotic allegorical representations of Asia, Africa, America, and Europe in Tiepolo's vast fresco ceiling for the Treppenhaus of the Residenz of the prince-bishops of Würzburg? (Figure 5). And how else except by an aesthetics of belief might one explain Tiepolo's many images of religious apparitions and secular apotheoses—of the Pisani family, of Aeneas, of the Barbaro family, and, in the Royal Palace in Madrid, of Spain itself? All these works rely on a form of belief that allows Tiepolo to fashion illusionistic spaces that would be utterly implausible on virtually any other terms.

Figure 5. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Allegory of the Planets and Continents*. 1752. Oil on canvas, 73 × 54 ⅞ in. (185.4 × 139.4 cm). Würzburg Residenz.

In painting the frescoes for San Antonio, Goya would certainly have had Tiepolo in mind, not least because Tiepolo had painted what was then the most important fresco in Madrid, the ceiling of the throne room of the Royal Palace (1764, Figure 6). Although it may sound surprising to say so, Tiepolo was in many ways both a more secular artist than Goya—secular sometimes to the point of pagan in his adherence to the mythological world—*and* more of a believer, at least in matters aesthetic. Indeed, the grounds of that "belief" remained surprisingly intact even among painters who were aware, through Alberti, of the mechanics of perspective. (The Renaissance painter Uccello, for example, found something miraculous in perspective.) To the extent that his large frescoes convey a buoyant faith in the subjects they treat—whether allegorical, epic, or religious in nature— that faith finds its aesthetic supports in the way that Tiepolo manages the use of color and natural light. Indeed, there are specific effects of light that depend in crucial ways on the particular interiors for which his works were created. The seeming naturalness of the light was one way that Tiepolo could manage to render otherwise improbable and exotic subjects with such apparent ease. In his most successful works, the natural light creates a context for the display of bodies and forms that in turn produces a

Figure 6. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Glory of Spain*. 1762–66. 2,700 × 1,000 cm. Throne Room, Palacio Real, Madrid.

remarkable equality among figures of all types—angels, heroes, gods, and kings all alike. As Calasso remarked, in this world of light "the ecclesiastics and the aristocratic families, the courts and the dynasties all move away. They become so many pretexts. So what is left, then? The pure exhibition of the world, with all its apparatus of ceremonies and fatuousness"[9]—and,

one might add, without the contradictions that Goya found impossible to ignore in such compositions.

Consider again the enormous Treppenhaus ceiling, said to be the largest secular ceiling fresco in all of Europe. The exoticism associated with Asia, Africa, and America is scarcely diminished by the more prosaic imagery that Europe is accorded. Moreover, the painted light circulates freely throughout the entire work, in part because the natural light of the remarkable Treppenhaus allowed for it. Tiepolo's fresco for the throne room in Madrid, *The Glory of Spain*, was by contrast substantially less compelling in its use of light, in part because the natural light in the space was far less supple. As Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall remarked,

> [Tiepolo] could work with mobile, structured light of many types, even when it came to quite intractable forms. What Tiepolo could not work with was inert light. In the huge Throne Room in Madrid, for example, the ambient lighting for *The Glory of Spain* is a morose and single-track affair from deep-set windows low down on one side only. . . . One of the things that defeated the attempt to rejuvenate subject matter from his earlier years was clearly the limp site lighting.[10]

It is altogether possible, even likely, that Goya had seen Tiepolo's throne room ceiling before he painted the San Antonio frescoes. Goya had served as painter to the king (*Pintor del Rey*) since 1786, where he was employed along with Ramón Bayeu to make the cartoons for the Royal Tapestry Works. As of 1789 Goya was court painter. (He was named first court painter the year after the San Antonio frescoes were completed.) If Goya had indeed seen the ceiling in the throne room, as seems likely to have been the case, then it is entirely possible that the disparity between what Tiepolo wanted to achieve with effects of light in *The Glory of Spain* and what he was actually able to accomplish may have helped Goya consolidate whatever doubts he might already have had about proceeding with a fresco according to the conventions that Tiepolo epitomized. Without the play of light to lend a semblance of naturalness to such implausible compositions as *The Glory of Spain*, Tiepolo's conventions could seem improbable or absurd. A critical intelligence such as Goya's would have easily been led to question them. Manet later referred to them as "boring."[11]

To return to Goya's frescoes: The railing that girds the scene of the central dome of San Antonio is but one of several elements that pose problems for determining the most fundamental things about the image, including the perspective from which it asks to be understood. What form of aesthetic intelligence does it require of the beholder? To concentrate

on the different groups of figures within the image, notwithstanding their fascinating and powerful social typology, may obscure some of the larger enigmas of the work, including those of perspective and composition. These are the means through which Goya came to confront the question of what it meant—of what it meant for painting as an art—to represent a miracle within the context of the contemporary secular world. The principles of visual perspective, which are innerworldly, stand at odds with the very idea of a miracle, which requires formidable powers of imagination, not to say belief, to support the idea of an efficacious spiritual force acting in the human world. This was a question that Goya was to address in numerous other works, including the night visions of the *Caprichos*, his images of truth and time, various scenes of witches, and his enigmatic architectural projects. In those works he raises the question of whether a secular perspective of any kind can finally account for everything that a critical intelligence needs to engage in art. In the San Antonio frescoes the question is whether the presentation of a miracle to a group of ordinary *madrileños* can also make itself intelligible to the beholder of the painting, who stands in a position—both literally and figuratively—that lies outside the work and that seems to be irreconcilable with it. I note that the paradox of the beholder's position in this work is fundamentally different from the one that Michael Fried describes as significantly modern in relation to Courbet's large breakthrough works, such as the *Burial at Ornans*.[12] There, the composition virtually impels the beholder into its space, creating a powerful sense of visual incorporation, while the painting includes a figure who mirrors the posture of the external beholder.

With two significant exceptions—the frescoes for the dome of the Basilica del Pilar in Zaragoza done in 1772 and 1780, and a *Burial of Christ* of 1797—Goya's religious paintings prior to the San Antonio frescoes did not raise such questions. Many of those works are conceived within a framework of belief that is at once religious and aesthetic; their adherence to artistic convention is consistent with what might be thought of as Goya's precritical stance. Wonder could be integrated unproblematically into these works in part because they confront the spectator with few questions and make relatively few visual demands. Indeed, the representation of wonder within them seems to relieve the beholder of most intellectual or affective challenges by so easily accommodating the beholder's gaze. So too the principles of perspective and the conventions of composition support the sacred context that these early religious works presuppose. Among the works in question are the paintings for the Charterhouse of the Aula Dei just outside Zaragoza, the small *Burial of Christ* (also painted

in his Zaragoza years, now in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid), the portraits of the four Doctors of the Church (Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory, and Saint Jerome) done just before the frescoes in San Antonio, and the work commissioned by the Count of Floridablanca for a side altar in the church of San Francisco el Grande in Madrid showing San Bernardino of Siena preaching before Alfonso of Aragón. These works are sustained by an aesthetic of belief that works through the conventions of religious painting; they rely on the use of narrative forms, on sculptural modeling, and on effects of color, in order to lend a sense of depth and dimension and, especially in the case of the portraits, of "liveness," to their subjects.

Among Goya's religious works in Zaragoza were the seven large paintings he did in oil on dry plaster (rather than as frescoes) for the Charterhouse of the Carthusian Monks, the Aula Dei. Granted, the works have been severely compromised because of the deterioration of the surface of the walls; subsequent efforts at restoration amounted to the repainting of large portions of them. But the subject matter and narrative form of the paintings tell much, nonetheless. These are all New Testament stories: the Annunciation to Joachim, the Birth of the Virgin, the Betrothal of the Virgin, the Visitation, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Circumcision. They are all rendered according to neoclassical norms for the treatment of narrative subjects in art. Architectural elements within these paintings provide a secure visual orientation for the spectator, as they also seem to do for the figures within each of the scenes. (It is by contrast remarkable how Goya uses the architectural element of the railing in the San Antonio fresco to circumscribe the scene and to render it precarious.) In one of the Aula Dei works, the *Betrothal of the Virgin* (Figure 7), the figures gesture in the rhetorical ways that were associated with the style of Jacques Louis David, whose works were known in Spain.

But in Goya's early religious paintings such gestures have the effect of ignoring the presence of the beholder rather than indicating it, not so much by denying the beholder as by unquestioningly presupposing the stance of a believing spectator.[13] In contrast to the dome of San Antonio, the images in the Aula Dei accept as unproblematic the elemental fact that they would be viewed frontally. Moreover, they achieve coherence as a group of narrative scenes, much as Goya's tapestry cartoons make most sense when understood as an ensemble in the context of the various rooms for which they were planned.[14]

As critics have noted, the sheer scale of the Aula Dei paintings also meant that there was more space on the walls for Goya to cover than might

Figure 7. Francisco Goya, *Betrothal of the Virgin*. 1774. Oil on plaster, 306 × 790 cm. Aula Dei, Zaragoza.

rightly be occupied by any of the central scenes they treat.[15] His recourse was to add background landscapes, folds of drapery, and incidental structures of various types (steps, pedestals, platforms, etc.) in order to make up the difference. In San Antonio, by contrast, Goya transformed the curved picture plane on which the main action was represented into a vast social "canvas" in the round. Above the internal spectators is a landscape and a sky that draw the eye dizzyingly toward an empty nothingness; the landscape anticipates passages in some of the later works in which Goya all but abandons figuration altogether. This is a space that "reads" as if governed from above by a final vacancy, bereft of any forces that might carry the miracle worker or his father heavenward. The work as a whole derives power from the sheer visual drama of the circular composition and from the steep curvature of the dome, which terminates in a hollow central cupola. Indeed, Goya seems in the San Antonio frescoes to have been responding to the power of a vacant space—to its ability to suggest the emptiness of a context that had once been filled with the signs and effects of religious belief.

These features of the San Antonio frescoes are even more remarkable if one considers them in contrast to the relative conventionality of some of Goya's other religious commissions, such as the two frescoes for the Basilica of the Virgen del Pilar. *The Adoration of the Name of God* in the small choir (*coreto*) was completed in 1772; the other, larger work, painted on the main cupola in 1780, is *Mary, Queen of Martyrs* (Figure 8). It's worth
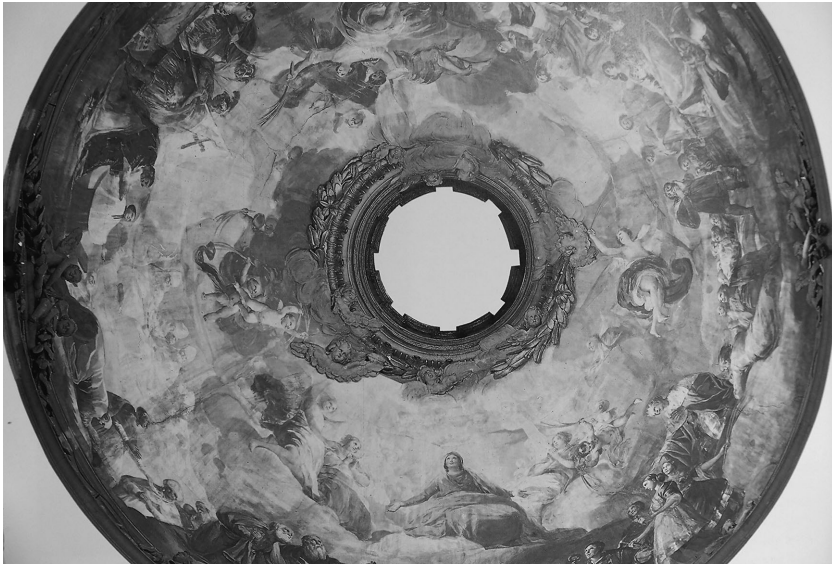
Figure 8. Francisco Goya, *Mary Queen of Martyrs*. 1780–81. Oil sketch. Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, Zaragoza.

a detour to consider these images. Janis Tomlinson rightly notes that Goya adopted the perspective of an easel painting for *The Adoration of the Name of God*.[16] For my purpose, this also meant adopting the illusion that the circumstance of the fresco was something other—something at once more painterly and more secular—than a church, and that its material support was not in fact a wall. This was a relatively sober work,[17] fundamentally neoclassical in its conception, and firm in the power of belief that supports the figures in it. The image shows a heaven full of angels and saints, buoyed up on layers of clouds, all arranged in strongly receding perspective, ascending on the vertical plane toward an apex. At the point of that apex, and at the highest position in the picture plane, stands the triangular icon of the name of God. Flanking angels sing the praises of the Lord and perfume the heavens with incense. The work for *Mary, Queen of Martyrs* was a rather different affair. This was a later commission that Goya was awarded after submitting materials first to the building committee of the basilica and then to a committee of the Royal Academy. But the project ran into trouble on both religious and aesthetic fronts. Goya had by this time completed a great number of tapestry paintings for various royal residences. Not surprisingly, he complained of having to work on the cupola under the supervision of his brother-in-law Francisco Bayeu, and alongside Francisco's

brother Ramón. Goya's later sketches for four pendentives (now lost) were met with reservation when he subsequently presented these to the committee; neither was his work on the cupola found pleasing. No doubt the cupola image, and the plans for the pendentives too, showed too many traces of Goya's experience as a secular artist; his work making the tapestry cartoons seems to have undermined the decorum that the officials would have expected to see observed in the basilica. Goya's image for the cupola, as Janis Tomlinson notes, includes groups of "gesticulating figures swathed in colorful drapery," who seem too alive for the scene. "Even worse (in the Committee's eyes) is the fact that they almost overpower the immobile Virgin."[18]

The *Burial of Christ* painted for the palace of the Count of Sobradiel (Figure 9) is likewise conventional, with the exception of one surprising passage. The work relies on a well-established arrangement of figures for the composition of this hallowed scene. To be sure, the Virgin in this painting more resembles an eighteenth-century commoner than the saintly mother of Christ; to that extent she may be linked to some of the figures in the San Antonio fresco. But neither she nor any of the others in the painting seems to show any form of grief that might press itself upon the beholder or disturb the internal order of the work. Whatever claim the work might make is defeated by the conventionality of its static form, which has a deadening effect even on the figures within it. And yet among the figures in the image there is an angel on the right, who is pictured in motion, as if levitating. Here, it seems, Goya's effort to paint the supernatural power of an angel seems already to have begun to draw him to confront questions about the plausibility of the visual effects that the supernatural might require. (In later works, such as the *Flying Witches*, he was to embrace those supernatural powers with the conviction of a critic who had peered into the very heart of superstition and fathomed its seductive weirdness.)

Before turning back to the San Antonio frescoes in greater detail, it is worth noting some further facts about Goya's earlier career: that he was admitted to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in 1780 and subsequently won a commission for an altarpiece for one of the chapels in San Francisco el Grande in Madrid, completed in 1781–83. The work he submitted for admission to the academy in 1780 was a *Crucified Christ* that Robert Hughes has described with characteristic hyperbole as Goya's "worst painting" (he goes on to describe it as a "soapy piece of bondieuserie . . . [conveying] a sort of sickly, moaning piety that, if it were not for the relative liveness of the paint and its impeccable provenance, would make

Figure 9. Francisco Goya, *Burial of Christ*. 1770. Oil on canvas, 130 × 95 cm. Fundacion Lazaro Galdiano, Spain.

you doubt it was by Goya at all").[19] This is colorful prose, but it misses the fact that Goya was intent on showing to the members of the academy that he could compete on equal footing with the greatest painters of the Spanish Golden Age—with Murillo, Zurbarán, Pacheco, Ribera, and above all with Velásquez, after whom he had made numerous, studiously crafted etchings in 1778.[20] Velásquez's *Crucified Christ* was in the royal collection, and Ribera's *Crucifixion* had recently been brought to Spain from Naples by the Osunas, whom Goya knew. Goya may well have seen it in their collection at the Alameda country palace called El Capricho, realizing that they had reclaimed this work for Spain.

Goya's *Crucified Christ* is important both because it shows something about his relationship to the art of the past—especially where the past was Spanish, and was recognized as having a special importance for the development of art in official contexts—and because it reveals the role that color and sculptural form play in sustaining the illusion of an image whose subject matter is fully believed.[21] Goya's *Crucified Christ* adheres to a sculptural ideal that is as much about Ribera or Velásquez as forceful predecessors as it is about a set of aesthetic conventions that had been masterfully adopted by an entire range of Spanish Golden Age artists. The work creates an illusion of sculptural depth that is consistent with an aesthetic desire to transcend the basic flatness that sets one of the physical conditions for painting on canvas.[22] What Goya's *Crucified Christ* lacks is nothing that Velásquez has, but rather demonstrates the raw intensity and material energy of the paint itself. That was one way in which Goya eventually came to see the flatness of the canvas as an opportunity rather than as a constraint to be overcome; it came to be one of his most powerful ways of dealing with the power of religion in the medium of paint. The energy of his paint is already quite evident in the stunning Prado oil sketch for the *Taking of Christ* (1798) (Figure 10); the final version, in the Cathedral of Toledo, transposes that raw liveness into a dramatism of light.

The side altarpiece that Goya painted for San Francisco el Grande is altogether different in composition and purpose. The work shows the Spanish ruler of Naples (King Alfonso V of Aragón) in prayer at the feet of the Franciscan friar, later saint, Bernardino of Siena (Figure 11). In this composition, the collaborative hierarchy of church and state takes the form of a pyramidal arrangement of actors; the image is equally a statement about the piety of the Spanish ruler and the holy presence of Saint Bernardino. The crucifix-wielding saint occupies the highest place in the picture, while a ray of divine grace bathes his upper body in symbolic light. (The saint's posture is one that Goya will later reference, albeit in a much darker

Figure 10. Francisco Goya, *Taking of Christ*. 1798. Oil on canvas, 40.2 × 23.1 cm. Prado Museum, Madrid.

register, in the image of Saint Francis Borgia at the deathbed of an impenitent.) The upturned gazes of the assembled spectators are reminiscent of El Greco, though the diversity of the faces suggests the direction that Goya will pursue in the San Antonio frescoes. And yet, as Tomlinson has observed, there is no uniform perspective holding these figures together within the visual space they occupy. This is surprising. Given the fact that the work was done as a chapel altarpiece, it was conceived with a particular, external spectator in mind. It was part of a visual theater that depended for its sense on the gaze of the faithful spectators who would worship before it.

Figure 11. Francisco Goya, *The Sermon of Saint Bernardino of Siena*. 1784. 480 cm × 300 cm. Church of San Francisco el Grande, Madrid, Spain.

It stages a mirror-like "reenactment of what would take place in front of the painting as the officiant stands before his parishioners, mimicking the stances of saint, king, and courtiers."[23]

And yet that otherwise perfect mirroring is upset by Goya's inclusion of an image of himself on the right hand side of the scene, looking toward the faithful spectator.[24] This bit of self-consciousness may well be taken as the signature of a young artist whose career was clearly on the ascent. And while it also references the self-consciousness of artists like Velásquez and Rembrandt, it also suggests Goya's particular awareness of the ultimate "constructedness" of the work of art. A similar, even more prominent moment of self-incorporation is important in the portrait of the 1783 Count of Floridablanca, in the collection of the Bank of Spain (Figure 12), where Goya depicts himself showing his work to the sitter, who is surrounded by the artifacts associated with his public career. The count was responsible for a number of large-scale public works projects, and so the painting shows the plans for the Aragón canal displayed against the table. But also lying on the floor is what appears to be a copy of volume 2 of Antonio de Palomino's early eighteenth-century treatise on the history and technique of art, titled *Práctica de la pintura*. The image makes the point that painting has a place among the most highly esteemed human inventions. In the Enlightened sense, painting and engineering are both arts, and the fact that one is "liberal" hardly means that it is lesser than any of the mechanical arts. Palomino's treatise, the *Museo pictórico y escala óptica*, which I mention again below, deals extensively with visual perspective; it recognizes that painting has its basis in optics, and so in mathematics, but that it requires mathematics and invention in equal measures. As Goya himself said in his statement to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the source of art lies in the power of human invention, which may well take its bearings by "nature" rather than by established rules; and yet artifactual creation gives rise to a visual world that can be shown as unmade for the same reason that it is itself made. (This becomes quite apparent in Goya's aquatints and later paintings.)

The fresco in San Antonio marks a radical departure both from the model that Tiepolo had provided and from Goya's earlier religious works. It is an earthbound work even though it is about a miracle scene. Moreover, its position overhead and on a concave surface led Goya to confront a series of questions about the conditions under which any image must be constructed so as to be viewed as natural. Given that Goya's rendition of the miracle scene was earthbound rather than heavenly, it became imperative for him to fathom whether the effect of flatness, characteristic of painting on canvas or on a wall, was in fact *necessary*, and whether it could be

Figure 12. Francisco Goya, *Count Floridablanca*. 1783. 262 × 166 cm. Banco de Espana, Madrid.

reproduced on a concave surface. The answer to that question involved the technique of anamorphosis, which Goya had practiced during his Italian years. To summarize briefly, an anamorphosis is a deformed image that appears in its true shape only when viewed in some highly "unconventional" way. It is, according to one common understanding, the distorted projection of an image on a plane or curved surface, which, when viewed from a particular angle, or as if reflected in a curved mirror, appears regular and in normal proportion. In one common type of anamorphosis, sometimes termed "oblique," the unconventionality arises from the fact that the image must be viewed from a position that is very far from the usual frontal angle from which we normally expect pictures to be seen and understood. In another common form, sometimes termed "catoptric," the image must be seen reflected in a distorting mirror, typically cylindrical or conical in form, in order for it to make sense.

The most influential treatise on painting in Goya's time, Palomino's *Museo pictórico* (the three parts of which had been reprinted in 1795–97), includes a detailed discussion of the alteration of conventional perspective demanded by curved surfaces; there is special treatment of the techniques required for painting on concave ceilings. Palomino describes the anamorphic effects of these situations as a forms of "deformation" (*deformación*).[25] Beyond Goya's familiarity with Palomino's treatise, recent scholarship has shown that Goya was interested in the effects of anamorphosis from at least as early as his Italian travels in 1771. The recently discovered Italian sketchbook includes several experiments with anamorphic images. Among these are the preparatory drawings for the painting of *Hannibal Crossing the Alps*, which Goya eventually entered into a competition at Parma; the sketches in question appear to be nonsense *except* when viewed from a radically oblique angle, from which they clearly appear as faces.[26]

In the years preceding the frescoes of San Antonio Goya also painted a *Last Supper* in Cádiz (1796–97) (Figure 13), which, while not exactly anamorphic, is nonetheless rendered from a perspective that is oblique in the extreme. The compression characteristic of the Aula Dei works such as *The Betrothal of the Virgin* has been replaced by a heightened depth. The apostles sit on the floor with Christ, reclining in various angled positions; they are seen from a perspective that attempts to approach the impossible flatness of a purely horizontal view receding deeply toward an empty background. It is probably no accident that in Goya's speech to the Academy of San Fernando he praised Carracci among a very few named artists; quite possibly while in Rome he had seen Carracci's *Dead Christ* (Figure 14), as well as Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*, both of which press Albertian

principles of perspective to the extreme. Goya said that Carracci was particularly important because he gave free rein to his students (that he "revived Painting that since the time of Raphael had fallen into decline, with the liberality of his genius, he gave birth to more disciples, and better than as many practitioners as there has been, leaving each to proceed following the inclination of his spirit").[27] But whereas these images involve forceful and purposive distortions—in the case of the Carracci so as to present the figure of the dead Christ in all the extremity of its suffering—the perspective technique that governs Goya's San Antonio fresco is, by contrast, the "resolution" of an anamorphic image: the work makes visual sense as a flat image in the round because it has been projected onto the distorting surface that is required to view it clearly. It is an example of a kind of illusionism that asks us to look beyond the concave surface that supports it. The implication for an understanding of the constructedness of any image is profound, and especially so because the thematic content of this particular image is a miracle scene.

Some of the figures in the San Antonio frescoes call forth the idea of a contextual space, typically social; such is the case with the majas and the celestina. But others, such as the "ecstatic figure," can scarcely be placed at all. Moreover, the various groups of figures seem to share little by way of relationship with one another. They form a circle not because there is any formal or thematic closure in the work but simply because that is the form of the work's material support. In terms of composition, Goya's fresco in San Antonio de la Florida is also one of his most important efforts in the genre of ensemble painting. The work is seldom regarded in this way, in part because discussions of the genre of "ensemble painting" tend to concentrate either on Dutch group portraits or on the more modern en-
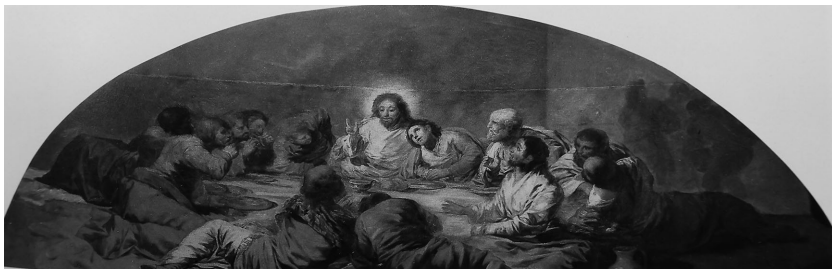
Figure 13. Francisco Goya, *Last Supper*. 1796–97. Museo Historico Municipal, Cádiz, Spain.

Figure 14. Annibale Carracci, *Dead Christ Mourned*. 1604. Oil on canvas, 92.8 × 103.2 cm. The National Gallery, London.

sembles that begin with Courbet's large-scale works, such as the *Burial at Ornans* and that reach at least until *Guernica*. Goya's fresco is distinct with regard to both these traditions. When the San Antonio fresco is viewed, as it must be, from below and in the round, there is no absolute focal center for its ensembles. To see it at all requires that the viewer rotate an upward gaze around all points in an unstructured circle. The symmetry that positions the so-called ecstatic figure directly opposite Saint Anthony introduces one element of visual orientation, but it hardly changes the fact that the image sprawls across the circle, without structural articulations save for the loosely defined groupings mentioned above.

Goya's fresco works consciously with the fact that its orientation is not horizontal in any physical sense. And yet the image reads thematically as if its underlying thematic ground does lie in the horizontality of the social and secular space in which the miracle is set. The horizontal elements of the image, which are all parts of its thematic presuppositions, stand in contradiction with the shape of the dome. In acknowledging the material

support of the work, and in constructing the illusion of flatness on the basis of it, Goya began to confront an issue that later modernist painting would find crucial. Modernist painting struggled, in one of its modes at least, to resist the tendency to imagine all objects of sight as located in a semblance of three-dimensional space; rather, modernism sought to accept objects in painting as conditioned by something prior, and potentially antithetical to that—by the flatness of the canvas. Hence Clement Greenberg, writing of what modernism sought to oppose, would remark that "all recognizable entities (including pictures themselves) exist in three-dimensional space, and the barest suggestion of a recognizable entity suffices to call up associations of that kinds of space."[28] Goya's work in the San Antonio frescoes presages modernism, though in a somewhat different way. In it, he coupled an acknowledgment of the physical conditions of the illusionistic image with a reassessment of unquestioned alliances between religious belief and the aesthetic conventions of composition, form, and color, which had for so long supported one another. This in turn set the stage for the development of a critical project that would address itself equally to the conventions of visual representation and to the world that such images were ostensibly "about."

NOTES

1. I follow the translation of Goya's speech as included in the appendix to Janis Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya y Lucientes, 1746–1828* (London: Phaidon, 1994), 306. The term "inventadas," which is not uncommon in printmaking, is meant to suggest that the images that are not copied or otherwise derived from prior ones, but are instead originally conceived. The term was prominent in Antonio Palomino de Castro y Velasco's treatise, the *Museo pictórico, y escala óptica* (1715–27; 2nd ed., 1795–97), where it carries the sense of rhetorical invention, i.e., of finding or uncovering the topic to be treated. (See especially 2:122–26: "Qué cosa sea inventar.") Already in making some of the tapestry cartoons Goya would assert that they were of his "own invention" ("de invención mía"). See Valentín de Sambricio, *Tapices de Goya* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 1946), doc. 22, where Goya refers to "The Meadow of San Isidro." For more on the sense and the implications of "invention" in Goya, see Janis Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya: The Tapestry Cartoons and Early Career at the Court of Madrid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially chap. 2, "Of My Own Invention," and the epilogue, "Invention into Metaphor." Tomlinson links the importance of "invention" in Goya in part to the development of a tradition of national painting in Spain.

2. Valeriano Bozal, *Goya y el gusto moderno*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Alianza, 2002), 67. Addison's *The Spectator* (1712) was translated into Spanish from the

French and was a direct influence on Clavijo y Fajardo's influential text (for Goya's world), *El Pensador*. Bozal goes on to note that Spain had virtually no native tradition of "picturesque" painting. The picturesque painters who held greatest sway in the decades before Goya's ascendancy were foreigners, such as Miguel Angel Houasse.

3. Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

4. The writer/translator was José Francisco Isla, whose *Año cristiano* drew on a text by Jean Croiset, in the *Année Chrétienne*. See Enrique Lafuente-Ferrari, *Goya and the Frescoes in San Antonio de la Florida*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Skira, 1955), 23. The story is cited in Hans Rothe, *Las pinturas del panteón de Goya*, trans. Manuel Gutiérrez Marín (Barcelona: Orbis, 1944).

5. Fred Licht, *Goya* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2001), 77. N.B., This is a substantially revised and expanded edition of Licht's 1979 book, *Goya: The Origin of the Modern Temper in Art*.

6. Rothe, *Las pinturas del panteón de Goya*, 12.

7. Robert Hughes, *Goya* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 213.

8. Robert Calasso, *Tiepolo Pink* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 197.

9. Ibid., 198.

10. Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall, *Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 93–94.

11. Manet, on Tiepolo, as recorded by Charles Toché, winter, 1874–75: "They're so boring, these Italians, with their allegories, their characters from *Jerusalem Delivered* and *Orlando Furioso*, with all that showy bric-a-brac." *Manet by Himself*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (1991; Edison, N.J.: Chartwell Books, 2001), 172.

12. Michael Fried, "The Structure of Beholding in Courbet's *Burial at Ornans*," *Critical Inquiry* 9 (June 1983): 635–83.

13. The issue of what it means for a work to refuse or to invite the presence of the beholder is one that Michael Fried has discussed at length over the course of many works beginning with *Absorption and Theatricality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Tomlinson notes that, as with the tapestry cartoons, Goya attempts to mitigate the fact that the works were to be placed high on a wall by compressing the figures against the background (*Francisco Goya y Lucientes*, 22).

14. See Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya y Lucientes*, 25–37.

15. See, for example, ibid., 21–22.

16. Ibid., 18.

17. Tomlinson notes that the "Adoration" refuses baroque ebullience and avoids rococo complexity (*Francisco Goya y Lucientes*, 18). And yet the work does recall the rococo painting of Giaquinto.

18. Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya y Lucientes*, 54.

19. Hughes, *Goya*, 99.

20. Goya was at once fascinated by Velásquez's techniques, as the etchings show, but also determined to displace their unique sense of space in the process of transposing them to the far more resistant medium of etching.

21. The portraits of Saint Ambrose and Saint Gregory bear substantial resemblance to Murillo's portraits of Saint Isidore and Saint Leander in the Cathedral of Seville.

22. For this sense of the "sculptural," see Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting." I cite the version published in *Art and Literature* 4 (1965): 193–201. This highly influential essay has also met with serious objections. Among the sources of resistance to Greenberg's focus on flatness is his emphasis on the autonomy of modernist art, that is, its separation from the social and political worlds. Insofar as Goya's engagement with the physical grounds of art is positioned at the intersection of the sacred and secular worlds, it would be difficult to align it fully with Greenberg's ideas.

23. Janis Tomlinson, *Goya in the Twilight of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 11.

24. For a discussion of this work in the context of the others in San Francisco el Grande see Tomlinson, *Goya in the Twilight of Enlightenment*, esp. 28–38. The image offers what Tomlinson describes as a warning to anyone who would interpret it as a mimetic recording of the scene (p. 12).

25. Antonio Palomino de Castro y Velasco, *Museo pictórico, y escala óptica*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Sancha, 1795–97), 2:177–79.

26. See Santiago Alcolea Blanch, "Aníbal, máscaras y anamorfosis en el *Cuaderno italiano* de Goya" (Barcelona: Instituto Amatller de Arte Hispánico, 1998), 1–18. Goya's sketch along with Alcolea Blanch's computer projections are reproduced in this essay.

27. Cited in Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya y Lucientes*, 306.

28. Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 196.

Remembering Isaac: On the Impossibility and Immorality of Faith

J. M. Bernstein

> Desire mediates between subject and object, and it annihilates the distance between them by transforming the subject into a lover and the object into the beloved. For the lover is never isolated from what he loves; he belongs to it. . . . Hence, in *cupiditas* or in *caritas*, we decide about our abode, whether we wish to belong to this world or the world to come, but the faculty that decides is always the same. Since man is not self-sufficient and therefore always desires something outside himself, the question of who he is can only be resolved by the object of his desire.
>
> —HANNAH ARENDT, *Love and Saint Augustine*

Secular modernity is in retreat, its ideals, ends, and fundamental forms of self-understanding under a constant barrage of interrogation and challenge. Correspondingly, the goods of religion, the inevitability of political theology, and the necessity of faith are being offered a late veneer of legitimacy, a guilt-ridden acknowledgment that their intended destruction at the hands of rational modernity has been somehow undeserved. This reevaluation of religious modes of thought strikes me as deeply mistaken, a work of self-hatred and self-repudiation, as if secular modernity could be reduced to its most destructive movements.

Although the issues here are multiple and complex, my narrow focus in this essay concerns the resurgence of faith as the presumptively necessary complement to secular reason. Faith gets a good deal of its current acceptance through its contrast with reason, as if the only "other" to reason were faith, even reason requiring faith, at least in itself. The now all too familiar "reason needs faith" view assumes that if reason is left to its own devices it becomes totalitarian, transforming all ends into means. Although the idea of a wholly self-sufficient reason is indeed dangerous in its totalizing aspirations, there is no reason to think that only faith is truly other

to reason, or that faith is the paradigm of reason's other (although that thought hits on a significant historical moment, as we shall see). There are numerous others to reason: trust, love, commitment, loyalty, courage, the whole panoply of feelings, emotions, and affects.[1] Commitment to reason does not entail a wholly rationalized, calculating view of the world: Reason can be in the service of the love of others, of children, friends, and fellow citizens. Reason can orient trust in neighbors and strangers (doctors, teachers, politicians, plumbers, secondhand car salesmen). It can inflect our commitment to causes and ideals. What distinguishes these others is that they are not absolutely other to reason since each carries within itself norms of appropriateness and inappropriateness that make it available to rational evaluation. Trust, for example, can be earned or unearned, excessive or insufficient, sensitive or insensitive to evidence. Trust is indeed an attitude of acceptance; but for all that, it can be rational or irrational.[2] Faith is otherwise; by definition it exceeds the parameters of reason and evidence; that excess is constitutive of (modern) faith, in particular the concept of faith pioneered by Pascal that receives its definitive philosophical elaboration in the writings of Søren Kierkegaard.

It is only faith in its austere understanding, the kind of faith that Kierkegaard unflinchingly urges (and, arguably, belongs to both fundamentalism and many resurrected religious practices) that challenges the secularist self-understanding of reason. Arguably, it is this conception of faith that is at stake in the actual debates between religious and secular views of the fate of modern society, since only this notion of faith must dispute the restricting of faith to standing within the limits of democratic pluralism alone. (Religious beliefs that accept democratic pluralism and the claims of natural science as trumping the demands of faith are sufficiently secular in their outlook as to raise no problems requiring immediate address.) And it is certainly this conception of faith that has been used within philosophy for contesting the authority of secular reason, and hence this conception of faith which yields the radical self-doubt of secular reason underlying claims for our now living in a postsecular society, not just factually, but by right.

My argument is critical, diagnostic, and genealogical. In the first and third sections of the essay, I track the genealogy of secular reason in its scientific and moral constitution as arising from an explicit rejection of faith. The long middle section offers a reading of Kierkegaard's account of the nature of faith in *Fear and Trembling*, in which I argue that faith as faith is the *sacrifice* of reason, including moral reason, through being a sacrifice of love of the world. Sacrifice, I argue, belongs to the inner logic of faith. In my opening section I proffer a slightly heterodox reading of

Descartes, claiming that the founding gesture of the *Meditations* and the precise meaning of the cogito is the repudiation of faith as performatively contradictory and logically irrational. This critique of faith is constitutive of secular reason, a fact that Kierkegaard is all too aware of; his notion of faith is indeed constructed as the other of secular reason in this sense. In the final section, I argue that we can find *a* if not *the* counterreading to Kierkegaard's telling of the Abraham narrative in Caravaggio's *The Sacrifice of Isaac* from 1603; arguably, moral modernity can be dated from that moment. Caravaggio's realist form of painting, his installation or inauguration or actualization of modern autonomous art achieves a definitive statement in *Isaac* by formally and substantially blocking the sacrificial movement of the Abraham narrative. In making us witnesses to Isaac's suffering rather than spectators, the painting transforms the terms from the religious to the ethical. Rational and moral modernity arrive through destruction of faith as a mode of world-relation in radical acts of self-affirmation and recognition. Secular reason is necessarily and emphatically other to faith. In pointing to the "arguments" of Descartes and Caravaggio against faith, I mean to be highlighting two pivotal moments in the constitution of secular reason; these moments belong to what is indeed a progressive learning process. I hear in the idea of the postsecular willingness to repudiate these genealogical touchstones of Western reason a despairing, self-lacerating doubt. The cogito and the pleading eye of Isaac were intended from their inception as counters to precisely such despair and self-doubt.

Faith Is Self-Sacrifice

Descartes is an appropriate first guide here since our situation is uncannily analogous to the one he faced, namely a world in which there were three fiercely competing certainties: the deliverances of the senses; mathematical and logical truths, with the sciences that followed from them; and religious faith. These three modes of certainty were then, and are now, accompanied by a sophisticated skepticism that insists that none of these certainties deserve allegiance.[3] Mathematical physics contradicts the immediate evidence of the senses. The church's condemnation of Galileo in June 1633 for holding the doctrine that the earth moves—occurring just as Descartes was about to publish his *Treatise on the Universe*—made evident that there was a fundamental conflict between reason and faith. The writings of Montaigne give powerful expression to the skeptical tradition that holds that all human beliefs are partial, limited, and rationally open to refutation.

Descartes's goal is not to reconstitute the field of knowledge from the bottom up, but to provide a foundation sufficient to ground the structure of the sciences;[4] and for this purpose, given the nature of the crisis, a plausible, indeed compelling skeptical procedure is to exam just "those principles upon which all [his] former opinions rested."[5] Those principles, finally, correlate exactly with the three domains of certainty: sense, reason, faith. It should not go unmentioned that placing faith in this list tacitly makes it a kind of mental faculty, a source of object-relations. In reality, faith is an attitude (like trust), or a feeling (like conviction), or an act (like believing or willing) rather than a separate faculty of mind; but as the effort is made to separate faith from sense and reason, on the one hand, and these other attitudes, on the other hand, it begins to take on faculty-like qualities, as if it were via this faculty that the human mind contacted God, apprehending if not comprehending God. Given its setting and treatment not just in Descartes, but generally, the faith versus reason opposition is routinely construed as analogous to the senses versus reason opposition. Faith marks the relation of the believer to God; faith is how the God of the Jews and the Christians is beheld.

Although the method of radical doubt presupposes the modern idea of individual freedom whereby beliefs and epistemic commitments become matters of personal responsibility, where the individual holding a belief becomes accountable for it, Descartes's method is not viciously circular. This act of taking responsibility is not, in the first instance, metaphysically asserted; rather, it is instigated by the crisis itself; the crisis distances the subject from his or her core beliefs and places him or her in a reflective relation to those beliefs.[6] In seeing the need to take individual responsibility for culturally sanctioned modes of certainty, Descartes is implicitly claiming that nothing is truly or rightfully certain unless "I take it, I judge it" *as* certain.[7] This is equally Descartes's conclusion. The apperceptive condition entails that even modes of certainty are mediated.

The stunning strategy of the first *Meditation* involves bringing the three competing domains of certainty and their skeptical refutation into an orderly conversation in which the method of skepticism is employed to overcome skepticism and reason's opponents: sense-knowledge and faith. The first arguments from illusion establish that the senses never were autonomous claimants; sense awareness is always under the control of reason. Sensory cognition is always a matter of judgment; hence the sense doubt is not the senses being corrected by reason, but reason as the power of judgment "in the process of self-correction."[8]

The catharsis of sensory knowing via the dream doubt leaves the meditator with only the sciences that deal with the simplest and most general things, namely, arithmetic and geometry. Even dreaming we cannot doubt that a square has four sides. Descartes must now find a way to throw into doubt even the most irresistible of the deliverances of reason. His difficulty in doubting mathematical reason derives from it instantiating the rule of reason: What is clearly and distinctly perceived is indubitable. Hence, any doubt that could question mathematical reason would have to be suprarational, nonnatural, or metaphysical, since any such doubts would necessarily run contrary to the nature of mind. The questioning of reason originates from a domain beyond reason, but not from a domain external to the certainties governing our belief system generally. On the contrary, the third source of certainty, namely faith in the creator God of traditional revealed religion, appears immediately as a source of beliefs not subject to the rule of reason. Could not an all-powerful God lead me to be deceived about even the simplest calculations? To imagine God could not would be equivalent to denying God's omnipotence. The claim that such a God is necessarily supremely good, and it would be incompatible with God's goodness to have made me constantly deceive myself is equally untoward: "It would," Descartes says, "also appear to be contrary to His goodness to permit me to be sometimes deceived, and nevertheless I cannot doubt that he does permit this."[9]

If I am right in postulating that the precise stakes and region of Cartesian doubt constitute the crisis of reason besetting the framework of beliefs in the light of the incommensurability among competing sources of certainty, then the original metaphysical doubt and its extension into the doubt of the evil demon is a reflective staging of the strife between faith and reason which exhibits, precisely, the disjunction between the demands of religion and the requirements of the new science, a staging that uses the method of doubt to overcome (cultural) doubt. That metaphysical doubt arises at just the moment where reason is reassuring itself with mathematical intuitions, thus focusing the faith versus reason conflict where the latter becomes necessary for the former to carry out its self-critical examination. Faith demonstrates that it is logically possible to doubt reason; faith becomes the doubt of reason. (This simply makes reflectively explicit what was already implicit in the cultural crisis of the time.) The demon doubt would be idle unless it generated a true either/or: "affirming the existence of the biblical God, which entails the uncertainty of all knowledge, [or] affirming the self-sufficiency of reason, which entails the denial of unqualified divine omnipotence."[10]

Descartes's procedure documents the sole conditions in which faith could be rational for us moderns, namely, if having faith were the necessary condition for a binding relation to the world because it was the sole means available for overcoming a culture-wide skeptical crisis concerning the conditions of world-relatedness. If faith does not concern a binding relation to the world, then it cannot be in any sense authoritative for the believer since it would have no leverage in relation to what does bind and orient existence. Said differently, if faith is not what grounds or founds the self-understanding through which the "I" determines his or her way through the world, then it becomes simply optional, but if optional then without sufficient authority to provide *overriding* grounds for the believer on which to base his or her decisions about his or her life and his or her treatment of. Nonbinding faith can be as weak as an inkling of there being "more" than this world or as strong as a fervent wish or passionate hope, but nothing that deserves constitutive social respect independent of the moral and legal respect-based tolerance owed its holders. Conversely, if faith were shown to be a necessary condition for relating to the world, then the deliverance of faith about, say, the age of the world and how it came to be, or the moral worth of human embryos could, at least in principle, trump other sources for determining them. What would give faith its power to trump the self-correcting common sense of everyday reason with its scientific supplement would be the skeptical discovery that reason lacks binding authority. This is exactly the possibility that the demon doubt raises. And if that doubt could not be answered, then it would be radical faith that was necessary: Only a leap of faith, that is, a surmounting of the claims of intellect and sense and the according of an unconditional trust in a benevolent as opposed to malevolent omnipotent deity, could now render the subject's relation to himself or herself, others, and the world coherent and tenable.

What the threat of an evil demon attempting to deceive me fully shares with the idea of faith is that both involve the effort to completely doubt the immanent authority of reason and judgment. The idea of the evil demon thus brings self-doubt to the highest pitch conceivable. Whereas the defeat of reason would require faith to answer skepticism, the defeat of the faith-based doubt would demonstrate that faith is impossible. And this is the profound meaning and point of the cogito: I cannot hand over or surrender my conscious existence to the other, consider it a gift, for in order for that to be possible *I* would have to do the handing over, the very act of so doing affirming what the intentional content of the act denies.[11]

A simple objection to what I have just argued might run like this: From the fact that an act of suicide is a result of my agency that destroys my agency, it does not follow that I cannot destroy my agency. Descartes cannot be claiming that faith, as the mind's self-repudiation of its own primacy and authority, is impossible: In actively accepting the absolute authority of another, believers do that every day. The argument is rather twofold: first, that the act of faith is not what believers suppose it to be, namely, a founding of myself on the authority of another, but rather a perpetually disowned "I think," a disowned judgment that necessarily depends for its occurrence and effectiveness on granting to our powers of judgment the authority to judge what is or is not authoritative; this is the sense in which the content of the act opposes its formal conditions of possibility.[12] But given that is the case, then, second, the act can *only* be one of intellectual suicide.

One last variation on this idea: If every act of faith depends on a suppressed "I think," "I take," "I judge," then faith is simply another wholly human act of judgment. As an act of judgment it is not certain, but derivative, mediated, a work of reflection. But if faith is finally an act of judgment, then it is not what it has traditionally been conceived to be and what Kierkegaard will say it is, namely, an absolute relation (faith) to the absolute (God), hence something irreducibly singular, immediate, and grounding. Religious spirituality depends on the idea that there is an irreducible type of mental attitude that distinguishes my relation to God from my relation to ideas and sensuous particulars. What Descartes demonstrates is that there is no such attitude—there has never been, and there never could be a mental posture of faith, only a judgment, but an awful judgment because it is one that is performatively contradictory, self-repudiating, and self-denying. Faith is not a posture of the mind, but the imagining of such a posture, the imagining of what turns out to be an imaginary type of relation to an imaginary object. Once one understands the cogito, faith is finished.

Faith as Sacrificing the Other

Arguably, the Abraham-Isaac narrative stands very near the center of Western religious spirituality, and certainly so since the seventeenth century; it is, perhaps, even more central than the Moses narrative.[13] Although the latter introduced a new content to religious belief—both the idol destroying invisibility of the one, unique God, and God's moral commandments—the Abraham narrative introduces and clarifies the necessary conditions for the

reception of that content: faith. Faith is the propositional attitude necessary for existence of religious meanings related to a certain kind of deity, the one circulating in the monotheistic religions.

Fear and Trembling presents an elaborate meditation on the sacrifice of Isaac. The work provides Kierkegaard's most explicit account of the nature of faith; it is not a complete account of faith because the episode belongs to the Old Testament, and the character and content of Christian belief is not identical with Jewish faith. Nonetheless, Abraham's ordeal does represent the paradigm case of what it is to have faith; one might even say that Abraham's faith *reveals* the meaning of faith—for Jews and Christians alike. The Abraham narrative installs a certain idea of faith as the attitude or posture requisite in order for one's sayings and doings to fully acknowledge the authority of a one, unique Godhead. The effort of *Fear and Trembling* is, through a series of failed analogies and failed contrasts, to make the revelation of the meaning of faith, what faith is and requires, more available, more inspiring and terrifying, more spiritually compelling.

In broad terms, Kierkegaard's approach focuses on the two most obvious aspects of Abraham's ordeal: the quality of his faith and that he was prepared to transgress the unshakable center of human morality by sacrificing his son. If his faith is stirring and remarkable, his willingness to murder his son is appalling. Our ordinary feelings of admiration and moral disgust are what any reading of this moment must address.[14]

The cogito marks the absolute limit of self-dispossession. Kierkegaard, rather than denying this, makes it the hallmark of faith: The transcendental impossibility of faith as demonstrated by Descartes becomes the necessary condition of its spiritual possibility.[15] Kierkegaard underlines this gap between philosophical intelligibility and spiritual possibility by considering faith in terms of "the paradox," "the absurd," and "the incommunicable." Each of these terms attempt to both guarantee that faith remains beyond the precincts of unaided human understanding and turn that impossibility of comprehension into an affirmative characteristic. The issue here is not any particular religious content but the character of faith itself.

The notion of the absurd will bring us quickly into the center of Kierkegaard's thought. "All along he [Abraham] had faith, he believed that God would not demand Isaac of him, while still he was willing to offer him if that was indeed what was demanded. He believed on the strength of the absurd, for there could be no question of human calculation, and it was indeed absurd that God who demanded this of him should in the next instant withdraw that demand" (*FT*, 65).[16] The absurd is the connection between two beliefs: that God has demanded the sacrifice of Isaac, and that

God will give Isaac back or Isaac will not, finally, be sacrificed. The position of faith is the unflinching, resolute acting on both those beliefs at the same time.

Abraham believes, despite the fact that God is demanding him to sacrifice Isaac, and despite the fact that he intends to unflinchingly carry out God's demand, and hence despite all the evidence that Isaac is going to die, right up till the very moment that he holds Isaac's head in his hands and draws out his knife, that nonetheless Isaac will not die. The former set of beliefs, the ones based on intention and empirical evidence, is what human reason requires; the latter belief is what faith licenses.[17] Abraham must be *certain* that Isaac will not die. And it is this certainty that Kierkegaard is targeting with his conception of the absurd with its emphasis on receiving Isaac back here and now, in this life. Without certainty that Isaac will not die, Abraham's state would be something like a hope or wish that he not die, a desperate needing to believe that he will not die. But if Abraham's cognitive state were that of a mere hope, then his act would be worse than appalling. If it were a question of mere hope, we could not believe that Abraham truly, utterly, and perfectly loved Isaac. Faith is necessarily a form of certainty, a movement of making what can never be certain certain. It is the quality of certainty adhering to religious beliefs—faithing them—that makes faith operate like a mental faculty. Because faith is a making of the necessarily uncertain certain, then faith will routinely appear as dogmatic, fanatical, crazed. Kierkegaard's effort in part involves the attempt to make the apparent pathology of faith disappear.

The fundamental question raised by the Abraham narrative, a question both acknowledged and voided by Kierkegaard, is: Must the very idea of faith be placed in relation to the sacrifice of a beloved other? The drive and determining energy of Kierkegaard's study is to prevent acknowledgment of the relation to sacrifice from collapsing into a literal requirement. Nowadays no one believes in sacrifice; it is thus natural to suppose that the actual human and animal sacrifices of the Old Testament are a long superseded stage of religious practice. This raises a second question: If sacrifice cannot intelligibly be thought of as actually demanding blood-sacrifice, what is the meaning of sacrifice such that Kierkegaard feels compelled to place faith in relation to it as a necessary step in the elaboration of its meaning? I address this question below.

Because faith is an absolute relation to the absolute, it cannot be communicated. This is certainly part of what is at stake in Kierkegaard's contention that faith is beyond comprehension: What can be comprehended can be communicated, and what is communicable is comprehensible; if

faith is an existential relation of putting oneself into an absolute—direct, unmediated—relation to the absolute, then it cannot be comprehended, and therefore cannot be communicated. *Fear and Trembling*, whose subtitle is *Dialectical Lyric*, is presented as written by Johannes de Silentio. Although in some contexts, silence can be a form of communication (as in giving someone the silent treatment), generally silence is conceived as the opposite of communication, and keeping silent is a refusal of communication. Silence is all over *Fear and Trembling*: First, because faith itself cannot be discursively communicated, but only exemplified, shown—the text itself is an indirect communication; second, because the relation between Abrahamic faith and Christian faith remains unsaid throughout; third, because Abraham cannot communicate his faith; and therefore, fourth, because an explicit theme of the text, as taken up in the third of the "Problemata"— "Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac"—concerns the ethical status of religious silence. Silence is the empirical reality of incomprehension: a severing of human communication.

What forces silence on Abraham in exact terms is that at the communicable, human level his direct intention is that he intends to murder Isaac. What is the difference between murder and sacrifice? Here is Kierkegaard's explicit meditation on this question.

> The moment he is ready to sacrifice Isaac, the ethical expression for what he does is this: he hates Isaac. But if he actually hates Isaac he can be certain that God does not require this of him: for Cain and Abraham are not the same. Isaac he must love with all his soul. When God asks for Isaac, Abraham must if possible love him even more, and only then can he *sacrifice* him; *for it is indeed love of Isaac that in its paradoxical opposition to his love of God makes his act a sacrifice*. But the distress and anguish in the paradox is that, humanly speaking, he is quite incapable of making himself understood. Only in the moment when his act is in absolute contradiction with his feeling, only then does he sacrifice Isaac, but the reality of his act is that in virtue of which he belongs to the universal, and there he is and remains a murderer. (*FT*, 101–2; second italics mine)

Why must Abraham love Isaac all the more if his act is to be one of sacrifice and not murder? Because Abraham's love of Isaac is his unconditional love of the world, his love of life, and hence constitutes his binding to the world as such. In order to have faith, Abraham must be willing to surrender everything that directly binds him to life and the world. Hence faith is

necessarily the sacrifice of the other, which is to say, the sacrifice of love of the world as orienting his being in the world. In human terms, faith is world hatred; in human terms, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is the murder of Isaac—something that Kierkegaard never disputes.[18]

The requirement of world hatred is, Kierkegaard insists, just as present in Christianity as it is Judaism. This is clearest in Luke 14:26, where what faith requires is expressed thus: "If any may come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Kierkegaard refuses any reading of this passage that would soften the hardness of its demand. The thought that religious faith involves some form of world hatred is, of course, a staple of critiques of Christianity that emphasize its apparent hatred of the body, of sexuality, of worldly goods, of worldly flourishing. And, to be sure, one can interpret the various hatreds Christ demands, above all hatred of one's own life, as precisely requiring the utter dissolution of those forms of worldly attachment and enjoyment that have their source in human embodiment and feelings. But asceticism is a degraded understanding of Christ's teaching, nor what Christ is demanding. Christ's list should be read backward: Because one must sacrifice one's self, one must sacrifice all one's passionately loved others; holding on to love of them is holding on to self-love. But this view of the matter, which I take to be close to what is being thought in Luke, is almost certainly empirically false, an inkling of which circulates in Kierkegaard's praise of Abraham. For nearly all parents, the discovery of what being a mother or a father means is conveyed, often at the moment of birth, by a wrenching and unfathomable dissolution of self-love and its being supplanted by love of the child. Suddenly, one is stripped of one's naïve self-concern and self-absorption and delivered over to the protection and nurturing of the child. Children, especially in those years when they are most needy and most vulnerable, become the anchor of one's world-relation: I have a world and care about the world because I love this child; I would happily sacrifice myself for this child. And when this child is the promise that the earth shall have a future worth having, the promise that is the explicit content of Abraham's child and implicitly the content of every newborn, then one's willingness to sacrifice everything for the child is not an act of selfishness, but truly the exposition of love of the world. Kierkegaard knows this: The third of his sub-Abrahams—those all too human Abrahams Kierkegaard creates whose lack of faith helps reveal the actual Abraham's faith (*FT*, 45–48)—who could not go through with the sacrifice of Isaac, feels he has sinned by simply having formed the intention to sacrifice Isaac, knowing full well that his love for him was such

that he would "many a time have gladly laid down his own life" (*FT*, 47). There is no religious faith unless the child is sacrificed. This shows that the stakes are not self-love versus love of the other, including God (which would reduce the meaning of faith to morality), but love of the world versus love of God, as my opening epigraph from Arendt eloquently claims.

The sacrifice of the child to faith also means that the point of view of the child, of Isaac, is necessarily excluded. The Abraham story is unique because the experience of being required to sacrifice the child of one's heart and go through with that sacrifice completely is made in the full presence of the sacrificial victim. Terrifyingly, Abraham and Isaac share the ordeal even though every account portrays the events as if they were Abraham's alone. And in a sense, the events are Abraham's alone because it is *his* faith that is being tested and perfected; and because he does manifestly remain silent. And in a sense this is necessary because the very nature of the act of faith is *logically private*, beyond communication; hence, the very act that will determine forever the relation between Abraham and Isaac is one from which Isaac is excluded, yet done in his full presence and demanding his participation. Isaac's role in these events makes him an object whose own subjective life is discounted. The work of faith can only include Isaac as sacrificial victim by excluding him as subject.

Abraham's silence is a useful starting place for considering Isaac's perspective. Abraham is silent in that he does not fully communicate to Isaac what is occurring. What would have happened if Abraham had attempted to be fully honest with his son? In the story of the first sub-Abraham, Kierkegaard tries to imagine exactly that.

> And Abraham's expression was fatherly, his gaze gentle, his speech encouraging. But Isaac could not understand him, his soul could not be uplifted; he clung to Abraham's knees, pleaded at his feet, begged for his young life, for his fair promise; he called to mind the joy in Abraham's house, reminded him of the sorrow and loneliness. Then Abraham lifted the boy up and walked with him, taking him by the hand, and his words were full of comfort and exhortation. But Isaac could not understand him. Abraham climbed the mountain in Moriah, but Isaac did not understand him. Then he turned away from Isaac for a moment. (*FT*, 45)

It is noteworthy that Kierkegaard, who lacked nothing in the way of imagination, does not attempt to imagine the words Abraham might have spoken in explaining himself to Isaac. What could Abraham say? What is plausibly imagined is that whatever words Abraham might have spoken, Isaac could

not understand him. And from everything that follows in the book, we are indeed meant to conclude that the very nature of Abraham's faith makes it incommunicable not because of who Abraham is but because of what faith is.

Inevitably, when Kierkegaard does consider the possibility of the actual Abraham directly addressing Isaac, he does so only to demonstrate that were Abraham so tempted it would be because of weakness, not strength, and worse, because addressing Isaac would amount to feeling a need to justify himself before Isaac, then in so doing Abraham would fall out of the paradox, out of faith altogether, and collapse back into the tawdry world of the ethical. If Isaac's understanding becomes the ethical measure, then God is displaced as ground, and faith proper evaporates. From the point of view of faith, the desire to justify oneself humanly becomes a temptation to not do one's duty to God, and hence exposes a failure of faith. What dignifies Abraham is that he is not so tempted. Here is the offending passage.

> Were Abraham, at the decisive moment, to say to Isaac, "It is you who are to be sacrificed," this would only be a weakness. For if he could speak at all he should have done so long before, and the weakness consists in his not having the maturity of spirit and concentration to imagine the whole of the pain beforehand but having pushed it aside so that the actual pain proves greater than the imagined one. Besides, with talk of this kind he would fall out of the paradox, and if he really wanted to talk to Isaac he would have to transform his own situation into that of a temptation. Otherwise, after all, he could say nothing and if he does so transform his situation he isn't even a tragic hero. (*FT*, 142)

This is perhaps the most dissembling passage in all of Kierkegaard. Of course, the argument is circular: From the point view of faith, any falling away demands of faith will appear as weakness, temptation, vacillation, a wanting and needing to justify oneself in the (finite) eyes of the world rather than before the (infinite) eyes of God. But what is worse, the almost dismissive last sentence—"he isn't even a tragic hero"—reveals something that has been implicit from the outset: Much of what is at stake in the praise of Abraham is the creation of a certain *image* of Abraham. How else did we suppose that Abraham's actions might exemplify faith? In this particular case, it is just that image of silent steadfastness as a form of uncompromising virtue that is, finally, doing most of the work. Kierkegaard must make Abraham appear as neither dogmatic nor fanatical, but rather as noble; and his nobility, because it requires silence, an impossibility of intelligibly communicating with others, thus requires more than what is asked of the

tragic hero. To gather all this up demands constructing an image convey-
ing superlative virtue, a virtuousness that is akin to but emphatically more
magnificent than the highest ethical virtue. And in order for this to hap-
pen, then the ethical ideal of communication must be demoted, demeaned,
come to be seen as something shabby and unworthy. And that is just the
image Kierkegaard works to construct. Much of the glory of Abraham,
and by extension the worthiness of the very idea of faith, derives from his
silent image, the image of his carrying an impossible burden that is impos-
sible to communicate with calm determination and unbending authority.[19]
If Abraham is so calmly sure, so noble in demeanor in the face of the un-
speakable action he is about to do, then how can his faith be anything other
than the highest virtue, a virtue beyond ethical virtue? Such is the image of
Abraham. This is how we forget Isaac.

Much of the energy of *Fear and Trembling* is determined by the need
to produce a certain image of Abraham, an image governed by a moral
aesthetic that is borrowed from the tradition of Greek virtue ethics: In his
solitude and noble bearing Abraham rises to an image of virtue incompara-
ble with because beyond the exemplars of tragic virtue. Because the image
of Abraham is so pivotal in the exclusion of Isaac from the events in which
his entire being is at stake, then I shall need to return to the image of Abra-
ham below.[20] For the present, I simply need to underline that Abraham, in
truth, could not speak honestly to Isaac because there is no version of what
Abraham might say to him that, morally speaking, Isaac *could* accept.[21] The
inwardness of faith requires concealment because its content is always the
sacrifice of the other that the other could never agree to. From an ethical
point of view, we inevitably construe the fact of Abraham's saying nothing
to Sarah, and of dissembling before Eleazar at the foot of the mountain
as acknowledgments of shame and guilt. Justifications by faith alone are
incommensurable with worldly ethics, and Abraham's silence is a certain
acknowledgment that before the eyes of humanity he is forever guilty.

And he is forever guilty at a higher level: He does not simply keep hid-
den from Isaac his intention of sacrificing him, but in the unbending of his
intention *Abraham does sacrifice Isaac*. And this is the reason that the angel of
the lord comes down and stays his hand: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad,
neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God,
seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only [son] from me" (Genesis
22:12). Abraham was not required to complete the action because, given
the complete nature of his intention, he had already sacrificed Isaac, giving
his life totally over to God. Nothing was withheld; Isaac was killed, killed
in the very heart of Abraham. In de Silentio's praise of Abraham's faith,

this is conceded when, in attempting to capture the relation between faith and the absurd, he presses the issue: "We let Isaac actually be sacrificed. Abraham had faith. His faith was not that he should be happy sometime in the hereafter" (*FT*, 65).

Abraham must remain silent because neither Sarah nor Eleazar nor Isaac could agree to his sacrificial act, an act that he, in his heart, completes. Could the fact that Abraham completes the sacrifice of Isaac in his heart but not in life make it acceptable to Isaac?[22] If Abraham were to try to communicate this affective sacrifice to Isaac, could it be acceptable? So we might imagine Abraham saying to Isaac: "God has commanded me to sacrifice you to him. Be not afraid, for God will not require that I take your life, leaving you bloodied and dead on the sacrificial stone. Our God does not require blood sacrifices. What he is demanding is that I no longer base my life on my love for you. Indeed, I must sacrifice all my love of the world—for you, for Sarah, for those who are dearest to my heart—and make God the founding love of my life. If I do this, God will give you back to me, but changed utterly. From now on I will love you as God's gift to me, you will be a sign of God's love and grace, my love of you a further expression of his bounteousness." Isaac is confused: "Father, *why* would you want to stop loving me, loving me as you do now, and only love me because God gives you this love, allows it or requires it? Why would you wish to love me as a *symbol* of your god rather than for who I am? I do not understand. What does God have to do with your love for me?" Abraham might reply: "There is no reason I can give you for this sacrifice except that God demands it. Sacrificing my love for you is what it is for me to have faith in God." "But father," Isaac might reply in turn, "all that is about *you*, *your* faith, *your* relation to God. What does it have to do with me?" And of course, in a way, it really does have nothing to do with Isaac since Abraham's faith is just his absolute relation to the absolute, his infinite self-interest. This relation leaves out Isaac, sacrifices him. How could Isaac come to accept that, agree to it? For Isaac, Abraham would not love directly, but only as something that accorded with his faith, as something his faith allowed or demanded, but either way for reasons that left him out altogether. In the name of Abraham's singularity, but also his faith and his virtue, Isaac is sacrificed to the absolute: Like every sacrificial victim, he is an item, a token, in an exchange between human and God. So Abraham will not discuss the matter with Isaac, and he will not do so for all the reasons that the biblical Abraham remained silent: In ethical terms his action cannot be justified, and it cannot be justified because those actions cannot be communicated to Isaac in terms that could be acceptable to him; they

leave Isaac out of account, sacrifice him, leaving the living bonds of love bloodied and dead on the sacrificial stone.[23]

One can be reborn in faith only if one first dies to the world. In order to die to the world one must slaughter one's living attachments to the world; one must murder one's love of the world and offer it to God. One must sacrifice Isaac. Abraham's silence is the silence of the severing of the bonds of love as what constitutes the very nature of his relation to Isaac. And the condition of this is that the point of view of Isaac is forever excluded.

Remembering Isaac: The Claim of the Other

> Caravaggio thematized in his painting the reality of individual experience, *il vero*, and by so doing called into question the very truth of the ideal itself, the truth beyond experience which had been given historical verisimilitude in the traditions of art.[24]

I have suggested that a not inconsiderable feature of Kierkegaard's presentation of the Abraham narrative involved a work of image creation in which Abraham's faith is sublimed into a picture of ethical-religious beauty, a sublime beauty because always pointing to an inwardness and transcendence exceeding the ordinary capability of discursive communication and narrative representation. It is hence no accident that the opening sections of the text after the "Attunement" are a "Speech in Praise of Abraham" followed by (as a preface to the "Problemata") a "Preamble from the Heart." In the preamble the focus is on the double movement of infinite resignation and, let's call it, infinite affirmation, on the severing of the bonds of love with the sacrifice of all worldly passion, and the simultaneous conviction that nothing will be lost. So the "whole earthly form" that Abraham presents "is *a new creation* on the strength of the absurd. He resigned everything infinitely, and then took everything back on the strength of the absurd. He is continually making the movement of infinity, but he makes it with such accuracy and poise that he is continually getting finitude out of it, and not for a second would one suspect anything else" (*FT*, 70; emphasis mine). The giveaway here is the phrase "and not for a second would one suspect anything else" since that is what Kierkegaard must convince us of in order to have the violence of infinite resignation, the violence of world-hatred and world-negation become resolved in the invisible perfection of having everything returned—the love of the world is now affirmed as God's gift of the world. And there is only one condition for this to be possible: Sacrifice Isaac. The image of Abrahamic faith lives

off the invisibility of Isaac's ordeal; hence the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac is both the account of Isaac being sacrificed and, through the narrative itself, enforcing that sacrifice, repeating it. Every telling of the sacrifice of Isaac thus becomes another sacrifice of Isaac, another exclusion of him from the ordeal of his life and death.

Not quite every telling. We do have one depiction of the sacrifice of Isaac that interrupts the movement from infinite resignation to the absurd receiving everything back that places Isaac, terrified, screaming in an infinite of agony of betrayal and loss, at the exact intersection of those two movements: Caravaggio's 1603 *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (Figure 2). It makes sense to discuss this painting in relation to Caravaggio's 1598 painting of the same scene (Figure 1). These two paintings come close to depicting the two sides of the argument: the sublime revelation of faith and the tortured counterimage of a sacrifice that has never stopped occurring.

Both paintings focus on the same moment of the narrative: "the patriarch Abraham with his knife out and ready to slit his own son's throat as an offering to the old testament god, the angel interceding at the last moment, the ram making itself available as a substitute sacrifice."[25] Peter Robb, in his uneven *M: The Man Who Became Caravaggio*, nicely summarizes the 1598 *Isaac*: "The earlier version had been a much more rigorously controlled study of figures in darkness, a close sculptural group in the glow of a fire and a little heavenly highlighting. It'd been a very gentle study—within the terms of an event set up to diminish merely human love—thoughtful father, weeping son and sweetly reasonable young angel."[26] While fine as a start, Robb underplays some obvious features of the painting. First, the dramatically enhanced chiaroscuro that Caravaggio employs leaves the profiled faces of both Abraham and Isaac partially obscured in shadow, only the three-quarters face of the angel and that of the ram allowed to glow, as if light and angelic transcendence were one. Second, both Abraham and Isaac are turned toward the angel, listening intently, as if to *hear* this very story, their story as part of God's story, hence doubling the sense of the painting being about angelic intervention, a folding of the human event into one forever separate from it. Third, the painting's most striking internal mimetic feature: the right hand of the angel on the blackened fleece back of the ram mirroring or mirrored by Abraham's left hand holding Isaac's black hair (which, like the ram's, is all but indistinguishable from the painting's black background). And then, finally, there is Isaac's relaxed pose, leaning casually on his left forearm (hands tied at the wrist, but without noticeable effect), and, even more surprising, is Abraham's right forearm resting easily on Isaac's thigh, his knife hand suspended in its action.

While there is the odd reality effect—most obviously the sharply lit patch of Abraham's exquisitely painted neck, veins bulging, disheveled hair hanging lank at the back, and the richly textured, dove-grey left wing of the angel—none of this comes close to experiential truth. I take it, in line with his usual practice, that Caravaggio does here want to contrast the unreality or ideality or fiction of the angel with the reality of the humans; it is just that he can do nothing with these human playthings of the divine, the painting insistently turned toward what even it regards as an unreality.

André Félibien wrote that "Poussin could not bear Caravaggio and said that he had come into the world in order to *destroy painting*. . . . Yet his aversion for Caravaggio is not surprising. For whereas Poussin sought to foreground the nobility of his subjects, Caravaggio allowed himself to be carried away by the truth of nature as it appeared to him."[27] In commenting on the Poussin/Caravaggio opposition, Louis Marin states that "the choice is between the nobility of the subject [Poussin] and the vitality of the object [Caravaggio], between bringing the dead to life—as a story is told through figures that are carefully interwoven within a scene—and simply seeing what appears in the here and now before one's eyes."[28] The
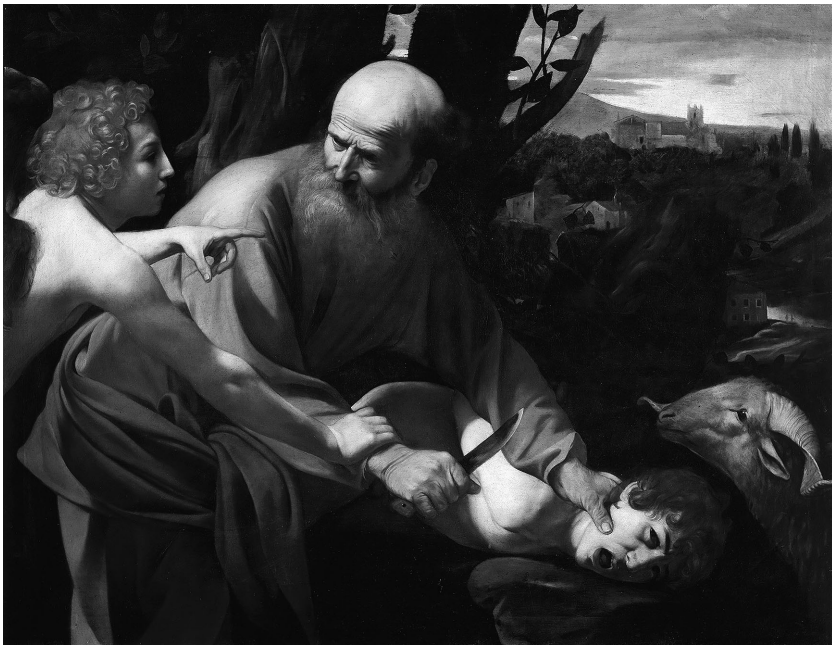
Figure 1. Caravaggio, *Sacrifice of Isaac*. 1598. Oil on canvas, 116 × 173 cm (46 × 68 in.). Piasecka-Johnson Collection, Princeton, New Jersey.

Figure 2. Caravaggio, *Sacrifice of Isaac*. 1603. Oil on canvas, 104 × 135 cm (41 × 53 in.). Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

issues here are immensely complex, a complexity that is densely elaborated in Marin's remarkable study, *To Destroy Painting*. Still, it seems right to say that at the core of Caravaggio's achievement is the de-sublimation or, better, a de-transcendentalizing of painting, a turning away from the narrative idealization of the dead and toward the incorrigible sensuous density of what presents itself in re-presentations. What Caravaggio set out to destroy was what Gombrich called "the classic solution" in which the claims of order—of ideality, conceptuality, and narrative—are "balanced" by fidelity to nature. Order provides the vertical axis of classic Italian painting whereby a single image takes on the authority of an ideal meaning, a world-transcendent meaning that is but temporally and imperfectly incarnated in a physical image.[29] Let's say that in classical Italian painting, world images are sacrificed to transcendent meanings in a manner consistent with the Christian disposition of that art. The resolution of figures within a finally transcendent narrative order is, one might argue, the source of the immense pleasure, the jouissance proper to Renaissance art.[30] In opposing this, Caravaggio sought a means of painting whereby the scene would not be sacrificed to its ideal meaning, in which rather than retrospectively gathering the image before our eyes we are wrenched from our position of being invisible spectators, of being somehow outside and above, the

masters of what we see, to becoming bodily present to the scene being represented. Caravaggio wanted a painting that would not be the bearer of ideas and meanings existing independently of it; rather, meaning would be fulfilled and exhausted by paint matter, by the work of color, light, and shadow in their articulation of figures. And all this was to be accomplished directly in relation to the great tradition of narrative art.

In order to accomplish this task, Caravaggio sought mechanisms for folding a painting back into the scene represented, for de-narrativizing the events depicted in order that they might take on a wholly immanent, sensuous intelligibility. If pressed, I would want to argue that Caravaggio was the first of the southern painters to fully take on the burden of secular modernity, of finding meaning and the loss of meaning in the direct experience of persons and objects. Because his concern was with fidelity to the object, a secular notion of truth in painting, Caravaggio did not seek to make his pictures agreeable, a source of uplifted pleasure. That notion of pleasure presumes that paintings are for the sake of the viewer, lacking inwardness, autonomy, being-for-themselves, and in that betraying the objects represented. My sense of the failure, the unsatisfactoriness of the 1598 *Sacrifice* is precisely that the human subjects of the momentous event it records become mere shadows of angelic light. Fidelity to nature for Caravaggio meant letting the power of what was re-presented make a claim *against* the viewer, a sensuous claiming one would turn away from if one could. Certainly, among the stakes in Caravaggio's nearly one dozen decapitation paintings is that of a specular address to the viewer. In our inability to avert our eyes there emerges a sensuous authority relying on nothing other than the material means of its depiction and the expressive features of the objects represented. One might complain that the sublime address of some of the decapitation paintings—*Medusa* (1598), *Judith and Holofernes* (1599), *David with the Head of Goliath* (1606), *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (1608)—depend on blood, gore, and sheer grotesquerie for their effects, painterly violence an all to easy accompaniment of the violence represented.[31] Although one might argue that Caravaggio felt he needed the represented violence to secure the violence of his painterly act, no such argument is relevant to the 1603 *Isaac*. I think of the 1603 *Sacrifice of Isaac* as not only correcting the earlier *Isaac*, Caravaggio bringing to bear on the Abraham narrative the demands of realism his painting was by then fully realizing, but also of achieving what the other decapitation paintings promise but overshoot precisely because here the beheading does not occur. The severance both does and does not happen, and does happen all the

more for not factually happening. Nonetheless, the head of Isaac should be seen as a member of the procession of Caravaggio's severed heads.[32]

A premise of my argument has been that the Abraham narrative stands near the center of Western religious spirituality because it elaborates faith as the relation proper to the God-relation. If I am right in posing Caravaggio as attempting to forge a wholly secular method of representation, then his engagement with the paradigmatic account of faith can succeed only by posing itself against that form of world-relation by destroying a central mechanism for its reproduction: the sublime aesthetic of the classic solution that had been the main bearer of the ideal binding of virtue and beauty. The transcending pull of that aesthetic is still evident in the 1598 *Isaac*.

The overriding condition for destroying the Abraham image is to let Isaac in; letting Isaac into the narrative is a matter of content and a matter of form. The content question and the form question are interrelated: In order to destroy the Abraham image one must not only let Isaac in, but transfigure the account so that it is not *also* about Isaac, but fundamentally *about Isaac*. And this is a formal question because it involves more than recentering the image, so to speak, in order that we have Isaac constantly in view; in order to have Isaac constantly in view in the appropriate sense the narrative movement in which he is a constantly disappearing moment in the resignation and affirmation of Abraham's faith must be not just interrupted, but forever blocked. And this means that we require a narrative representation in which the narrative arrives as always broken, always interrupted, always failing the moment that would be its fulfillment.

It is just this that Caravaggio manages.

Since my own reading of the 1603 *Isaac* began with Louis Marin's, let me begin with the central moment of his interpretation.

> Entering from the left, the angel, God's messenger, stays the murderous arm of Abraham with his right hand. Abraham turns his head to follow the angel's left index finger, which *points out* to him what the Lord's angel sees: the ram on the right that will be *sacrificed* in place of the son. In this arrangement, where the retrospection moves from the center to the left, simultaneity functions as an inchoate and prospective immobilization. The gesture and gaze move from left to right where the future is being prepared. A story finds its starting point in the interval between the halting of the knife and the offering of the neck, the instant that serves as the matrix of a successive temporality. But something very strange happens in the space "between" two moments,

this inter-diction of a sacrificial murder that *will not* take place. The viewer's eye is tricked into producing this moment. It is trapped by the *single eye* of Isaac lying on the stone, who, his mouth open as he cries out in terror, looks at me with a gaze that is something like the look of Medusa. This gaze has no equal.[33]

Although we know the Abraham story fully, this painting consistently seeks to undermine the possibility that it be finally told. One aspect of this is the different flows of movement in the painting: We can follow the descending light falling from the angel's shoulder to his hand, to Abraham's hand, to the shoulder and face of Isaac; this descending light and movement is matched by a horizontal left to right movement from the angel's shoulder and finger to Abraham's face and forehead; Abraham's eyes travel back against the movement of light to the partially shaded face of the angel (note how in this painting the light values of the earlier *Isaac* are reversed: now Abraham and Isaac are lit, and the angel and ram shaded); there is the left to right movement of the angel's finger pointing to the ram who is to replace Isaac on the stone, with his other hand staying Abraham's hand. Note too how the heads of Isaac and the ram are set one atop the other, with the peaceful ram's head, eye lifted, its look ascending, directly above the horizontal, abjected face of Isaac.

These series of formal, prospective, and retrospective movements do not add up to one story—one coherent temporality—but rather cancel one another, move toward an immobilization. And this might be thought appropriate since the narrative center of the picture is the immobilized hand of Abraham, forcibly being restrained by the angel, the knife fiercely gripped in his right hand. But that immobilized hand is literally that: a movement halted, held, restrained, leaving no doubt that the hand's trajectory is downward toward Isaac's neck. And this downward trajectory, the movement of the immobile right hand, is complemented by the work of the left hand around the neck of Isaac, Abraham's thumb pressing harshly against the boy's cheek in order to hold his head firmly to the stone. The fact that the sacrifice will not take place is, so to speak, contradicted by Abraham's hands: They are the hands of a murderer. How else did we imagine those hands? Caravaggio mimetically emphasizes the downward thrust of Abraham's hand through one of his cherished devices: the powerfully rendered and utterly excessive red drapery wrapped around Abraham's waist, with the looped hanging part finishing the act. The hanging or falling piece of the red drapery is Isaac's blood, the life taken from him.

The immobilized hands that are the painting's narrative center are not what hold our visual attention; it is rather Isaac's single eye staring out at us, the painting's expressive core, that draws our looking back again and again until we are transfixed. In staring out at us, Isaac's look breaks through the narrative formality of the painting, the formality the would source our perceptual mastery of the scene, in order that we become present to him: a witness to his suffering. Isaac's pleading eye performs a searing iconoclastic shattering of the Abraham image, leaving just his suffering, his brutalized becoming animal, a sacrificial ram, to be witnessed. In our being petrified before that eye, Marin conjectures, we spontaneously see the fulfillment of Abraham's intention: Isaac dead. We perceive the true internal connection between the symbolic sacrifice and the literal one. In becoming witnesses to Isaac's brutalization and terror, his death, we leave behind the mythos of faith and enter the cold reality of a loveless world whose ruin derives solely from the fact that there have been those who have had faith.

Deploying a thinned version of Michael Fried's dialectic of immersive absorption versus specular address, we can more explicitly connect the painting's formal and substantive achievement. Fried contends that it is the underlying structure of "absorption-plus-address" that secures the Caravaggio's realization of the autonomous artwork. "The logic of absorption," he states, "is such that, as long as a particular feat of noticing and understanding lasts, the viewer is still 'within' the implied temporality of the image."[34] The internal temporality of *Isaac* is just that of the Abraham narrative itself; it concerns the staying of Abraham's hand, and it is accomplished through the crossing of looks among the angel, Abraham, and the ram: Abraham intently looking and listening to the angel, eyes hooded, forehead intensely furrowed, the furrows summoning his world of puzzlement and pain; the angel looking at both Abraham and ram, his finger pointing horizontally to a place where, in fact, the ram is not. The horizontal plane conjured by facing looks and pointing finger (with ram's gaze upward) generates the painting's absorptive moment. I understand the horizontal looks of Abraham and angel to convoke a world of shared concern between them, indeed the very same concern that is the whole content of the 1598 *Isaac*. What then is most obvious about this angel-Abraham-ram trio is that the circuit among them closes in on itself. None of them seems to notice or explicitly to pay heed to Isaac. The absorptive moment of this painting perfectly captures the forgetting of Isaac; his being overlooked here is his disappearance from the Abraham narrative. Only we notice Isaac; his desperate address is to us alone, far beyond the

temporal proprieties of the traditional narrative. Only we are witnesses to his sacrifice.

The authority of this canvas is finally not painterly, not aesthetic at all, even though without its complex movement of conflicting perspectives that in their integration makes the painting both self-conscious about it image character, and in being self-aware in that way, relatively autonomous, it could not achieve its ethical claim. The painting wrenches itself out of being a representation, an object to be beheld, and by addressing the viewer makes him or her into a moral witness. One cannot view the painting without witnessing Isaac's ordeal. In forcing the viewer to witness Isaac's ordeal—or turn his or her back on the painting altogether—Caravaggio has the painting perform, in its being viewed, the moral cogito, that is, it performs the actuality of the other as having a claim against me that is not mine to dispose of but rather places me, situates me in a moral space in which I must either acknowledge the full destiny of that demand—say, to perceive Abraham's irredeemable guilt—or forfeit the possibility of seeing as such. What is meant to be sublime about the Abraham narrative is that it is emptied of all meaning, all content apart from what belongs to faith itself; it gives us faith as absolute (an absolute relation to the absolute). This Caravaggio understands and contests. What faith means is the death of Isaac; what faith means is murder.

Caravaggio's image of Isaac is posed precisely between the two moments of Kierkegaard's dialectic of faith, between the moment of infinite resignation and infinite affirmation in which everything is returned. In Kierkegaard the "movement of infinity" is done with such "accuracy and poise" by Abraham that he keeps getting finitude out of it. Caravaggio in destroying Abraham's accuracy and poise, in forcing us to see the work of his hands and the fullness of his intent, makes the movement of infinite affirmation impossible. There is only finitude here. Between the glittering knife and Isaac's neck, between the angel's pointing finger and the ram who will replace Isaac, between the loss of everything and the getting it back, there is Isaac's pleading, anguished eye blocking the movement from left to right, blocking the narrative, destroying the dialectic and its message, dissolving the scene and its meaning. No more image, no more faith.

Coda on Derrida on Kierkegaard

Chapter 3 of Derrida's *The Gift of Death*, "Whom to Give to (Knowing Not to Know)," which rightly makes the question of keeping secret the key to *Fear and Trembling*, is less a defense of Kierkegaard than a surprisingly

slavish repetition of Kierkegaard's argument, with the minor nuance that he assumes that traditional morality is already a hyperbolic logic of sacrifice: "How would you ever justify the fact that you sacrifice all the cats in the world to the cat you feed at home every morning for years, whereas other cats die of hunger at every instant?" (71; see also 69).[35] Casually, that is, without argument, flouting the "ought implies can" principle, this assumes, since feeding my cat *entails* that I have sacrificed all the others, that I must have an a priori, absolute duty to feed all the cats—dogs, hippopotamuses, snakes, parakeets, humans, donkeys, et al.—in the world, a thesis that is not only stronger than even the most extreme versions of utilitarianism, but strictly unintelligible. Compare this to Benjamin's and Adorno's notion of the "guilt context of the living"; it assumes that it is not an abstract deontological demand but my actual *participation* in a range of practices that is the source of my obligation to unknown others. There is no reason to suppose that responding to the call or claim of one other I have sacrificed all others, and so sacrificed ethics itself. The thought that ethical obligation is aporetic is here, at least, unjustified.

Put Derrida's extremism aside; his failure of argument in elaborating Kierkegaard is even more severe than this. Derrida wants to argue that the demand of the ethical, the traditional one he is opposing, is the opposite of the secret: It is the demand for justification in rational terms: I must justify myself to the other and hence make my action acceptable to him or her. In so doing, Derrida argues, I relieve myself of my singularity and my individual responsibility: The reasons for my action must be of a kind the other could, at least in principle, share. Exactly why he thinks the demand for rational justification relieves me of singularity and responsibility is unclear: that my reasons are shareable or intelligible to the other, say Isaac, does not entail that any one other than *me* is liable or responsible to *him* (say, because I am his father).[36] Nonetheless, what drives Derrida's misprision is an implausible metaphysical premise: "And since each of us, everyone else, each is infinitely other in its absolute singularity, inaccessible, solitary, transcendent, nonmanifest, originarily nonpresent to my *ego*" (78). This seems a formal and empty account of ethical singularity. Historically, as Nietzsche demonstrated over and over, responsibility—the right to keep promises—is a hard-earned, historically extended, and emphatically *social* accomplishment: The *I* becomes ethically singular only when it becomes indefinitely answerable for its precise doings and sayings to whoever is affected by them (in the absence of all gods, fates, and malevolent natures). Answerability is not the excision of singularity, but its historic introduction: Caravaggio is the first to make Abraham answerable to Isaac

by making the viewer answerable to Isaac's suffering here and now. That is the point of Caravaggio's painting: to generate the space of mutual answerability out of and against the anonymous space of absolute obligation. Derrida, like all idealists, wants to ground the ethical relation between self and other outside of all the historical and social ways selves and others have found themselves bound to one another. If, however, history has no role in the constitution of ethical singularity, then there cannot be any ethical singularity, since nothing can affect historical living except another aspect of historical living.

Historically constituted answerability is not an "absolute decision . . . neither guided nor controlled by knowledge" (77), but a criticizable judgment that is indefinitely answerable to the claims of others; it is only by our actions being in the domain of judgment and criticism that anything like a secular ethics becomes possible.[37] But it is just this that makes evident the most egregious of Derrida's presumptions. He states that it is God's silence, his not needing to justify himself—Kant, by the way, thought differently about the appearance of Jesus—that makes him God: "Otherwise he wouldn't be God, we wouldn't be dealing with the Other as God or with God as *wholly other*" (57). As is patent throughout Derrida's text, the function of the "wholly other" is to resolve *the problem of authority* of the moral demand, to seek the authority of the other as having an unconditional claim on me by making him absolutely other: "the unpronounceable name of God as other to which I am bound by an absolute, unconditional obligation, by an incomparable, nonnegotiable duty" (67). It is evident that all the language of "unconditional obligation" and "nonnegotiable duty" are rhetorical efforts to give to the ethical demand an authority that cannot be questioned, challenged, overridden, or denied. But it is hard to see this as anything other than wishful moral rhetoric, dangerous rhetoric since the unity of silence and absolute obligation here is for the sake of an act of gratuitous murder, murder as nothing but a test for fidelity to law and command. An other can possess authority only through the authorization of his or her other (the other of the absolute other), that is, he or she can place a claim on me only if he or she authorizes the possibility of my dissent and my refusal, which he or she in turn can question and criticize. Only if Abraham can disobey can he obey, and whichever he judges as necessary, he then becomes responsible and answerable for; not faith but argument is the only intelligible medium of exchange between human and God: If I cannot answer back, then I cannot answer at all; all else is mere obedience, in fear and trembling, no doubt. Of course, it is not implausible to suppose

that fundamental to the narrative of the binding was the historic effort to distinguish faith *from* mere fearful obedience, and to distinguish a moral god from a mere sovereign pagan god, which is equally the historic reason for the substitution of beast for boy. But faith cannot be distinguished from mere obedience so easily, as the remainder of the Old Testament demonstrates, and even the new one could not twist free from. Only answerability and responsibility without limit, only when my word becomes my bond, only when the other becomes my other to whom I am answerable does the logic of sacrifice stop. But this means, exactly and precisely, there is no permanent solution to the problem of authority without its becoming something inhuman—a theology, say. It is only through the refusal of absolute authority, the absolute other, that there first arises the possibility of an ethics without sacrifice. Derrida follows Kierkegaard in doubling down on the logic of sacrifice—universalizing it, generalizing it—in the empty hope that it will of a sudden turn around and become the opposite of itself. This strikes me as magical thinking.

NOTES

1. These others, of course, are the ones that in some hyperbolic form, either singly or in union with other members of the list, become faith. Faith is an absolutizing or making certain of these more routine attitudes and feelings.

2. For an argument to the effect that trust is the ethical substance of everyday living see my "Trust: On the Real but Almost Always Unnoticed, Ever-Changing Founding of Ethical Life," *Metaphilosophy* 24, no. 4 (2011): 395–416.

3. On being directed toward "the whole sphere of certainty" see M. Gueroult, *Descartes' Philosophy Interpreted according to the Order of Reasons*, trans. R. Ariew (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 1:15.

4. R. Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 1:144.

5. Ibid., 145. *Pace* Michael Williams, "Descartes and the Metaphysics of Doubt," in *Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 36.

6. This is the significance of *The Discourse on Method*, where Descartes narratively frames his philosophical practice in the context of a culture-wide crisis of reason.

7. The "as" does not transform certainty into uncertainty; the fact that I must add to "2 + 2 = 4" an "I judge . . ." clause does not entail that I could find it even intelligible that 2 + 2 was not equal to 4. For a defense of the incorporation thesis see Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (New York:

Cambridge University Press, 1990), 51–52. Not only does the Cartesian cogito presage Kant's "I think must accompany all my representations," but the normative lesson of Kant's "I think" is already present in the method of doubt.

    8. Hiram Caton, *Origin of Subjectivity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 109. My reading of Descartes has been much influenced by Caton's too-little-known book.

    9. Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, 1:147.

    10. Caton, *Origin of Subjectivity*, 117.

    11. Although it would be a complicated argument to make, I take it that the discovery that the "I think" is itself mediated (or, as Descartes acknowledges, not wholly self-sufficient) does not trouble the claims being made for the cogito at this juncture.

    12. This is the point made over and over again in the great "Unhappy Consciousness" section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), §§207–30. Consciousness takes the Unchangeable to be its essence, its truth. Yet each effort to affirm God as essence turns into an act of self-affirmation—and must, since every effort to show that God is my essence entails me accomplishing an emphatic act of either self-avowal or self-disavowal: Either way the self cannot be bypassed or thinned out or finally stripped of its authority. Which is why Hegel's phenomenology here becomes darkly comic.

    13. The question of the role of faith prior to the Christian age—in which religious belief is from the outset in relation to nonbelief—is complex. I certainly do not want to rule out the possibility that what we think of as faith, faith as Kierkegaard or Pascal or even the medievals see it, could arise only when religion as an orienting form of life has died; faith might well turn out to be one of the ways that religious ideas appear when the forms of life they originally informed have disappeared. This would make modern faith-based religiosity not the return of the repressed, but the return of the dead.

        In urging that faith is central to Western spirituality, I am not arguing that the Moses narrative is not the more significant for Western *thought*; as Nietzsche powerfully demonstrates, our ideas of reason and truth receive their critical impetus and self-correcting drive from the idea of the one, unique God; and it is those ideas of truth and reason that, finally, lead to the dethroning of religion. To grant that rationalized reason itself must undergo critical interrogation should not be construed as demanding a regress to a locale prior to reason. My comments about the various affective, attitudinal, and orientational complements to reason in the second paragraph of this es-

say were meant as fast, but I hope sufficient, acknowledgments of the limits to any characterization of reason as self-sufficient.

14. For a powerful contrary reading of the episode, see Omri Boehm, *The Binding of Isaac: A Religious Model of Disobedience* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007).

15. It is for this reason that one might think that Kierkegaard's notion of faith is irredeemably modern, a modernizing of faith in relation to a modern, postreligious notion of reason.

16. All references in the body of the text to *FT* refer to Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling: Dialectical Lyric by Johannes de Silentio*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Books, 1985).

17. For a nuanced discussion of the range of interpretive options, see John Lippitt, *Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling* (London: Routledge, 2003), 66–76. This is an immensely useful volume, providing both a fine reading of the text and a clear guide through the leading interpretive options on the text. My reading of Kierkegaard owes the most to two former Essex colleagues, Michael Weston and Stephen Mulhall.

18. In what is the most penetrating reading of *Fear and Trembling* available, Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), wriggles free from this issue by emphasizing the allegorical or analogical reading of Abraham's ordeal as prefiguring Christ's atonement, and then urging, given that Christ is the kind of God willing to shed his own blood for the sake of others, that it follows that "faith could never require the violation of ethical duty" (383). Certainly the implication is hollow; that apart, Mulhall both stops too quickly in thinking through what the stakes of sacrifice are for Kierkegaard and, worse, as I shall show, contradicts the letter and spirit of Kierkegaard's argument.

19. Since at times each of us might be called on to do something that we cannot, then and there, justify to those who most deserve an explanation, Abraham's act is empirically identifiable. Kierkegaard's effort is to take that original empathic identification into a superlative mode.

20. Kierkegaard tacitly admits this strategy, but lays the blame for it on de Silentio. So he comments, "As I have said, I cannot understand Abraham, I can only admire him" (*FT*, 136). De Silentio's admiration is, I am claiming, this aesthetic strategy of creating a noble image of Abraham. It hence does matter that the subtitle of this book is *Dialectical Lyric*; its lyricism is its work of image creation. But if faith is logically silent, then this strategy cannot be dismissed wholly through de Silentio's inadequacies as thinker. Again, the content of Christian faith does not alter the character of faith.

21. The "could" is moral, not psychological; psychologically, we can imagine anyone coming to believe nearly anything.

22. I understand the "in his heart" rather than "in life" substitution as capturing what is sometimes regarded as the crucial shift from a literal to a symbolic sacrifice in the Abraham narrative. As will become evident, in this story where, again, what makes the act sacrifice and not murder is that the object is unconditionally loved; the "literal" to "symbolic" transition changes little.

23. In stating the issue in this way I am following the lead of Bernard Williams's critique of Kant's moral theory in which the primary motive for any action must be that it is obligated by or permitted by the moral law. In his essay "Persons, Character, and Morality," in his book *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Williams imagines a situation in which two persons are drowning, one of whom is his wife, and only one of the two persons can be saved. Morality requires that all persons be treated equally. Complications aside, the moralist might reasonably contend that in such a situation, where no further facts might weigh, and hence in which equal treatment does not disallow the use of preference—the only alternative to the use of preference being pure randomness, say flipping a coin—it must be permissible to save one's wife. Williams famously comments (18): "But this construction provides the agent with one thought too many: it might have been hoped by some (for instance, by his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife." This is sometimes referred to at the "one thought too many" objection to pure morality. And I am suggesting that this objection applies more forcefully and radically to the question of faith. Both faith and pure morality require that there be one, unitary source of motivation for human action. So a standard complaint against Kantian morality that sharpens the "one thought too many" objection runs like this: I am morally required, as a wide duty, to act beneficently. My friend is in the hospital, and she would certainly be cheered by a visit. Spelling out the deliberation fully: Because I am bound to act beneficently, and visiting my friend in the hospital would be a case of beneficent action, I will visit her. Here the complaint can be uttered by my friend: "I hoped that you would visit because I am ill and your friend, and not because doing so allows you to fulfill you wide duty of beneficence." The dragging in of morality motivationally brackets, sacrifices, the fact that she is my ill friend. The effort of making myself a fully moral person, perfecting my virtue, as the primary motive governing all my actions has the consequence of making the doing of beneficial actions toward others somehow more about

me than them; it is always my virtue rather than their need that comes first. Substitute the word "faith" for "virtue" in that last clause and the parallel is evident. The sacrifice is simply more complete and radical in the case of faith. Given these parallels between the demands of faith and the requirements of the moral law, it is plausible to interpret the latter as a noble effort to cash out the ideals of religious morality in wholly secular terms, where the moral law replaces the living God. And it is thus equally plausible to criticize Kantian morality as too much under the sway of its theological origin to manage fully the transformation into secular modernity.

24. Charles Dempsey, "Idealism and Naturalism in Rome around 1600," in *Il classicismo: Medioevo, rinascimento, barocco: Atti di colloquio Cesare Gnudi*, ed. A. Emiliani (Bologna, 1993), 238, quoted in Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 245.

25. Peter Robb, *M: The Man Who Became Caravaggio* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 242.

26. Ibid.

27. Quoted from the 1725 *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens and modernes* by Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, trans. Mette Hjort (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3.

28. Ibid., 4.

29. For an attempt to free the claims of Dutch realism from the grip of the ideal of the classic solution, see my *Against Voluptuous Bodies: Late Modernism and the Meaning of Painting* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), chap. 1.

30. On jouissance, see Marin, *To Destroy Painting* 5.

31. On the relation between representational and formal violence in painting, see my "In Praise of Pure Violence (Matisse's War)," in *The Life and Death of Images: Ethics and Aesthetics*, ed. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), 37–55.

32. For a thoughtful treatment of the decapitation paintings as exemplifying a structural element in Caravaggio's development of autonomous art, see Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio*, lecture 5. Fried's lectures brilliantly if sometimes erratically stretch his account of the dialectical relation between absorption (immersion) and theatricality (specularity and address) as structural for modern and modernist art to a founding moment of the realist tradition in the art of Caravaggio (now the precursor of Courbet for Fried). Once one recognizes that Fried's terms of contrast easily track more familiar ones—beauty/inwardness/harmony versus sublime/outward/dissonance/excess—then his project will seem less willful than it sometimes does. For a fuller and more multisided account of the emergence of the autonomous art

of the easel painting, see Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

33. Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 141.

34. Fried, *Moment of Caravaggio*, 102.

35. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Willis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); all page references in the text of the coda are to this text.

36. As my argument in footnote 23 should have made evident, I do not think the notions of justification, shareability, or answerability are strictly Kantian. On the contrary, I think of Kantian morals as an effort to suppress the demand for justification and answerability by formalizing it—which is at least in part, I argue, just what Derrida, following Levinas, is doing here. What Derrida's defense of silence may be a hapless way of trying to understand is that moral norms unlike theoretical truths count as moral only *after* they have been approved, accepted, passionately grasped; hence, moral norms, singular or general, are logically silent in that they have a moment of affirmation that precedes their discursive comprehension because they are only practical as providing reasons for action, but reasons for action necessarily possess an affective component. But this fact about practical as opposed to theoretical reason has been well known since Plato. For an elaboration see Dieter Henrich, "The Concept of Moral Insight and Kant's Doctrine of the Fact of Reason," in his *The Unity of Reason*, trans. Richard Velkley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

37. Responsibility and answerability are "indefinite" for three primary reasons: The meaning of an action is indefinitely open to future transformation; no individual has unique authority over the meaning of an action; and no ground of action is rationally self-sufficient because rationality is always conditioned. They are not indefinite because the other has an absolute claim on me—a thesis that is truly groundless.

J. M. BERNSTEIN is University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research. His publications include *Torture and Dignity* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), *Against Voluptuous Bodies: Adorno's Late Modernism and the Meaning of Painting* (Stanford University Press, 2007), *Classical and Romantic German Aesthetics* (editor; Cambridge University Press, 2002), *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (Routledge, 1995), and *The Fate of Art* (Penn State University Press, 1992).

ANTHONY J. CASCARDI is Dean of the Arts and Humanities, and a professor of Comparative Literature, Rhetoric, and Spanish at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Cervantes, Literature, and the Discourse of Politics* (University of Toronto Press, 2012), *Consequences of Enlightenment: Aesthetics as Critique* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age* (Penn State University Press), *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 1992, reprinted 1994 and 1995), and other works. He is the editor of *Literature and the Question of Philosophy* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

ANDREW CUTROFELLO is a professor in the Philosophy Department at Loyola University Chicago. His publications include *All for Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity* (MIT Press, 2014), *Continental Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 2005), *Imagining Otherwise: Metapsychology and the Analytic A Posteriori* (1997), *The Owl at Dawn: A Sequel to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1995), and *Discipline and Critique: Kant, Poststructuralism, and the Problem of Resistance* (1994).

MAARTEN DELBEKE is an associate professor in the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of Ghent University. He was the Scott Opler fellow in Architectural History at Worcester College (Oxford), and in 2004

a visiting scholar at the Canadian Center for Architecture. He has been teaching at Ghent and in the Art History Department of Leiden University since 2005. He is the author of *The Art of Religion*: *Sforza Pallavicino and Art Theory in Bernini's Rome* (Ashgate, 2012) and the editor with Evonne Levy and Steven Ostrow of *Bernini's Biographies: Critical Essays* (Penn State University Press, 2006),

Rachel Eisendrath is an assistant professor of English at Barnard College. Her work on Renaissance poetry explores problems of aesthetics, the history of poetic forms, and the intersection of literary and visual arts. Her current book project, tentatively called "Renaissance Ekphrasis: Art in an Empiricist World," is a study of elaborate literary descriptions, or *ekphrases*, against the background of the early modern rise of objectivity. Eisendrath received a BA from Harvard, MA from St. John's College, and another MA and a PhD from the University of Chicago. In addition, she studied painting and sculpture at the New York Studio School.

Kristin Gjesdal is an associate professor of philosophy at Temple University. She specializes in German Idealism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. She studied philosophy at the University of Oslo and has been a visiting scholar at the Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, and Columbia University, as well as a postdoctoral Fulbright Fellow at the University of Chicago. Her book *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2009.

Lydia Goehr is a professor of philosophy at Columbia University. She is the author of *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Clarendon Press, 1992; second edition with a new essay, 2007, with translations in Greek and Chinese), *The Quest for Voice: Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (essays on Richard Wagner) (University of California Press, 1998), *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (essays on Adorno and Danto) (Columbia University Press, 2008), and co-editor with Daniel Alan Herwitz of *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera* (Columbia University Press, 2006).

Victoria Kahn is Katharine Bixby Hotchkis Chair in English at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of several books and numerous articles, including *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640–1674* (Princeton University Press, 2004), *Machiavellian Rhetoric from the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton University Press, 1994), and *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism*

(Cornell University Press, 1985). She is also the editor of *Politics and the Passions, 1500–1850* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

Paul A. Kottman is an associate professor of comparative literature at the New School for Social Research. He is the author of *Love as Human Freedom* (Stanford University Press, forthcoming), *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), *A Politics of the Scene* (Stanford University Press, 2008) and the editor of *Philosophers on Shakespeare* (Stanford University Press, 2009). He is also the editor of *Square One: First Order Questions in the Humanities*, a book series at Stanford University Press.

Jon R. Snyder is a professor of Italian studies and comparative literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has published and lectured extensively on the literatures, arts, and cultures of early modern Europe. His most recent books are *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (University of California Press, 2009), *Love in the Mirror* (University of Toronto Press, 2009), *L'estetica del Barocco* (*The Aesthetics of the Baroque*), written and published in Italian in 2005 and translated into Portuguese in 2007. He is also the author of *Writing the Scene of Speaking: Theories of Dialogue in the Late Italian Renaissance* (Stanford University Press, 1989).