Camille Pissarro's Jewish Identity

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*D*uring the first decades of the 20th century, many Jewish emigré artists converged on Paris. Some of them, Modigliani, Soutine, Chagall and Lipchitz, to mention four of the most outstanding, played central roles in avant-garde movements. These artists became active participants in the vibrant Parisian art scene, and substantially contributed to the innovative currents that changed the course of art history. In late 19th century France, however, only one Jewish artist maintained a pivotal position in the vanguard of his time. This distinction belongs to Camille Pissarro, who was one of the principal figures in the founding, development and dissemination of Impressionism.

Pissarro was a self-declared atheist and anarchist. Though of Jewish lineage, no references to his ancestry are to be found in his paintings. Nevertheless, the fact that he was born a Jew had an influence on the man and on the course of his life. This study attempts to bring together the scattered and fragmentary, direct and indirect allusions to Pissarro's Jewishness. It will further endeavor to ascertain what insights these yield (when viewed chronologically and contextually), about the identity of a Jewish artist in late 19th century France.

The outermost borders of Pissarro's biography were touched by two dramatic events that influenced his intellectual development and had significant effects on his life. Both events were related to his Jewish origins. An emphasis will, therefore, be placed here on the first and last decades of his life, when these events had a meaningful impact on his thinking process. In addition, some attention will also be given to exploring written texts, by Pissarro and his close associates, during times when his awareness of his origins was less acutely perceived. But first, it is worth reviewing a few salient points regarding the Jewish heritage to which Pissarro was heir.

Pissarro's Jewish Heritage

Camille Pissarro was descended from a Spanish-Portuguese Jewish family whose history goes back hundreds of years. Jews arrived in Spain with the Romans already in the 3rd century, and prospered there as merchants. They continued to live there under the Visigoths, who invaded the Roman Empire in the 4th century and by the end of the 5th century controlled most of the Iberian Peninsula. When the Moslems conquered the area, the Jews persevered in their midst, as a tolerated minority. At the end of the 15th century, however, when the Christians, under the Catholic King and Queen Ferdinand and Isabella, completed the reconquest of Spain, the Inquisition was established to purge the country of heretics and the Jews were expelled. Some Jews fled to North Africa; others escaped to Portugal, only to be subjected to a blanket conversion a few years later. Many became *Marranos*; a name applied to Jews who had been forced to convert but continued to practice their religion in secret.

Camille's great grandfather, Pierre Rodrigues Alvares Pizzarro, was a native of Braganza, a Portuguese medieval fortified city near the Spanish border. His son Joseph Gabriel (Camille's grandfather, born 1776) emigrated to Bordeaux, France at the end of the 18th century.[1] By the time Joseph Gabriel left Braganza, his family had been *Marranos* for some two hundred and fifty years, passing their religion down in secret for ten generations. This transmission of religious belief was often accomplished at great personal risk, as the Inquisition was ever vigilant in its search to root out misbelievers. The tenacious continuing of Jewish traditions, despite adverse conditions, would therefore have been a family characteristic. It is interesting to note that this quality of tenacity was reflected in Pissarro's personality. Once having determined his own ideology, he remained loyal to it throughout his life. One might say that passionate fidelity to an ideology – religious or political – ran in the Pissarro family.

The unusual conditions that existed in Bordeaux at the time of Pissarro's grandfather's immigration were probably at least partially responsible for his leaving his native town of Braganza and moving to the southern French city. To understand the milieu that he encountered in Bordeaux, and into which his son Frédéric (Pissarro's father) was born and grew up, it is necessary to have some understanding of the history of Bordeaux's Jewish community. [2]

The Jews had been expelled from France in 1306. However, in 1472 and 1474, Louis XI had issued two significant ordinances specific to the city of Bordeaux. These ordinances granted special privileges to foreigners and were intended to encourage enterprising individuals to settle there with an eye to enhancing the city's flagging commerce. It was this new situation that enticed

the Inquisition endangered M*arranos*, called in France *nouveaux Chrétiens* (New Christians) to settle in Bordeaux. Realizing the importance of this influx to the Bordeaux economy, Henri II issued in 1550 the *Lettre Patente,* which officially recognized and protected the *nouveaux Chrétiens* and accorded them the rights of privileged Frenchmen. Four years later, the Bordeaux parliament made the *Lettre Patente* official by passing the first protective ordinance prohibiting 'all residences regardless of status either to molest the *nouveaux Chrétiens* or to force them to leave the city.' [3] Understanding that their safety and privileges were dependent upon their usefulness to the crown and the city, the *nouveau Chrétiens* strove to develop the commercial potential of Bordeaux while maintaining a low profile. Nevertheless, the community was intermittently threatened with eviction of certain of its ranks. Though tension was at times great, advances were also made. In 1615 the Portuguese merchants gained additional economic and political privileges. Throughout this time, however, the members of the community continued to live within the frame of Catholicism.

During the reign of Louis XIV a significant change took place. The Portuguese merchants slowly began to be referred to as Jews by the Crown. Their situation once again became precarious; by 1684 ninety-three Portuguese Jewish families considered unnecessary to France had received notice to depart within a month. The King's zeal in establishing one religion in France was not, of course, limited to the suppression of *nouveaux Chrétiens.* In 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes, forcing the large Huguenot (Protestant) population to emigrate or convert to Catholicism. France's economic development suffered greatly from the departure of large numbers of its commercial and industrial classes.

Eventually, however, for political and economic reason, Louis decided in 1700 to tax the *nouveaux Chrétiens* rather than expel them. It was clear by this time that the King considered them Jews and no longer found it necessary to pretend to accept their Christian camouflage. Under Louis XV the situation worsened. In 1722 the King ordered the wealth of the Portuguese merchants of Bordeaux inventoried and seized. He considered them Jews and therefore without privileges. However, the combination of their undeniable economic usefulness, their ability to pay large sums of money to the government, and the country's economic predicament eventually caused Louis XV to issue the *Lettres Patentes* of 1723. The *nouveaux Chrétiens* had their privileges of 1550 and 1656 again confirmed, but with a most important addition. They were now officially recognized as Jews.

This in fact reflected a process that had been underway for some time. Between 1690 and 1700 the *nouveaux Chrétiens* ceased to baptize their children and by 1711 they were no longer having their marriages blessed in Church. The definitive step came with the formal establishment of a Jewish communal structure. At first various charitable institutions were created. Then the Portuguese merchants established their own bakeries and kosher meat shops. A rabbi was hired. By 1711 all marriages had to have the approval of the syndic or his assistant. By the time of the *Lettres Patentes* of 1723 the *nouveaux Chrétiens* had established a tightly organized Jewish community able to oversee and discipline the activities of its members.

During the first half of the 18th century, the commerce of Bordeaux altered dramatically; exports rapidly began to exceed imports, and the population increased from 48,000 in 1710 to 108,000 by the end of the century. The Jewish population also increased threefold, from 500 in 1713 to 1500 on the eve of the French Revolution. Camille Pissarro's grandfather was among those who swelled the ranks of the burgeoning Jewish community. By then, the Jews had a strong communal organization and acting against it could be perilous.

A study of marriage contracts from between 1782 to 1784 (a decade before Camille's grandfather Joseph Gabriel would marry in Bordeaux), reveals some interesting facts. In the contracts involving Sephardic Jews marrying fellow Sephardim, 'some involve marriages within an extended family (for example cousins), all indicate professions of either tradesmen, merchants, brokers, bankers or *négociants*, and most reveal that family interests were strong in insuring economic stability.'[4] This profile would precisely fit that of Camille Pissarro's father, Frédéric.

As they became manifestly Jewish and as a greater number of Portuguese emigrants arrived in Bordeaux, the activities and responsibilities of the community reinforced its moral as well as institutional commitment to Judaism. The Rabbi had a very limited role. It was the lay leaders whose authority prevailed. In the schools, the children were taught Hebrew grammar, an appreciation of the Psalms and Prophets, and a knowledge of the prayer book. The study of the Talmud was excluded. Thus, by rejecting the Talmud and Midrash and stressing the Bible as the exclusive source of divine truth, the Sephardim of Bordeaux developed a Judaism that was more compatible with 18th century rationalism. The Sephardim stressed decorum, orderliness and tranquility; they prohibited the use of the rod, which they viewed as retarding the educational process; and most significantly, they introduced French and arithmetic into the revised curriculum of 1774.

The French Jews were the first in Europe to be emancipated. They were accorded citizenship in 1791. The Sephardic Jews, having arrived in the 16th and 17th century, gradually casting off their Catholic guise by the beginning of the 18th century, were the most highly acculturated of French Jewry. In Bordeaux, the absence of an intense religious environment, and the profound break with tradition represented by the inclusion of non-Jewish standards and values, helps explain the ease with which the Sephardim were to emerge as French citizens.

Joseph Gabriel (Camille's grandfather) was a listed member of the Sephardic Jewish community of Bordeaux.[5] He married Anne Félicité Petit in 1798. Anne Félicité had a brother, Isaac Petit, who had immigrated to the island of St. Thomas in the West Indies, then a possession of the Danish Crown. St. Thomas too provided trade opportunities within a relatively liberal openness that allowed for freedom of faith. In the small Jewish community of Bordeaux, family and business connections intertwined. Therefore, it was not unusual that when Isaac Petit died, the Pissarros sent one of their sons, Frédéric (Camille's father) to St. Thomas to help his maternal uncle's widow deal with her business matters.

Though she was his aunt by marriage and a number of years older, Rachel Petit and Frédéric Pissarro became involved. The ensuing scandal was of huge proportions, at least in local terms. On November 22, 1826 their marriage was announced in the *St.Thomas Times*, as having taken place 'by license from His Most Gracious Majesty King Frederik VI, and according to the Israelitish ritual'. A day later the leaders of the local Jewish community responded that the marriage was 'without the knowledge of the Rulers and Wardens of the synagogue, nor was the Ceremony performed according to the usual custom.'[6] (Fig. 1) It was the judgment of the elders of the synagogue that the Pissarros marriage contravened certain Jewish religious tenets. Joachim Pissarro, Camille's great-grandson, has described the intensity of the battle that ensued:

> There followed a protracted and doubtless painful legal and emotional battle, lasting several years. The newlyweds insisted upon gaining proper recognition; the synagogue officials tried to thwart them. Both sides …brought into the dispute every authority they could muster, be it the Danish government of St. Thomas or the Rabbinic authorities of Bordeaux, Paris, London, and Copenhagen, in order to gain support. The Pissarros tried desperately to legitimize their claim to be married. [7]
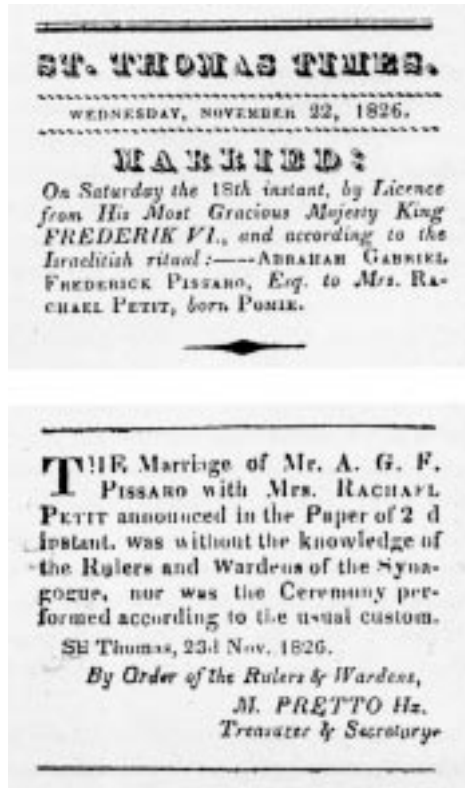
Fig. 1: Above: Announcement of the wedding of Camille Pissarro's parents in the *St. Thomas Tidende*, November 22, 1826. Below: Rejoinder of the Rulers and Wardens of the synagogue to the Pissarro's Wedding announcement, *St. Thomas Tidente*, November 23, 1826 Enid M. Baa Library, Von Scholten Collection

Frédéric Pissarro was only one generation removed from the M*arranos* who had been forced to practice their religion in secret. He had grown up in the tight-knit Jewish community of Bordeaux, where family and economic relationships were closely intertwined. He and his wife wanted to continue to live and be a part of the tiny Jewish community on St. Thomas. It is small wonder that they fought hard to have their marriage sanctioned by Jewish authorities.

The Early Years
Their third child, Jacob Camille (born 1830) was, in fact, registered in the ledger of the synagogue of the town of Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas (Fig. 2). Even so, their children would have been considered illegitimate. It was not until
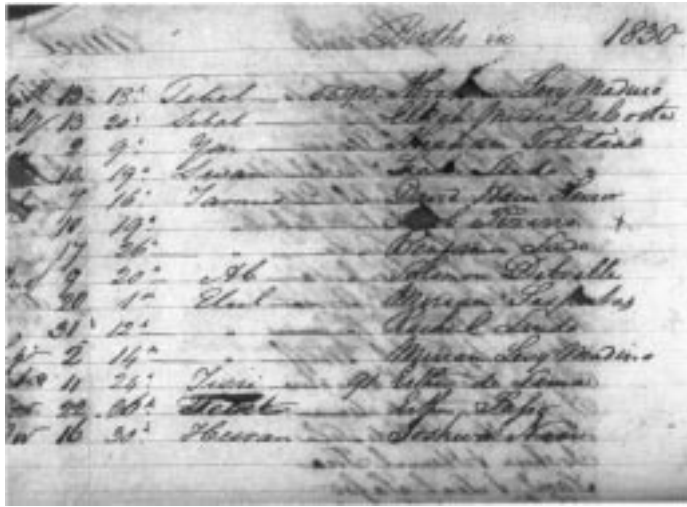
Fig. 2: Jacob Camille Pissarro's birth registration (line 6) in the ledger
of the synagogue, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas

1833, seven years after their marriage, that the Elders of the synagogue finally relented and legitimized the Pissarro union. It would have been a humiliating experience and the stigma probably remained. Reflecting on the consequences of this unfortunate episode Joachim Pissarro speculates:

> It seems, indeed, that Pissarro's anarchism and atheism both had deep psychological roots. When he was still a child, his parents, caught in the religious scandal surrounding their marriage, were probably no longer in a strong position to convincingly transmit to their children the principles of a tradition which had just rejected them.…Knowing what had happened to their parents, it is not surprising that none of the children was very enthusiastic about the religion of their ancestors.
> Pissarro decided to turn his back on religion altogether and immersed himself in authors who fortified his oppositional stance.[8]

Camille Pissarro's childhood and early school years on St. Thomas were, therefore, colored by the scandal surrounding the refusal of the Elders of the synagogue to recognize the marriage of his parents. These events, however, probably receded into the background when, in 1841 at age eleven, Camille was sent to the Pension Savary, a boarding school on the outskirts of Paris. It was important to his father that his sons learn French traditions and culture.[9] This would have been in keeping with the customs established in the Bordeaux

Jewish community into which Frédéric had been born. Camille followed a six-year traditional secular course of study. On occasion he visited his grandparents, Joseph and Anne-Félicité Pissarro. Upon graduating at age seventeen, Pissarro returned home to work in the family business. In his early twenties, however, he realized that being a well-paid clerk was not for him, and together with a painter friend, Fritz Melbye, he ran off to Venezuela in 1852. For the next two years, Pissarro pursued the life of an artist. In 1854, however, under pressure from the family he returned to St. Thomas for a short time, in return for a promise that his family would support him in his desired career.

In 1855 Pissarro returned to France where he remained, with the exception of short trips, for the rest of his life. At first he lived with his mother and two sisters, who had already taken up residence in Paris. By 1858, a monthly allowance provided by his parents permitted him to set up his own studio. Around this time, an interesting letter from his father Frédéric, written in the fall of 1859, gives us some insight into his family relations. Written on the eve of Yom Kippur, the letter was meant to remind Camille to spend the Day of Atonement with his parents. Although signed by his father, the request is made in his mother's name: 'Your mother asks me to write to you to come and have dinner with us today. Because this is the evening when we celebrate "la fête de Kipur" and on this solemn occasion the whole family should be together—and tomorrow not work, we should pass that day together.' [10] The fact that his father felt impelled to remind Camille of the meaning of this holiest of Jewish holidays indicated how far his son's estrangement from his religious traditions had advanced.

No letters before 1865 remain to us from Pissarro's voluminous correspondence, which fills five volumes. This means that the first letter that he preserved was written when he was already thirty-five years old. This first letter is also the only one in which traditional religious wording is employed, most likely because it announces the death of his father. In this letter, addressed to Eugene Petit in St. Thomas and dated January 31, 1865, he wrote: 'God is great, He took away what was dearest to us in the whole world; we have to bow and believe in His providence.'[11] Although he chose not to follow the religion of his ancestors, Pissarro was obviously well acquainted with its traditional, accepted format for expressing grief. The correct phrasing seems to have come easily to him. What is also interesting is that he chose this letter with which to begin the record of his correspondence. It is as if, confronted with the death of his father, he now felt the necessity, or perhaps the ability, to begin the chronicle of his own life.

Although Pissarro must have written to his father while he was alive, not a single letter remains either to his father or his mother. In regard to the letters to his mother, Joachim Pissarro has conjectured that Camille may have destroyed them, because he was:

> eager to erase all traces of her turbulent and contemptuous attitude toward his wife. Pissarro married a woman who represented everything his mother did not want for her son. When he met her, Julie …was employed as the cook's helper in his mother's house. She was not Jewish; she came from an ordinary social background; her family had no money, she…could speak no languages other than French. [12]

The fact that their children would not be Jewish was probably an added reason for Rachel Pissarro's ongoing refusal to speak to Julie. Although they were already the parents of two children (a third had died shortly after birth) it was only in 1871, in London, away from Pissarro's mother, that the couple were finally married in a civil ceremony. Even thereafter, Camille's dependence on his mother for financial assistance until he was in his forties undoubtedly complicated matters. [13]

Throughout his life, in varying degrees, the "Jewish problem" would manifest itself in different ways. At times, as we have seen, it would be connected to his relations with his immediate family. In others instances, however, it would have to do with how he interacted with friends and art world associates. Shikes and Harper, in their excellent biography of Pissarro (much quoted in this essay), make note of many such instances that they discovered in contemporary texts. From these it is clearly apparent that Pissarro's friends and associates were quite aware and frequently took note of his Jewish origins.

The 1870s and 1880s
In the late seventies, the Impressionists' meeting place in Paris was the Café de la Nouvelle-Athénes, on the Place Pigalle. The writer George Moore was one of the regulars. Of Pissarro he wrote:

> No one was kinder than Pissarro. He would always take the trouble to explain to the students from the Beaux-Arts why Jules Lefévre was not a great master of drawing. Pissarro was a wise and appreciative Jew, and he looked like Abraham; his beard was white

and his hair was white and he was bald, though at the time he could not have been much more than fifty.[14]

Another, less kind reference to Pissarro as the archetype of an Old Testament Jew, was made by Féllicien Champsaur who wrote that he resembled, 'with his bald forehead, his spiritual eyes under black eyebrows, Abraham in an opera-bouffe with his long hoary beard.'[15] Yet others greeted him with 'Hail to Moses' when he arrived.[16]

There was, however, no trace of the Old Testament in his painting. Pissarro found it ironic that Millet, to whom he was often compared, was much more influenced by the Old Testament than he was: '…[the critics] all throw Millet at me, but Millet's art was biblical. For the Hebrew that I am, there is very little of that in me; isn't that funny?'[17] In this telling quote, Pissarro points both to his alienation from his family's traditions, which find no echo in his work ('there is very little of that in me'), and to the fact that his Jewish origins remained a part of his self-definition ('for the Hebrew that I am').

Pissarro never denied his origins, but there were times when it seemed that being designated an outsider troubled him and his confidence was shaken. During the wrangling over the 1882 Impressionist exhibition, Renoir's brother made some unpleasant remarks. In this regard Pissarro wrote to his good friend Claude Monet:

> Do you know, my dear Monet, that the younger brother of Renoir is really insufferable, not that his complete nonsense has any effect on me…It seems that I am a prime schemer without talent, a mercenary Jew, playing underhanded tricks…It is so absurd that I pay no attention to it, only the dangerous aspect of it is the dispute he stirs up, the discord he tries to provoke…Is it because I am an intruder in the group?[18]

Although we find scattered references to Pissarro's Jewish origins during the 1870s and 1880s, they do not seem to have caused him either significant problems or pause for thought. Those two decades were devoted, in the main, to breakthroughs in his work, dedication to advancing the Impressionist cause, and to his growing family. Then, at the end of the 1880s, specifically in 1889, we find in his personal life, his correspondence, and in his work, indications that his Jewish origins remain problematic. These occurrences foreshadow a preoccupation with this subject during the last decade of his life, from 1894 until his death in 1903. The catalyst was the *cause célèbre* of those years, the Dreyfus Affair, as a result of which Pissarro's Jewish consciousness was

heightened, and a change in his perception of his own identity ensued.

But before looking at that last decade, it is instructive to return first to the year 1889. During that year, Pissarro's eldest son Lucien met Esther Bensusan, a friend of Pissarro's niece Esther Isaacson, while she and her London-based family were visiting Paris. The two young people corresponded thereafter. Esther came from a middle-class family of Spanish-Jewish descent. Her father, Jacob Bensusan, was a respectable merchant, conservative, and also very Orthodox. In November 1890, Lucien began teaching drawing in London and the romance progressed further. The affair came to a head in the spring of 1892, when Esther confronted her father with her wish to marry Lucien. Jacob insisted that the marriage take place in a synagogue, that Lucien embrace Judaism—which he refused to do, with Esther's support—that any children be raised as Jews, and that any sons be circumcised. [19]

 Lucien appealed to his father for help. Once again Camille Pissarro found himself embroiled in a marriage dispute connected, among other things, to the "Jewish problem". Despite Pissarro's efforts, and his well-known talents as an arbitrator, the two fathers could find no common ground. Bensusan threatened to disown his daughter if she married Lucien. As an immediate solution was not in sight, Lucien and Esther married in a civil ceremony in an English Registry office, just as his father and mother had done. After their honeymoon the newlyweds hiked to Eragny, where they spent the first year of their marriage under the protection of the Pissarros.

1889 was a difficult time for Pissarro. It not only marked the beginning of Lucien's problematic romance, but it was also the year his mother died, at the age of ninety-four. In addition, he was having serious problems with his work. Having embraced Seurat's Neo-Impressionist ideas in 1886, by 1889 Pissarro was becoming disenchanted with the new technique. Moreover, his adoption of Neo-Impressionism was having a disastrous effect on sales. Once again, this time nearing his sixtieth birthday, he was in economic difficulty. His break with Impressionism had another dramatic effect on his life. During that period he virtually ceased all contact with his former colleagues, including Monet and Degas.[20]

All these things may have led to the discouraged state of mind that caused him to write a unique letter to his niece Esther Isaacson, on May 1, 1889, suggesting that his lack of acceptance as a painter was related to his being Jewish. '…a matter of race, probably. Until now, no Jew has made art here, or rather no Jew has searched to make a disinterested and truly felt art. I believe that this could be one of the causes of my bad luck…'. But if, in what may have been a depressed or despairing moment, Pissarro attributed "one of the causes"

Fig. 3: "Capitol" from *Les Turpitudes Sociales*, 1890, Pen and ink, Private Collection

of his bad luck to discrimination, he immediately put forward, in addition, a purely work related reason: 'I am too serious to please the masses' he continued, ' and I don't partake enough of the exotic tradition to be appreciated by the dilettantes.'[21]

It was also in 1889, in a series of twenty-eight pen-and-ink drawings, *Les Turpitudes Sociales*, that Pissarro created a rare visual representation of his political beliefs. Here he expressed his deep contempt for Parisian society, and his strong compassion for the exploited. *Les Turpitudes* were made for the "education" of his nieces, Esther and Alice Isaacson, and not meant for publication. Even so it is surprising to find that Pissarro used exaggerated anti-Semitic stereotypes for certain figures in this series. In *Capital*, the prominent hooked nose, potbelly and soft hands make the Jewish allusion easily discernible (Fig.3). In a letter to his nieces accompanying the drawings, Pissarro described this thus: 'In a word it represents the divinity of the day in a portrait of a Bischoffheim, of an Oppenheim, of a Rothschild, of a Gould, whatever. It

Fig. 4: "The New Idolators" an illustration for *Les Turpitudes Sociales*, 1890, Pen and brown ink over brief indications in pencil on glazed paper, The Denver Museum of Art

is without distinction, vulgar and ugly.' [22] In *The Temple of the Golden Calf*, the hooked-nose figures of Jews appear prominently in the foreground. And, in *The New Idolators* (originally intended for the series but omitted), two of the top-hatted capitalists carrying a golden calf, have distorted, Jewish-looking features (Fig.4).

Both Ralph Shikes and Linda Nochlin, in her excellent article on Degas' anti-Semitism,[23] are at pains to explain why Pissarro used these offensive stereotypes. Shikes contends that Pissarro's attitude was essentially a class attitude of the radical artist towards the wealthy Jews of finance and the stock market. He also reminds us that an anti-Semitic streak runs through some of the anarchist and radical literature of the 19th century, that big noses were a convention of radical imagery, and that these drawings were meant for private consumption. Nochlin adds that 'In Pissarro's case, it was simply that no other visual signs worked so effectively and with such immediacy to signify

capitalism as the hook nose and pot belly of the stereotypical Jew.' [24] Even if we accept all these explanations, it is clear that at this juncture Pissarro is at best unaware of the dangers of anti-Semitic caricatures. Employing an effective image to advance his political stance was more important to him at this point than refraining from the slur on all Jews implied in such depictions. He does not yet understand that such conventions, aimed at the Jews of finance, could be used to justify hating all Jews.

The Dreyfus Affair
On December 22, 1894 Captain Alfred Dreyfus was convicted by a French military court of treason and sentenced to incarceration on Devil's Island. Dreyfus had allegedly passed French military secrets to German intelligence. An unpopular, ambitious officer, of cold personality, Dreyfus was also Jewish. Moreover, he was not from one of the Parisian or Bordeaux families that had long since been assimilated, but rather from an Alsatian family that had emigrated to France after the cession of Alsace to Germany.

Over a period of time, evidence gradually began to accumulate pointing to Dreyfus' innocence. As more and more evidence surfaced, France became divided into two camps. On one side were those who supported the army and contended that Dreyfus was guilty. On the other side were those who supported justice and believed Dreyfus innocent. The "Dreyfus Affair" pitted neighbor against neighbor, and friend against friend. The Impressionists were not impervious to the clash. Monet, Pissarro and radical artists like Luce, Signac and Vallotton, as well as critics such as Duret, Ajalbert, Geffroy and Mirbeau came eventually to support Dreyfus. So too did the Symbolist writers and critics Fénéon, Gustave Kahn, Adam and Tailhade. Among those on the opposite side were some of Pissarro's oldest friends: Cézanne, Renoir, Degas, Guillaumin and Forain. Joachim Pissarro contends that Pissarro's being Jewish was only a 'fragment of the truth' that led to his support of Dreyfus.

> Pissarro did not spontaneously join forces with the Dreyfusards…
> At the beginning of the Dreyfus Affair, therefore, it is clear that Pissarro was largely influenced by views expressed in the anarchist press, which saw in this case a problem strictly internal to the bourgeoisie and capitalism. When the artist decided to change his mind, it was in recognition of the justice of Emile Zola's 'courageous deed'.[25]

This, however, was probably not the case, since Pissarro was already convinced of Dreyfus' innocence before Zola took his public stand in his famous article

J'Accuse. What transpired was, in fact, even more interesting and complex.
To best understand Pissarro's changing attitudes, it is instructive to follow the
development of ideas in the mind of the French-Jewish anarchist intellectual,
Bernard Lazare. Pissarro's changing ideas were influenced by Lazare's, and it
is possible to see a parallel development in the two men. Lazare was one of the
few to become convinced early on that the court-martial had wrongfully
convicted Dreyfus. Coming, however, from an anarchist background, he did
not immediately perceive the significance of the Dreyfus case, nor the rabid
anti-Semitism that followed in its wake. Bernard Lazare came from an
assimilated Jewish family from Nîmes. While still a young man, he quickly
made a name for himself in Paris as a literary critic and anarchist, and by 1892
was appointed director of the Symbolist organ *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*.
Two years previously, in 1890, he had published two articles on the Jewish
question, also in *Entretiens*. These articles distinguished between the *Israélites*
(cultivated French Jews who had absorbed Latin civilization) and *Juifs* (foreign
Jews, rich or poor). The latter he viewed as mean, narrow-minded, sly and
unscrupulous, owing their allegiance only to the 'Golden Calf'. The terminology
and imagery he used was very similar to that of Pissarro's in his drawings and
the letter accompanying *Les Turpitudes Sociales*, from around this same date.

As was the case with Pissarro, Lazare too was using accepted rhetorical
conventions, albeit applying them selectively. As Robert S. Wistrich so concisely
explains,

> The milieu in which he (Lazare) moved was thoroughly infiltrated
> with anti-Semitism, which in nineteenth-century France had long
> been a feature of the Left. Hatred of the Rothschild 'dynasty' was
> almost obligatory in socialist and anarchist circles…Hence there
> was nothing especially surprising in the fact that a young Jew,
> ignorant of his tradition and history, should identify with the
> commonplace anti-Semitic stereotypes of the time.[26]

In 1894 Lazare published a study entitled *L'Antisémitisme, son histoire et ses
causes*, which still presented the Jews as at least partly responsible for their
own fate. The Dreyfus Affair, which broke out only a few months after
L'Antisémitisme was published, forced him to re-examine his views and revise
his opinions. His re-assessment began in November 1894 in the aftermath of
the smear campaign against Dreyfus in the press, which ultimately made a
guilty verdict inevitable. Edouard Drumont, a long time outspoken propagator
of anti-Semitism, immediately exploited the Dreyfus trial to whip up a frenzied
xenophobic crusade in France.

> Even the most assimilated French Israelite now discovered he was
> after all only a pariah, living in a new ghetto surrounded by an
> impenetrable wall of suspicion…This latent hatred
> was more shocking for the sensitive, educated Jew…It awakened
> for the first time in Bernard Lazare an understanding of the
> ambiguity of emancipation and the pariah quality of Jewish
> existence.[27]

In a small pamphlet entitled *Antisémitisme et Révolution* (March 1895), Lazare
for the first time unmasked the pseudo-socialist, demagogic character of
Drumont's propaganda. Then, in 1896, he published *Contre l'antisémitisme,
histoire d'une polémique*. This was a brochure of a four-week public debate (18
May to 14 June 1896) that Drumont conducted from *La Libre Parole* and Bernard-
Lazare from the radical paper *Le Voltaire*.' The energetic and unequivocal
declaration of war contained in *Contre l'antisémitisme'* writes Nelly Wilson, 'was
proof that there was at least one determined and fully alert Jew to take on
Drumont, his supporters and his backers.'[28] By this time Lazare was convinced
that anti-Semitism aimed to destroy the fundamental values of the French
revolutionary tradition by reversing the Edict of Emancipation and abrogating
the Rights of Man. He further observed that the attacks on the Jewish barons of
finance masked an attack on all Jews. What was at stake was not Jewish
monopoly of the Stock Exchange but the Jew's rights as a man and a citizen.
Camille Pissarro had also come to this realization. He read *Contre l'antisémitisme*
and wrote the following letter to Bernard Lazare (Fig. 5):

> Rouen,
> Hotel d'Angleterre,
> quai Boëldieu
> 13 Sept. 96
>
> Dear Sir,
> I was away on a trip when your little brochure on anti-Semitism
> arrived, and I would like to write you a word of my great sympathy
> for the man and for the writer who was able to puncture that
> "windbag" Drumont. Not knowing your address, I have written
> you care of *L'Echo de Paris*. I need not tell you how much I share
> your ideas about the anti-Semitic movement and how pleased I
> was to see a Semite defending, in such an eloquent manner, my
> ideas; only a knowledgeable Jewish anarchist would be capable of

> raising his voice with such authority. You have been courageous
> and you did your duty.
> I send respectful greetings to your wife, and remain your devoted
> C. Pissarro.[29]

This letter suggests that Pissarro identified totally with Lazare and his pamphlet. He here expresses his complete agreement with Lazare's ideas regarding anti-Semitism, and praises his courage. Moreover, Pissarro is particularly pleased that these ideas, which are so congruent with his own, have been put forth by a Jew. It is, however, not clear what he meant in writing 'you did your duty'. Did Pissarro think that 'a knowledgeable Jewish anarchist' like Lazare and himself had a responsibility to speak out and take a stand? His letter of support to Lazare suggests that he did.

In any event, it seems likely that at this point Pissarro had become sensitized to the various manifestations of anti-Semitism and to their dangerous consequences. The use of anti-Semitic conventions that came so easily to him in the 1889 *Turpitude* drawings, would at this time have been, at the very least, cause for careful reflection. Like Lazare, he would by now have understood that such caricatures were a ploy used to engender hatred of all Jews. On January 27, 1898 he made this distinction in a letter to his son: 'Unfortunately, the masses haven't the least understanding of what is going on; they assume a social struggle is being waged against Capital without asking themselves who will be defeated - they dislike the Jewish bankers, and rightly, but they have a weakness for the Catholic bankers, which is idiotic.'[30]

For Lazare, the understanding of the evil effects of anti-Semitism was followed by the comprehension that Dreyfus could be, and in fact was, innocent. On November 6, 1896, Lazare published his first pamphlet in the Dreyfusard campaign. *Une erreur judiciaire; la vérité sur l'affaire Dreyfus.* Three thousand copies were sent out to influential personalities. Initially the reaction of his anarchist comrades was cool and hostile. Lazare found himself alone. Friends deserted him, and overnight doors closed on him.

This first tract was followed in 1897 by a second, *Une erreur judiciare. L'Affaire Dreyfus, (deuxième mémoire avec des expertises d'écritures).* Pissarro's reaction was swift. On November 14, 1897, he wrote to Lucien:

> I am sending you a batch of newspapers that will bring you up to
> date on the Dreyfus case, which is so agitating public opinion.
> You will realize that the man may well be innocent; at any rate,
> there are honorable people in high positions who assert that he is

Fig. 5: Postcard from Camille Pissarro to Bernard Lazare,
Rouen, Hotel d'Angleterre, Quai Boëldieu, dated 13
September 1896. Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

innocent. The new brochure of Bernard Lazare, which has just
appeared, proves that the document that the General gave the press
is a forgery. Lazare's contention is supported by twelve scientists
of different nationalities. Isn't it dreadful?[31]

It seems, therefore, that Bernard Lazare's pamphlets had already convinced Pissarro of Dreyfus' innocence in November, 1897. Two months later, a military court acquitted the obviously guilty officer, Major Esterhazy. In response, Emile Zola wrote his scathing article with the inflammatory title, *J'ACCUSE,* which Clemenceau's *L'Aurore* published on January 13, 1898. In it he charged the War Office and leading military figures with misconduct during both trials. His article catalyzed French passions. Anti-Jewish riots broke out in the provinces.

Like all the Impressionists, Pissarro had been estranged from Zola because of his critical attitude toward Impressionism in the nineties. Now, his statement prompted an immediate letter of support: 'Accept the expression of my admiration for your great courage and the nobility of your character. Your Old Comrade.'[32] A month later, when Zola was convicted of slandering the judges in the Esterhazy trial, Pissarro hastened to write him. ' I am among those who believe that you are rendering a proud service to France, your great cry of an honest man has rectified her moral sense, she will be proud one day to have borne you.'[33]

On the day that Zola's *J'ACCUSE* was published, Pissarro wrote to his niece Esther,

> The Dreyfus case is causing many horrible things to be said here. I will send you *L'Aurore*, which has very fine pieces by Clemenceau and Zola. Today Zola accuses the General Staff. Ajalbert has published a very brave article in *Les Droits de l'homme*, but the majority of the public is against Dreyfus, despite the bad faith shown in the Esterazy affair. I heard Guillaumin saying that if Dreyfus had been shot at once, people would have been spared all this commotion! He is not the only one who is of this opinion. At Durand-Ruel's, everyone took this view except for the doorman, and I heard many others speak that way too. Alas for a people so great in '93 and '48! [34]

Pissarro's state of mind at this time was well described by Shikes and Harper:

> As events built up, Pissarro's involvement deepened. As a Jew, he felt menaced by the passions that surfaced during the tumult over the affair. His sense of justice was outraged. He believed in Dreyfus's innocence; his antennae indicated that the forces of the Right – all the groups he despised as anti-social – were aligned

behind the anti-Dreyfussards; he was distressed by the violence of superpatriotic mobs and anti-Semitic ruffians. At one point, he even felt threatened with deportation. [35]

On a personal level, the Dreyfus affair took its toll on Pissarro. In the fall of 1898 he wrote to Lucien,

> Yesterday, at about five o'clock, while on my way to Durand-Ruel, I found myself in the middle of a gang of young scamps seconded by ruffians. They shouted: 'Death to the Jews! Down with Zola!' I calmly passed through them and reached the rue Lafitte…they had not even taken me for a Jew (Fig. 6).[36]

Although he assured his son that he did not fear for his own safety, he continued in that same letter:

> France is really sick, will she recover?…Yesterday I received a card from Mirbeau asking me to sign the protest with Monet and various others. Despite the grave turn of affairs in Paris, despite all these anxieties, I must work at my window as if nothing has happened.[37]

The constraints of his work imposed themselves on Pissarro even though he took the Dreyfus Affair very much to heart. He continued to paint, despite his anxieties, but he was evidently so caught up in the Affair that his wife Julie became angry about it: 'Doubtless the affaire Zola takes all your time, so you can't write me…That interests you much more than your family.' [38] Pissarro was such a devoted family man that his preoccupation must have been great to draw such fire from his wife.

From the 1870s onward Degas and Pissarro were the only Impressionists that persisted in their unwavering defiance of the Salons. They were fellow militants in their firm resolution to defy the stifling academic art establishment. In his biography of his great grandfather, Joachim Pissarro, tells us: 'Degas was, incidentally, the artist to whom Pissarro referred the most often throughout his correspondence: their intense and mutual admiration was based on a kinship of ethical as well as aesthetic concerns.'[39] And regarding Pissarro's ongoing

Fig. 6: Camille Pissarro, ca 1895. Musée Pissarro, Pontoise

openness to new techniques in printmaking he continues; 'The artist with whom he most shared this passionate technical audacity was again Degas, whose methods he studied and regularly mentioned in his correspondence with his son Lucien.'[40] Degas was one of the first to have bought Pissarro's paintings, and Pissarro admired Degas above all the other Impressionists, maintaining that he was 'without doubt the greatest artist of the period.' [41]

Degas also had a number of other Jewish friends, some of whom he saw constantly, and whose portraits appear in several of his paintings. Yet of all those who had participated in the Impressionist exhibitions, Degas became the most irrationally anti-Dreyfus. During the nineties, he had maintained a certain amount of cordial though infrequent contact with Pissarro. As late as January 1898, they met at an exhibition Degas had arranged at Vollard's for a young protégé of his. Pissarro wrote to his son George about meeting Degas at

the exhibition and urged him to visit the show. Thereafter, Degas never spoke to Pissarro again.[42] Degas became a savage anti-Semite. He blamed the Jews for all of France's troubles. At breakfast he had his maid read aloud to him the more lurid passages of Drumont's wildly anti-Semitic newspaper.[43] Ajalbert wrote about Degas, on January 20, 1898, telling of a model he had thrown out of his studio because she expressed doubts as to Dreyfus' guilt. After reading this, Pissarro referred to Degas the next day in a letter to Lucien as 'the ferocious anti-Semite'. [44] A sad confirmation of Degas' and Renoir's behavior is found in a February 11, 1898 entry in Paul Signac's diary: 'Pissarro tells me that since the anti-Semitic incidents, Degas and Renoir shun him and no longer greet him. What can be taking place in the minds of such intelligent men that leads them to become so stupid?' [45]

When Pissarro died, Degas did not attend the funeral. He expressed his regrets to Lucien, giving illness as the excuse. But to his friend Henri Rouart he wrote:

> So he has died, the poor old wandering Jew. He will walk no more, and if one had been warned, one would certainly have walked a little behind him. What has he been thinking since the nasty affair, what did he think of the embarrassment one felt, in spite of oneself, in his company? Did he ever say a word to you? What went on inside that old Israelite head of his? Did he think only of going back to the times when we were pretty nearly unaware of his terrible race? [46]

Perhaps the most incisive summing up of Degas' behavior was made by Linda Nochlin; 'One must conclude that although Degas was indeed an extraordinary artist, a brilliant innovator, and one of the most important figures in the artistic vanguard of the nineteenth century, he was a perfectly ordinary anti-Semite.'[47]

Pissarro and Bernard Lazare died in the same year, 1903. Lazare's fight against anti-Semitism and his support of Dreyfus had led him to conclude that the only answer to the Jewish problem was Jewish nationalism. He became a Zionist. It was the solution of a young man. He was only thirty-eight when he died. Pissarro was seventy-three, not a time to radically alter your worldview. Pissarro remained true to anarchist beliefs, but the course of events had not left him untouched.

Although they lived to see Dreyfus pardoned, and they witnessed his petition for a retrial, neither Pissarro nor Lazar was alive to see the verdict reversed. Dreyfus was only fully vindicated in 1906, three years after Camille

Pissarro had been laid to rest in the Père Lachaise cemetry in Paris, in the family plot, next to his father, mother and grandfather.

What does this all mean? Very little in regard to Pissarro's painting, which appears not to have been affected in any significant way. It does, however, give us a better understanding of a Jewish artist's dilemma in late 19th c. France. Pissarro, after all, was of a new breed. Though of Jewish origin, he succeeded in entering the mainstream of the Parisian avant-garde, and he desired to be judged solely by universal art standards. In this sense, he became a path blazer for the many artists of Jewish origin who would come to Paris in the early 20thc.

As we know, the anti-Semitism that Pissarro encountered did not disappear in the new century. As the number of Jewish artists (and dealers, collectors, publishers etc.) increased, a new strand of anti-Semitism took shape. In its reconfigured form that culminated in the 1930s, it would prove to be even more monstrous and deadly. In the interim, however, following Pissarro's example, an important group of artists were able to "surmount'" the prejudices related to their Jewish roots, and move into the forefront of the Modern Art movement.

Postscript

I would like to conclude with a few remarks on the continued connection of Pissarro and his work with the Israel Museum. On December 16, 1952, Mordecai Narkis, director of the Bezalel Museum, which would later form part of the Israel Museum, wrote to Paul-Emile Pissarro, Camille Pissarro's youngest son. In this letter he thanked Paul-Emile for the two etchings by his father and the painting by his own hand that he had donated to the museum. The gifts were duly noted in the catalogue of the *Exposition d'oeuvres d'art français contemporaines*, catalogue of the Bezalel National Museum, Jerusalem, 15 Nov.- 20 Dec. 1952. Narkis went on to say that he understood Paul-Emile had promised an exhibition of his father's work for the following year to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Camille Pissarro's death. That exhibition never happened. However, some forty years later, in October 1994, Joachim Pissarro, Paul-Emile's grandson, made good that promise and co-curated with me a highly successful Pissarro retrospective at the Israel Museum. The exhibition was subsequently shown at the Jewish Museum, New York.

It is also worth noting that there are seven oil paintings by Pissarro in the collection of the Israel Museum (Fig. 7).[48] These paintings are all donations, and they represent a group of works larger by far than that of any other

Fig. 7: *The Tuileries Gardens, Afternoon, Sun*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm. The Israel Museum Jerusalem, Gift of Federico and Alicia Halberstam Lieberg, Buenos Aires.

Impressionist artist in the museum's holdings. The museum's holdings also include twenty one Pissaro drawings and eighteen prints. Perhaps it is not by accident that generous donors have seen the Israel Museum as an appropriate repository for the works of Camille Pissarro.

Notes

1. For the history of the Pissarro family, see Pissarro 1995: 20.
2. For a history of the Jews of Bordeaux, see Malino 1978.
3. *Ibid: 4.*
4. *Ibid:* 15-16.
5. Cavignac 1991: 169.
6. Pissarro 1995: 21.
7. I*bid:* 21.
8. *Ibid:* 24.
9. Shikes and Harper 1980: 21.
10. *Ibid:* 51. The letter is dated October 7, 1859. Pissarro's correspondence is quoted throughout this essay in English translations from various sources. For the original

letters in French, see Bailly-Herzberg 1980; Bailly-Herzberg 1986-1991.

11. Pissarro 1995:18.
12. *Ibid:* 18.
13. Pissarro 1993: 38
14. Moore 1906: 39-41.
15. Shikes and Harper 1980: 142.
16. *Ibid:* 142.
17. Bailly-Herzberg 1980: 158 (Letter to Duret, 12 March 1882).
18. Shikes and Harper 1980: 178.
19. *Ibid:* 265.
20. Pissarro 1995: 141
21. Shikes and Harper 1980: 248 (Letter to Esther Isaacson, May 1, 1889).
22. *Ibid: 231 (*Letter to Esther and Alice Isaacson).
23. *Ibid:* 231-234: Nochlin 1987: 96-116.
24. Nochlin 1987: 109.
25. Pissarro 1995: 35.
26. Wistrich 1976:136-7.
27. *Ibid.* p. 141.
28. Wilson 1978: 207.
29. Letter from Camille Pissarro to Bernard Lazare, Rouen, Hotel d'Angleterre, quai Boëldieu, dated 13 Sept. 1896, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.
30. Rewald 1943: 320 (Letter to Lucien dated January 27, 1898).
31. *Ibid*: 314.
32. Shikes and Harper 1980: 306 (Letter from Pissarro to Zola, Jan. 14. 1898).
33. *Ibid*: 306 (Letter from Pissarro to Zola, Feb. 26, 1898).
34. Rewald 1943: 318.
35. Shikes and Harper 1980: 305.
36. Rewald 1943: 332 (Letter dated November 19, 1898).
37. *Ibid: 332.*
38. Shikes and Harper 1980: 306 (Unpublished letter from Julie Pissarro, n.d., Musée de Pontoise).
39. Pissarro 1993: 7.
40. *Ibid*: 11.
41. Rewald 1943: 30 (Letter to Lucien, Osny, May 9, 1883).
42. Shikes and Harper 1980: 307.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Rewald 1943: 319 (Letter to Lucien, Paris, January 21, 1898).
45. Shikes and Harper 1980: 308.
46. *Ibid: 308 (*Guérin, *Lettres de Degas*, letter no. CLXXXIII).
47. Nochlin 1987: 109.
48. Paintings by Camille Pissarro in the Israel Museum's collection:
    1. *The Factory at Pontoise*, 1873
       Oil on canvas, 38 X 55 cm.
       Gift of the Saidye Rosner Bronfman Estate, Montreal, to the Canadian Friends of the Israel Museum.
    2. *Sunset at Eragny*, 1890
       Oil on canvas, 66 x 82.7 cm
       Bequest of Johanna and Ludovic Lawrence.
    3. *Portrait of Jeanne*, ca. 1893

Oil on canvas, 46 x 38 cm.

Bequest of Blanche T. Weisberg, to American Friends of the Israel Museum.

4. *Bountiful Harvest* (also known as *The Hayrackers*)

Oil on canvas, 43 x 54 cm.

Gift of the Sara Lee Corporation, Chicago, to American Friends of the Israel Museum

5. *Morning, Sunlight Effect, Eragny*, 1899

Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm.

Bequest of Mrs. Neville Blond, O.B.E., London, to British Friends of the Art Museums of Israel.

6. *The Tuileries Gardens, Afternoon, Sun*, 1900

Oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm.

Gift of Federico and Alicia Halberstam Lieberg, Buenos Aires.

7. *The Louvre, Morning, Spring*, 1902

Oil on canvas, 65 X 54 cm.

Bequest of Otto and Rita Blau, Lugano.

On long term loans:

1. Landscape *near Pontoise, the Auvers Road*, 1881

Long term loan from the Sara and Moshe Mayer Collection**,** Tel Aviv.

2. *Boulevard Montmartre: Spring*, 1897

Oil on canvas, 65 X 81 cm.

Long term loan from the daughter-in-law and heir of Max Silberberg, Breslau

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C.R. Ashbee's Jerusalem Years: Arts and Crafts, Orientalism and British Regionalism*

Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler
Tel-Aviv University

> …And an Eastern man in the sun's eye,
> Holding a cup, stood splendidly.
> His draperies of ample white,
> Were bound with a bar of azurite,
> And his turban glittered with festoons
> Of beryl and jade and great jargoons
> Tasseled with gold thread fine and thin,
> And the olive brown of his polished skin;
> And he looked far out at Conradin.
> While from the speechless deep of his eyes
> Woke Oriental mysteries…[1]

*T*hese lines were written by Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942) ten years before he first set foot in Jerusalem. Though this poem was written about medieval Sicily,[2] it is threaded with fascination with that island's Moslem inhabitants. Ashbee relishes in details of costume and architecture as he paints a portrait of the young heir to the Norman kings, who, with a certain *naïveté* dreams of a Christian-ruled Sicily in which Moslems and Christians live harmoniously. The ballad, in a way, sheds light on Ashbee's conceptions of the East, which were forged from an early time, by a man who was one of the central figures in Britain's second-generation Arts and Crafts Movement. The eminent Orientalist Richard Burton (1821-90) was a friend of Ashbee's family.[3] In addition, Ashbee had a lasting acquaintance with William de Morgan (1839-1917),[4] whose tilework and pottery bore a strong Islamic influence.[5] These facts certainly suggest that he developed an affection for the Moslem East and its crafts early in his career.

Encountering the East

During 1916-17 Ashbee spent time in Cairo, teaching at the Sultania Training College. It was in Cairo that he first experienced personally the abundance of ancient manual crafts that had been preserved in a part of the world less 'inflicted' with the intrusion of modern industry and technology. To a man like Ashbee, for whom craftsmanship was not just a business, but a way of life and the paving of a road to a better society, Cairene crafts were seen as an expression of a society beautiful in its simplicity.

Inspired by John Ruskin (1918-1900) and William Morris (1834-96), Ashbee believed in the inseparable links between labour and society.[6] In 1908 he published *Craftsmanship in Competitive Industry,*[7] a book that bears the mark of his realization that the experiment of his Guild of Handicraft in Chipping Campden was just that: an experiment.[8] In an age controlled by industry and insufficiently aware of technology's dangers, he regarded Campden as a rural reservation of guild life, craftsmanship and self-sustaining agriculture. To a man of his ideas, Cairo must also have seemed like a reservation, preserving in its crafts and way of life distant and unique cultural and religious ideals.

Although Ashbee's attitudes changed in later years and he adopted a view that was much more sympathetic of modern industry,[9] he could still say during his visit to Cairo: 'It is wonderful to see what one has so long been preaching - the cultural force of these hand processes.'[10]

In the spring of 1918 Ashbee was summoned by the new Military Governor of Jerusalem, Sir Ronald Storrs (1881-1955), to survey the extant crafts in Jerusalem and advise on town planning. This was shortly after the occupation of Palestine by the British towards the end of World War I. Ashbee embarked on his journey to the Holy City in the summer. After a brief return to England, during which he and the few Guildsmen still associated with the Guild of Handicraft formally declared the Guild extinct, he settled in Palestine at the beginning of 1919, and was joined by his wife and daughters in the spring.[11] Ashbee held the post of "Civic Adviser" of Jerusalem until 1922.

Post-World War I Jerusalem was in its greater part a medieval walled city, in desperate need of reconstruction, modern transportation and sanitation, with rapidly developing new neighborhoods outside its walls.[12] The British Military Government and, after 1920, the British Mandate, were the culmination of age-old religious spiritual ties between Britain and the '…land of Jacob's might and Ishmael's wandering power, of David's lyre and Isaiah's strain, of Abraham's faith and Immanuel's love…',[13] which were given impetus by strong imperial ambitions.[14]

Ashbee's objectives, set out in cooperation with Ronald Storrs, were to propose solutions to the city's modern problems while conserving its ancient holy sites and unique character, which were charged with historical significance and religious symbolism for Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

As a part of Ashbee's work as civic adviser, he was greatly involved with the Pro-Jerusalem Society, founded by Ronald Storrs in 1918. The Society's aims were to preserve the city's antiquities, develop modern urban cultural functions such as museums, libraries, theatre, etc., and foster the education and welfare of the city's inhabitants.[15] Ashbee was the society's secretary and chief coordinator. The Society included representatives of the city's diverse religious and political groups, as well as archaeologists, historians and architects.[16]

As observed by Crawford, Ashbee's attitude towards the groups that formed Jerusalem's delicate social fabric was extraordinarily anti-sectarian.[17] In its earlier manifestations, in *Conradin*, he had given expression to an ideal union of Christianity and Islam:

> …A Cross in his hands I did enfold,
> And I laid on his brow a crescent of gold.
> They have risen both and both shall set
> Christ's Cross and the Crescent of Mohamet
> And the wisdom and virtue of both shall be
> As thy beauty, things of eternity...[18]

Ashbee viewed the British claim to the Palestine Mandate as the natural realization of Christian supremacy. In the Holy Land, however, a third party had to be added to Ashbee's dream of religious coexistence: the Jews. He believed that there must be a way for all three religions to live, work and pray side by side in Jerusalem: 'There is no other logical way out,' he wrote, 'For keeping the races apart means the old racial and religious antagonism…there must come fusion in the end.'[19]

Although Ashbee was half Jewish on his mother's side, who came from a wealthy family of Jewish merchants in Hamburg, his political views in Palestine were pro-Arab, as were the views of many of his British colleagues.[20] Perhaps the fact that he himself was an offspring of two religions contributed to Ashbee's yearning for a harmonious coexistence of the different sects in Jerusalem. His memoirs reveal a growing criticism of the Jews during his years in the region.[21] Ashbee was drawn towards the Moslem age-old customs and Islamic

architecture, design and traditional costumes, which for him had an almost mythological Oriental aura about them. He found in them the realization of his earlier romantic conceptions of Eastern society. In his *Palestine Notebook* quite a few descriptions of Arabs echo his imaginary descriptions in *Conradin.* When describing a meeting with the Grand Mufti, Ashbee writes that 'He had his beads handy, and shuffled them along with thin, aristocratic fingers as we talked… I rather liked his dreamy, metaphysical eyes. He wore a large and spotlessly white turban…'[22]

The style of Ashbee's writings continued the literary European traditions that had forged for their readers an Orient with ancient peoples who, to the European, were often reminiscent of Biblical times, and who had marvelous architecture, costumes, markets, folklore, etc.[23] Yet, like other travelers to the East since the beginning of the 19th century., upon encountering the Holy Land in person, Ashbee was able to adopt a fresh and practical point of view.[24] He had a keen perception of the complicated political situation and the national aspirations of both Jews and Arabs.[25] He also believed that Jerusalem was in desperate need of some modernization.

Reviving the Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem

In Jerusalem, Ashbee found a survival of ancient crafts and architecture similar to that which he had seen in Cairo, and just as stimulating. He enthusiastically began planning how to give a breath of new life to what was in his eyes a state of extreme deterioration caused by the Great War and by years of neglect during the Ottoman rule.

When summoned to Palestine in 1918, Ashbee received his first assignment: to survey and draw up a report on the condition of arts and crafts in Jerusalem (and in other areas of the country) and 'to submit recommendations as to the best way to grapple, without distinction of race or creed with the problem of preserving, encouraging, and if necessary creating suitable arts and crafts for the city; and if possible placing them upon an economically working basis.'[26]

The importance attached to the revival of arts and crafts as part of a greater plan for repairing and building Jerusalem by the new British Administration, while it was still under military control, is most interesting, and attests to the extent to which the ideas of the Arts and Crafts Movement had seeped into British society.

As Ashbee himself notes in the report, William Mclean, the Civil Engineer of the City of Alexandria, was at the time preparing a city plan for Jerusalem while Ernest Richmond was surveying and suggesting restorations in the area

of the Dome of the Rock (the *Haram ash-Sharif*).[27] Ashbee's initial report was thus part of a larger plan of repairing and modernizing the city. At the outset of his report he refers to modern methods of carrying out the preservation of the crafts through the implementation of 'the new civic ideas'.[28]

In 1917 Ashbee had published his book *Where the Great City Stands.* In it he had stated his views concerning the modern city, how it should be built and how urban society could merge its various needs of dwellings, parks, industry, arts and crafts, education and public institutions.[29] Many of his suggestions in the above-mentioned preliminary report and in his ensuing work in Jerusalem, echo the ideas expressed in the book,[30] and the report states that his proposals are 'all the outcome of practical experience in the schools or workshops of Europe, America, and Egypt.'[31]

Ashbee collected data for his report by meticulously counting all the craftsmen in Jerusalem (and its district) according to their areas of expertise, such as glass-blowers, carpenters, potters, weavers, etc.[32] His approach for reviving the crafts was based on an infusion of the extant craftsmanship with Western or Middle-Eastern knowledge. He advised bringing Cairene weavers and Syrian mother-of-pearl inlayers (whom he had also seen in Cairo) to Jerusalem, in order to strengthen these crafts in the City.[33] For development of new dyes for the weaving industry he enlisted the aid of Mr. Rubinovitch, a "Botaniste orientaliste" from the University of Lausanne, who compiled a list of 'Palestine flora suitable for dying', and also considered bringing a "scientific dyer".[34] For revival of the pottery industry he suggested importing knowledge of kilns from what was then the De Morgan Workshop in Britain.[35] It would appear that Ashbee considered a certain amount of Western or Cairene expertise to be complementary and of assistance to the local crafts - assistance that would revive and give a new impetus to the existing workshops.

The major tool for the Arts and Crafts revival suggested by Ashbee was the creation of a system similar to the Guild and School of Handicraft that he had established in Britain in 1888. He first surveyed all the schools in Jerusalem that either taught arts and crafts or encouraged them. Among these were Bezalel, the Jewish School of Arts and Crafts, founded in 1906 by Boris Schatz (1866-1932); the Syrian Orphanage ("Schneller's"), founded in 1860 by Johanne Ludwig Schneller (1820-96); and various schools belonging to religious organizations.[36] The conclusion from surveying the schools and the extant workshops was that a 'central school of arts and crafts' should be created and a 'Guild of craftsmen and women' which would 'be closely co-ordinated with the education system…' should be established.[37] Ashbee went on to give detailed

suggestions of the relations between the school and the workshops, employment opportunities for teachers and students and other functions of the school. He suggested that all reconstruction and building taking place in Jerusalem would exploit the school's facilities, thus supplying a demand for its products.[38] In the school there was to be a department of archaeological and historical research. He also suggested the establishment of a museum that would display 'living arts and crafts based on principles of workmanship and aesthetics…and ethnography and the life of the city based on historic principles.'[39] These ideas echo those he had raised in *Where the Great City Stands*, in which he stressed the importance of the guild, crafts and museums in the urban and social makeup of the modern city. The idea of a museum to display the local arts and crafts exemplifies once more the high regard in which he held Islamic art.[40]

In the report, Ashbee judged both the quality of the work he saw and its usefulness. He viewed Jerusalem crafts on the whole as the product of an agricultural society, and therefore devoted a section to maintaining a sound relationship between agriculture and the crafts, since 'The district in which the City stands is never likely to be seriously industrialized.'[41] Throughout the report he stressed the merits of local crafts for the purpose of building reconstruction, such as the '"Mushrabia" balconies…which give such distinction to and are such a special feature of the Jerusalem streets…'[42]

Although Ashbee's report offered many suggestions for importing knowledge and techniques from the West, he also often warned of the harmful penetration of foreign, especially Western, influences into the local crafts, and in his view they posed a threat to local styles. He reserved a certain amount of esteem for the Jewish settlers' Bezalel School of Arts and crafts, but nevertheless regarded it as a vehicle of harmful Western influences, referring to it as an institution whose '…design is biased by the Zionist motive, and the consequent result is a certain barrenness…'[43] In the section devoted to costume and needlework, which he held to be very important, he wrote anxiously that

> In the general chaos to which these crafts have been reduced, some new organization, such as the Jews and Americans are introducing, is essential but that gives us no security for safeguarding either the traditional methods or the taste of the individual… I advise therefore that at the earliest opportunity a collection be made of all the traditional methods of needle work, local dress and the stitches on which they are based, and these be placed not only in all the schools…but more particularly in the Central School where I want the best models assembled…[44]

In an effort to preserve the local embroidery and style of dress, it was to be a basis for a uniform for the Central School.

Ashbee wanted to preserve not only the ancient manual techniques which he saw in Jerusalem but also the *idea* of a constant and unique local Moslem style, which was conceived as petrified in its own beauty and unsusceptible to change and development - only to "threats" from the outside. This dehistoricizing of Islamic crafts is again characteristic of a romantic conception of the East as a region that should be preserved with its excellent arts and crafts, which '…in Europe and America would be regarded as museum pieces…'[45]

On the other hand, it is important to make a distinction between Ashbee's conception of the local style as opposed to the measures by which he sought to preserve it. The manual techniques were, in his opinion, to be supported and advanced by foreign knowledge. The education system, designed to ensure the survival of the style by passing it on to new apprentices, was modeled upon a British system, as well as its ties to the community via commerce and exhibition. In his socialist perspective, Ashbee hoped that an arts and crafts revival would help to preserve many of the ancient characteristics of the local Moslem society in Jerusalem. This concept was in itself a paradox, since it called for remarkable changes to be made, but changes that were, in Ashbee's view, carefully designed to *prevent* change and encourage consistency.

In *A Palestine Notebook* Ashbee stressed more strongly the need to combine the local tradition with modernizing processes than in the 1918 preliminary report, writing that:

> By far the best constructive planning here is that of the Jews, because the brains and scholarship behind it are German and Austrian. Whether they will be able to make good remains to be seen. Local traditions of craftsmanship and labour are Moslem and Greek. Unless some permanent union is effected between the outside scholarship and the local traditions, no lasting result can be attained.[46]

His love of the local traditions in the city and his wish to combine them with European scholarship, in this case as introduced by the Jews, were an expression of his social views on the importance of arts and crafts for society, and of his hope that through them it would be possible to attain strong, long-lasting ties between the City's various national and religious groups.

The 'revival' of the tile industry can serve as a good example for the actual

implementation of Ashbee's ideas. Although Jerusalem had never boasted any significant tile industry, one was created, or 'revived' in Ashbee's terms, chiefly through the repair of the tiles of the Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat as-Sakhra*). For this project the 'Dome of the Rock Potteries' were originally established, and afterwards continued to flourish and manufacture pottery. The establishment of the Dome of the Rock Potteries is recounted by Crawford.[47] An Armenian potter from Kütahya, David Ohanessian, came to Jerusalem for the purpose of replacing the large quantity of damaged tiles on the famous Moslem monument.[48] Ohanessian was followed by other craftsmen from Kütahya.[49] Ashbee contributed technical knowledge, having received professional advice concerning kilns and glazing techniques from William de Morgan in 1909, when examining the prospects of starting a pottery in Campden.[50] By the time restorations of the Dome of the Rock were to commence, William de Morgan had passed away, but Ashbee was able to reobtain the information, as he had suggested in his 1918 report.[51] Ronald Storrs was familiar with David Ohanessian's work from the home of the diplomat Mark Sykes in Sledmere, Yorkshire.[52] Thus, establishment of the Dome of the Rock Potteries was the outcome of a combination of the skills of an Armenian potter from Kütahya and the importation of De Morgan's techniques, which he had gained chiefly by reconstructing ancient Persian pottery methods.[53] This merge displays a kind of feedback: techniques and styles from Persia and Turkey reappeared in Jerusalem mainly as a result of their introduction into Britain in the 19th century. Ashbee writes that '…after some four months of fresh experiment and hard work, tiles were produced which compared very favorably with some of the early tile work on the Dome, and certainly exceeded in beauty and skill the later European factory production with which for the last fifty years the Dome has been repaired.' [54]

Tiles from the Dome of the Rock Potteries were used in several other instances, which provide us with some insights not only of Ashbee's architectural schemes and urban plans for Jerusalem, but also of furnishings that he executed during his years in the city.

A Pavilion in the Citadel Gardens: A Case of Landscape Architecture
Ashbee viewed landscape planning as a topic of utmost importance in the urban city plan.[55] This was an approach that he had adopted from the City Beautiful Movement and from models that had impressed him in the United States.[56] The Citadel Gardens (Fig. 1) were to be 'the core of the Jerusalem Park system,' as the entrance to a park that would stretch around most of the Old
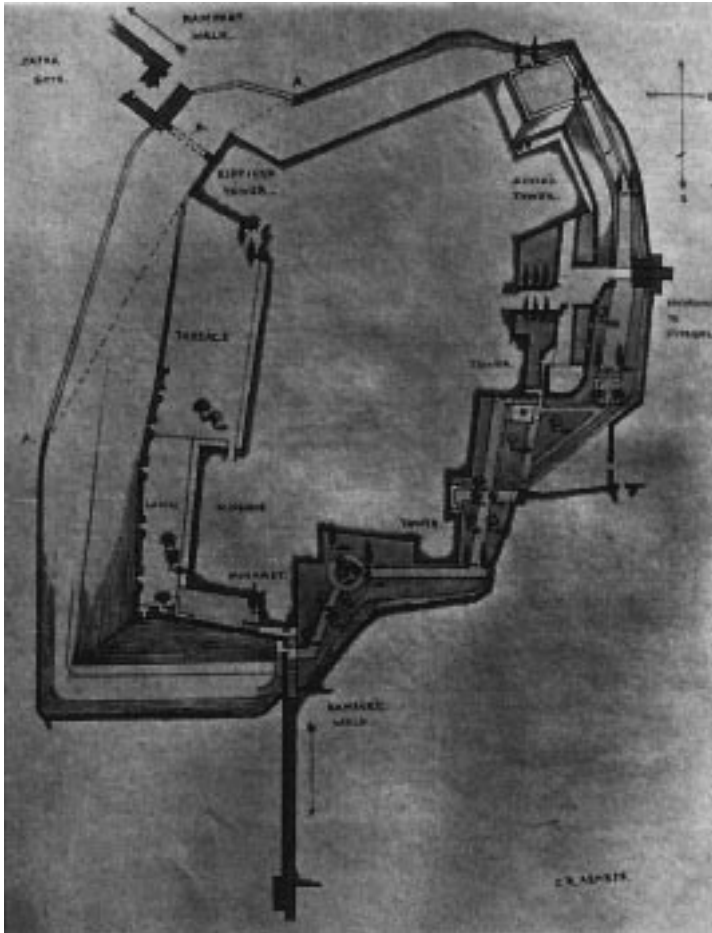
Fig. 1: C. R. Ashbee, Plan of the Citadel Gardens, Frontpiece of
Jerusalem, 1918-1920 (Reproduced by kind permission of the
Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem).

City.[57] They were planned by Ashbee down to the smallest details of the types
of plants to be planted, walks and benches.[58]

Among these, Ashbee designed a small garden pavilion. It consisted of a
bench built around a large block that looks like a pier, faced with tiles on all
four sides and crested by a kind of oval stone (Fig. 2).[59] The structure was
surmounted by a wooden pergola painted white. From the extant photographs
it can be seen that the tile panels were decorated with Turkish-inspired motifs.
The panel (Fig. 3) consisted of a cypress on a light background decked with
sinuous flowering stems, seen through an articulated arched opening decorated
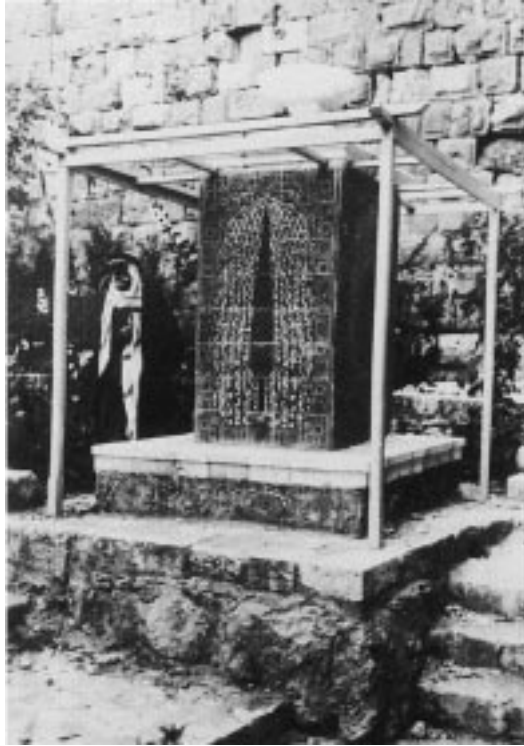
Fig. 2: *A seat in the Citadel Garden*, 1920-22,
photograph, 12.9x17.9 cm (Reproduced
by kind permission of the Jerusalem
Municipal Archives).

with square tiles of various flowers.[60] The seat, mentioned as being the gift of Miss Virginia Blandy, had a more elaborate scheme than that of the other benches incorporated into the garden.[61] These were simply constructed of local stone and were either corner seats or built into a wall, while the pergola and tiled bench were freestanding.

The idea of a garden encircling the walls of the Old City was based on Western urban approaches.[62] Ashbee conceived it symbolically as a frame for the Holy City, set in its center.[63] He planned the Citadel Gardens as 'a series of steps, walks, terraces and plantations, laid out in the ancient fosse…(which follows) the architectural lines of the Citadel which it embraces…and is dominated by the masses of ancient stonework.'[64]

Ashbee designated the area around the walls as an urban public space enabling appreciation of the city's 'romantic beauty and grandeur.'[65] His romantic approach to the garden's functions added to the utility of the modern
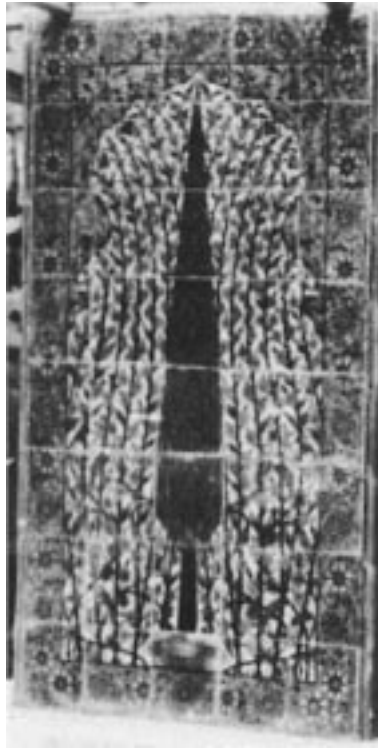
Fig. 3: *A seat in the Citadel Garden,* detail.

urban open space an aspect of its forerunner, the picturesque garden. The plan shows an intricate weave of little walks, with corners into which the seats were apparently fitted, dotted with cypresses and other trees (Fig. 1). It exemplifies what James Ackerman has said of the English picturesque garden, as creating 'a designated route through a sequence of experiences that elicited differing emotions and aroused varied associations.'[66] Ashbee's plan contains an orderly sequence of paths and terraces that envelope the Citadel, and offer secluded spaces near the walls and open ones with a view from the garden's edges.[67] This arrangement was specifically planned to arouse in its visitors emotional or religious sentiments for the city and its walls, which bear so many centuries of evocative history. Similar to the English picturesque garden, benches were also added in locations offering both rest and enjoyment of the view.

These evocations of history and memory, which in the English picturesque garden were created by pavilions, sculptures, monuments or inscriptions, formed a part of Ashbee's plan as well: the Pro-Jerusalem Society planned on

placing an inscription on the spot 'where Lord Allenby made his proclamation on the surrender of the city;'[68] in the large park area designated for east of the Old City, 'tombs, burial-places, and existing memorials' were 'incorporated into the park', thus replacing the sometimes artificial inventions of the picturesque garden with real monuments. Ashbee marked 'the Jewish burial-places…in circles, the Christian in crosses, and the Muslim in Crescents.'[69] Thus, the park was apparently perceived by Ashbee as another means for encouraging the union he longed for among Jews, Christians and Moslems. The memorials were another silent testimony in stone of the symbolic and historical city that Ashbee called 'A City of the Mind':

> Jerusalem, this city of the mind, is a type, and thus everything is possible within her. It is a great privilege to have a little of her shaping. One reads back to Suleiman the Magnificent, to Saladin, to Al Mamoun, to Herod, to Nehemiah, to Solomon…[70]

Another idea characteristic of the English garden and used by Ashbee was to combine the park with the natural or agricultural landscape around it.[71] This was to be carried out by planting endemic natural vegetation and by leaving part of the park area in a state of wilderness or under development by local agrotechniques.[72] Within the Jerusalem Park System planned by Ashbee, this integration was to serve for conservation of both landscape and traditional agricultural cultivation.

If we return now to the pergola and tiled bench, they can be seen as a small garden pavilion, which ideologically stems from the long tradition of these structures in European and American parks and gardens. It is possible that the idea of erecting such a tiled pavilion had its source in garden pavilions, or kiosks, in the Oriental style, which were often a part of European and American landscape gardens during the 18th and 19th centuries.[73]

Ashbee had been impressed with the idea of the garden pergola supporting vines since he had first seen it upon his arrival in Jerusalem, and wished to incorporate one into the Citadel Gardens.[74] He used the local constructions of vine pergolas as a source of inspiration to create a formal square structure painted white, along with a bench built around a kind of large pedestal, decorated with tiles from the 'revived' ceramic industry. The result is a pavilion that expresses, both through the pergola and the vegetation presented on the tiles, the idea of an Eastern garden. The utilization of pergola and tiles, which Ashbee conceived as local elements, expressed a colonial regionalism typical

to Ashbee's architectural design as well.[75] Although Palestine was not a colony by definition, it has been shown that as far as architecture is concerned, a regionalist approach could be discerned among several of the British architects and planners who came to Palestine after World War I, including Ashbee himself.[76] As noted by Ron Fuchs, the incorporation of local architectural elements into British buildings as prescribed by regionalism, is in its essence a preservative approach, striving for a continuation of local traditions.[77] In this sense, Ashbee's little pavilion does not imitate a specific local form, but combines local elements as a statement of their preservation.[78]

Furniture for the Government House: Regionalism on a Domestic Level
In 1920 Ashbee was commissioned to furnish and decorate Government House, which was to be the abode of the first High Commissioner of the Civil Administration, Lord Herbert Samuel (1870-1963). The residence was then in the Augusta Victoria compound on Mount Scopus.[79] For Ashbee, this commission offered the perfect merge of his Arts and Crafts ideals and regionalist attitude, which sought an expression of local interior design for the home of the British ruler of Palestine. In *Jerusalem 1920-1922* he writes:

> There were four rooms to decorate and furnish, some £E.3,000 to spend, and the question was, should this be done from England, by Maple or Waring, or some other firm, or could it be done in Jerusalem by local craftsmen? His Excellency the High Commissioner decided on the local venture, and put the work in my hands. The experiment was not purely aesthetic; it was also human…
> … all the work was local with the exception of the silks, which I had woven in Cairo, and the carpets which I selected for the colour schemes I needed… the stone was local marble… the cotton and wool, though imported, were made up at the Jerusalem Looms, and the glass was from Hebron. Wood there was none in the country, so my selection was limited to such slight and carefully hidden stocks, Indian woods mainly…[80]

Ashbee was obviously very pleased that the principle of using local craft was adhered to as much as possible and, having hired craftsmen from Jerusalem's various sects, he saw the project as another opportunity for nurturing their coexistence.[81] About the style he chose, Ashbee wrote: 'There are many

Fig. 4: Government House, Jerusalem: *Dining Room* (Reproduced by kind permission of the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem).

essentially Syrian forms…and…patterns and mouldings that are Byzantine or Arabic in character and go well in local stone and wood.'[82]

He gave the interiors local Islamic characteristics by using tilework, colorful fabric wall hangings, carpets, chandeliers made from clusters of Hebron glass mosque lamps, and more (Fig. 4). These are often arranged in a fashion more characteristic of Western interiors than of Islamic ones.[83] A similar use of fabrics and carpets had been made by Ashbee in 1906 when he designed and renovated the Norman Chapel in Chipping Campden, which he adapted to the taste of his Anglo-Sinhalese friend, Ananda Coomaraswamy who had come to live in Campden with his wife, Ethel Mary.[84] The Coomaraswamys arrived in Campden after a three-year residence in Ceylon, and from extant photos in can be seen that their Campden home reflected their profound interest in the traditional arts and craftsmanship of India and Ceylon. The house was fitted with William Morris textiles, Indian wall hangings and many carpets and curtains.[85]

Tiles are of paramount importance in the decorative theme of the dining room (Fig. 4), in which Ashbee again used tiles from the Dome of the Rock Potteries. A low tiled dado encircled the entire room. The tiles for the dado created a knotted flower and leaf geometric pattern.[86] Similar tiles were also used in the sideboard that Ashbee designed for the room (Fig. 5), the only known example of a piece of furniture he designed in Jerusalem, and one that
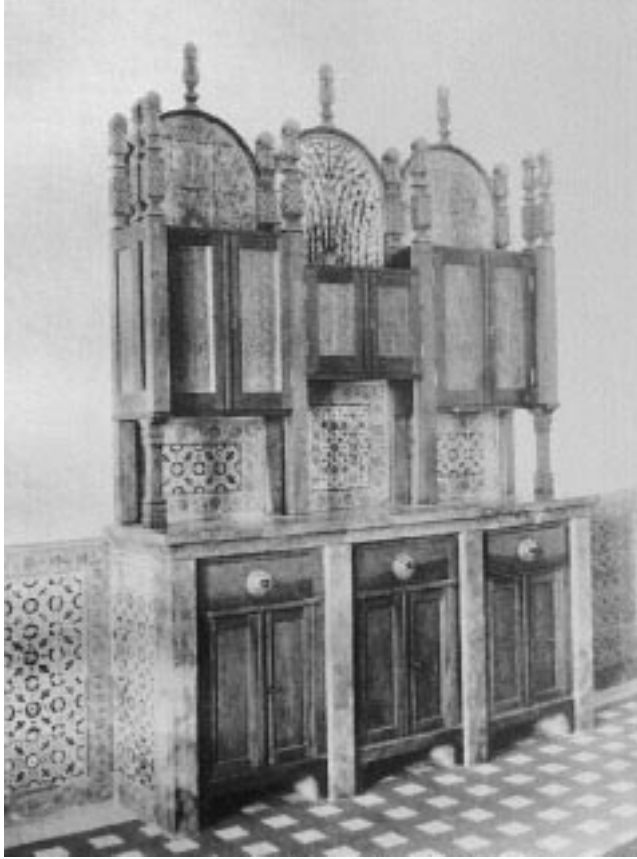
Fig. 5: Government House, Jerusalem: *sideboard in the dining
room* (Reproduced by kind permission of the Jewish
National and University Library, Jerusalem).

deserves close scrutiny.[87] The sideboard was made of 'peach-blossom marble
and…carved and gilded Indian woods.'[88] It has a simple lower part divided by
marble into three sections, each fitted with a cupboard topped by a drawer.
The drawers have simple round knobs, possibly brass. On top of the drawers
is a wide marble slab, from which rises a more elaborate higher section. This
part is divided into three tiled arches that serve as a backdrop for the cupboards.
Ashbee reduced the size of the central cupboard, thus creating a more elaborate
sequence. The doors of the central top cupboard are carved with a vegetal
scroll, while the two flanking cupboards are carved with an interlaced geometric
design. The different parts of the sideboard are accentuated by the use of very
wide and unadorned partitions and door frames. The carvings on the top doors
are flat so as not to interrupt the general design. Topping the cupboards are ten

Fig. 6: *Damascus Gate* pinnacles after repair (Reproduced by kind permission of the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem).

pinnacles, and a shorter version of them crests the background arches. The pinnacles resemble the Damascus Gate pinnacles (Fig. 6). They give the sideboard an elaborate and majestic look. The dado of the dining room is carried over to the sideboard giving it the appearance of built-in furnishing. Its tile pattern also continues above the marble slab, which in its central part has a pattern that recalls Turkish *saz* motifs.[89] The arcades at the top of the cupboard feature the common motif of an amphora from which flowering stems extend, filling the space with blooms.[90] Ashbee wrote that the tiles' turquoise and green color scheme was derived from the Dome of the Rock.[91]

It would appear that Ashbee thus used two motifs derived from the local Islamic architecture of Jerusalem: he alludes to the Damascus Gate pinnacles recorded in his account of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, while the tiled arches, in both design and color scheme, reflect some of the designs used at the Dome of the Rock and perhaps in other buildings as well. This eclecticism is unified by the tiled arched background. The carved doors may have had their inspiration in the Islamic woodwork Ashbee so admired in Jerusalem and Cairo, but they also bear close resemblance to Byzantine patterns.

In its simple joinery, adherence to a frame and panel construction of the doors and the low relief of the carved panels, the sideboard resembles Ashbee's

furniture made during the Guild's peak years of production.[92] However, the pinnacles, tiled panels and the more elaborate construction created in the arrangement of the top cupboards are novel to Ashbee's work and uncharacteristic of his previous designs.[93]

In the sideboard, which is basically a Western piece of furniture intended for Western interiors, Ashbee used various materials to express his conception of local crafts: local marble and locally manufactured tiles. The combination of different materials was also characteristic of his earlier furniture designs. He perceived an assortment of styles - Byzantine, Near Eastern and Turkish, as viable for creating a vocabulary that could express the native artistic tendencies. The emphasis placed on producing this piece of furnishing in Jerusalem, reflects Ashbee's ambition to use local materials, techniques and architectural vocabulary as vehicles for expressing or *creating* a tie between the British and the local populations.

The original piece of furnishing he designed, together with the general concept of the Government House's interior design, would thus appear to be an attempt to express local aesthetic values in the creation of a British representative interior in Jerusalem. British colonial, or rather, Mandatory regionalism, is manifested in this attitude; and the basically Western arrangement of the room, with the large elongated table in its center and sumptuous sideboard, appear to carry their regionalist and Orientalizing meaning mainly through detail and accessories. The emphasis laid on tiles, carpets and fabrics continued the Orientalist design tradition of Europe and America: massively-tiled Oriental interiors, such as Lord Leighton's famous Arab Hall (completed 1879) and created with the aid, among others, of Richard Burton and William de Morgan, were open to visitors and probably inspired many, albeit less costly, design schemes.[94]

Conclusion

Ashbee had arrived in Jerusalem with the hopes of preserving its archaeological assets and local traditions, which to him were reflected mainly in Moslem society. These aspirations were formed not only by his social viewpoint and love of creation through manual labour, but also by a romantic conception of the East as a domain in which 'oriental mysteries' have survived, evoking centuries of history. Ashbee also had plans no less important and just as far-reaching to modernize Jerusalem, a fact that seems to contradict his preservative attitude. It is possible to explain this contradiction if we bear in mind that he made a very clear separation between the City within the walls, which, as

Crawford notes, he regarded in a secular way as an historic monument marked for archaeological preservation,[95] and the surrounding zones which were designated for modern development and to supply the growing city's needs. In all the projects he suggested or actually carried out, such as the Central School, the Citadel Garden and others, the 'new civic ideas', that is, Western approaches to urban development, were utilized for all of his objectives: archaeological and social preservation as well as modernization. For Ashbee, preservation or revival of the ancient crafts was part of a striving for the social well-being of Jerusalem's inhabitants, and an instrument for maintaining its unique characteristics. However, he was by no means ignorant of the changes this society was undergoing during his sojourn there, or the complex challenges, both political and urban, that it had to face.

The designs considered in this article display Ashbee's respect for local tradition, and his methods of reviving it. As exemplified here, this revival appears to have been based not only on the extant crafts that Ashbee initially encountered in Jerusalem, but also on his conception of what *should* be the ancient crafts practiced there. He thus brought in 'Oriental' techniques and styles from other parts of the Moslem world, such as Egypt and Turkey, as if to achieve an ideal "Oriental Arts and Crafts Society" or guild, which would encompass a wide range of crafts with a longstanding Eastern reputation. His designs reveal this conception of 'local' crafts that are actually compiled from several different Islamic artistic traditions. This compilation was done consciously, and Ashbee regarded it as a natural sequence of the creative process. He was apparently less concerned with regional historical accuracy than with a general conservation of Islamic art and crafts. His attempt to use these in the creation of the Citadel Gardens and Government House reflects a regionalist attitude, that strives to incorporate local techniques and styles. Although local or Oriental elements were used, the projects in themselves are Western in both function and spirit: the pavilion was constructed as part of a Western urban scheme for a park complex to preserve the City Walls and enable experience of their symbolical historical significance by walking and resting in them; and the sideboard is basically a Western furnishing placed in a Western interior in which local crafts serve as accents.

Ashbee and his family returned to England in 1922. In the following years, Ashbee published the records of the Pro-Jerusalem Society and his personal diaries of his experiences in the Holy Land. He continued lecturing and writing about arts and crafts and their relation to industry. Charles Robert Ashbee died in 1942. On June 3rd, 1942, Ashbee's wife, Janet, wrote to the Mayor of Jerusalem

thanking him for his condolences: 'My husband *loved* his years in your beautiful city and greatly regretted leaving it. We all have most happy memories of our time there and of the kindness we all received.'[96]

Although the projects considered here form only a small part of Ashbee's work in Jerusalem, they offer some of the best evidence of those of his plans that were actually realized. They exhibit his first and foremost love of beauty in handcrafted design, combined with the deep and genuine affection he had for Islamic crafts and for the city of Jerusalem.

Notes

*   I wish to thank Dr. Edina Meyer-Maril for introducing me to this intriguing subject, and for her valuable comments during the work on this article.

1.   Ashbee 1908a: 12.
2.   The ballad tells the tale of Konradin Von Hohenstaufen (1252-1268), grandson of Emperor Friedrich II. Konradin attempted to claim the throne of Sicily, but was defeated by Friedrich II's bastard son, Manfredi, and later executed by Charles I d'Anjou, who conquered Sicily.
3.   Crawford 1985: 4. Ashbee's biography is described in detail in Crawford's landmark work.
4.   *Ibid.:* 127, 144, 222.
5.   For William de Morgan's Eastern Inspiration, see Herbert and Huggins 1995: 179-183; Sweetman 1991: 182-186; Skipwith 1989: 128-133.
6.   William Morris was the founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain in the second half of the 19th century, a movement that owed its theoretical and ideal concepts pertaining to craftsmanship and its ties to society to the powerful works of the famous and influential British art critic, John Ruskin.
7.   Ashbee 1908b.
8.   Ashbee founded the Guild of Handicraft in 1888. The Guild's working methods and designs continued the ideas promoted by William Morris. The members of the Guild, originally John Pearson, John Williams, W.A. White and William Hardiman, were self-taught in the framework of their own workshops, and with Ashbee's direction and guidance created a unique style in silverware, jewelry, carpentry, book printing and interior design, which achieved world-wide fame during the last decade of the 19th century. In 1902 Ashbee moved the guild to the small and secluded village of Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, with the intention of creating an ideal Guild community and providing craft education for the local population. The move to Campden, which was far from London, marked the beginning of the Guild's decline. See Naylor 1972: 166-172.
9.   Naylor 1971: 172. Naylor suggested that this 'radical reappraisal' was probably due to the Guild's failure, and perhaps also to Ashbee's encounter with America and the friendship he developed with Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959).

10. Ashbee's Journal, 25 March 1917, quoted in Crawford 1985: 166.
11. *Ibid.:* 170-171.
12. Kark and Oren-Nordheim 1995: 166-171.
13. Tuchman 1982: 211, quoted from C. H. Churchill, *Mount Lebanon,* 3 (London, 1853).
14. *Ibid.:* 208-223, 340-347.
16. *Ibid.:* xv.
17. Crawford 1985: 176.
18. Ashbee 1908a: 14.
20. Crawford 1985: 2, 175.
21. Ashbee 1923: 105. At the outset of the Chapter entitled 'What is Zionism', Ashbee, quoting Henry Morgenthau, writes that '(Zionism is) the most stupendous failure in Jewish History'.
22. *Ibid.:* 13.
23. The European and American conception of the East, especially during the 19th C., has been dealt with widely. A partial list of references includes: Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New-York, 1978); John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture, 1500-1920* (Cambridge and New-York 1988); John M. Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester and New York, 1995); John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton, 1996).
24. See, for example, Leila Ahmed, *Edward W. Lane, A Study of his Life and Works and of British Ideas of the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century* (London, New-York & Beirut, 1978). Monk 1995 defines Ashbee's attitude towards the East within a mode of interpretation that takes its cue from Edward Said's theories as presented in *Orientalism* (see above, n. 23). Apart from the fact that many of the conceptions that Monk attributes to Ashbee are presented without sufficient references to Ashbee's numerous writings, he deals with Ashbee's artistic production during his stay in Jerusalem only in very general terms. By considering Ashbee with the sole use of Said's theories as a point of reference, Monk underplays the varied and dynamic ideas Ashbee expressed upon encountering Jerusalem in person, and Ashbee's artistic interpretations of the land and its art that resulted from his personal experiences. See Monk 1995: 97-111.
25. On July 5th, 1918, Ashbee wrote to a friend: 'Do you hear of the Arab nationality movement in the Harmsworth papers? Or is what's going on out here censored in England for fear the Irish should ask questions in the house? We are preaching Nationality in Palestine but we suppress it in Egypt and Ireland. We are a wonderful people!' See Ashbee 1923: 7-8.
26. Ashbee 1918: 2.
27. For the Jerusalem city plans during the British Mandate, see Kark and Oren-Nordheim 1995: 171-174.
28. Ashbee 1918: 2.
29. Crawford 1985: 167-169.
30. Ashbee's concepts of urban planning were formed through his trips to the United States and his friendship with Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as admiration for the

City Beautiful Movement and the ideas of Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), see Crawford 1985: 167-169. Geddes had also made an urban plan for Jerusalem in 1919, as well as plans for the Hebrew University in Mt. Scopus, in collaboration with Frank Mears, see Dolev 1998: 221-232. Naylor has also suggested as a source for Ashbee's urban concepts, the influence of Walter Gropius' (1883-1969) writings on the Bauhaus in Weimar, see Naylor 1971: 172-176.

31. Ashbee 1918: 3.
32. The various sections of the report are summarized in Levin 1987: 76-80.
33. Ashbee 1918: 12, 18.
34. *Ibid.:* 13, 19.
35. *Ibid.:* 21-22, and see discussion in the ensuing pages of this article.
36. *Ibid.:* 49-57.
37. *Ibid.:* 84.
38. *Ibid.:* 84-85.
39. *Ibid.:* 85. The offspring of these ideas are the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, founded 1919, and 'Migdal David', the Citadel Museum for the history of Jerusalem, see Levin 1991: 25.
40. Ashbee may have formed an early acquaintance with Islamic arts and crafts through their regular display in Britain in Museums for design and in World Fairs. The importance Ashbee places on exhibition is, in a way, a continuation of this tradition, see Çelik 1992: 1-3, 17-32; Ben-Asher Gitler 1998: 36-41.
41. Ashbee 1918: 2.
42. *Ibid.:* 12.
43. *Ibid.:* 13.
44. *Ibid.:* 13.
45. *Ibid.:* 21.
46. Ashbee 1923: 149-150, 250-266.
47. Crawford 1985: 181.
48. The initiative for bringing him was apparently the result of collaboration between Ronald Storrs, Ashbee, and Ernst Tathham Richmond, who later published several books on Islamic Architecture. The eminent historian of Islamic architecture, K.A.C. Creswell, was probably involved in the reconstruction project as well, as during those years he served as a Captain, and was inspector of monuments to the Military Administration in Jerusalem and a member of the Pro-Jerusalem Society. Creswell contributed a chapter about Islamic Architecture to *Jerusalem 1918-1920,* see Ashbee 1921: 67-70.
49. Kütahya tiles were not new in Jerusalem, since this major center of Turkish ceramic production had supplied the tilework for the Armenian Cathedral of St. James, in the years 1718-19. See Atasoy and Raby 1989: 288, and John Carswell 1972. George Antonius devoted a chapter to this tilework in Ashbee 1924: 57-59. Antonius stresses the importance of reviving this craft in Anatolia and refers to its revival in Jerusalem as part of a joint effort for this project.
50. Crawford 1985: 181.
51. Ashbee 1918: 21-22.
52. Crawford 1985: 181. For a discussion of the 'Turkish Room' in Sledmere, see

Sweetman 1991: 196-197.

53. For the development of De Morgan's techniques, see *ibid.:* 182-185.

54. Ashbee 1921: 32. The repairs on the Dome of the Rock, which were supervised by Ernest Richmond, display, in a sense, the archaeological aspect of Ashbee's mission to Jerusalem, which was dealt with according to contemporary attitudes towards conservation, or as Ernest Richmond had put it, 'Tiles have decayed in the past, and tiles will decay in the future;…In the past they have always been replaced in some form or another… the Dome of the Rock is not merely a building of archaeological interest, but also a symbol of something very much alive…' quoted in Ashbee 1921: 9.

55. Ashbee 1918: 13-15; Ashbee 1921: 19-24.

56. Crawford 1985: 184.

57. Ashbee 1921: 19. Further implementation of Ashbee's idea was gradually continued in the ensuing years. Although different in plan and in scope, the greater part of the Old City wall is today surrounded by vegetal and archaeological gardens (including ancient cemeteries).

58. For a discussion of Ashbee's general plan for the Citadel, see Levin 1991: 25.

59. See references to this and other benches in Ashbee 1924: 21, 29. A photograph of the bench appears facing p. 20 - Fig. 39.

60. For this motif's Turkish sources, see for example a dish reproduced in Atasoy and Raby 1989: Pl. 681 and tile panels reproduced in Atil 1987: 240. The cypress tree was apparently seen by Ashbee as one of the most characteristic of the endemic vegetation, as it appears in many of his architectural drawings for planning in Jerusalem. See, for example, Ashbee 1921: Ills. 24, 46, 50, 54.

61. Ashbee 1924: Figs. 36-38.

62. Crawford 1985:182.

63. Ashbee 1921: 19.

64. *Ibid.:* 21.

65. *Ibid.;* Crawford 1985: 182.

66. Ackerman 1990: 164.

67. This is yet another characteristic of the picturesque garden that Ackerman describes, see *ibid.*

68. Ashbee 1921: 21.

69. *Ibid.:* 23. It is interesting to note that he chose not to mark the Jewish graves with a Star of David. The map of the park referred to is reproduced in Crawford 1985: Fig. 84.

70. Ashbee 1923: 18.

71. Ackerman 1990: 164.

72. Ashbee 1921: 24.

73. For a discussion of this aspect of Orientalism, see Ben-Asher Gitler 1998: 44-52.

74. Ashbee 1918: 13.

75. Fuchs 1992: 177-179.

76. *Ibid.:* 16-22, 40-43, 174-179, 276-277.

77. *Ibid.:* 22.

78. Ashbee incorporated pavilions into several of his Jerusalem urban plans, such as

in the plan for the *Jaffa Road Market,* illustrated in Ashbee 1921: Fig. 51.

79. Levin 1987: 80.
80. Ashbee 1924: 60-61.
81. *Ibid.*: 61.
82. *Ibid.*: 62.
83. See, for example, the somewhat strange fabric 'dado' that surrounds the drawing room and is sewn into symmetrical curtain folds, Ashbee 1924: Fig. 55, and the fabric hanging in the dining room.
84. Crawford 1985: 140-141.
85. *Ibid.:* 265; Fig. 126.
86. Ashbee 1924: 62. Ashbee intended to 'carry the rich blue paneling and tile work up to the curve of the dome', perhaps in the manner of overall paneling used in Mark Sykes' home at Sledmere, see above, 86.
87. Its whereabouts are unknown, but it is recorded in a photo, published in Ashbee 1924.
88. *Ibid.*
89. As far as can be judged by the photos, these may be inlays of antique tiles combined with the Dome of the Rock workshops' tiles.
90. This pattern is very common in Islamic tilework and appears in Turkish tiles as well as in Near-Eastern models, see Atasoy and Raby 1989: Pl. 321; Carswell 1972: Fig. 11.
91. Ashbee 1924: 62.
92. The Guild's furniture is discussed in Crawford 1985: 280-285.
93. See for example, Crawford 1985: Figs. 138 and color pl. vi.
94. Ben-Asher Gitler 1998: 92-93.
95. Crawford 1985: 176.
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Rhyme or Reason in Colour Symbolism? A Biophysical Analysis of Kandinsky's Colour Theories

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*T*he rationale behind this essay is that certain individuals, by virtue of sensitivity to various environmental phenomena such as colour, form, symmetry, sound or music, etc., may be able to determine the physical nature of a phenomenon without possessing any basic or formal knowledge of its biophysical properties. This surmise is analyzed in the light of Vassily Kandinsky's (1866-1944) colour theories since he himself is a commonly acknowledged master of colour and one of the founders of modern non-objective art and, as stated in his writings, his theories are purely subjective.[1]

Of Kandinsky's œuvre it has been said 'that not only has he extracted the subject from painting, he has even done away with its aim'. In his classic book on the topic, he states that in his paintings, especially the later ones where all semblance to reality is untraceable, 'there are no subjects nor aims but only an aesthetic interplay between colour and form', based on aesthetic rules that he himself had laid down.[2]

As I shall demonstrate, in many but not all instances Kandinsky's subjective definitions closely approximate biophysical concepts. However, there are several inconsistencies that preclude a general supposition that Kandinsky can fully be relied upon *to tell the scientist what's what*. It is concluded that artistic sensitivity to natural phenomena, while not providing unerring approximations, can nevertheless aid objective scientific enquiry and possibly save a great deal of preliminary research and/or learning. While this article relates to the plastic arts, the above contention also applies to other fields of art, e.g., music. This is adeptly detailed by Franz Liszt in his little known book on the music and talents of Chopin.[3]

The Basics of Kandinsky's Colour Theory

Colours are discussed in the context of 'opponent pairs'[4] in groups in which a single major colour is bordered by two others derived from it.

The Opponent Pair – Yellow/Green

Yellow: Yellow is regarded by Kandinsky as a basic colour that is inherently 'warm and powerful' and its effect is 'eccentric'.[5] The radiant intensity of this colour increases with lighter colouration, i.e., upon increasing addition of white to the yellow. Yellow is, therefore, 'maddening', psychologically unsettling and angry looking.[6]

Blue: According to Kandinsky, blue is a basic essentially warm colour, (but he later contradicts himself and sees blue as cool). It is a 'concentric' colour and hence its effect is self-centering. Kandinsky states that blue arouses sensations of purity and longing for the infinite and with increase of tone, i.e. with the addition of black, the above described qualities assume connotations of sadness and mourning.[7] On the other hand, as blue becomes lighter by addition of white it induces the apathy and silence that can be experienced when observing far distant skies.

Green: Green is the intermediate between yellow and blue with all the implications thereof. According to Kandinsky's approach, on the artist's palette green is obtained by cooling yellow by the addition of blue. Upon the mixing of a small amount of blue with yellow a 'non-tangible sickly' hue is produced,[8] but if an additional amount of blue is added, 'normal' green appears. Green implies utter complacence and absolute rest, this being so since the all-energetic yellow is countered by the complacent blue. It therefore follows that green pleases the eye of the weary observer since it elicits only static quietude: however, prolonged viewing leads to boredom. Despite the above, Kandinsky states that green is potentially reassuring,[9] a property arising from its two constituent components.

The Red-Violet-Brown-Orange Complex: This complex can be schematically presented as follows:

$$\text{violet} \leftarrow \text{blue} + \text{RED} + \text{yellow} \rightarrow \text{orange}$$
$$+$$
$$\text{black}$$
$$\downarrow$$
$$\text{brown}$$

Red is considered a lively warm colour and arouses increased unease. It lacks the proclivity to frivolity and discomfort of the eccentric yellow. Red tends to concentricity and signifies male maturity.[10]

Brown: As seen in the above scheme, brown is comprised by the darkening of red by black. The latter modifies the former, but nevertheless brown contains a certain amount of 'curbed force'.

Orange: (Fig. 1) indicates that orange is to be had by supplementation of red with yellow. Red, which is basically concentric and 'self-containing', is partially metamorphose d to eccentricity. Kandinsky thus states that orange symbolizes a quiet, self-contained strong person who is fully conscious of his own powers.

Violet: Obtained by addition of blue to red (Fig. 1). This combination has a cooling effect on the red and thereby converts it to a frayed sickly hue and consequently in certain parts of the world violet is the colour of mourning garb, as is black.

Kandinsky terminates his outline of colour theory with the statement that what he describes is 'the outcome of experimental and spiritual feelings and is not based upon any positive scientific foundations'.
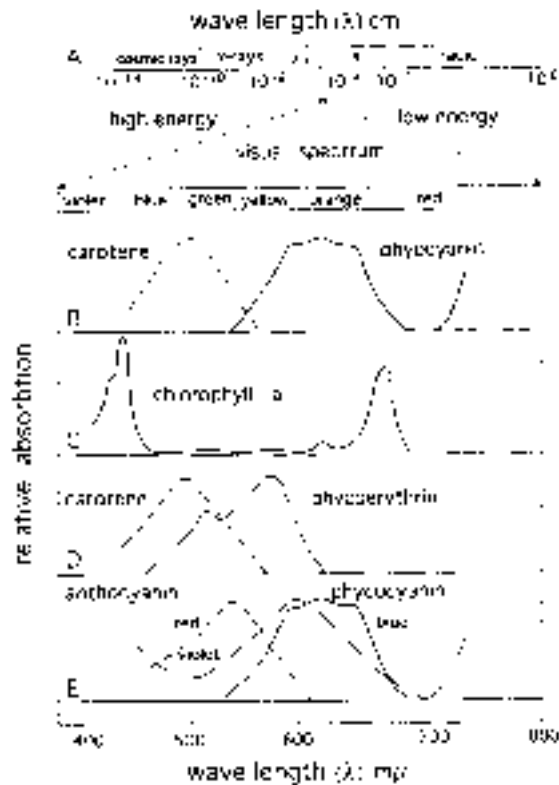

Fig. 1: The spectral range of absorption and emission of the major biological pigments in plants (Giese, 1965).

Physical Aspects of Colour Constituency

Colour energy: Following the above essentially subjective outline of the colour artist Kandinsky, described in relatively simplistic terms, I now broach the subject of colour physics, including objective qualities related to the visual colour spectrum as perceived by the human eye. It is well known that white light is comprised of an admixture of all the other colours.[11] Moreover, each category of solar light and other cosmic irradiations reaching earth possesses its own particular wavelength. Fig. 1 indicates the wide spectrum and frequencies of rays intercepted by earth. Concerning energy: for every type of colour or irradiation, a relatively easily calculated formula exists whereby energy may be calculated provided that wave frequency at that particular wavelength is known.

E (energy) = F (frequency) × h (Planck's Constant)   [1]

Factor "h" is constant and thus E is obtained as a simple multiple of F and h. A further and interesting physical phenomenon is that all types of irradiation travel towards earth with the same velocity, this being the speed of light. A further simple physical formula [2] states that the velocity (V) of a light beam is the multiple of wavelength and its frequency,

V = F (frequency) × λ (wavelength)   [2]

Since, as stated above, V is constant (i.e., V = K), from formula [2] it can be understood that with increase of F, λ decreases and vice versa. Concomitantly, it is apparent that light with low wavelengths (at the blue end of the spectrum) possesses high frequencies and therefore contains more energy while at the same time light possessing longer wavelengths (towards the red end of the spectrum) has low frequencies and therefore is lower in energy content (Galston et al., 1980).

Colour Temperature

A further aspect of the physical manifestation of colour pertains to light emission by a heated metallic film as in an electric bulb. If a priori it can be stated that before commencement of heating, i.e., at a comparatively low temperature, the colour of an object able to absorb heat is black, then it can be assumed that being black the object absorbs all light wavelengths. Upon application of heat, it initially emits dark red light changing to light red with increment of temperature. Further heating produces yellow light emission, followed by "white-hot" emissions, and as temperature continues to rise, white changes to

blue. In terms of illumination engineering it is thus apparent that a phenomenon of "colour temperature" exists - proceeding as follows: red → yellow → white → blue. In this sequence, the centigrade metric system of colour measurement is not employed but, rather, absolute Kelvin degrees of temperature. The absolute zero that can possibly exist is regarded as 0°K, where centigrade (Celsius) 0°C is parallel to 273°K. Seen thus, red and yellow light sources possess colour temperatures in the range of 6500°K. In this system it again transpires that the red section of the visual spectrum possesses relatively lower energy content than that of the blue range.[12]

Colour Temperatures as Relating to Kandinsky's Concepts

The human eye perceives colour that is reflected from an object and not the colour that is absorbed. In other words, white light (which as found by Newton (1604) is comprised of all the multicoloured visual spectral colours), when falling upon a certain object loses certain spectral components that are absorbed; and what is perceived by the human eye is the sum result of the mixture of reflected components. Fig. 1 one provides a case study of the prevalent naturally occurring plant pigments. It indicates wavelengths and spectral absorption curves of the various sections of cosmic rays received by the earth, with the human visual spectrum being presented in greater detail. The areas under the curves in the diagram are those colour components that are absorbed, whereas those above the lines are reflected. For example, in chlorophyll-a, two major absorption peaks occur respectively in the blue and red spectral sections, while almost all the other colours are reflected. The final outcome of this specific absorption / reflection pattern is that what is actually seen is that section of white light lacking most of its blue and red: viz. green. Present day biochemical spectronic assessment[13] based on colour absorption curves can quantitate endogenous content of the above-mentioned pigments – including yellow carotenoids, blue phycocyanins, green chlorophylls, red phytoerythrins and violet anthocyanins.[15] Contemporary "satellite" remote sensing utilizes this principle to obtain aerial photographs of forests and agricultural fields wherein pale green or green-yellowing of foliage indicates nutrient deficiency resulting from insufficient development of chlorophyll. This subsequently may be locally and pin-pointedly treated by nutrient additives of chemical fertilizers or of a calcium-based fertilizer which can remedy this vegetation ailment, termed *chlorosis* – which can be likened to human anemia.[14] In the following section, we return to the surmise that Kandinsky's essentially subjective colour theories may have a sound objective scientific basis.

a. The Blue-Yellow Complex

Fig. 1 indicates absorbance patterns of yellow carotenoids and blue phycocyanin. These two colours appear at opposite ends of the visible spectrum and therefore may be regarded – as does Kandinsky – as an "opponent" colour pair. He maintains that yellow is warm, irradiant and eccentric (cf. note 8). The figure indicates that yellow absorbs much of the essentially short ray wavelengthed colours typical of green and blue. In contradiction to Kandinsky's concept, it thus transpires that yellow inherently has a *lower* energy content, while blue possesses a *higher* energy content.

This is, again, in contradiction to Kandinsky, who claims that blue is a 'cooler concentric' colour. The above findings are also in keeping with the "colour temperature" values mentioned above, which assign a temperature range of approximately 3000˚K to yellow or red-yellow whereas the temperature of Kandinsky's purportedly cool blue colour is in the 6500˚K range, i.e., more than double of its yellow opponent partner.

b. Green – The Intermediate between Yellow and Blue

Kandinsky states that green is obtained by 'cooling of yellow by blue'. All artists also know that on the painter's palette one may obtain green by mixing yellow and blue. Kandinsky claims that green expresses absolute tranquility and complete repose: this colour he claims is immobile, concentric and passive. A glance at the absorption spectrum of a typical chlorophyll (chlorophyll-a) clearly indicates that the wavelengths of reflection of the green section are by no means stationed at either of two opposite spectral termini, and that green's wavelength value is of an intermediary category.

As mentioned before, chlorophyll markedly absorbs blue and green light. Kandinsky is of the opinion that while green is inherently passive, it nevertheless has a 'resurrective' capacity endowed by its two components – the blue and the yellow (not red) – which impose a state of equilibrium. Had red and not yellow been the opponent of blue, Kandinsky would have been nearer to objectivity.

c. The Red-Violet-Yellow Complex

Red: According to Kandinsky, red is considered to be essentially a somewhat altered type of yellow. The spectral absorbance of the red pigment phycoerythrin is compared to that of yellow in Fig. 1d, where it is apparent that red light possesses a higher energy content than yellow since the latter reflects less light in the high energy-containing shorter wavelength regions. However, upon comparing the "colour temperatures" of these two colours, red is indeed perceived at a lower temperature than yellow. Thus in this context, Kandinsky's

concept of interaction between the two colours could possibly be regarded as physically correct.

Violet: According to the above theory, it may follow that red can be cooled by addition of blue. Absorbance spectra of three closely related colours – the blue of phycocyanin, the red of anthocyanin and the violet of the latter pigment at a lower pH (acidity) (Figs. 1-5), indicate that all of these hues absorb light primarily in the spectral range of green, yellow and orange. The reflected light is concomitantly red and blue. Small changes in the mode of light absorbance determine the relative percentages of blue or red and the resulting visually perceived final colour could either be blue, red or of an intermediary hue. These spectral properties indicate that Kandinsky's definition that violet is a mixture of blue and red is physically sound: however, his interpretation that as a result of this admixture, a colour 'associated with mourning' is obtained, may be questioned.

To avoid too lengthy a discussion, in this article the cases of brown and orange are not dealt with – the above instances supply ample ground for our discussion of to what degree Kandinsky's colour definitions are objectively correct.

There appear to be definite instances where the artistic instincts of Kandinsky closely coincide with scientific criteria. However, in other cases, his colour concepts are purely subjective and the sensations evoked, which in his treatise are dealt with in logical sequence, are also purely subjective and bear no semblance to scientific objectivity. His interpretations clearly manifest apparent deviations from scientifically measured colour parameters, as formerly pointed out when dealing with Kandinsky's contentions pertaining to the blue-yellow complex. Concerning heating potential, it is of common knowledge that in most biological tissues or even in static objects, red or infrared irradiation, which inherently contains less energy, is more effective than blue irradiation, which has higher energy content. This situation may be likened to the trajectory of a bullet of a given caliber through a reinforced glass pane such as an automobile windshield. If the bullet travels at great speed, the damage caused to the pane will only be a comparatively small hole, whereas if its velocity is slower, the whole pane may shatter. The latter effect may be analogous to what occurs when red light of a lower energy content comes into contact with an object, thus demonstrating that the composition of the light recipient object also has to be taken into account when dealing with heat generation. In wake of this surmise, if we again reassess Kandinsky's contentions, we may realize certain aspects that are not quite as objectively illogical as claimed above.

Based upon the scientific facts and comparisons dealt with above, it may well be that while artistic intuition and/or heightened visual sensitivity to colour can be an aid towards solving colour-associated physical parameters – this is not an all-encompassing rule, since subjective psychological factors may also come into play. The latter are a function of cultural background, education and memory-associated events linked to colour preponderance. In a like manner, in the science of chemistry, it is well accepted that a keen sense of smell can save the analytic chemist months of experimental work. While true science has of necessity solid objective and physical grounds, artistic sensitivity to any art form (e.g., colour, symmetry, sound or even movement) can considerably enhance research, while at the same time such phenomena have intrinsic values in their own right, which for human welfare may be as important as objective science.

A necessary offshoot of these conclusions, which in themselves are of no minor implication, is the basic question of to what extent in his artistic output did Kandinsky adhere to his own principles of colour and geometric juxtapositions? In my opinion, the answer is – hardly, if at all. This poses a counterquestion. Why did Kandinsky devote so much time to his written colour pyrotechnics and pseudo-geometric "Colour, Line and Plane" frolicking? The answer to this query may possibly lie in Kandinsky's earlier training as a lawyer and his legal practice before adopting an artistic career. He was undoubtedly well trained and versed in legal codici, constitutions, compendia of precedents, etc. etc., and this probably suggested to him the necessity for a similar codification of applied rules of colour and form practice in the plastic arts. If this is indeed so, then in painting, as in the arts in general, theory is not of necessity linked to practice.

Notes

1. Kandinsky 1925; 1972.
2. The issue of Kandinsky's alleged anti-Semitism and its refutation evolving around recently unearthed correspondence between Arnold Schonberg and Kandinsky who in 1933 invited the former to assume a position at the Bauhaus in Berlin, has recently commanded much interest. Be this at it may, subconsciously Kandinsky may have been influenced by anti-Semitic attitudes then rife in Germany during his Bauhaus days in the 1930s and his attitude to yellow (see note 6) may thus be accounted for. An excerpt from an ironical letter from the famed composer Arnold Schonberg to Kandinsky states: 'I'm not a German, nor a European, nor even a human being, but only a Jew.' (Chanani 1999). Kandinsky's reply is not known. The son of a well

known Israeli architect whose father was a pupil of Kandinsky at the Bauhaus right up to the time of its closure by the Nazi regime, reports of the warm attitude of the artist to his father without a trace of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, he states that Kandinsky was fully aware of his pupil's national identity (Inbar 1999).

3. Lichtenbum 1956.

4. Hurvitz and Jameson 1957.

5. Note: eccentric i.e., in physical terms, diffusing outwards, as opposed to "concentric" – diffusing inwards.

6. It is interesting to compare this definition of yellow to that of Goethe's (1840), who states that yellow is a 'sickly' colour, suggesting 'love for gold' and associated with Jews, this probably leading to the infamous yellow star of David forced on Jewish apparel during the Holocaust.

7. This perhaps has something in common with the essentially sad-sweet "blues" music.

8. See above, n. 3.

9. In this "resurrective" capacity in his early Russian upbringing if not in strict observance, Kandinsky being Greek Orthodox, may have been influenced by Christian mysticism as promulgated by Hildegaard of Bingen, who in turn - as suggested by Scholem (1974) was probably influenced by Jewish Kabalah assigning this essentially optimistic property to green (Liebeschütz 1930; Sambursky 1974; Scholem 1974).

10. Here we see a clear influence of classic mythology which attributes red to Mars the Warrior. I venture to suggest that had Kandinsky not been a male and initially trained as a lawyer, but instead female or a gynecologist, he probably would have associated red – being the predominant colour association with childbirth – and not green with the attributes of naissance and regeneration. Even in present times, some barbershops still hang red and white intertwirling cylinders as signboards to their saloons since in days gone by, barbers also functioned as bloodletters. It may also be contended that red, at least psychologically, is indeed energetic, e.g., anger is described as 'seeing red' and, furthermore, in bullfighting it was believed that it is the matador's red cape that angers the animal. It has since been shown that the bull's anger is evoked by the incessant waving to and fro of the material irrespective of cape colour and that the human response is associated with the colour of blood, i.e., is not an inherent genetic response but rather a conditioned response as from infancy. Had blood been blue the same effect would have been aroused. That the fear of red is not ingrained but a learned response is reflected in the story of "Little Red Riding Hood", who as depicted in the children's storybooks, was good and cute and not fear-arousing.

11. Newton 1604.

12. This sequence of colour changes is indeed used in industry to assess temperatures of furnaces and kilns employed in metal, ceramic and other industries.

13. Anthocyanins change colour as a function of cell sap acidity (pH) and may express degree of senescence (aging) of flower petals (Leshem, Halevy and Frenkel 1986).

14. Lichtenthaler 1994.

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Grosz's Political Position: False Commitment, False Testimony[1]

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*T*he artistic career of George Grosz (1893-1959) began around 1910 and ended with his death 49 years later. From the age of 23 (1916), Grosz became involved in the political upheavals in his country and in December 1918, he became a member of the Communist Party.[2] From 1933 on, however, a dramatic change may be seen as the artist abandoned the political motifs that had previously characterized his drawings. He also left Germany for the United States, where he eventually settled.

Analysis of Grosz's work reveals that the political message of his drawings does not reflect his Communist militancy at the time; on the contrary, the distance between the two is striking. The following exploration of the ideological aspects of his work is intended to reveal the changes in Grosz's artistic approach from communist militant to promoter of American capitalism.[3] As we shall see, his work reflects a false political conscience: while espousing adhesion to communism, Grosz's work reflects at best a bourgeois moralist approach.

An examination of Grosz's artistic development relative to his political position identifies three stages. The first, between 1913 and 1916, included years of study when Grosz's work was devoid of any political or social conflict. The second period, from 1916 to 1932, comprised the years of declarative identification with communism and antimilitarism. Yet one may discern here a lack of authentic commitment to the revolution of the proletariat, as well as a lack of any message emphasizing the unity and strength of the working class. In the third period, from 1933 on, Grosz returned to an apolitical tendency in his art, while in his writings he became an outright defender of capitalism. Scholars of Grosz's work note that the artist's communist identification suffered

an about-face from 1933, when he gave up his political convictions and assimilated into the American way of life.[4] The following analysis of Grosz's works will enable us to appreciate that his political positions changed not from ideological reasons, but rather because his supposed identification with communism was not in fact authentic.

The young Grosz revealed an apolitical spirit, enlisting in the army as a volunteer. This step should be interpreted not as a sign of patriotism, but rather as motivated by considerations of personal convenience, since the volunteers enjoyed various privileges.[5] His service in the German army and his participation in World War I were rather short-lived, beginning November 13 and ending March 11, 1915, when he was released due to ill health and declared unfit for service.[6] Grosz's experience at the front made him an opponent of the army, which he relentlessly criticized in his work. His resentment grew stronger when, on January 4, 1917, he was drafted again. He feigned a state of mental disorder and was sent to a psychiatric clinic, from which he was freed six months later.[7] Alongside his anti-German and antimilitarist position, Grosz was sympathetic to the United States, adopting the English name of George instead of Georg. His friend Helmut Herzfelde also changed his name, becoming known as John Heartfield. Unlike Grosz, Herzfelde continued to retain a solid communist position.[8] The war experience made of Grosz an exponent of peace, and above all a fierce enemy of the military and military interests. His hatred was directed at German society as a whole, as the following comment reveals:

> From an aesthetics point of view, I am happy about every German who dies a hero's death on the field of honour. To be German always means to be ill-mannered, ugly, fat and to be the worst sort of reactionary, to be unwashed. [9]

From his youth, Grosz felt a profound disappointment with the German society of his time. This disappointment had its roots in Expressionism and Dadaism, reflecting disgust with life on the one hand and a spirit of rebellion on the other.[10] As is well known, Grosz took part in Dadaist Berlin from its beginnings in 1918, and, like other Dada artists, his works were dominated by aggression and rebellion. He himself stated that his protest was directed against the established rules of a decadent government.[11]

Before discussing Grosz's work in greater depth, it is necessary to relate briefly to the political context that generated his identification with the communists, a context dominated by political violence and the rise of leftist

Fig. 1: *Cheers Noske! The Proletariat has been Disarmed*
Drawing for *The Face of the Ruling Class* (Second
version) 1921

parties. The leaders of the Socialist Party assumed that with the fall of the
Kaiser they had achieved a revolutionary change, while the Spartakist
movement was of the opinion that the abdication of Wilhelm II meant no more
than the beginning of the revolution.[12] The new political system established in
Germany in November 1918 would last until 1933, and was known as the
Weimar Republic after the city in which the new constitution was proclaimed.
Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg (the leaders of the Spartakist League)
viewed this political change as no more than a fraud. They instigated a second
revolution, which was brutally repressed. Violence erupted on January 15, 1919,
when both these leaders were murdered and hundreds of others killed.[13] In
March 1919, the Spartakists declared a general strike, brutally repressed by
Minister of Defense Gustav Nolke, who brought in 150 companies of the Free
Corps, killing 100 revolutionaries and injuring 400.[14] In several drawings Grosz
accused Nolke of genocide, but he did not promote the ideology of the
Spartakist movement, nor did he resoundingly denounce the death of its

Fig. 2: *Iron Noske* (*1921*) Drawing for *The Face of the Ruling Class*

leaders, despite the fact that he was one of its followers. In *Cheers Noske! The Proletariat has been Disarmed* (1919)[15] (Fig.1), the minister celebrates the extermination of the revolutionaries holding a sword in his right hand, with which he pierces the body of a baby. This motif is a clear reflection of the extreme violence applied in repressing the revolution. The streets of the city are a battlefield, strewn with countless corpses. Grosz again denounced Noske in the drawing *Iron Noske* (Fig. 2) in which the German minister is accused of being a dictator and terrorist. In this drawing, Noske is represented grotesquely, in monster-like form with a skull-like face. He holds a sword between his teeth and grenades in his right hand, while a sheet in his left hand bears the legend 'one more step and you will be shot'. In this drawing, Grosz retreats from realism: rather than maintaining any pretension of depicting the accused minister, he opts for a satirical approach, distancing himself from the actual events and those responsible. The same is true of *Cheers Noske!*, which at the time was considered a highly offensive political pamphlet, but which from a modern perspective has lost its energy and original clarity. Although Grosz's drawings relate to the first four years of the Weimar Republic, the artist failed to express the magnitude of the Revolutionary movement, responsible in 1919 alone for 5000 strikes; neither did he manage to express the ferocious repression

Fig. *3: In Front of the Factories* (1921) Drawing for *In the Shadows*

that followed those strikes.[16] The lack of conviction in his leftist ideology and in the defense of the proletariat is evident in such drawings as *In Front of the Factories* (1921) (Fig. 3), which depicts the worker as an anti-hero, despicable, rude and primitive. Grosz never represented the workers as revolutionary figures in a manner that, without idealizing them, would transmit a clear message of the struggle of the proletariat. It is surprising that an artist who was identified with the Communist Party was unable to present a more optimistic and dignified image of the workers and their lives. In contrast to Grosz, Käthe Kollwitz's series of engravings *A Weaver's Rebellion* (1897) shows a stronger identification with the workers, as does the series *The War* (1924). Even in the woodcut *Memorial Plate for Karl Liebknecht* (Fig. 4), the workers convey a sense of pain and human warmth that is absent from Grosz's works. Kollwitz understood the predicament of the German proletariat, although she did not identify with Karl Liebknecht. As a friend of the family, she was invited to his funeral in order to prepare portraits of the dead leader. She drew six sketches from different points of view, originating the idea of the print. The print represented the body at the base, with a group of workers, wracked by pain, bowing in homage. The date on the base, 15.1.1919, perpetuates the murder and focuses the work on actual events. Although Grosz represented

Fig. 4: Käthe Kollwitz : *Memorial Plate to Karl Liebknecht* (1919), Woodcut 35 x 55 cm

Fig. 5: *Remember* (1919), Drawing for *Interregnum*

Fig. 6: *Shot While Escaping* (1919), Drawing for *The Face of the Ruling Class*

the Spartakist leaders in several drawings, including one denouncing the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg, his approach is ambiguous and negative. In *Remember*, from the *Interregnum* portfolio (1936) (Fig. 5), the ghostly figure of a judge crosses the coffins, his back to the spectators, obscuring identification of those responsible for the crime. The sinister look of the judge, who has several sheets in his hand, is stressed through the fact that his eyes are set in the back of his head, alluding to the capacity of the authorities to be the masters of circumstances. The drawing is simple and schematic, without any reference that might articulate the political identity of the deceased. The coffins are abandoned in an unrecognizable place, isolated, as if having no support from the workers. The drawing does not explain the political personality of the victims, nor the identity of their victimizers, and Grosz makes no reference to the true circumstances of the death of the Communist leaders - circumstances that were not hidden by the military elements responsible. Rosa Luxemburg was fiercely beaten and thrown, almost dead, into the Landwehr Channel; her body was found many months later. This lack of identification of the victims eliminates any element of denouncement, in terms of criticism of the state and rejection of the injustice committed by the authorities.

Grosz made a brief reference to the actual events in the drawing *Shot While Escaping* (Fig. 6), which presents three figures: the victim tied to a pillar,

Fig. 7: Francisco Goya: *For being a Liberal?* (1814-1824), Album C, n.98

and the executioners (a soldier and a guard) on the verge of shooting. The title includes an emphatic denouncement of the crime committed by the establishment - not only can the victim not escape, he cannot even move. The idea of shooting a supposed fugitive and the phrase 'shot while escaping' were current in the public mind, since these were the terms used by the government to justify the murder of Karl Liebknecht. As in the previous drawing, the artist was protesting against lies and injustice. It is remarkable, however, that Grosz, as a member of the Communist Party, was unable to create a work conveying a more audacious political message and emphasizing the violence of the criminals and indignation for the loss of the political leaders.

Much earlier two great artists had left more convincing testimony of their position, expressing a clear political opinion: Francisco Goya (1746-1828) and Honoré Daumier (1808-1878). Their works denounced the excesses of the absolute monarchies in Spain and France. Although Goya lived under an absolute regime that repressed freedom of expression and political protest, his paintings, drawings and engravings manage to denounce the exploitation of the workers and peasants. In his works, he identifies with the anonymous political victim, as in the drawing *For Being a Liberal?* (Fig. 7) in which a young

Fig. 8: Honoré Daumier: *Rue Trasnonian, April 15 1834*, 1834

woman prisoner of the Inquisition is bound hand and foot, her face expressing anguish. Through the question mark included in the title, Goya asks whether being a liberal (i.e. an anti-monarchist) is sufficient reason for a person to be tortured, even if he is an opponent of the government.

Daumier also showed a clear identification with the anonymous victims in his lithography *Rue Trasnonian, April 15, 1834* (Fig.8). This work is based on an actual incident that occurred in Paris as part of the extension of the rebellion by weavers in Lyon, who demanded an eight hour working day and a wage increase. After the strike was announced, the government passed a law declaring the strike as a criminal plot. At the same time, the death of a National Guard in Paris drove his companions to take vengeance. National Guards entered Trasnonian Street killing 11 people and injuring many women, children and old people not involved in the events. Daumier created an accurate testimony of the massacre, reconstructing the dramatic atmosphere of violence faced by the victims of Trasnonian Street.[17] In the works of Goya and Daumier we see a compromise with the social victim much more defined than in the drawings of Grosz.

From 1920, the political contradictions of Grosz and the Dada movement began to become evident. This could be seen on the occasion of the First International Dada Fair, between July and August, at which 174 works of art were exhibited. The fair had an overtly political and anti-militaristic character, with placards featuring such slogans as 'Dada struggles alongside the revolutionary proletariat'. A doll representing a German official, created by

Rudolf Schlichter, and Grosz's portfolio *Gott mit uns*, confiscated by the police because of its anti-militarist invective, were the reason for the uproar. Herzfelde and Grosz were convicted on the same charge: insulting the army.[18] Instead of making good use of the event in order to discredit the government, Grosz, Herzfelde, and the other accused artists retracted their criticism. During the trial, the defenders asserted that they did not wish to offend any person or institution, only to criticize the excesses of militarism. The defense insisted that the fair should not be taken seriously. The defense witnesses were Stefan Grossman (editor of the *Tagebuch*) and Dr. Paul F. Schmidt, director of the Dresden City Collection, a critic and collector of Expressionist art. The latter argued that the exhibition should be understood as a satirical manifestation of Dadaist humor, directed against everything and everyone; he referred to Grosz as one of the outstanding artists of the time, not only in Germany but throughout Europe. In the event, the judge imposed a fine of 300 Marks on Grosz, and 600 on Schlichter and Herzfelde.[19] We may deduce from these events that Schmidt's argument, neutralizing the political message and transforming it into a Dadaist joke, reflected the true situation: none of those involved, with the exception of John Heartfield, was an authentic communist.[20]

In order to avoid jail, Grosz deviated from his ideological stand, reflecting an ambivalent and paradoxical attitude: in his writings and actions, Grosz supported the ideology of the Communist Party, while in his works he did not do so. For example, in the context of the conflict between "art for art's sake" and "tendentious art" (*Tendence Kunst*), he supported the concept of art with a political message and political commitment, as an instrument for the class struggles in the service of the proletariat.[21]

On March 15, 1920, during a confrontation with the army, 50 workers died and 150 were injured. Several shots entered the Zwinger Gallery, damaging a Rubens *(Batsheba)*. The artist Oscar Kokoshka, professor at the Academy of Dresden, published an article in over forty newspapers asking for gunfire to be kept away from the gallery. Grosz and Heartfield attacked Kokoshka for defending holy possessions and for his reactionary conception of art.[22]

In another article published in November 1920 and entitled *Concerning My New Pictures*, Grosz urged artists to show political commitment in order to promote art as a weapon for the defense of the workers. In this text, Grosz expresses the opinion that art is secondary compared to the class struggle, and demands that artists express their own personal stance on this question, and define whether they are on the side of the exploiters or of the masses.[23] Curiously, one can not discern in his own work such a strong message in favor of the

Fig. 9: *Spartacus in Court* (1921), Drawing for *The Face of the Ruling Class*

workers, although he was closely involved in activities on behalf of the Communist Party.[24] In 1921, the political situation in Germany was still characterized by a pre-revolutionary state repressed by the Free Corps that acted independently in 'imposing justice', i.e. killing supposed traitors. Finance Minister Mathias Erzberg and Foreign Office Minister Walther Rathenau, were the most famous victims of 354 political crimes committed by the rightists between 1919 and 1922.[25] Significantly, Grosz did not respond clearly to these crimes. In 1921, Grosz published the portfolio *The Face of the Ruling Class*, curiously considered the first portfolio intended to improved the consciousness of the proletariat.[26] The drawings depicted the injustice and brutality of the police, and portrayed the workers as repressed victims, who work until they die, and are sometimes murdered while defending their interests. However, the drawings represent the workers not as revolutionary heroes, but rather as disagreeable figures from the point of view of the dominant class. Grosz

Fig. 10: *How the State Courts Ought to Look* (1919), Drawing for *Bankruptcy*

portrays the workers in the same manner he portrays the bourgeoisie; thus the worker also becomes a negative stereotype.

The portfolio *The Face of the Ruling Class*, dating to the years of the revolution, represented the responsibility of military elements in repressing the workers rather than promoting their interests as such. Several drawings in the portfolio address Spartakist ideology, but they reveal a lack of ideological definition. *Spartacus in Court* (Fig. 9) is a satirical drawing showing a court of three figures: an officer, a bishop and a bourgeois, all in caricatured form. The three are scrutinizing a revolutionary, who is not clearly identified. The author seems to be referring to an anonymous militant Spartakist revolutionary, but rather than conveying a message that would augur the outbreak of the revolution, Grosz instead offered a pessimistic message, depicting the Spartakist tied hand and foot like a common prisoner. In this drawing, Grosz represents reality with a certain impartiality, and fails to emphasize the serious situation faced by the Spartakists.

Fig. 11: Francisco Goya - *The Forge*, 1812-1816

How the State Courts Ought to Look (Fig. 10) seems to reflect Grosz's hopes: a popular tribunal judging six military men with their hands tied behind their backs. Behind the judges, two workers are watching the trial, presided over by the portrait of Karl Liebknecht. As in the previous drawing, however, Grosz does not specify the reason for the trial, a fact that weakens his message.

In 1922, Grosz spent five months visiting the Soviet Union. He returned with a negative impression, according to his autobiography published in 1946.[27] Critics suggest that the trip marked his point of departure from communism and his disillusionment with the Soviet Union.[28] Nevertheless, his ambivalent position remained unchanged throughout the 1920s. On the one hand, Grosz supported the struggles of the proletariat and opposed the exploitation of workers by the alliance of military and capitalist forces through his drawings and writings about the Soviet Union and in publications of communist orientation such as *Der Knuppel* (The Cudgel) and *Die Rote Fahne*, (the Red Flag) the official organ of the Communist Party.[29] On the other hand, while

these drawings were an attack against the dominating class, they do not reflect any possibility of change to put an end to exploitation. By contrast, Goya's work, such as *The Forge* (1812-1816) (Fig. 11) explicitly expresses the artist's identification with the humble workers. He incorporated into the world of art one of the most defamed professions of his time.[30] Although Goya lived under the pressure and limits set by the Inquisition, he managed to create a painting of large dimensions (181 x 125 cm), while Grosz, who enjoyed freedom of expression, did not represent the workers in his paintings.

In 1924, Grosz developed the Red Group, an organization of artists who were members of the Communist Party.[31] The following year, he published declarations in which he condemned artists who did not promote a political message and defined themselves as communists and defenders of the proletariat. The text shows that while Grosz considered himself to be a revolutionary, at the same time he referred to the workers as 'philistines, reactionaries, uncultivated and vulgar'.[32] thereby revealing his true face. He had a 'bourgeois' vision of the proletariat and did not believe in an egalitarian society. Between 1924 and 1932, Grosz was called on repeatedly to justify his work to Communist Party critics.[33] However Grosz and Heartfield continued to collaborate, and in 1925 they published *Art is in Danger*, an article reflecting the Marxist point of view that culture depends on the means of production in society; the artist must support and defend the working class.[34] In Grosz's letters and declarations, we gain an acquaintance with his nature, as one who may have deceived his admirers but could not deceive himself. By the late 1920s, he seemed to be completely conscious of his position, as reflected in his comment in 1927:

> I have to be content with my usual role - a traitor… a petty bourgeois anarchist.[35]

Yet his ambivalent attitude persisted. That same year, Grosz sent a telegram to Budapest protesting against the court-martial and persecution of the leaders of the working class. He also denounced the execution of the Italian immigrants Sacco and Vanzetti[36] in the United States. However, he did not create artistic works criticizing state violence or identifying with the unjust fate of the victims.

In April 1932, Grosz accepted an invitation to teach at the Art Student League in New York. The old enemy of capitalism, instead of continuing his satirical tendency, departed from his communist past and claimed to be starting a new life, adapting willingly to American society.[37] During the McCarthy era,

Grosz was the subject of investigation. He admitted having been a member of the Communist Party, explaining that he had abandoned the party in 1923 upon returning from his trip to Russia, when he gave up his communist militancy.[38] He also admitted that his work had been published in the *Die Rote Fahne*, but accused its publishers of manipulating him (a false argument) and of changing titles according to their needs. Grosz declared that his most critical drawings were not party slogans and that he had never been a member of the American Communist Party. He also declared that:

> Since coming to the United States, I have not made drawings of any political character, and have rejected all invitations to do so. [39]

By 1933, as the power of the Nazis increased, Grosz was the name most frequently mentioned as an enemy of German culture. On February 19, 1933, he lost his German citizenship. He never became an authentic American, however; despite his effort, he always remained a demoralized German.[40] From 1933, he not only abandoned his communist militancy but even his anti-Nazi position, refusing in 1939 to collaborate with a special publication, *Equality*, bringing together German and American writers.[41]

The most reasonable deduction from the above facts is that Grosz's participation in the events of his time were the result of the turbulence of the period. The playwright Ervin Piscator recalls that at the time it was not necessary to read Marx and Lenin in order to become a revolutionary; artists and intellectuals were driven by the political context.[42] This political context was also the subject of confusion for Grosz. In his autobiography, he repudiated his past work, admitting that he lived in a permanent state of conflict, unable to accept the work he had done in Germany.[43]

Although his declarations contain clear ideological inconsistencies, most art historians have accepted his communist stand as authentic. Even Lewis, who reviewed Grosz's communist militancy and subscribed to the views of Alfred Durus (pseudonym of Alfred Kemeny, a Hungarian communist who was an art and literature critic for *Die Rote Fahne*), who argued that Grosz abandoned being both a Spartakist and a Bolshevik,[44] does not raise any questions regarding the honesty of Grosz's ideological position. Furthermore, despite the artist's declarations, it is difficult for Hess, for example, to accept that Grosz deviated from his political work, while Schneede notes that Grosz did not defend the struggles of the proletariat, nor was he identified with the communist cause.[45] Nevertheless, he does not explain Grosz's ideological position clearly, although he quotes the diary of Count Harry Kesler (a liberal

diplomat and patron of the arts), who presents Grosz as a moralist and not a communist militant:

> Berlin, February 5, 1919. Called on the painter George Grosz this morning… He said he would like to become the '**German Hogarth'** - to be deliberately concrete and moralistic in his work. He wants to preach to the world, improve it, reform it...[46]

In conclusion, rather than trying to create an artistic political message that would support the workers and the exploited, according to his declared communist militancy, the true Grosz was a Protestant believer, who could not accept evil or sin [47] and who saw his critical mission as being to fight these ills, which he perceived as the negative factors that dominate the world, driving the desire for wealth and opulence.

Notes

1.	This paper is based on my Ph.D dissertation: *Political Aspects of Spanish Art of the 20th Century - The Paradox of Art Engagée,* Jerusalem University, 1998.
2.	On December 30 1918 George Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde, John Heartfield and Erwin Piscator joined the Communist Party, see Hess 1974: 260. Grosz met Herzefelde in Meidner's studio in 1915, see McCloskey 1997: 20. The study of McCloskey is fundamental to understand the connection of the artists with the Communist Party. However as she notes, she will 'refrain from entering into debates over whether Grosz was ever really a political artist and genuinely committed to Communism', McCloskey 1997: 9.
3.	Hess 1974: 81-118; Schneede 1985: 132-170.
4.	Hess 1974: 46.
5.	Lewis 1971: 23.
6.	Lewis 1971: 51.
7.	Hess 1974: 46.
8.	Hess 1974: 64.
9.	Hess 1974: 51.
10.	Hess 1974: 98.
11.	Schneede 1985: 31.
12.	The Spartakist League (founded in 1916) was named after Roman slave who led an unsuccesful rebellion of slaves in 71 BC. The League was a revolutionary Marxist organization that became part of the Independent Socialist Party (USPD). On December 1918 the Spartakist broke with the USPD and formed the German Communist Party, see Townson 1995: 897.
13.	Townson 1995: 904.
14.	Lewis 1971: 66-68.

15.   Grosz drew two versions of the same motif. The first was for *Die Pleite (1919)* and the second for *The Face of the Ruling Class* (1921).
16.   Lewis 1971: 125.
17.   Lejeune 1953: 46.
18.   Hess 1974: 98-100.
19.   Hess 1974: 100.
20.   About the Fair, *Die Rote Fahne,* the official daily of the Communist Party published on July 25 1920 wrote: 'pretending that this collection of perverse works represents a cultural or artistic achievements is not a joke but an impertinence', Schneede 1985: 109-110.
21.   Lewis 1971: 92.
22.   Lewis 1971: 94. In their article, Grosz and Heartfield argued: 'with pleasure bullets flying into galleries and palaces and into Rubens masterworks, instead of into the houses of the poor in workers' districts', McCloskey 1997: 65.
23.   Lewis 1971: 97.
24.   Schneede 1985: 146.
25.   Lewis 1971: 132.
26.   Lewis 1971: 132.
27.   Grosz 1972: quotes Grosz 1946.
28.   Lewis 1971: 103.
29.   D*er Knuppel* was a satirical periodical of the Communist Party.
30.   *Catalogue, Goya y el espiritu de la Ilustracion*, 1995: 30. See the etchings serie: *Los Caprichos, n. 42 Thou who cant not; n.50, The Chinchillas and the Album C, n. 120 You didn't know what you were carrying on your shoulders.*
31.   The purpose of the *Red Group*, according to the manifest was: 'to work closely together with local Communist Party organizations…to contribute to an improved effectiveness of Communist Propaganda.' The manifest of the group was reprinted in *Die Rote Fahne*, June 18 1924, see Schneede 1985: 145, 192.
32.   Lewis 1971: 192.
33.   McCloskey 1997: 105. From 1927 Grosz's work was no longer recognized as an effective weapon in the Party's revolutionary struggle, McCloskley 1997: 128 .
34.   The essay's last part was an attack upon Paris' position as the center of reactionary art, which was ignoring the social revolution and connected in aesthetics problems. *Art is in Danger* was translated to Russian and published in Moscow, see Lewis 1971: 116-119.
35.   Hess 1974: 154.
36.   Lewis 1971: 116.
37.   Backett 1976: 15.
38.   Hess 1974: 175.
39.   Hess 1974: 247.
40.   Hess 1974: 247.
41.   Lewis 1971: 228.
42.   Hess 1974: 215.
43.   Richard 1979: 101.
44.   Lewis 1971: 195. Durus accused Grosz of a lack of ideological clarity and of selling

his art comfortably in exhibitions alongside those of the 'decadent bourgeois artist', Paul Klee, McCloskey 1997: 145.

45. Hess 1974: 179-180.
46. Schneede 1985: 133 (author's emphasis in last quotation).
47. Lewis 191: 164.

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Sex and Gender in Giacometti's Couples

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*I*n Western sculpture, the term "couple" usually expresses a relationship between two people, whether positive or negative - lust or love, rape or kidnapping, while in tribal art it is also common to place the two figures side by side as separate, independent entities. The latter approach can be seen in Giacometti's first *Couple* (Fig. 1), but since then Giacometti went on to portray many different types of couples, illustrating a wide variety of relations between men and women, ranging from alienation to extreme violence. As we shall see, the changing character of the relations appears to result from Giacometti's increasing self-awareness of his psychological and artistic motivations, and his willingness to expose them.

The most common phenomenon in Giacometti's early couples is the difficulty of distinguishing the man from the woman. Both masculine and feminine characteristics appear simultaneously in each figure, and it is only through juxtaposition that the contrast between them becomes evident. This phenomenon began in the early twenties, when Giacometti was searching for means to represent the human being independent of his own visual impressions or the figure's external appearance.

In 1921, during a visit to Italy, Giacometti first encountered the difficulty of realizing what he saw with his own eyes. The problem arose again in Paris, while he was studying with Bourdelle in the *Grand-Chaumière* Academy (1922-25). As he later wrote to Pierre Matisse (the gallery owner): 'The form dissolved, it was little more than granules moving over a deep black void, the distance between one wing of the nose and the other is like the Sahara, without end, nothing to fix one's gaze upon, everything escapes'.[1]

Giacometti traced the origin of the problem to the fact that he became lost in the mass of details and was therefore incapable of capturing the

comprehensive whole. As he added in his letter to Matisse: '…impossible to grasp the entire figure (we were too close to the model, and if one began on a detail, a heel, the nose, there was no hope of ever achieving the whole)'. [2] As the presence of the model caused him to focus again and again on details, he finally decided to work from memory. I believe that this is the main reason why he began to sculpt couples: since he was not copying reality, it was thus easier to represent the different sexual identities simply by contrasting the male and the female.

This was the beginning of a ten-year period in which Giacometti sought different ways to tackle the same problem. At first he sought help in two artistic sources in particular – primitive and cubist sculptures. Neither imitates the external shapes of visual reality, but rather represents them conceptually, by reducing them to the most characteristic forms, or by the use of signs and ideograms. In the first *Couple* (Fig. 1), the sexual identification is based on signs - a kind of graphic summary of the male and female sexual organs. However, at the same time, it is already possible to detect a hint of the archetypal shapes (which would figure more prominently in later couples).

The man is constructed as a phallic upside-down cone, with what appears to be a phallus projecting from its base. Above it is the palm of a hand and to its right a bulge that could be another hand or perhaps a nose in profile. Above the hands is a concave dent that suggests a mouth, and above all these, a very large eye protrudes, resembling those of Egyptian art. In combination with the cone it endows the man with the quality of an archaic totem. The size of the eye and its prominence immediately brings to mind Giacometti's main difficulty - how to realize what he perceived with his eyes.[3]

Just as the cone represents the male, the oval is a feminine archetype; it represents the woman's fertility by creating an association with the female reproductive organs: the womb, the ovaries or the lips of the vagina. The same shape reappeared the same year in Giacometti's *Spoon Woman*, as a concave oval that almost looks like a container. Giacometti was probably familiar with the theories of Freud, which by that time were well known in Paris, mostly to Giacometti's Surrealist friends. Freud claims that vessels, or any containing shape, are archetypal female symbols.[4]

It should be noted that use of a spoon-shape for a figure (human or animal) is very common in African sculpture, as can be seen in the Dan spoons from Nigeria, in which the spoon represents the body and the handle is a pair of legs.[5] *Couple* and *Spoon Woman* were the first appearance of the oval or the spoon to represent a female archetype in Giacometti's work. Many variations of these have since been used in his couples.

Fig. 1: *Couple*, 1926, Bronze, 60X37X18 cm., Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich. ® ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

At the base of the first *Couple*'s female oval appears a smaller horizontal oval that looks like lips, but represents the vagina.[6] Above it are two hands, then two breasts (which look like eyes), and finally a round shape that may represent an eye, but has no resemblance to the male's; it looks more like his phallus, though much less prominent.[7]

The female's identity is determined by her sexual attributes. Each part of the female body, that is, each sexual sign, could also represent a part of her face. This replacement of facial features with sexual organs appeared later in many paintings by Magritte, such as *Rape* (1934);[8] and indeed, portraying the woman simply as female and not as an individual, is an act of aggression, just like rape. But the most explicit fact is the lack of the female eye, replaced by an ambivalent shape that could also be interpreted as a sexual organ, and one that stands in stark contrast to the man's large and clear eye. If the eye is the window to the soul, then the woman has no soul but sex; therefore she is only a sex object.

In his continued search for a means to represent the human figure, Giacometti was not prepared to settle for such an abstract solution as that used in the first *Couple*, because he was, nevertheless, interested in realizing at least part of what his eyes could see in reality.[9] He thus turned to Cubism: 'This yielded, after many attempts touching on Cubism, one necessarily had to touch on it (it is too long to explain now)'.[10]

I presume that by the word "Cubism", Giacometti did not meant any particular style in Cubism (analytical or synthetic), but rather a general conceptual language that had become a modern artistic means, and was also used by many artists who were not Cubists. Giacometti used Cubism as he used Primitivism, as a conceptual language that provided him with a formal framework. Cubism enabled him to break up the human body into its component parts, using shapes that were not copied from visual reality, and simultaneously to assemble them into a whole without getting lost in details.

In *Figures, Man and Woman* (Fig. 2), one can already see the transition in progress from African forms to Cubist forms. The break up of the forms is only partial and they are arranged in two geometric massive shapes; each figure is composed of several units which represent the different body areas (head, torso, legs).

To represent gender, Giacometti substituted the graphic sexual ideogram with archetypal shapes that evoke maleness or femaleness. Nevertheless, it is not easy to distinguish the man from the woman because each figure contains a mixture of sexual signs. Furthermore, Giacometti's lexicon of shapes is not sufficiently consistent to enable one to construct a key to his symbolism, for the same shape may appear in one work as female and in another as male.

The woman in *Figures* appears to be composed of a cylinder and a ball. The cylinder is somewhat phallic, but its side, where the stomach should be, is an oval concavity. While the concavity may represent the stomach's negative reflection (it is common in Cubism to exchange convex for concave and vice versa), it is, as already stated, also a female archetypal image. The roundness of the ball, on the top of the cylinder, also draws a comparison with the female form, though here it could simply represent the head. It is important to note that in some of Giacometti's sculptures the ball shape is also associated with the male figure, but as I have already contended, its significance, like that of the other forms, can change from one sculpture to the next.

The male appears to be the taller figure, but is also composed of ambiguous shapes that resist immediate identification: the big square shapes create a masculine association, but seen from the side, the hips portray the silhouette of a guitar, which is also conceived as a archetypal female image. The problem

Fig. 2: *Figures, Man and Woman (Personage),*
1926-27, Bronze, 26X20X15 cm., Alberto
Giacometti Foundation, Zurich. ®
ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

of identification is increased when we turn the supposedly male sculpture, and discover an oval concavity in it too. An additional clue for gender identification is supplied by the rod that penetrates the two figures. It is difficult to determine which is performing the act of penetration, because of the static nature of both figures and the horizontal angle of the rod. However, the supposedly male figure is taller, and the rod protrudes from lower down its anatomy, in the groin area, which suggests the male phallus. Since it emerges through a bulge in the upper part of the other figure, it suggests a female breast.

Finally, if each figure is analyzed separately, it is difficult to discern which is which; from every angle the emphasis changes and either figure can be interpreted as both male and female. Only their juxtaposition contrasts the height and massive shapes of the one, with the roundness of the other. Therefore, the only means of reaching a determinate conclusion is by viewing the couple side by side. This is thus the main reason for presenting them as a couple: not
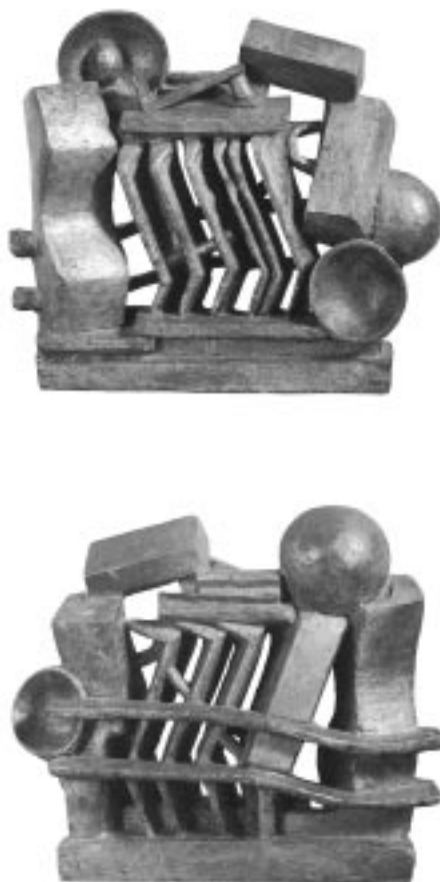
Fig. 3:   *Cubist Composition* 1927, Bronze, H:63.5 cm., Private Collection,
Bern. ® ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

the physical or spiritual relations between the man and the woman, but the
possibility of creating each of them out of abstract forms and yet still being
able to distinguish the male from the female.

Another sculpture from the cubist-couples series is *Cubist Composition, Man
and Woman* (Fig. 3). This was created at the time that Giacometti separated
from Flora, with whom he was having a complicated love affair, while at the
same time still being in love with Bianca. Bianca was a relative whom he had
met in Rome (1921), but their relations were never consummated.[11]

At that stage in his life Giacometti made a clear distinction between the
pure woman and the defiled - the saint and the whore. This distinction was
apparently a product of the complicated relationship he had with his mother,

whom he loved but feared; they had a special relationship, very understanding and caring, but she was also a very imposing and dominant parent. Subconsciously, he appears to have associated with his mother any woman he could love, that is a woman to whom he could relate on a spiritual level, and therefore he could not have a sexual relationship with her, which would have been almost like incest.[12]

While Bianca was the object of pure love, his relations with Flora were strictly sexual. When he became tired of her and her infidelities he left her, but when he discovered that she had another love, he became jealous.[13] His emotional confusion - his betrayal of Bianca's pure love, his need for Flora and at the same time his recoiling from any emotional commitment - is expressed in the muddle of *Cubist Composition,* which was probably done at that time.

Both figures are partly broken into many abstract fragments, which create a transparent skeleton in space. The female and male archetype signs are mixed to the extent that they can not be told apart. It is not even clear whether there is a couple or three people, because of the three half-empty balls, which probably serve as heads. The half-empty ball is also a kind of spoon, similar to the Zulu Spoon from *musée de l'homme* in Paris, in which it serves as the head of an elongated female figure.[14]

Two of the half-empty balls of the *Cubist Composition* are seen from the front while the third is seen from behind. The identity of the third party is not clear; it could represent a lover who is disrupting the relations between the couple, like Flora's lover. But it could also be the image of Bianca, his pure love, whose memory interfered in his relations with Flora. However, it should be noted that a third person also appears in Giacometti's *Three Figures Outdoors* (Fig. 5), as his double or alter ego.

Whatever the identity or nature of the relations between the three people in *Cubist Composition,* they are no longer alienated or stand next to each other. Their parts may be muddled in a purely mechanical way or the physical relations at least are real; the fusion of shapes here may suggest actual intercourse. The idea of sexual relations is supported by the presence of a little ball that lies inside one of the half-empty balls and could symbolize an embryo. All these shapes continued to recur in Giacometti's work: the half-empty ball as a head, or as a container representing fertility, mostly when it contains a little "embryo" ball inside.

If in *Figures* one could distinguish the sexual identity of the male and female by their juxtaposition, in *Cubist Composition* it is impossible to do so. What does this confusion of sexual signs mean? The answer is complex and lends itself to a number of interpretations. A similar phenomenon can be detected in

the work of many artists of the time, and perhaps expresses the idea that man and woman are one, or were so initially. This approach sees the human being as one entity, regardless of sexual identity. Such unification of man and woman is conceived as the ideal state, before the separation of Eve from Adam, and before the temptation of the serpent, who introduced them to knowledge, that is, to experience sex. The real banishment from the Garden of Eden is thus seen as the separation of the human whole into two incomplete entities - male and female.

The longing for reunification of the two genders is present in many religions: in the Jewish Cabala, for instance, the union between God and his female counterpart, the *Shekhinah* (the spirit), is to be preceded by the return of the male and female elements to their original union.[15] In the Hindu Tantras, the male god and the female goddess are considered, together, to be the first revelation of the Absolute.[16] In the Polynesian religion, unification of the two divinities, Hina the female and Taaroa the male, creates the world in the form of Fatou, their son, who endows the earth with life.[17]

Images combining both male and female exist in several cultures. In tribal art, for example, one can find a simultaneous duality of sexual identities in a Dogon *Seated Figure:* the same figure has both breasts and a male phallus.[18] Another combined image, which appears in classical culture, is the hermaphrodite. Erich Neumann uses the term 'Hermaphroditic quality' in order to label the presence of the opposite sexual component in each gender: the female (anima) in the man, or the male (animus) in the woman.[19] And indeed, considering this concept of hermaphrodity, it is possible to understand the mixing of sexual signs in Giacometti's work through the theories of Freud and Jung, who claimed that each person contains within him some components of the other sex.

However, one cannot ignore the fact that the confusion of sexual signs could hint at Giacometti's insecurity in his own sexual identity. James Lord argues that already in his youth Giacometti had feared a homosexual tendency, when he was suspected of being in love with one of his friends at his boarding school. Rumors began to spread around about the nature of their relationship (which was never consummated, and was probably no more than a normal teenage crush). Giacometti was torn between his feelings and his fear: the fear of being attracted to a member of his own sex, the fear of the strict school-ban on such relations and, most of all, the fear of confronting the issue; he therefore ran away from school.[20]

Later on in Paris, where some of his close friends were homosexuals, there were again rumors. It is an interesting phenomenon in itself that the Surrealists

were strictly opposed to homosexuality. I assume that Freud would have found it worthy of investigation that such a revolutionary group should exhibit such a conservative prejudice, despite its supposedly liberal sexual approach.[21]

Although Giacometti was not, as far as one can tell, a homosexual, his early experiences do appear to have left their mark and contributed to his sexual problems - partial impotence and inability to relate to woman.[22] In 1921, in Rome, where he met Bianca, he also discovered that whores were the ideal means for stress-free sex, and the prospect excited him: 'It's cold, it's mechanical', he exclaimed once after reaching orgasm with a whore.[23]

His inability to make a total commitment may partly explain the alienation of the first *Couple*, in which the two figures stand apart, ignoring one another. This may also explain the mixing of sexual signs in the cubist couples, in which the fusion is not derived from the emotional nature of the relations, but is a product of the mechanical manipulation of shapes, which creates an artificial relation between the two figures.

Although I take a psychological approach, such as considering Giacometti's insecurity in his sexual identity, I do not intend to use psychoanalysis as a methodological tool for interpretation. It is Giacometti, rather, who himself uses psychoanalysis to hint that several of his past traumatic experiences offer the necessary key to his work. He is no mere innocent patient in the analyst's chair; but sometimes tells tales and manipulates us into interpreting his works according to Freudian theories. He also puts himself in the role of the Freudian dreamer, who does not know how to interpret the images and symbols of his own dream. However, since *we* know how to translate them, says Freud, it may happen that the sense of the dream becomes clear to us as soon as we hear its text, while it still remains an enigma to the dreamer himself.[24]

By providing constant autobiographical details, Giacometti turns us into voyeurs, placing us next to the psychoanalyst's sofa, beside the patient (he himself). Although some interpretations may seem like Freudian clichés, Giacometti himself manipulates us into accepting them as part of the narrative of his works, and we must, therefore, include them in our discourse. Giacometti continued to use psychoanalytic manipulations to the end of his days, long after he broke with the Surrealists. This enabled him to enrich the multiplicity of meaning in his work, a multiplicity that could not, perhaps, be expressed by visual means alone. It is impossible to analyze his work without paying close attention to its verbal accompaniment.

But were all these "facts" true? Some of then were probably the fruit of his imagination but, like Jung, Giacometti realized that fantasies can carry the same weight as reality itself. Whatever the case, they shed light upon his artistic

creation, as affected by his somewhat obsessive and disturbed personality and his many compulsive habits.[25]

Whatever the original reason for the confusion of sexual signs, it began to disappear as the influence of the Surrealists increased. Because exploration and externalization of the unconscious were so important to the Surrealists, every member of the group had to undergo a kind of group therapy, accompanied by confessions and free association exercises.[26] These seances helped Giacometti to express and release his suppressed sexual aggression. Consequently, he ceased mixing the sexual signs, for gender identification was essential to determine who was the aggressor (the male) and who was the cause (the female).[27]

Giacometti often spoke of the important role that violence between the sexes played in his thoughts and dreams; in his youth, every night before going to sleep he imagined himself killing two men, and raping and murdering two women.[28] He always thought that between men and woman there could only be disagreement and hostility, a rivalry in which 'the woman will not surrender until her physical strength is diminished; the man has raped her'.[29] At one of the Surrealist meetings, he was asked to answer, among other questions: 'How were the women chosen?' to which he replied: 'You hid yourself at dusk, and as the girl passed, you threw yourself at her and raped her'.[30] This violence was finally released, in a very concise and abstract form, in *Couple* (Fig. 4).

The female figure in *Couple* is reminiscent of the oval *Spoon Woman*, but she is even more concave and empty of matter and in profile no more than a thin curved line. Although the concave shape is a female archetype, it could also have been influenced by the positive-negative technique of the Cubists, and thus represent the convex belly. However, in this couple, the concave shape has yet another function: to stress and enhance the recoiling movement of the female, and thus to increase the male threat of aggression.

The man resembles a taut bow and arrow. The blunt end of the arrow is slanted backwards, increasing the tension. It resembles a leg gaining momentum to pounce forward. The sharp end cuts aggressively through the space between the man and the woman, directed at the center of the concavity, where the female sexual organ appears, prominent and emphasized.[31] It almost touches the vagina, but not quite, and the suspense is eternally preserved in a threatening freeze, just before the actual moment of penetration.[32] The terror is enhanced by a zigzag effect in the upper part of the woman, resembling a spring about to jolt her body forward, towards the arrow, thus enabling the male to complete the painful and even fatal act of penetration.

Fig. 4: *Couple, Man and Woman,* 1928-29, Bronze, 40X40X16.5 cm.,
Musée natioinal d'Art modern , Paris. ® ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

This work not only describes fear and aggression between the sexes; it also creates them. In order to achieve this, Giacometti had to create "a state of mind", in its Futuristic sense, through the use of force-lines. By reducing the material to a mere vector, he created a decisive movement that evokes violence. This was the first time that Giacometti realized the concept of man and woman through their relations, without the aid of gender signs or other images of external appearance.

In *Three Figures Outdoors* (Fig. 5), the subject is again a trio. The genders are very difficult to identify and describe because of their extreme linearity, but the central figure appeared to be a woman. Its zigzag shape recalls the upper part of the woman in *Couple,* but this time the form is open, comprising four linear zigzags that resemble an African decorative pattern. The woman is passive, while another figure is reaching out to her with two spear-like phallic hands, grabbing her aggressively. This aggression seems more possessive than sexual, though there is also a hint of sex and even fertility: a kind of branch grows between the man and the woman, linking them inseparably and bearing fruit shaped like breasts, or a womb with ovary.

Does this scene depict the Garden of Eden? The presence of the tree and the fruit as an image of fertility could suggest so.[33] But who is the third figure, standing apart? He seems to be another male, and not directly involved in the

Fig. 5: *Tree Figures Outdoors*, 1929, Bronze,
54X39X8.9 cm., Art Gallery of Ontario,
Toronto. ® ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

couple's relations. He too has two spear-like phallic hands but they are very short. Is it Giacometti himself, portrayed as impotent? Does the sculpture describe relations that involve three parties, as I have suggested for *Cubist Composition?* Around 1930 Giacometti was involved with Denise, who also had another lover, a man called *Dédé le Raisin*, because he sold fruit in the street (could this be related to the above tree and fruit?). Apparently the three of them got along well and, according to Lord, 'it is said that they enjoyed together the conclusive demonstrations of intimacy'.[34] Unfortunately, nothing is known about Denise nor are there dates or other details on the affair, and therefore no proof that the sculpture was created at the same time.

Reinhold Hohl believes that a hint to the presence of a third person can be found in Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*: Every time Miller reached orgasm he felt as though he were two people, one of whom was watching the other perform.[35] His description matches Giacometti's state of mind at the time: his inability to relate to women, the distinction he made between love and sex, and above all, the mechanical nature of the sexual act (which he had discovered

with the help of the Roman prostitutes). All these suggest that the two male figures are Giacometti himself: part of him is grasping the woman passionately, while the other part looks on from the outside, disengaged and alienated.

Giacometti's double fits the image of the *doppelgänger* - an apparition of a living person (not a ghost) in German folklore. Encountering one's double is a sign of approaching death, which may explain why Giacometti wrote upon a photograph taken from the plaster: *Man, Woman and Ghost*.[36] The theme of the "double" is also familiar in literature and probably first appeared in the tale by Hoffmann, *The Devil's Elixir*, 1815-16 (and later in Dostoyevsky's *The Double*, 1846).

Hoffmann's "Sandman" is explained by Freud, in his essay *The Uncanny* (1919), as a division, or multiplication or replacement of the self.[37] Freud sees the *doppelgänger* as an insurance against destruction to the ego, expressing a desire for immortality, like the act of the ancient Egyptians who duplicated the dead in sculpture or paintings. He agrees with the theory of Otto Rank, who argues that the double functions as a measure against annihilation of the self, as a denial of death. Freud relates the *doppelgänger* to the early stage of the personality, that of narcissism.[38] However, when the narcissism disappears, its function changes: 'From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death',[39] reinforcing the above explanation for the "Ghost" in Giacometti's words on the photo: *Man, Woman and Ghost.* Freud also claims that the invention of doubling has its counterpart in the language of dreams that represent castration. However, with mental maturity the double becomes an expression of the conscious: 'Inside the self grows, slowly but surely, another special entity, able to stand in opposition to the rest of the self… which fulfills the role of mental censorship and is recognized by our consciousness as Conscience'.[40]

I argue that Giacometti's double neither represents his conscience, nor his mature personality. He is still in the narcissist stage, because he has neither confronted nor overcome his problems, and therefore the double represents his fear of castration, or his impotence. It should be noted that Giacometti contracted mumps in his youth (1917-18) and was left sterile for life;[41] he could, at that stage, have considered his sterility as lack of virility.

The next two sculptures, both from 1929, *Reclining Woman* and *Lying Woman*, are not couple-sculptures as such, because each of them represents only a female figure. However, I contend that both women contain the man within them and therefore represent relations between the sexes.

Reclining Woman is a variation on *Spoon Woman*, with an oval body peacefully reclining. Next to the woman's head appears a phallus-like shape, which

Fig. 6: *Lying Woman (Woman Dreaming),* 1929, Painted Bronze, 24.5X43X14 cm.,
Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich. ® ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

probably represents the male, but this time it does not disturb the balance and
stability of the female's horizontal lines, nor does it break the closed line of her
shape or interfere with the introverted nature of the sculpture. Perhaps because
the man is present only in the woman's thoughts, and so long as there is no
active sexual contact, there is no violence.

The possibility that the presence of the man exists in the woman's thoughts
is strengthened in *Lying Woman (Woman Dreaming),* (Fig. 6), primarily due to
incorporation of the word "dream" in the name of the work. The name is an
essential part of a Surrealist work; it endows it with a further dimension,
whether supplementary or contradictory. The dream is the most important
component of Surrealist theory; it is one of the main means to reach surreality,
as it gives access to the unconscious.

I believe that *Lying Woman* expresses the woman's sexual fantasy and desires
revealed in her dream. There is no image of an oval spoon-woman, but there
is, again, a half-empty ball that probably represents the woman's head. The
single empty hemisphere also indicates that there is only one figure, although
the sculpture is composed of two parallel horizontal waves, viewed from the
side, lying one on top of the other. The curved lines are constructed as a mirror
image: the bottom wave is mostly convex while the top wave is concave. The
waves simulate love-making, both because they create undulations and because
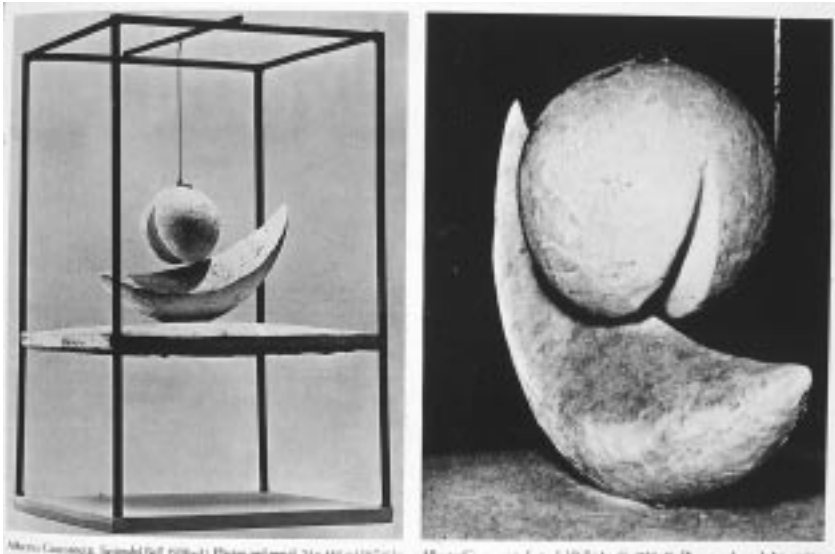
Fig. 7: *Suspended Ball,* 1930-31, Plaster and Metal, 61X36X33.5 cm., Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich. ® ADAGP, Paris, 2000.

of the metaphor of sea waves, which, after years of watching Hollywood movies, we have come to recognize as a subtle (or censored) symbol of sexual intercourse.

Here too, there is no male violence, for there is no real sexual contact, but only an imagined fantasy. Nevertheless, sexual activity is insinuated, and the calmness and pleasantness of the composition is undermined by three "male" comb-teeth, which penetrate the upper figure like a multiple duplication of the arrow from the 1928-29 *Couple.* Sharp comb-teeth recur in other of Giacometti's works as masculine metaphors, but here their lack of sharpness neutralizes the threat.

Three vertical phallic shapes, together with the spoon, frame the composition like four pillars holding up the waves, or like four legs supporting a bed, on which the woman (or imaginary couple) lie, thereby further enhancing the images of sleep and dream.[42] Overall, the sculpture elicits a sense of calmness, because of the fine balance between the horizontal wavy shapes and the vertical phallic shapes. Here again we see that when the man is present only in the woman's thoughts, there is no violence.

In *Suspended Ball* (Fig. 7) aggression returns in full force, but in contrast to the explicit sexual violence that we witnessed in the 1928-29 *Couple,* now the violence, although similar, has become controlled and sophisticated. Giacometti

has managed here to create a synthesis between expressive means, which externalize primordial drives and instincts, and aesthetic detachment. The work not only expresses Giacometti's sexual frustrations, but it successfully realizes many of the Surrealists' ideas. Therefore, when the sculpture was first exhibited in 1930, it evoked powerful emotional responses from all who viewed it, and a particular interest among the Surrealists.[43]

Suspended Ball is a cage that encloses and defines three-dimensional artistic space and time, within which Giacometti creates a certain situation. The need to define the space arises from the perception that existence is fluid and changing, and therefore the artist can relate to it only by framing his own artistic space.

Dora Ashton traces a shift from Surrealism to Existentialism during the 1930s, as resulting from a change in the intellectual climate at that time.[44] If in the early stage of Surrealism the focus was on a person's relations with himself - between the different levels of his consciousness - now the focus shifted towards the relations between oneself and the "Other" - people and objects that exist outside the self. The Freudian concept of duality becomes lost in a maze of possibilities; there is no longer one cause to one effect, but a multifaceted variety of circumstances that lead to a given situation, which can change in an instant if one of its components changes. The individual is conceived as part of a situation, which is composed of a network of relations between him and the "Others" (whether people or objects).

This fluid and mutable existence does not lend itself to concrete illustration, and so it becomes necessary to freeze its components in a fixed space and to enclose its duration in time in a given situation. Such an act, however, actually changes the nature of the situation, for freezing negates the essence of its inevitable fluidity.[45] The need to realize the unrealizable causes the artist to try over and over again, but at the same time it frustrates him. This frustration is transmitted to the spectator by tempting him to act, although the act is not possible. Thus, the spectator's frustration in itself concretizes the ambiguity of the situation, realizing the absurdity of existence itself.

This new existential concept was the reason for some of the characteristics that appeared in Giacometti's sculptures at that time: a space defined by a cage or a stage,[46] which contained a situation between a couple, in which the viewer was encouraged to intervene, and to experience an inevitable frustration.[47] To elicit the desired frustration these sculptures demand active participation on the part of the viewer and, therefore, the artist must create the possibility of actual movement in the sculpture. And indeed, Giacometti, who up until then had relied on the illusion of movement, claimed in his letter to

Matisse: 'I could only create such movement if it was real and actual, I also wanted to give the sensation of motion that could be induced'.[48]

The cage has several functions in *Suspended Ball*: not only does it enclose space and freeze a situation, but it provides a construction, like a bridge, from which the ball hangs in mid-air by a thin string, like a mobile. The outlines of the cage also provide a frame of reference that accentuates the movement of the ball, which could otherwise be lost in an open space. Beneath the ball lies a phallic image in the shape of a crescent, which can only be a male symbol, especially since its sharp edge fits exactly into the feminine groove in the ball. The perfect fit, together with the possibility of moving the ball, tempts the viewer to insert the crescent into the slit of the ball. Thus this act becomes a reenactment of the initial aggression of the ball, and in fact constitutes the violent act itself, since it can only occur if someone activates the sculpture. However, the length of string does not permit contact, a fact that the viewer can not know that until he/she actually tries it out. The frustration that the viewer experiences stimulates a repeated attempt, and so on. Being part of the situation, the viewer comprehends its complexity and absurdity. Thus *Suspended Ball* not only presents the relationships between the sexes, but it also becomes an existential symbol of the absurdity of human existence.

There has been some discussion about the gender of the ball in this work. Hohl sees Giacometti's balls in general as a male metaphor,[49] while Hal Foster claims that the sexual reference in this work is indeterminate and that neither form (ball or crescent) is exclusively masculine or feminine, active or passive.[50] I contend, however, that there can be no gender ambivalence in this sculpture, or it will not transmit the intended essence of violence. As I have claimed earlier, at this stage of Giacometti's work the identity of the sexes is essential in order to determine who is the aggressor. I also reject the idea that there is no definition of the active or passive party. The active element (the ball) must be clear, or it would not tempt the viewer to activate it. Yet, I admit that the nature of its activity could raise a problem, since in most of Giacometti's work the active part is the male. However, in this work the ball is not really active, but is manipulated by an outsider, a kind of *Deus ex Machina*, which moves the ball like a mobile. This may suggest an image of a passive female, pushed towards the hiding male who is waiting to rape her - a paraphrase of Giacometti's own words.

Whether the ball is active or manipulated, I argue that in this work it is a clear feminine image. First, let us not forget that a ball in French is feminine (*une boule)*! Second, at the base of the ball is a slit resembling the female sexual organ *in situ*, an association that was also very clear to Dalí: 'a wooden ball (*une boule)* stamped with a feminine groove'.[51]

In his essay *Objets surréalistes* Dalí sums up the phases undergone by the Surrealist object. These are, I believe, relevant to the development of Giacometti's couples:

1. 'The object exists outside us, without our taking a part in it (anthropomorphic articles).' This phase fits the early alienated couples of Giacometti, influenced by primitivism and cubism.

2. 'The object assumes the immovable shape of desire and acts upon our contemplation (dream state articles)'. This phase fits his early Surrealist influence - the violent couples and also the reclining and dreaming women.

3. 'The object is movable and such that it can be acted upon (articles operating symbolically)'.

4. 'The object tends to bring about our fusion with it and makes us pursue the formation of unity with it (hunger for an article and edible articles)'.[52] The last two phases fit *Suspended Ball* and other movable objects that Giacometti created at that time. Thus *Suspended Ball* can be the seen as the most accomplished Surrealist object but, at the same time, one of Giacometti's first existential works.

The violence between male and female disappeared from Giacometti's work as he completed his process of self-examination that had begun with the Surrealist influence. Up until then both female and male were kept captive in their gender role, and joining them together as a couple shifted the focus to the sexual character of their identity or their relations. However, during the 1930s he began to feel that he had exhausted the possibilities within the framework of Surrealism, and he left the group. From then on, Giacometti ceased to portray couples. Men and woman no longer appeared as male and female, but as human beings, whatever their gender, concerned with existential problems, and expressing the isolation and alienation of human existence.

Notes

1. Giacometti 1947: 18.
2. *Ibid.*: 16.
3. The eye plays a very important role in Surrealist thinking; in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (1928) Breton declares: 'The eye exists in the savage stage'. Pierre 1955: 76-83. In the same year Dalí and Buñuel began their film, *Un Chien Andalou*, with a scene of a razor slicing an eye, and George Bataille published his book *L'histoire de l'oeil.* See Krauss 1985 (The Originality): 62-62, a comparison between Bataille's book and Giacometti's *Suspended Ball.* It should be noted that in "The uncanny" (Freud 1919) Freud claims that the fear of losing sight expresses the fear of castration.

The connection between eye, sexual identity and fear of castration appears in many Surrealist works.

4. Both Freud and Jung compare vessels with the uterus, see Freud 1900: 471; Jung 1990: 203. For elaboration on the vessels as Jungian archetype, see Neumann 1955: 39, 120-146. The same year in which the first *Couple* and *Spoon Woman* were made, 1926, was Freud's 70th birthday and to celebrate it many articles discussing his theories were published all over the world.

5. For instance: *Spoon*, Dan, Liberia, Wood, H: 48 cm, The Metropolitan Museum, New York, and *Spoon*, Dan, Ivory Coast or Liberia, H: 52.1 cm, Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington.

6. On the comparison between mouth and vagina, see in Belton 1987: 10; Walker 1983: 1034-1037. A similar vagina-mouth shape appears in Picasso's work, especially in the studio paintings of 1927-1928. An elaboration on the subject is to be published in my article "Surrealism's Praying Mantis and Castrating Woman", Markus, 2000.

7. Here again we may see the sexual connotation of the eye, and its connection to sexual identity and fear of castration.

8. For a comprehensive analysis of Magritte's *The Rape* (1934), see Gubar 1987: 715-729.

9. Giacometti 1947: 18: 'Since I wanted nevertheless to realize a little of what I saw...'

10. *Ibid*.

11. Lord 1986: 45, 47, 94-97.

12. For instance: on his special relations with his mother, *ibid*.: 12; on the ambivalent feeling for woman, *ibid*.: 77-78; on his impotence, *ibid*.: 78. Their special relations are clearly perceived in a family photograph from 1909: Giacometti and his mother look at each other over the heads of the other members of the family, *ibid*. (opp. p. 176).

13. *Ibid*.: 106-107.

14. *Spoon*, Zulu, South Africa, Wood, H:57 cm, Musée de l'homme, Paris. This spoon was probably familiar to many artists who visited the museum, which could explain the similarity between the Zulu spoon and some of Picasso's wood figures from the 1930s (272-282 in the catalogue of Picasso's Museum in Paris).

15. Most of my references are in Hebrew, for example Michal Peled "God and his Wife", *Ha'arez* (26.8.96) 27-76. However, this subject is also mentioned (in another context) in Belton 1988: 55.

16. Tantras is a comprehensive name for theological texts, myths and ceremonies of a number of sects in the Hindu and Buddhist religions. The writings of one of its sections, the Sakata Tantras, which apparently began in the 7th century, deals in length with the female divinity as the embodiment of creative power and godly energy. According to them, Shiva, without Shakti, is merely a lifeless body

17. Gauguin 1989: 254-256.

18. *Seated Figure*, Dogon, Mali, Wood, H: 69 cm., Private collection (formerly in the collection of the sculptor Jacob Epstein).

19. Neumann 1955: 24-25.

20. Lord 1986: 31-32.

21. *Ibid*.: 125-126.

22. *Ibid*.: 77-78. There are many other sources concerning Giacometti's complexes and

inclinations, including texts by Gicaometti himself, but to simplify the matter I prefer to use Lord, who has already collected and translated most of the sources.

23. *Ibid*.: 47-48.

24. Freud 1932: 41. It should be noted that this source could also be used for the interpretation of Giacometti's *The Palace at 4 a.m.*

25. There are many examples of his compulsive and obsessive behavior, for example Lord 1986; 14. The same could be said about his brother Diego (*Ibid*.: 16-17), which suggests that there was something wrong with their supposedly ideal family relationship.

26. Alexandrian 1975: 49; Ades 1983: 123.

27. In Giacometti's couple the female is not a victim, but the cause of the violence. For elaboration on the subject, including an analysis of two other violent sculptures: *Unpleasant Object* (1931) and *Woman with a Cut Throat* (1932), see Markus 2000.

28. Lord 1986: 15, 77; Giacometti 1933: 44-45. It should be noted that in 1958 Giacometti erased the last paragraph in this text, which describes the rape, see Giacometti 1995: 9. More about Giacometti's sexual aggression, see Giacometti 1945: 3 and in many other examples in Dupin 1962.

29. Lord 1986: 77.

30. Hohl 1972: 251. See also Giacometti 1995: 14. The connection between eroticism and violence was a very common idea among the Surrealists, and was mainly developed by George Bataille, who claims: 'De l'érotisme, il est possible de dire qu'il est l'approbation de la vie jusque dans la mort', Bataille 1957: 17. For an elaboration on the subject, see Markus, 2000.

31. A similar shape of an emphasized vagina inside an empty oval appears in his destroyed plaster *Woman* (1926-27), see Krauss 1984: 528.

32. This always reminds me of the tension between the fingers of God and Adam in Michelangelo's *Creation of Man* (1508-12) in the Sistine Chapel, mainly because of the contrast between the meanings of the two works - creation by a potentially spiritual idea versus intercourse by a potentially violent sexual act.

33. Another work by Giacometti, *Woman, Head, Tree* (1930) is interpreted by Hohl as the story of Eden, Hohl 1972: 81.

34. Lord 1986: 125-126.

35. Hohl 1972: 81.

36. Giacometti 1988: 86.

37. Freud 1919. See also Krauss *(Corpus Delicti)* 1985: 82; 85.

38. *Ibid*. (Freud): 234-241.

39. *Ibid*.

40. *Ibid*.

41. Lord 1986: 29.

42. It should be noted that the French word for lying – *couchée* – also has a sexual connotation.

43. Upon seeing the sculpture, Breton invited Giacometti to join the Surrealist group (Lord 1986: 118). Dalí was very impressed and claimed that *Suspended Ball* introduced all the essential principles of the definition of the Surrealist object (Finkelstein 1993: 119). In fact, Dalí wrote his essay on the Surrealist object, *L'objets surrealistes,* (Dalí

1931) after he had seen *Suspended Ball* in the exhibition. See also Krauss 1984: 512; 529, n. 33 and Krauss 1985: 57.

44. Ashton 1971: 89-95.

45. Artists' inability to determine a situation that, by nature, is constantly mobile and changing is similar to the problem posed by quantum mechanics: scientists' inability to conduct an accurate objective experiment, as the same experiment necessarily interferes with and influences the results (Heidenberg's indeterminancy principle, 1927).

46. It should be noted that Giacometti also defines the space of his drawings and paintings by a linear frame.

47. Sometimes Giacometti introduces a third figure, such as a lover or his alter ego. In *Man, Woman and Child* (1931) the third party is a child, whose presence immediately turns the couple into parents. Although the latter can also be considered as a couple, it involves a new theme in Giacometti's sculptures: the Oedipal phase, on which I can not elaborate in the frame of this article.

48. Giacometti 1947: 20.

49. Hohl 1972: 81. Hohl refers to other sculptures as evidence but, as I have claimed before, Giacometti changes the metaphors from one sculpture to another, and so their significance can not be inferred except within the context of the specific sculpture at hand.

50. Foster 1991: 49. Foster is referring to the fact that *Suspended Ball* appears as one of Giacometti's drawings under the title "Objets mobiles et muets" (movable and silent objects) in *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* 3 (1931). On the ambivalent identity of the genders in this work, see also Krauss 1985: 62-64.

51. Finkelstein 1993: 119.

52. Chipp 1975: 426-27.

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The Non-presence of People in David Hockney's Paintings of Nouveau Riche Houses

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> The house, the residence, is the only rampart against the dread of nothingness, darkness and the obscurity of the past… Man's identity is thus residential… The man without a home is a potential criminal
>
> Immanuel Kant[1]

*I*n this article I would like to discuss two forms of spaces of Hockney's nouveau-riche's series: on the one hand, the space of painting – the space inside the inner frame and the space between the inner and external frame; and on the other hand, the space of the nouveau-riche house that is divided into two kinds - those that are entirely devoid of people and those that feature a presentation of the collectors. In this article I discuss the perception of space in the "empty" houses, through two prominent works from the series: *A Bigger Splash* (Fig. 1) and *A Lawn Sprinkler* (Fig. 2). Although it is widely accepted, that the collectors are not present in the works, I argue that even when they are not explicitly represented there is a trace of the collectors.

The theme of nouveau-riche houses has occupied David Hockney since the sixties, a short time after his move from northern England to California, in 1964. Hockney escorted the art dealer John Kasmin, to a series of business meetings in various art collectors' homes, in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Through these meetings he learned to know those houses. As a foreigner, Hockney created an eccentric and unique image of his adopted home; a theme that made its debut in the sixties, when he began to paint the suburbs of Los Angeles, organizing them as a plain according to a geometrical, straight and rigorous pattern.[2]

Fig. 1: David Hockney, *A Bigger Splash,* 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 244x244,
Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, London.

The housepipe in *A Lawn Sprinkler* and the stepping stone in *A Bigger Splash*, introduces the spectator into the depth of the picture. Any feeling of depth disappears because the lawn in the front and back plane is treated with the same intensity. There is no blurring of color in the distance; no depth in the depiction of water. The water and the splash belong to the same reality but are depicted as different ones; no shadow exists, except that of the chair in *A Bigger Splash*. The painted frame, in both pictures, creates the awareness to the two-dimensionality of the canvas.

These paintings are among the last in which Hockney used a frame around the image - whether painted or left as bare margins of canvas - which is the space between the inner and external frame. Hockney explains the white stripe:
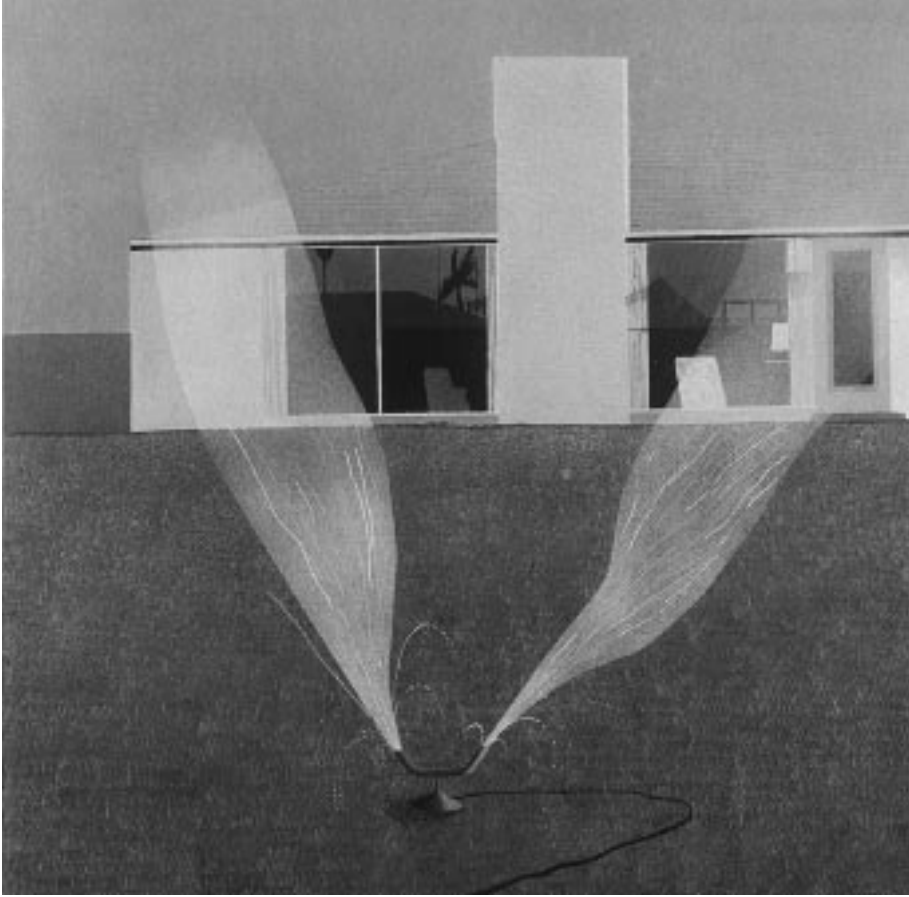
Fig. 2: David Hockney, *A Lawn Sprinkler*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 122x122,
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Studholme, London.

'I used borders around an image a lot, from about 1964 to 1967. This wasn't just a framing device. It started off as a formal device... it seemed to me that if I cut that picture off there, it became more conventional, and I was a little frightened of that then'.[3] Both works comprise a flat square with white borders that emphasize the flatness of the canvas itself - the two-dimensionality that is so indispensable to modern painting, as it is to Polaroid photography.

The white strip can be related to the space between two borders, the way that Samuel Weber describes the symbolic structure of psychic anxiety itself: 'Anxiety is perhaps what one feels when the world reveals itself to be caught up in the space between two frames: a doubled frame, or one that is split'.[4] This in-between space, a third space, is the place where things are not connected;

it is not just between borders but it is the place itself that is not self-evident, that causes anxiety, because the object facing one is not clear. whereas Weber's theory belongs to the psychoanalytic discourse, the following theories, that I shall develop here belong to the sociological and the philosophical discourse.

In *Frame Analysis*[5] by the American sociologist Erving Goffman, there is a distinction between two broad classes of primary frameworks: natural and social. Nathalie Heinich applies this theory to the bullfight in her article "Framing the bullfight: Aesthetics versus ethics",[6] as an example of the social and the transformed frame: In opposition to the "savage" unintended and unformalized confrontation of a bull and a man in a field, which would constitute a primary frame, there exists the social as the transformed frame. The key (of performance) and the fabrication (formal, regulated ceremony) are two types of transformed frame. Heinich claims that transformed frames are characterized by the existence of brackets. This spatial brackets delimit several levels of participation: the walls of the arena isolate, all the participants (transformed frame) from the external world (primary frame). The first barrier isolates from the public all the personnel (actors, doctors, etc.); the second barrier isolates, from the alley between those two barriers reserved for the personnel, the team made up by the matadors and toreadors, picadors and horses, banderilleros and of course, the bull..I claim that as Hockey's frame, 'These brackets', in Heinich words, 'which are neither inside, nor outside, like the frame of a picture, become part of an action as soon as an actor transgresses it, when in fleeing or in pursuit outside the arena'.[7]

Two philosophers have followed the changes in the status of the frame (Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida). Kant considers the necessary conditions for something to be beautiful:

> Even that we call "ornaments" [parerga], those things which do not belong to the complete representation of the object internally as elements, but only externally as complements, and which augment the satisfaction of taste, do not only by their forms; as, for example the frames of pictures or the draperies of statues or the colonnades of places. But if the ornament does not itself consist in beautiful form and if it is used as a golden frame is used, merely to recommend the painting by its charm, it is then called finery and injures genuine beauty.[8]

Frames have no value as themselves, according Kant, but are intended to draw attention to the creation itself, to be supplements. As such, claims Jacques

Derrida in *The truth on painting*, in the section that deals with Kant: 'You have to know what intrinsically concerns the value "beauty" and what remains external to your immanent sense of beauty. This requirement presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and outside of the art object, here a discourse on the frame'.[9] These ornaments, continues Derrida, work for Kant as inner and outer borders. They act as supplements - they are outside, but they are not the things that are outside, because they are the borders. However, the supplement has a potential for greater importance than the work itself, since without it one would not know where the creation begins and ends, or even the fact that one is standing in front of a creation.

In addition to the problem of the absence of depth in the picture, discussed above, the disappearance of the body is another question that arises from those paintings. Both the water and the glass act as screens that conceal the human body: the bodies of the collectors in *A Lawn Sprinkler*, and the body of the diver in *A Bigger Splash*. In the former, the glass window is simultaneously transparent - it is possible to see the armchair and other furniture inside the house, and opaque-mirroring the outside view.

Rosalind Krauss notes that a grid [in our case the bars over the windows] conveys one of the basic laws of knowledge - separation of the perceptual screen from that of the "real" world.[10] The window, she continues, is experienced as simultaneously transparent and opaque. As a transparent vehicle, it is that which admits light - or spirit - into the initial darkness of the room. But if glass transmits, it also reflects. And so the window is experienced as a mirror - something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being; the bars of the window - the grid - are what help us to see, to focus.

Lefebvre continues this line of thought when he speaks of a 'double illusion',[11] each side of which refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other. The two aspects are the illusion of transparency on the one hand and the illusion of opacity, or "realistic" illusion, on the other. In the illusion of transparency, he claims, space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving free rein for action. The realistic illusion is closer to (naturalistic and mechanistic) materialism. Rather than being mutually antagonistic, each illusion embodies and nourishes the other. The oscillation between the two, and the resulting flickering effect, are thus just as important as either of the illusions considered in isolation.

Krauss' argument discussed above relates also to the idea of public and private space: the 20th century has been witness to the building of such private homes as "Prairie House" (1900), designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and

published in the *Ladies' Home Journal*.[12] As the ideal design of a house suggesting absolute privacy, the window openings facing the street are relatively small, and are located high up, under the eaves. In contrast, "Farnsworth House" (1946-51), Illinois, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, offers the opposite approach, which Elizabeth Gordon describes as 'a one room house that is nothing but a glass cage on stilts'.[13] Gordon perceives this house as a home that can not be shielded from the public gaze. Edith Farnsworth, owner of the house, herself noted, 'the house is transparent, like an X-ray'.[14]

The well-groomed facades of the collector's houses that Hockney depicts require us to keep a distance, while the large glass windows and the pool, which are situated outdoors, prevent an image of absolute privacy. Mike Davies observes that 'security has less to do with personal safety than with the degree of personal insulation'.[15]

In *A Bigger Splash* another problem arises: that of space in time; or, in other words, the freezing of time that David Hockey recounts:

> I loved the idea of painting this thing that lasts for two seconds, it takes me two weeks to paint this event that lasts for two seconds. The effect of it as it got bigger was more stunning - everybody knows a splash can't be frozen in time, it doesn't exist, so when you see it like that in a painting it's even more striking than in a photograph, because you know a photograph took a second to take, or less. In fact if it's a splash and there's no blur in it, you know it took a sixtieth of a second, less time than the splash existed for. The painting took much longer to make than the splash existed for, so it has a very different effect on the viewer. When the painting was exhibited in Paris in 1974, I had them point one of the lights right on the splash itself, so it was even whiter.[16]

Hockney froze the moment of the splash.[17] It is visible as a trace of the unseen diver. The trace has no presence, notes Derrida. Like a signifier, it refers to something that is absent, and the gap between traces refers to something that is missing providing a sense of 'essence'. According to Vasseleu, Irigaray, writing on this suspension; mentions the 'forgotten vagina', when she places a different emphasis on the 'detour/passage' of metaphor by relating it to the passage between the artificially lit interior and the purity of the outside light, in Plato's famous cave allegory. Irigaray contends that it is precisely the metaphoric omission of the transition that allows such movement. The 'forgotten vagina'

is the 'passage that is missing, left on the shelf, between the outside and the inside, between the plus and the minus'.[18]

Irigaray names 'inscriptional space',[19] according to Judith Butler, as the specular surface that receives the marks of a masculine signifying act only to give back a (false) reflection and guarantee of phallogocentric self-sufficiency, without making any contribution of its own. This inscriptional space makes its appearance in Plato's "Timaeus" as the receptacle (Khora). This receptacle is not a metaphor based on likeness to a human form, but a disfiguration that emerges at the boundaries of the human, both as its very condition and as the insistent threat of its deformation. It cannot take a form, a morphe and, in that sense it cannot be a body.

Derrida sees this inscriptional space as a third gender/genre that cannot (she/it) be called by name. He explains that there is a preference for the presence of speech over writing. Speech represents essence, origin, it arrives without mediation and is exact, true and correct; whereas writing contains tears, cracks and voids. In inscription there is a process of incitement, movement, removal of the basic categories, through which we deliver information: 'The problematic of the place - the third irreducible class - all these things "require" that we define the origin of the world as trace, that is, a receptacle. It is a matrix, womb, or receptacle that is never and nowhere offered up in the form of presence...'.[20] The terms 'receptacle', 'matrix', 'mother', 'nurse', cause us to think of a space that contains things. The vaginal absence space implies that the place is a feminine place. Khora is a place, a hole, a puncture, receptacle, womb. The womb has no quality of its own, it is empty, a missing presence, the 'différance', suspension, space; it accepts, but owns nothing.

The water in Hockney' paintings is a screen that represents the body that can not be achieved. The diver is not seen, and the splash emphasizes what Merleau-Ponty calls 'The scandal of depth', i.e., the capacity of depth to hide things from us, to swallow them up.[21] He claims that the picture is a flat thing, contriving to give us what we would see in the presence of things by offering sufficient diacritical signs, through height and width, of the missing dimension.[22] Depth is a third dimension derived from the other two. Things encroach upon one another because they are outside one another according Merleoq-Ponf. The proof of this is that one can see depth in a painting, which everyone agrees has none and which organizes into an illusion of an illusion.

The *Silueta Works* by Ana Mendieta (Fig. 4), and the *Portrait of the Gardener Vallier* by Paul Cézanne (Fig. 3), I want to argue, are another example of the suspension that exists between real and illusionary space. In the portrait by

Fig. 3: Paul Cézanne, *Portrait of Gardner Vallier,* 1906. Graphite and
watercolor on paper, 48x31.5, the Berggruer Collection, on loan to
the National Gallery, London.

Fig. 4:   Ana Mendieta, *Silueta Works in Iowa,* 1976-78, color photograph, 50.8x40.6, edition of 20. The Estate of Ana Mendieta and Galerie Lelong, New York.

Cézanne, the blank spaces of a white page are not filled but surrounded by colours that signify the white beard and clothes of the gardener Vallier, and that take on the function of giving shape and setting it off. Relating to the watercolors of the late years of Cézanne, Ponty notes, 'space radiates around planes that cannot be assigned any place at all'.[23] Mendieta's photographs function as documentation of her impressed body, testifying that 'Mendieta was there',[24] while also recording her total absence - they are but traces of traces, traces that evoke a strong sense of isolation, aloneness and loneliness.

The splash in Hockney's *A Bigger Splash* is the diver's trace; it functions like the white left by Cézanne is the gardener's body trace and Mendieta's photographs are the traces of her body. In all three works the issue of origins becomes one of how - if at all- they can be commemoratively recalled. If, according Derrida, 'Everything begins by referring back, that is to say, does not begin', everything is in effect a memory trace; but of what, asks Edward S. Casey, if not of a beginning then of an (absent) origin?[25] Everything begins by forgetting the origin: 'The beginning of Western thought' according Heidegger, 'is not the same as its origin. The beginning is, rather, the veil that conceals the

origin – indeed an unavoidable veil… The origin keeps itself concealed in the beginning'.[26]

The above discussed image of people in Hockney's work, from full presence till total disappearance, reminds us (as do the solitary figures in Cézanne's and Mendieta's works) Heidegger's notion of Presence that is not itself something in the present but rather 'the wholeness of life, achieved only in death, when we are no longer 'there'. [27] It is thus, in the words of Susan Best, 'not through our presence, but through our passing, that we are finally individuated and complete'.[28]

The art collectors and the diver, though not seen, are like the white stripe - the frame; they are present in another space, a third space, a twilight zone, a place in between; a space that is made possible by the lack of acceptance of binarity; a place where things are disconnected and are not self-evident.

Notes

1. Edelman 1984: 25-26 (quoted in Terence Riley1999:9).
2. Hockney returned to this theme in the eighties, but now to panoramic images of houses whose access is by narrow serpentine roads, based upon the drive from his house in Hollywood Hills to his studio in Santa Monica. In this article I refer to the earlier paintings only.
3. Hockney 1976:125.
4. Weber 1991: 167.
5. Goffman 1974:21-22.
6. Heinich 1993: 52-58.
7. *Ibid.*, p.54.
8. Kant 1951: 61-62.
9. Derrida 1987: 37-81.
10. Krauss 1985: 15-17.
11. Lefebvre 1991: 27-30.
12. Wright 1901: p.17 (quoted in Riley 1999:14).
13. Gordon 1953: 129.
14. Barry 1953: 270 (quoted in Riley 1999: 15).
15. Davies 1966: M.Davies "Fortress L.A", in: *The City Reader,* London and New York 1996 (1990): 159-160.
16. Hockney 1976: 124-125.
17. In opposition to the early works in which Hockney deals with frozen time; in later works he deals with painting landscapes on the road. The frozen splash can be related with Japanese prints from the 19th century, for example: *Beneath the Wave*

Off Kavagawa, by Hokusai, known also as *The Big Wave*, is a decorative print from the series of 36 views of Mount Fuji from the early 1830s.

18.   Vasseleu 1998: 3,8.
19.   Butler 1994: 152-154.
20.   Derrida 1981: 159-160.
21.   Sterckx 1999: 4.
22.   Merleau-Ponty 1993:121-149.
23.   *Ibid.*: 121.
24.   Best 1997: 92.
25.   Casey 1984: 607.
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Agency and Everyday Life in Alvin Coburn's Octopus.

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*T*his essay provides a reading of Alvin Langdon Coburn's famous photograph, *The Octopus* (Fig. 1).[1] The photograph shows a view of Madison Square from the observation deck of the Metropolitan Insurance Building, which was the tallest office tower in New York City in 1912. It is part of a series of photographs that were exhibited in 1913 at the Goupil Gallery in London, under the title "New York from its Pinnacles."[2] So far, *The Octopus* has been interpreted solely in terms of the influence of modern art on photography. It has been celebrated by curators and historians of photography, who propagated the notion of art photography, as the first photograph to have abstracted a city from above. Coburn joined the Photo-Secessionists movement in 1902. Their ideology cultivated the romantic cult of genius to justify photography as an artistic activity.[3] Postmodern critics have found the idea of art photography an easy target for attack by questioning the notion of authorship *per se*. Nonetheless, despite the valid misgivings postmodern theory has found in romantic and humanistic theories of the self, it has failed to provide an adequate theory of agency.[4]

I propose here an approach for understanding the way subjectivity is constructed in a dynamic social surrounding, in order to avoid the rigid dichotomy between the autonomous romantic self and the subject as a socially determined construct. The study of the Everyday and the reconsideration of the role space plays in intersubjective relations can help us. The term 'everyday life' conjures up the daily rhythm, which is especially characterized by repetition and habitual patterns of behavior. We search for the everyday in modern life under the surfaces of dramatic news stories, behind the spectacles of fashion and celebrities, and in uneventful incidents. It revolves around a paradox. On

Fig. 1:   Alvin Coburn, *The Octopus, 1912.*

the one hand, routine levels people; homogeneity creates social conformity and individuals slip into human anonymity. On the other hand, practices of ordinary pedestrians can be spontaneous, attesting to the differences between people and thereby emphasizing individualism.

Michel de Certeau's writings on the everyday bridge between the individual and the systems determining cultural practices, language and behavior. Unlike Michel Foucault's approach to space, which emphasizes organized repression and sites of power, de Certeau examines the minuscule and quotidian aspects that slip and evade the overriding systems of cultural production.[5] In these spaces, individuals seek alternative creative ways to resist the cultural, linguistic and political maneuvers intended to curtail and supervise them from above. Resistance does not imply an organized political movement, or an articulated counter culture. In the very character of everyday practices there is no overt confrontation because its performers possess no institutions and hold no power. This character of the everyday is explained by Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross:

> The everyday is situated somewhere in the rift opened up between
> the subjective, phenomenological, sensory apparatus of the

individual, and reified institutions. Its starting point is neither the intentional subject dear to humanistic thinking nor the determining paradigms that bracket lived experience. Institutions, codes, and paradigms are not abstract constructs confronting us in some official 'out there.' Nor do we come to institutions alone. We live in historically specific ways, and we live them...as collective subjects or as virtually collective subjects...Everyday life harbors the texture of social change.[6]

I want to argue that Coburn's abstraction of Madison Square is not simply an indication of his artistic sensibility. The position he assumed on the observation deck of the tallest tower in the city was only possible because of the modern urban transformation, between1890 and 1910, which was typified by the construction of many skyscrapers. Coburn's photograph is a reflection of a larger social practice that led New Yorkers to escape from the noise in the streets and take refuge in the highest apartments, restaurant-clubs, and roof gardens of the city. From the peaks of these buildings they were able to look down at the city, assuming a sense of empowerment and an illusion of individual control.[7]

I equate Coburn's elitist social attitude with his elevated position on the Metropolitan Tower. Looking at the city from a detached vantage point turned it into a landscape, giving the impression that it is already a representation of a view that has been removed from the daily practices of reality. This kind of aesthetic detachment was approved by the Photo-Secessionists movement. In their preference for depicting a pre-industrial world, most Photo-Secessionists disregarded the city and instead picked Arcadian themes, sojourns in the country and idyllic rustic family scenes. Only a minority of art photographers, which included Coburn and Alfred Stieglitz, chose the city as a subject. They enveloped it in picturesque effects of moods of light, which either erased the signs of labor and urban changes or romanticized them.[8] Worried by the growing popularity of small Kodak cameras, which democratized vision by providing a growing leisure industry with the ability to turn every holiday-maker into an amateur photographer, art photographers were led to further cultivate their cult of genius. They stressed the amount of thought and labor that went into the preparation of creating photographs and wrote about the process of manipulating the images during the printing process.[9] They asserted their creative power through a complex system of clubs, social gatherings, competitions, publications and galleries that were meant to legitimize their claims that photography was an art.

Fig. 2: *King's Dream of New York, 1911-1912.*

Their preoccupation with defining the self in romantic terms was no different from the way writers in art and cultural journals aimed to please their readers by providing personable and positive descriptions of the city. Just as reading these journals had been a sign of cultural and economic status, so too, did the proliferation of articles about the civic character of the city and especially the discourse on its rapid rise upward, signal a pride in a new American life style, which was both imitating European cultural centers and trying to define its own distinct way of life. The growing demand for these magazines was the result of new technological advancements in the printing process, enabling photographs and half-tone illustrations to be published on good quality paper. Once skyscrapers were not vilified as social nuisances and recognized as having an independent aesthetic value, they too were endowed with personable qualities. The skyscrapers became modern icons, testifying to the individual spirit of American capitalism. In 1912 Coburn's *Octopus* arrived at the tail end of a deluge of illustrations showing the city from above: city planners and
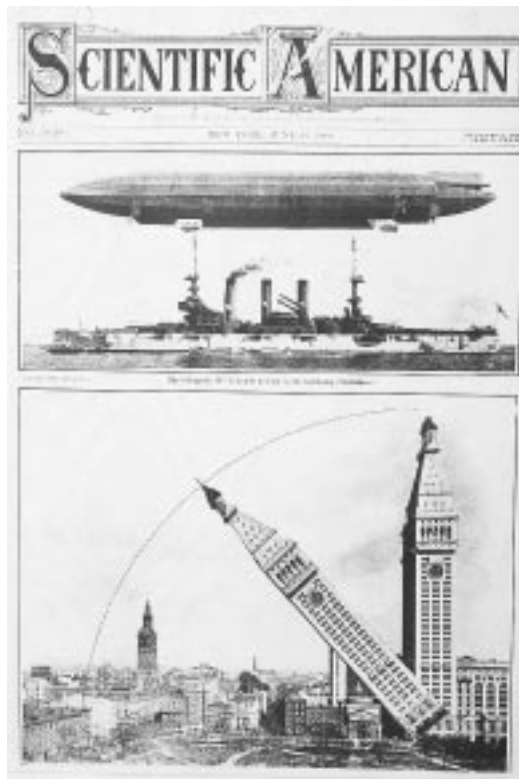
Fig. 3: *Toppling the Metropolitan Tower, 1909.*

artists imagined a futuristic city, like the illustration of *King's Dream of New York, 1911-1912*, featuring landing sites for dirigibles and gallery walkways connecting spaces in the upper echelons of the city (Fig. 2).[10] Numerous periodicals and local newspapers compared the vertical ascent of the city with the new inventions in aviation; the panorama of the city was described from the top of famous buildings. The inability of people to comprehend the heights of very tall buildings made it necessary for illustrators and writers to translate vertical distances into horizontal spatial terms. In one typical illustration, the length of the Metropolitan tower is illustrated by toppling it down and showing on what avenue and cross street its tip would fall (Fig. 3).[11]

Writers marveled at the repetitive sound of the word "up", heard on the lips of elevator operators, signaling the effortless climb to the top layers of the city.

Going up to the roofs was compared to leaving the city for the country. City roofs were utilized for sport facilities, children's playgrounds and private

Fig. 4 (left): *Alvin Coburn at the Grand Canyon, n.d.*
Fig. 5 (right): *A Dangerous Perch*, 1907.

gardens. Around 1893 roof gardens started to spring up on top of Broadway theaters.[12] People paid to promenade in the picturesque gardens and arcades on the roofs. The architects created the impression of an Arcadian setting by installing kiosks, arbors, pergolas, and ornate parapets with greenery that hid the view of the city below. Thus, people were either able to sit and look at the open sky and be oblivious of the city, or walk to the edge and look over the parapets like romantic travelers watching the sublime landscape from a mountain crag. Was there a difference between Coburn, whom we see photographing the Grand Canyon during an expedition, which inspired him to create the series of photographs of "The Pinnacles of New York" a year later, and the commercial camera operator who recorded the panoramic view of the city from the top of the Singer Tower during its construction? (Figs. 4, 5). [13] Coburn's desert landscapes and New York views only reinforce the binary terms that were used by writers to describe New York City as a desert of steel, its avenues as canyons and its skyscrapers as cliffs.

The sense of individual power and need to distinguish the Self from the crowds of the city is characterized by Coburn's description of looking at the

Fig. 6:   Otto H. Bacher, *View from a New York Mid-Air Club (The Arkwright), 1901.*

city from the observatory deck of the Singer Tower. Coburn writes in the catalogue of the exhibition: 'How romantic, how exhilarating it is in these altitudes, few of the denizens of the city realize; they crawl about in the abyss intent upon their own small concerns.' [14] Coburn's euphoria is evident. He distinguishes himself from the crowds going to work below, whom Maxim Gorky described as walking assertively, driven by forces of capitalism that enslaved them, while their faces revealed the sad self-conceit that made them feel like masters.[15] Coburn aligned his experience with that of the tourists. They had free time to wander with a Baedeker and check the sights of the city. Coburn's own sense of grandiosity, standing on the Singer Tower, while looking down, had its counterpart in the proliferation of illustrations showing the city from the vantage point of a powerful business class, who had the money to join social clubs and buy apartments later on, which provided both privacy and a spectacular view of the city. In *View from a New York Mid-Air Club (The Arkwright)*, for example, the feeling of empowerment that the businessman derives from eating a meal so far above the city is predicated on the strategic place that has been provided for him in front of the window. The correlation between the view and the placement settings on the table suggest that the customer can consume both the food and the city (Fig. 6).[16]

   The significance of looking down at the city was also not lost on Georgia O'Keeffe, one of the first artists to live on the top floor of a skyscraper. She

Fig. 7 (left): Brown Brothers, *Hoisting a Great Load of Steel 29 Storeys in the Air to the Top of Metropolitan Tower, n.d.*

Fig. 8 (above): Alvin Coburn, *The Octopus* (the small version), 1912.

claimed that every modern artist 'has to have a place where he can behold the city as a unit before his eyes.'[17] This desire for cohesion was echoed by many writers, who described the way New York City 'resolved itself' into a map from above. De Certeau, later on, contrasted the difference between the practice of the pedestrians and that of the observer who climbs up to the highest observatory deck of the Twin Towers, which at present are the tallest buildings in the world. According to de Certeau, the pedestrian has to 'remove himself from the obscure interlacing of everyday behavior and make himself a stranger to it,' to be able to see the city like a 'voyeur.'[18] Once the spectator is 'lifted from the city's grasp' he yearns to turn into a 'solar eye' that looks down 'like a god.' Such a position of mastery is merely wishful because it yields a fiction of knowledge that is related to the 'lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.'[19]

Coburn avoided looking across the observatory deck of the Metropolitan Tower at the city, because it would have yielded too much information. This is precisely what happened to the Brown Brother's photograph of Madison Square from the Metropolitan tower during its construction (Fig. 7).[20] Instead, Coburn's vertiginous effect, in the second version of *The Octopus*, paradoxically enhances the steep perspective while simultaneously canceling the impression of depth by using a telephoto lens to flatten the surface (Fig. 8). [21] The observer looking down from this height finds himself suddenly very aware that he is merely a speck in the optical field he is witnessing. He notices the disembodied eye, formed by the pattern in the square, which has turned the center circle into the

Fig. 9:   The Metropolitan Insurance Tower, n.d.

pupil of an eye. Not only does this early modernist urban photograph attest to the act of looking, it also erasures any sort of distance between the viewing position of the photographer on the tower and the square, thus creating a flat abstract ground that can be seen correctly from every angle.

The larger version of *The Octopus* illustrates both the act of seeing and the object of sight. It includes the shadow of the tower falling on the square, recalling the way New Yorkers complained about the lack of light in the city as a result of the construction of tall buildings. The ability this photograph has to show us both the view of a square and the point from where this view is seen, apparently impossible unless we use a mirror, recalls to mind the way Roland Barthes had described the special role that another famous tower plays in Paris: the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of modernity and progress, is the place from where everything in the city is seen and the place that is seen by everyone in Paris. It

Fig. 10: Joseph Pennell, *Elevated Road on the Bowery, 1909.*

achieves a 'sovereign circulation' between two functions that enable it to transgress the habitual separation between 'seeing' and 'being seen.' This sovereign position, which I contend that Coburn bestows upon the tallest tower in New York City, was also used as a popular technique of illustrating postcards of famous city landmarks. In one example, the Metropolitan tower, which is visible from the eye-level position of the pedestrian, is also surrounded by many views of the city (which the pedestrian could only see once he went up to the observatory deck) giving the impression that the tower has eyes (Fig. 9).[22]

Coburn was unaware that despite his aim to abstract the square—erasing public space to privatize vision and stake his claim for originality—the photograph actually represented the most popular ways by which pedestrians were able to view the city from above. The shadow of the Metropolitan tower

Fig. 11: Milton Bancroft and Roderic C. Penfield, *Fifth Avenue, as Seen from the Top of a Stage, 1901.*

represents all the observatory decks that provided the panoramic views all over the city. To make the viewer aware of the abstraction, Coburn gave the photograph a figurative title that matched the shape of the square from above. He was probably unaware of the significance that the word 'Octopus' held for New Yorkers. It served as an urban metaphor for the 'spindle-legged trestles' of the elevated train, which enabled passengers to see unexpected parts of their city from the height of the third and fourth stories of buildings (Fig. 10).[23] Moreover, H. G. Dwight describes the elevated railway as 'a kind of monstrous octopus, fastened upon the city and destroying wherever its tentacles reach?'[24] Coburn's view includes a double deck bus, traveling along Fifth Avenue. These buses were equated by one writer to 'roof gardens' on account of the leisurely time passengers spent on summer days watching the city unfold from their upper decks. This experience is conveyed in an illustration showing passengers traveling along on Fifth Avenue while the views they pass are represented on both sides (Fig. 11). [25]

Although Coburn stated his abstract artistic intentions by declaring that *The Octopus* is 'a composition in filling a rectangular space with curves and

masses, depending as it does more upon pattern than upon subject matter', nevertheless, the photograph maps out the most pertinent social and urban paradigm of the day.[26] The shadow of the Metropolitan tower represented the vertical ascent, making New York City known as a modern city. The skyscrapers represented the interests of corporate power. They clashed with the concerns of the Civic Beautiful Movement, whose demands for stricter building codes, wider pavements, and more greenery, represented the 'horizontal' interests of the pedestrians. The dichotomy between 'corporate verticality' and 'civic horizontality', represented in the photograph by the contrast between the shadow / tower and the square / land, is similar to the conflict between the way corporate systems determine human activities and the need people have to resist it by searching for individual activities to assert their spontaneous and leisurely civic activities.[27] This brings us back to the study of everyday life that I have suggested can mediate between the self and the system.

By searching for the insignificant details of everyday activities that slipped through the net of history—scraps of evidence, unpublished diaries, anonymous newspaper columns, illustrations and travel diaries—I was able to piece together fragments of subjective pedestrian practices that underwent frequent repetition in New York City. In our example, the practice of an art photographer was mirrored by a social phenomenon: people needed to define their individuality as a reaction to a period of social and urban turmoil, which threatened the most rudimentary notions of individualism and community relations. Pedestrians who went up to the roofs of the city sought the commanding views that turned the city into a picture precisely because the viewers were removed from the views. This was indeed the principle governing the artistic ideology of the Photo-Secessionists, who assumed the point of view of 'disinterested pleasure' that Kant designated as a precondition of the aesthetic attitude. By adopting this pictorial vision Coburn wanted to erase the utilitarian and urban significance of the square. Instead, however, the photograph has yielded us information attesting to the way social space participates in the construction of subjectivity and creativity.

Notes

1. *The Octopus* and many other photographs by Alvin Langdon Coburn are stored in the collection of the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York.
2. Five photographs of the city of New York were exhibited: *Trinity Church from Above, The Municipal Building, Woolworth Building, The Thousand Windows* and *The Octopus*. The photographs were published in a catalogue, see Coburn 1913: n.p.

3. For further reading on the Photo-Secession movement, see Keller 1984; Keller 1985.
4. For examples of critiques of authorship in photography, especially the role the museum plays in creating these canons and propagating photography as a privileged art, see Solomon-Godeau 1984; Solomon-Godeau 1991; Sekula 1975.
5. My understanding of Everyday life relies especially on these texts: De Certeau 1985; De Certeau 1989; Lefebvre 1989. On the comparison between Foucault and De Certeau, see Frow 1991.
6. Kaplan and Ross 1987: 3.
7. The topic of looking down at New York City was discussed in many articles, see Loti 1919; Mayo 1906.
8. On pictorial photography, see Hartmann 1978.
9. Coburn was among several pictorial photographers who contributed articles on art photography, see, for example, Coburn 1911; Coburn 1924; Coburn 1966.
10. *King's Dream of New York, 1908*; illustrated by Harry M. Petit, *The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York.*
11. *Toppling the Metropolitan Tower,* printed in *Scientific American* 100, no. 26, June 26, 1909, cover.
12. See Smith 1896; Johnson 1985.
13. *Alvin Langdon Coburn at the Grand Canyon,* International Museum of Photography at George eastman House; and *A Dangerous Perch* printed in Anderson 1907: 387.
14. Coburn 1913: n.p.
15. Gorky 1906: 178.
16. Illustrated by Otto H. Bacher in Moffett 1901: 642.
17. Quoted in Chave 1991: 98.
18. De Certeau 1988: 92.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Hoisting a Great Load of steel 29 Storeys in the Air to the Top of Metropolitan Tower,* by the Brown Brothers, illustrated in Keller 1984.
21. From the collection of the International Museum of Photography, at George Eastman House, Rochester.
22. *Metropolitan Insurance Building,* Museum of the City of New York.
23. *Elevated Road on the Bowery,* illustrated by Joseph in Van Dyke 1909, pl. 54.
24. Dwight 1905: 546.
25. *Fifth Avenue, as seen from the Top of a Stage,* illustrated by Milton Bancroft and Roderic C. Penfield, see Bancroft and Penfield 1901: 822-23.
26. Coburn 1978: 84.
27. I borrow the terms Civic Horizontality and Vertical Corporeality from an article about the significance of the square to the architectural history of New York City, see Bender and Taylor 1992. During this period many articles were written suggesting ways to improve the civic awareness of New York City, see for example, Caffin 1900; Flagg 1904.

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The Urge Toward the Sublime –
The Case of Itzhak Danziger

Arturo Schwarz
Milan

*I*believe that art, like poetry and love, is also an instrument of knowledge, as underscored by most esoteric systems, from alchemy to Tantrism to the Kabbalah and, in our century, by Surrealism. Duchamp reminded us that art should be put 'once again at the service of the mind'.[1] In a seminal text of the forties, Bernett Newman, who, according to Thomas B. Hess, was deeply affected by the Kabbalah, which played a central role in his life and art,[2] wrote that the new painter 'desires to transcend the plastic elements in art. … His imagination is therefore attempting to dig into metaphysical secrets. To that extent his art is concerned with the sublime. It is a religious art which through symbols will catch the basic truth of life which is its sense of tragedy'.[3] In a way Newman's remark echoes Freud's contention that creative artists are 'valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened up for science'.[4]

The demand that a work of art should not merely have an aesthetic quality but also an illuminating one is central not only to Kabbalistic literature but is as old as the first philosophical speculations on the role of art and has never ceased being a leitmotif of aesthetic theories. Plotinus believed that through art 'one could reach down to the principles constituting the source of nature'.[5] Hegel mentioned that 'art's vocation is to unveil the *truth*'.[6] Nelson Goodman, among others, has reiterated Newman's view that the artist should be put on the same plane as the scientist and the philosopher by holding that scientific analysis and artistic creation should be put on an equal footing[7].

Freud noted that 'Through the gap in the retina one could see deep into the unconscious'.[8] Accordingly, Rothko also held that, for the artist, 'The picture must be, as for anyone experiencing it later, a revelation, an unexpected and unprecedented resolution of an eternally familiar need'.[9] This aspiration dates back to the earliest aesthetic theories. Dionysius of Halicarnassus demanded that art should 'arouse ardour in the soul'. In our time, Koestler's requirement that art should have both a 'transcendental appeal and a cathartic effect',[10] encompasses the essence of both Abstract Expressionism and much of Israeli art.

Concerning art's 'cathartic effect', mentioned by Koestler, Freud had remarked that the aesthetic pleasure afforded us by a creative artist 'proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our mind',[11] and Marie Bonaparte, in turn, asserted that: 'Dreams and art fulfil an analogous function as regards the human psyche. Both, in fact, act as safety valves to humanity's overrepressed instincts'.[12]

The debt many an Israeli artist has to the Kabbalistic tradition is impressive: to realize its magnitude we only have to call to mind the main theoretical points that are common to the vast body of esoteric literature referred to as the Kabbalah and which, from the second half of the 12th century and up to this day, have been an essential part of Jewish mystical thinking. The artists I have in mind share with the Kabbalists their operative methodology based on an intuitive, direct and unmediated approach to the inner self. For the Kabbalists this meant going beyond rational thinking to discover the reflection of the divine in their being, while for these artists it is the ideal shortcut to bring to light their inner psychic model. In both cases, ecstatic meditation leads to the hidden self. Indeed, once sublimity is achieved, conventional logic gives way to what I would tern mystical ratiocination; i.e., to free associations (*kefitsah*, in the Kabbalist terminology) and to a dynamic rather than causal logic that obeys a 'leaps and bounds' (*dillug*) line. This psychic automatism permits, and not only in the Kabbalah as Di Nola pointed out: 'The involuntary emergence of unconscious images and brings to the fore the deeper dimension of the spirit, now free from the iron laws of knowledge'.[13] Indeed, Kabbalist beauty has a transcendental character and thus, in the Sephirotic system, the name of the central *Sephirah* is *Tiferet*, a term conveying the associated notions of Beauty, Knowledge and Truth, whose common denominator is Harmony. Beauty illuminates knowledge, which in turn reveals truth. This aspect of Beauty is underscored even in everyday language, where the Hebrew word *tov* designates both Beauty and Good. Good aspires to Beauty and vice versa.

Among the other spiritual points of contact between these artists and Kabbalistic thought I should mention another three at least: the importance

that inspiration has for both the mystical endeavour and the artistic creative process; the Kabbalist's concern for the substantiation of a messianic message, which for the artists means conveying their utopian vision; and the postulate of the interdependence of the macrocosm (the divine for the Kabbalist, nature for the secular creator) and the microcosm, which actually leads to the drive to discover the means to break one's solitude by finding channels of communication between one's self and the Other.

I do not think that the spiritual and transcendental character of Jewish culture needs further comment, other than to recall Cassirer's remark that 'it was Judaism that took the first decisive step from a *mythical* religion to an *ethical* religion'.[14] In turn, Einstein pointed out the features of the Jewish tradition that made him thank his stars for belonging to it: 'The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice and the desire for personal independence' adding that it was these very lofty ideals that were responsible for Jewish survival: 'History has given us a difficult row to hoe; but so long as we remain devoted servants of truth, justice, and liberty, we shall continue not merely to survive as the oldest of living peoples, but by creative work to bring forth fruits which contribute to the ennoblement of the human race'.[15]

Heraclitus reminds us that every human being harbours a spark of the divine and Kant's *Critique of Judgment* emphasizes that all artistic creations have their source in the primal urge of transcendence. In his discussion of Kant's conception of the Sublime, Paul Crowther rightly remarks that to enjoy an aesthetic empathy with the vision of the world embodied in an artwork, it is necessary that the viewer be personally involved and succeed in perceiving 'imaginatively or emotionally [its] overwhelming properties'.[16] In fact, 'to experience the sublime in these terms is to have a full and complete primordial experience of spatio-temporality',[17] since, in the last analysis, 'the sublime can lead to metaphysical and moral insights' and more 'aesthetic experience – and the sublime in particular – has the capacity to *humanize*'.[18]

* * *

As a teenager, in the mid-thirties, Danziger had the opportunity – while studying art at the Slade School in London (1934-37) – to visit, among others, the Anthropological Museum and the British Museum, where he was deeply impressed by the hieratic and uncanny aura of the art from Egypt, black Africa, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, India and Oceania. Later on, several artistic encounters were to play an important role in his spiritual growth: in the late forties, alternating between London and Paris, he worked for Ossip Zadkine, met

Constantin Brancusi, and became more closely acquainted with the aesthetics of Surrealism and its emphasis on the creative values of chance, the unconscious, the oneiric, and 'automatic' writing and drawing.

The esoterical dimension of Danziger's work reflects both an inborn temperament and the impetus of several biographical, cultural and visual events and it is evidenced in both his sculptures and his environmental works. For instance *Ritual* (1962), although supposed to represent an abandoned sheepfold, actually calls to mind a shattered jar and by its shape evoked the "Breaking of the Vessels" (*shvirat kellim*), which, in the earlier Kabbalistic literature, corresponded to the destruction of the first unsuccessful worlds. Danziger may, however, have shared the more positive view expressed in the Luranic Kabbalah, which explained that the broken vessels are not a mishap in the existence of the life-process of the Godhead, but rather a design to bring about a catharsis of the unsound elements of the unsuccessful worlds in the divine system.[19] Danziger's concern with the esoterical tradition also surfaces in his environmental works, such as his project for the Auschwitz memorial (1959) or the "Gate of Peace" (1968) on the Brotherhood Boulevard leading to the Olympic village in Mexico City.

Danziger's studies in garden landscaping at the London schools of the Architecture Association (1951-52) were doubtless prompted by the symbolic associations attached to the garden in Jewish biblical and esoterical literature. Let us recall, in the first place, that both talmudic and midrashic sources describe two Gardens of Eden: the terrestrial garden, a refuge of luxuriant vegetation and peace; and the celestial garden, abode of the righteous (*zaddikim*). The boundaries of the earthly Eden are even mentioned in the Torah (*Genesis* 2: 10-14), while its size is indicated in the Talmud as being one sixtieth of the celestial garden (*Ta'an:* 10a). Jung, among others, has familiarized us with the allegorical values of the garden, which he identified not only with fruitfulness and fertility, but also, because of its protective implications, with the mother archetype.[20] Thus, for Danziger, the garden also, and perhaps predominantly, represented the allegory of the shelter for the Jew sharing his own – temporarily diasporic – condition. Mordechai Omer has perceptively remarked that his garden imagery 'is a complex, a language, with a mystic significance in its structure and in everything that is part of it – animal, vegetable and mineral – and in their locations'.[21]

It is thus no wonder that many of the garden drawings executed during the ten years (1945-1955) Danziger spent in Europe abound with quotes from the *Song of Songs* relating to the garden. Especially indicative are the verses that convey the sense of shelter and happiness it bestows: 'A garden locked my

own, my bride… I have come to my garden, My own, my bride… Eaten my honey and honeycomb, Drunk my wine and my milk'.[22]

In the seventies, and until his untimely death in the summer of 1977, Danziger's preoccupation with man-made scenery was extended to natural landscapes and he embarked on a systematic study of Israeli sites, epitomized by the Hebrew word *makom* (place), the esoterical significance of which is evidenced by the semantic range of this term designating both earthly and heavenly loci. His research was thus aimed at finding and preserving sacred trees or hallowed sites and areas. From here it was but a short step to actually designing a *makom*, combing cultural and ecological elements into a single 'living system', thereby expanding the mythical view of a living Gea.

To Scharfstein, Danziger explained:

> Places were beginning to preoccupy me with their qualities, especially with the sacredness that could be attributed to them, or, better, felt in them. I began to notice the local shrines and the sacred trees, to feel the immanence of the holy in what is most ordinary and close to us. And then, having become sensitized to the particular aspects of the landscape, I became involved in planning and protecting it… The dignity of such places demands old, natural things. Heathen images, perhaps the heathen animal element, perhaps that barking, howling animal, the jackal. I came to use the jackal, as I had earlier used the sheep, to express my ideas and later to symbolize our destruction of animals and of wildlife generally.[23]

The drawing *Jackal Landscape* (1967) adds another dimension to Danziger's ecological concern: it was made at the end of the Six Day War and the choice of this wild animal to express the artist's feelings at the end of the war is eloquent - jackals were instrumental in the conflict and defeat of the Philistines (*Judges*, 15: 4-18). In Isaiah's prediction of the fall of another secular enemy they figure again: 'And Babylon, glory of kingdoms …Shall become like Sodom and Gomorrah… the houses be filled with owls… and jackals shall abide in its castles' (*Isaiah*, 13: 19-22). In this quick sketch the white space of the paper is ruled and ordered by a series of lines in black ink, broken in angles of varying degrees, which conjure up the essential outlines of three leaping jackals. Here Danziger seems to heed Majakovski's advice: 'Economy in art is the main and everlasting rule that governs the production of aesthetic values'.[24]

For Itzhak Danziger, drawings are of special importance because, in addition to being a spontaneous exposure of his psyche, they also constitute a major and autonomous expressive medium within his oeuvre. As was the case with Modigliani, most of Danziger's drawings are already fully accomplished works of art, which the addition of further details could in no way improve. Danziger's quick and nervous sketches are just as often preparatory studies for his sculptures as they are complementary and/or independent statements. In both instances they greatly contribute to a fuller comprehension of the constellation of conscious and unconscious motivations from which his works spring.

For Danziger, just as for Modigliani, drawing was a means to explore his inner self. However, unlike the Italian artist, whose point of departure was a *physical model*, the intimate identity of which he interpreted and transposed visually with exceeding sensitivity, Danziger started from an *inner image*: he did not materialize an *outer* model but rather recalled the impression it had made on him. He aspired to manifest reminiscences extending beyond personal events and furthermore, to materialize – borrowing the poetic formulation of the Talmud – 'dreams longer than the night'. In one word, Danziger is concerned with *yizkor*, i.e., memory, in all its esoterical and historical dimensions. Notwithstanding the different approach of the two artists, I believe that Danziger would have subscribed to Modigliani's view that 'Drawing is possessing, it is an act of awareness and of possession deeper and more concrete than coitus which only dream or death can give'.[25]

Mordechai Omer has noted that, whether figurative or abstract, sculptural or conceptual, Danziger's drawings were motivated by the urge to find a way, or rather, 'a method of thinking into which his life might be poured – a life troubled by continuous metaphoric transitions which rocked him restlessly from one situation to another'. Moreover, 'Danziger saw the artist as a shaman who creates a picture the purpose of which is to establish a way of life for society by making closer ties between the disappearing powers of the hidden world and the accumulating powers of the surface of the manifest world'.[26]

The other graphic works in this collection also illustrate Danziger's involvement with esoterical thought and encompass the two concepts of 'memorialization' and 'rehabilitation' with which, according to Omer,[27] he was mainly concerned in his later periods. *Landscape*, a pastel of the seventies, is a powerful image of the prolific aspect of the land. The creative aspect of Nature (Spinoza's *natura naturans)* finds expression in the metamorphic turmoil of the landscape from which seems to emerge the shape of a cow (*natura naturata*) – the archetypal nurturing animal.

In an earlier work, *Circumcised Man with Shofar* (1946), the title draws our attention to the fact that this personage has perfected himself: he has entered into the covenant (*brit milah*) and hence has been initiated into Judaism. Spinoza believed that this rite was so important that 'it alone would preserve the nation for ever'. Being circumcised, the man in the drawing is entitled to blow the shofar. He stands as a symbol of the triumph of culture over nature in the same way as Danziger's *Nimrod* (1939) – characteristically uncircumcised (*arel*) – represented for him the violence of the wild unleashed in the Europe of that period. Indeed *Nimrod* (the first man to make war on other peoples; *Genesis*, 10:8), was conceived on the eve of the Second World War. On the other hand, Danziger's shofar-blower evokes the visionary dream of salvation achieved with the end of exile and through the liberation of the land of Israel. In view of these associations it was natural for the shofar in this drawing to return five years later, in 1951, in his unrealized project for the entrance gate to Herzl's grave, which the instrument should have adorned. This musical instrument – one of the oldest known to mankind— was blown to herald the Jubilee Year when 'freedom throughout the land' would be proclaimed and everyone 'was to return to his holding and to his family' (*Leviticus*, 25: 10); it was also trumpeted in 'a clarion call to war' (*Judges,* 3: 27). Among the ten reasons for sounding the shofar, Saadiah Gaon mentions three that are of special relevance in this context: it is a reminder of the prophets, teachers of righteousness who raised their voices like the shofar to stir our conscience; it is to call Israel's scattered remnants to return to the Holy Land; and finally, it is sounded as a reminder of the Day of Resurrection, the return to life.

The elaboration of this drawing points to yet other ideas: a flowing and flexible line unites the player and the shofar into a single being. Danziger may have wished to graphically illustrate the concept of the Zohar, according to which an esoterical communion is established between the player and his instrument. We may perhaps also see in this drawing an allegorical self-portrait of the artist, recalling the archetypal significance of the primordial sound which, according to *Genesis* (1: 3-29), is endowed with creative powers.

This work also reflects Danziger's concern with the fate of his people. While in London, in February 1946, Danziger could not have missed the headline to a *Manchester Guardian* article on the condition of the Jews in Poland: 'Jews Still in Flight from Poland- Driven Abroad by Fear – Political Gangs Out to Terrorize Them – Campaign of Murder and Robbery'. That same month four Jews were murdered on a train from Lodz to Cracow, where they were to attend a Jewish communal convention. In April the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry

published its report recommending the admission of 100,000 refugees to Palestine (a UN trusteeship that would eventually lead to a binational state), and a revocation of the prohibition against the sale of land to Jews. But during the following months the British spared no effort to prevent the departure of immigrant ships to Israel, and in August they started imprisoning "illegal" Jewish immigrants in concentration camps in Cyprus, the ones in Palestine having been filled to the limit of their capacity. It was against this dramatic background that *Circumcised Man with Shofar* was conceived.

The absorbed expression of the *Meditating Shepherd* (1949) communicates Danziger's constant questioning of his own life choices, as well as his yearning for Jerusalem. An even more appropriate title for this drawing might have been *The Shepherd King Meditating*, since the artist so frequently identified the shepherd with David and the latter with Jerusalem.The fact that this sketch was made in the year following the foundation of the State of Israel points to still other associations. The shepherd king could well stand for the *Yishuv* at large, meditating on its future after the signing of the bilateral armistice with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria that terminated the military phase of the War of Independence. This identification is enforced by the fact that, just like David, who contrived to defeat all of Israel's external enemies – the Philistines, Moabites, Arameans and Ammonites – the small *Yishuv*, more than two thousand years later, prevailed against a hostile coalition of surrounding states.

The Zodiac Sign of Pisces (1948) testifies not merely to Danziger's interest in astrology, but also to the important place that calligraphy holds in his oeuvre. Although the Bible takes a disparaging view of astrology, the majority of the talmudic sages believed in the role played by the celestial bodies (*mazal*) in determining human affairs. In several places in the Talmud it is stated that every man has a *mazal,* which is his patron from conception to birth.[28] The Zohar also takes astrology for granted, stating explicitly: 'All the stars and planets in the firmament are appointed as overseers and officers in order to serve the world. There is not a single blade of grass in the entire world that is not controlled by a star or planet in the firmament'.[29] Among the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, Maimonides alone rejected astrology completely. It is therefore not surprising that Danziger steeped himself in this lore.

As for the prominence of calligraphy in Danziger's oeuvre, here again the sculptor is indebted to a long-standing Jewish tradition, evinced in Hebrew manuscripts, such as illuminated *ketubbot* and *haggadot*. In *The Zodiac Sign of Pisces* the letters take the form of fruits – ripening on the branches of a tree-like

structure that grows from the top of a six-story building – which spell the gracious message *bruchim habaim* (welcome to those arriving).

Notes

1. Duchamp1946.
2. Hess 1971: 57.
3. Newman 1943-45: 39,38.
4. Freud 1907: 8.
5. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 8, 1.
6. Hegel 1836-38: 55. Hegel's italics.
7. Goodman 1978: 133.
8. Freud 1930: 14.
9. Rothko 1947: 84.
10. Koestler 1964: 336.
11. Freud 1907: 153.
12. Bonaparte 1933: 821.
13. Di Nola 1984: 107.
14. Cassirer 1944: 244.
15. Bonaparte 1933: 185.
16. Crowther 1989: 168.
17. *Ibid.*: 171.
18. *Ibid.*: 174. Crowther's italics.
19. Scholem 1974: 138-140.
20. Jung 1954: 81.
21. Omer 1982: 86.
22. Song of Songs 4: 12, 5: 1.
23. Scharfstein 1982: n.p.
24. Majakovski 1927: 59.
25. Licini 1934: 91.
26. Omer 1981: 58.
27. Omer 1982: 86.
28. *Babylonian Talmud, Shabath,* 53b.
29. *Ibid.:* 2 171b.

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Majakovski 1927: V. Majakovski, *Come far versi*, Roma 1961, 59.

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On Text and Subtext in Arie Aroch's Series of the Late Sixties

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The idea of a people is linked in a very elementary way with its language. Mind you, a people is not a race! The belief that this was the only way to transcend all the racist impulses, the abominable sins, the indescribable black stigmas without ever losing sight of them for a second, made me decide in favor of art, an art that has led me to a concept of sculpture that originates in speech and in thought, that learns through speech to form concepts that can and will give form to emotion and to desire. If I do not weaken, if I strictly adhere to this course, then the images that embody the future will come to me, and the concepts will take shape.

Joseph Beuys[1]

> paintings
> and letters at the same time
> the handwriting
> as eloquent as the color
> still: both are silent
>
> a human effort
> timid and strong
> to tell what cannot be said
> it is too confidential

Willem Sandberg[2]

*T*owards the late sixties, Arie Aroch worked on a number of series of paintings that had major formal motifs in common: signs taken from the graphic forms of digits, especially of the numbers 2 and 8. The *Boat* series, which included works on canvas and on paper, and was executed in various techniques – at times in mixed media such as oil paints, oil pastels, India ink, pencil and graphite – was based on the number 8 (Figs. 1, 2). This series concluded with the

publication of a serigraph issued on 2 June 1970 (Fig. 3), printed at Itsche Mambouche's print workshop at Ein Hod, in an edition of eighty.[3] In addition, Aroch made eight more Artist's Proofs, using only the plate bearing the drawing that appears on the print, onto which, instead of printing the remaining color plates, he pasted silver leaves, depicting oars, on either side of the boat (Fig. 4).

In those years Aroch worked on an additional series of paintings that centered around *Exercise in the Line of 8* (Fig. 5). According to the artist's own testimony, both the *Boat* and the *Exercise in the Line of 8* series were influenced by the distinctive treatment of the figure 8 in a book of instruction for painters written by Christian Ludolph Reinhold in 1784 (Fig. 6). "For the basic form in "Line 8" I am indebted to the teacher and painter Christian Ludolph Reinhold, who in his book from 1784 teaches that 'with the aid of the line of 8 one can perform various pleasant exercises"'.[4] It is interesting to note that in the same interview Aroch credits Reinhold's book with an influence on a third series of his works from the same period, the late sixties – the *Ornament and Profile* series (Fig. 8), which also engendered a print in 1970, this time a lithograph published in edition of 80 in Paris, titled *Intersecting Profiles* (Fig. 9).

* * *

In this essay I will concern myself not with the visual principles of these series, but with the line of text that Arie Aroch chose to add to the prints of the *Boat* series. Beneath the image of the boat, Aroch added a hand-written inscription in Yiddish: '*Ich oif a shiffale du oif a ladke'* ['I on a little ship and you on a little boat'] (Fig. 10). The first critical references to this line of text appeared after the print was shown at an exhibition at the Dvora Schocken Gallery in Tel Aviv, in early 1972. Although Aroch himself had been quoted in 1972 as saying unequivocally that 'the boat reminded me of the *folk song* [my emphasis, M.O.], because a friend of mine who is no longer alive used to sing it',[5] the assumption that the line came from a "children's song" became current after the following claim appeared in an article in *Davar* on 4 February 1972: 'The boat takes us back to a Yiddish children's song which is written in pencil inside the painting – through a concrete form to a distanced form and through that back to a childhood experience, the circle closes'.[6] Among the most recent writers to have erred about the source of the song is Gideon Ofrat, who repeats the claim that the line is from 'a Jewish children's song'.[7] A more interesting reference to this line, although one that does not identify its source, was made by Sarit Shapira, who remarked that 'a text in the Yiddish language inscribed underneath the image of the boat symbolized the image and the space of the work as exiles whose language is not anchored in any cultural territory whatsoever'.[8]

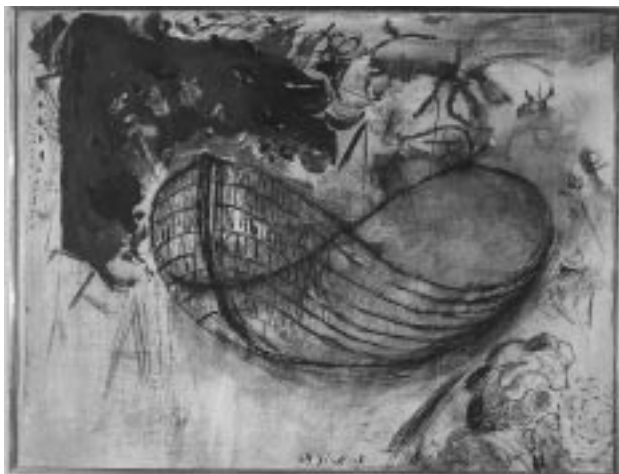It is not easy to arrive at the true source of the quoted line, but from the

Fig. 1: Arie Aroch, *Boat*, 1968, oil on canvas, 55.5x65.5, Collection of Aroch Family, Tel Aviv.

Fig. 2: Arie Aroch, *Boat*, 1968, pastel on paper, Collection of Dani Karavan, Tel Aviv.

Fig. 3: Arie Aroch, *Boat*, 1970, silkscreen, edition of 80, 49.7x58.6, Private Collection, Tel Aviv.

143

Fig. 4: Arie Aroch, *Boat*, 1970, silkscreen and silver lief, 49.7x58.6, Collection of Aroch Family, Tel Aviv.

Fig. 5: Arie Aroch, *Exercise in Line 8*, 1969, Oil and pencil on pand, Collection of Aroch Family, Tel Aviv.
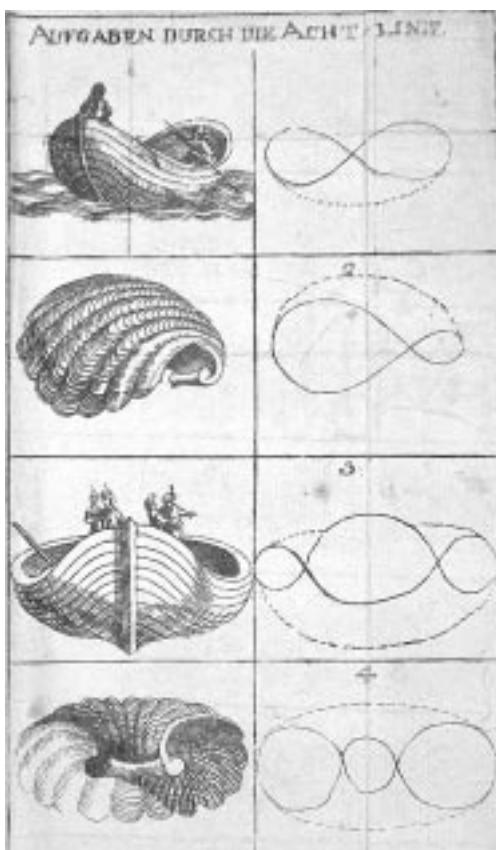

Fig. 6: Christian Ludolph Reinhold, *System der Zeichnenden Künste*, Germany, 1784, Pl. VI, Collection of Aroch Family, Tel Aviv.

Fig. 7: Arie Aroch, *Ornament and Profiles,* 1969, Watercolor and pencil on paper, 50.5x39, Collection of Benni Perleman.

Fig. 8: Christian Ludolph Reinhold.

Fig. 9: Arie Aroch, *Profiles (Intersecting Heads),* 1970, Litograph, Edition of 80, 66.5x50, Private collection, Tel Aviv.

Fig. 10: Arie Aroch, *Ich oif a shiffale du oif Ladke*, detail of fig. 3.

moment of its discovery it is no longer possible to see the picture otherwise than in the context of the totality of meanings with which Aroch wished to connect. The line, which Aroch had made an integral part of the picture's message, is taken from a Jewish folk song that deals with reconciliation between lovers. The song generally begins with the words '*Lomir zich iberbeten'* ['Let us be reconciled'], and appears in many variations. I have found Aroch's quotation in the anthology *Yiddishe Folkslieder* ["Yiddish Folk Songs"], edited by S. Bastamsky and published in Vilna in 1923. Bastamsky catalogues the song in the group of "Love Songs" ("*Liebe-lieder*"). The songs in the anthology were collected over a period of ten years 'as sung by the people' in Vilna and in the Jewish towns in its vicinity. The particular song from which Aroch quoted was brought to Bastamsky's knowledge by the S. Ansky Jewish Anthropological Historical Society in Vilna, or, more precisely, by the Society's secretary, Heikel Lunsky. Thus, thanks to Lunsky and Bastamsky from Vilna, we can finally read the song in its entirety,[9] and attempt to interpret Aroch's intention:

> *In garten vakst a mer,*
> *oifn mer a tzatzke.*
> *Kum aher, mein lieber freind,*
> *shpul mir a kazatzke.*

Ich hob dir gerufen,
du binst nit gegangen.
Ich hob an andern,
du ver oifgehangen.

Ich oif a shiff,
du oif a ladke,
mir di gust
dir (vor tzum strashez) di tchechatke)

And in English translation:

In the garden grows a carrot
and on the carrot a trinket
Come here, my dear friend,
Caper me a Cossack dance.

I called you,
you didn't come.
I have another,
you have hanged yourself

I on a ship,
you on a boat
I get the best,
You (to scare you) get a malignant disease.[10]

As I have mentioned, the song appears in several variations in the various Jewish dispersions in Eastern Europe. For example – a version from Galicia:

Lomir zich bobeten,
in freid, un in naches,
lomir zich bobeten
do sonim zu lehachis.

Nem dir nor sa'tichele,
gib dir nor avish,
gib aher sa'piskele
wel ich dir geben a kish…[11]

In English translation:

Let us be reconciled,
in joy and delight.

Let us be reconciled
& make our enemies mad.

Just take your handkerchief,
give yourself just a wipe,
give here your mouth
I want to give you a kiss…

In a version from Rumania, the song contains eight stanzas that convey a dialogue between the two lovers:

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
shtel dem samovar!
Lomir zich iberbeten,
zey zshe nit kein nar!

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
koif a par marantzen!
Lomir zich iberbeten,
veln mir geyn tanzen!

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
koif a funt pistashkes!
Lomir zich iberbeten,
shenk mir deine laskes!

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
in hartzen brent a feier —
Lomir zich iberbeten,
liebe iz doch teier.

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
genug vi bei di goyim!
Lomir zich iberbeten,
lomir shreiben tnoyim!

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
hob oif mir rachmones!
Lomir zich iberbeten,
k'hob dich lieb sakones!

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
k'bet dich zei mir moichel!

Lomir zich iberbeten,
gib zu mir a shmeichel!

Lomir zich iberbeten, iberbeten,
lomir beide lachen!
Lomir zich iberbeten,
lomir shoilem machen![12]

In the following English translation, which also follows a Hebrew translation (by Natan Mark) of this version of the song, we can clearly discern what each of the lovers says:

He: Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
Set up the samovar!
Let us be reconciled,
Don't be a boor!

She: Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
Buy a few oranges!
Let us be reconciled,
Let's go dancing!

Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
Buy a pound of pistachios!
Let us be reconciled,
Send me your favors!

:   Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
In the heart there burns a fire!
Let us be reconciled,
For love is so precious.

He: Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
Enough of being like the gentiles!
Let us be reconciled,
Let us write conditions!

She: Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
have mercy on me!
Let us be reconciled,
I love you perilously!

> Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
> I beg you please forgive me!
> Let us be reconciled,
> Give me a smile!
>
> He: Let us be reconciled, be reconciled,
>   Let us laugh together!
>   Let us be reconciled,
>   Let us make peace!

Emile Skolf, in his endeavor to explain the phenomenon of the various versions of the song, claims:

> The extensive diffusion of the Jewish folk song across the entire globe, as well as the various influences of the folklore of the peoples among whom the Jews lived, brought about a large number of variants of many of these songs. When we study the collections of Jewish folk songs that have been printed in many countries in recent years, and the oral material as well, we are able to create a picture of the wealth of variants of our song. In such an immense wealth of variants that resemble one another, or that only share some aspects in common, it is often very difficult and even impossible to determine which is the original type and which the variant.[13]

In the devoted work of documenting the treasures of Jewish folklore, the researchers have collected not only the texts of these songs, but their melodies as well. Thus, in the volume edited by Emile Skolf we can also find the melody that Arie Aroch remembered as part of his childhood experience (Fig. 11).

Thus we see that "*Lomir zich iberbeten*" is of course not **a children's song!** It is a love song suffused with passions, dealing with acceptance of one another by lovers who are tossed among the waves of the sea of life for better and for worse.

Since Aroch was very personal, and generally directed his dedications and textual references to specific people and to concrete events, it would appear that his need to add this text to the print of *The Boat* stemmed from a personal crisis between the artist and his wife, the difficulties of which were casting a shadow on the couple's life during those years. It is interesting to note that in the print titled *Intersecting Profiles* Aroch also added a text, a shorter one, which like the previous one is also inscribed among the lines, and scribbled on the

Fig. 11: Musical notes for *Lomir Zikh Iberbetn (Lets Pardon One Another)*, quoted in Skolf, 1970:55.

print: '*Dedicated to Dorale*'. It would appear that the inscription in the print titled *Boat* is addressed to the same person – to Dvora, the artist's wife, and stemmed from the artist's wish to narrow the gaps, come closer and achieve a reconciliation.

In an attempt to clarify the importance of the "story" and the status of the written characters (letters) in his means of expression, Arie Aroch noted:

> I too am not interested in the sentence, only in the letters. Both Chagall and Picasso did this as well, and it is discernible in Klee's work more than in that of any other painter. I flee from the story. However, those who claim that what is important is not the story but the writing of the letter are only hinting at a lie. The story is very important to them, to authors as to painters. Between the love and the writing the letter, between the painting of the letter and the story itself, is found all the good and the beautiful that exist in the world.[14]

Notes

1. From Joseph Beuys, "Talks on My Own Country", delivered at the Munich Kammerspiele, 1985, quoted in Stachelans 1991: 66.

2. Sandberg 1968: 11.
3. Arie Aroch came to Itsche Mambouche's print studio on the recommendation of his friend, the artist Bezalel Schatz, a resident of Ein Hod. The printer was Yehuda Peled.
4. From talks the artist held with Yona Fischer, quoted in Fischer 1976: 8.
5. Engel 1972.
6. Breitberg 1972.
7. Ofrat 1999: 90. Ofrat not only errs in his assumption that the song is a children's song, but also misleads the reader with a footnote reference that has no basis. The testimony that Ofrat speaks about is not by Naomi Mantzur but by Rachel Engel (see n. 5 above).
8. Shapira 1991: 147; English: 197.
9. Bastamsky 1923: 48.
10. The English translations were done especially for this essay, from the original Yiddish, by Richard Flantz, the translator of the essay. I am also indebted to my friend Rafael Blumenfeld, for translating the song into Hebrew and for kindly helping me find my way among these Yiddish folk songs.
11. Noi 2: 323.
12. Skolf 1970: 55-56.
13. *Ibid.*: 26.
14. Omer *et al.* 1966: 4.

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Motorics on the Threshold of the Abyss

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> At a second sight and after a while [the paintings] ... might be perceived as "naked" and lacking countenance. [1]

> ...in a way they are becoming my mirror. [2]

*I*n 1964 Moshe Kupferman presented his work in an exhibition entitled "Tazpit", a Hebrew word for observation. Kupferman's paintings displace the act of observing – which has the tone of a scientific operation – from a way of viewing the physical and transcribing it into the two dimensional, to a way in which the observed, the image, departs from the conventions of describing nature in paintings. This estrangement from the normative grasp of nature was considered by some of the "Tazpit" artists to lead inevitably to the immanent. The "Tazpit" exhibition was held a year after Kupferman's work had been shown in a group display of "Ofakim Hadashim" ("New Horizons"). In a certain sense, these two names exemplify the gap between two different ways of representing, two ways of transforming an object into the two-dimensional. The exhibitions consisted of a range of artists with different epistemological leanings. The artists could be divided into those who undertook the task of transforming nature, and those who subscribed to the point of view that the pictorial sign does not have to be united with its "natural" object in order to become art-in-fact.[3] In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, which might be considered as a manifesto, the "Tazpit" group established its antagonism to an earlier concept of representation by writing: 'These artists oppose any "Plastic-Expression" based upon "External Impression."' The move towards eliminating the external should not be seen as paving the way to the

Fig. 1: *Untitled*, Oil on Canvas, 1963 (after *Tazpit 1964*)

literalism of the object in itself. Rather, it advanced further along the path laid by the "Ofakim Hadashim" exhibition, in establishing the importance of inward vision. 'We exhibit here an art whose main meaning is not that of an "External Description" of substances and figures, but an emotional being felt and created in each artist's soul before being expressed figuratively.'[4] The artists' motivation, then, is to express the unrepresentable, seeing delimited internal space as opposed to palpable external space. The ideology promulgated by the "Ofakim Hadashim" and "Tazpit" groups indicates a similarly driven motivating impulse to produce art. This impulse marks a way to coordinate the world, understood as both the local physical surroundings, and the mental environment.

In 1964, Kupferman was at an early stage of his career. In the "Tazpit" display he exhibited a painting modeled on stains of colors that speaks of and expresses the lack of desire to determine between the motivation to map external space, and the motivation to emphasize artistic practice in itself as a kind of subversive act, an act that tries to free itself from subordination to the external object (Fig. 1). The different stains produce a topography that distinguishes between different areas of the plane: those in which the color is thickly laid on the canvas, thereby saturating it, and areas in which the color on the plane is a "remnant" of the act that placed it there, while at the same time camouflaging the presence

of the act on the canvas. Some of the stains are made by large brush strokes, and come together in a kind of deformed figure. On the right hand side of the painting the brush strokes are vertically laid down one next to the other, with the canvas breathing between them. They do not converge in a coherent and continuous line, and certainly not in any observable geometrical form. Rather, they appear on the canvas in a way that echoes impressionist brush strokes, thus offering a parody of the systematical and of the need for a hierarchically organized coherent pattern that converges into a unified and distinctive image. The brush strokes can also be discerned in some of the large stains; they emerge in different tones along and across the surface, dripping and erased. Due to these strokes, the surface is not perceived as a constructed image, one that typifies the pictorial practice of revealing a distinct image, that in turn makes the pattern concrete, but rather as a receptor of the act of painting itself.

The claim to be able to formulate the artist's soul or the external impression into a visual pattern marks the more important division between those who claim the ability to see the (fictitious) depth beneath the horizontal material surface from above, and those who acknowledge the surface as an impenetrable screen. The main difference is between the "verticals", who claim the power to dive into the depth of (illusionist/inner) space, and the "horizontals", who see dissemination as a central metaphor and practice, and who refuse to unite the multiplicity of images around a hegemonic vertical. Already at this early stage of his career, Kupferman can be seen to be taking a stand against the vertical. He is withdrawing from the scopic regime, to borrow Martin Jay's expression, according to which the eye is understood as the source of the image, as imprinting the object onto its field of vision; from this point of view, the eye is the necessary condition for nature's visibility.

Those of Kupferman's early drawings that portray the referent as a fading memory pose the question as to whether the image is an actual consequence of the mediation of the landscape, or whether we should discuss the works as a kind of mechanism that abandons the immediate affinity to the referent one is searching for. The quest for the external appears to have accompanied Kupferman's work throughout his career, though less in the works themselves than in the critics' insistence on identifying the visible fragments as connected to objects in the world.

In Kupferman's first main solo exhibition, one can already see the critics' need to detect autobiographical elements in the work, and to extricate his refined images from the abstract forms. Kupferman's early formal vocabulary consists of a combination of strokes as poignant assertions of color, and a refinement of

Fig. 2: *Frame and outside it*, Oil on Canvas, 1969 (after Fisher 1969: Fig. 35)

the image into a stroke, attempting to subvert our immediate tendency to find the point at which the stain becomes a form. In *Untitled* (Fig. 1), a characteristic composition of the period, the stroke hurled onto the canvas looks like a sudden cessation of the hand's movement; it does not produce a topography that frames its appearance as a static image. The rectangular image that emerges in the lower part of the composition gives the impression of another figure, continuously changing, because, immediately after it comes into being, another stroke appears; this stroke subverts the figure's formal exclusiveness as a distinct form, and blurs its relation to a geometrical world one, that can only be idealistic. In many of the works one can recognize open images, as identified by an ambivalent interaction between the image and the ground, and the frequent use of purple-gray with blue and green tones. The space is perceived as an active mass while some of its components are momentarily frozen. The works are also characterized by the vagueness that gives them life. This uncertainty results from the difficulty in defining the works as distinct forms operating in a restricted or coherent zone, and is also a consequence of choosing impure colors.

In Kupferman's early oil works the affinity between the color stains produces a sense of conflict. The collection of different stains looks like a collision of

diverse tones, and the large movements reveal the automatic, repetitive and compulsive nature of the stroke – or the motorization of the gesture. The conflict between the colors leads to the annihilation of the concept of color as a pure notion; there are no color passages in which the lower layer indicates an observable different time and zone. The action performed on the canvas thus appears to eliminate an earlier phase. Because the first layers of color to be placed on the canvas subsequently merge into one another, our perception of them as distinct from each other is fictitious, and so they function as a kind of simulacrum that should be confronted.

Any attempt to uncover the paintings' organizing principle is inevitably disappointed whenever one tries to expose the intricate weaving of the whole. These works give rise to the question: is self-organization possible? Perhaps it is possible to suggest binary concepts (center and margins, colorful and monochromatic, line and stain) to reach an organizing principle, a generalization that will enable the reading of the whole system as a continuum. However, any attempt to closely follow the course of the painting's coming into being, or to read the final text(ure), results in the renewed discovery that any suggested rule is transposed by another element which exists simultaneously to it, and subverts that which precedes and follows it. Adherence to any initial random starting point leads to the conclusion that whenever an alleged self/inner-organization appears, an external action emerges and affects the inner processes. Therefore, a discussion of non-conditioned organization beyond the mutual influence of the internal and the external, is irrelevant. The attempt to map an internal essence proves futile, as any image that is constituted in the scheme before us is also a function of external forces. If we try to formulate the external influence as one half of a dialectic pair, a pair that centers the entire system as a meta-principle, it will always be brought to a standstill by new principles. The final scheme is a parodic outcome of the desire not to determine a final state.

Basing the general layout of any painting on one module inevitably fails. Paradoxically, Kupferman himself talked of his paintings in terms of dialectics: 'I cover and remove, mix and negate, erase everything and start over with the mixture. The mistakes and failures, the erasing and negating, are all part of the building process.'[5] The different pairs under discussion – stain and line, color and structure, center and margins, internal and external, convergence and dispersion, as well as further divisions between the spectator and the beheld, and the epistemological and sensuous recognition versus the visibility of both the object and subject – all serve as different foci in space, and make the existence

of the work as a discursive object possible.

The critical discourse surrounding Kupferman's work is motivated mainly by the metaphysics of presence. One half of the equation is the painting, and the other is Kupferman himself. In this discourse, any formal characterization of the work is identified with a certain characteristic or event taken directly from Kupferman's personality. It has been said that the works confirm Kupferman's control over his own life; observing his work simultaneously reveals the process of its coming into being, as well as the artist's personality. The final moment is that of self-awareness; the abstract forms assert the Sisyphean process of self-renewal. According to another source, the abstract forms express the romantic. The same source concludes that the gaps between the image and its creator are closing, as the painting becomes a copy of consciousness.[6]

The question remains as to why the critics needed to immediately identify Kupferman's soul, life story and conscience with the pictorial gesture. One possible reason is the all-conclusive definition they attach to the way that Kupferman paints. His works have been discussed in three main contexts: the first stresses the layering of color in different depths and transparencies; the second reduces the pictorial whole to a limited number of shapes and elements; and the third emphasizes the importance of the pictorial gesture in the painting: the sketch becomes the main element, it is deciphered as the artist's "hand writing", and this hand determines the constitution of the shape. Kupferman's works were placed in three categories favored by the critical milieu: the lyrical abstract, the minimalist abstract and the expressionist abstract.

Kupferman seldom provided interpretations to his work. The few interviews given by the painter leave the impression that his statements merely add a verbal facade to the visual configuration. Kupferman notes:

> While working, all that exists is the process - action and reaction, action and reaction … not action and thought and reaction! This cannot be. The thought process is on, but I do not have to be aware of it while working. The hand holding the brush is moved by everything - not a decision one way or another, but everything … my painting is movement and line, movement and line. The use of the expression, "automatic painting", in regard to my painting, is founded: I stand in front of the canvas and act, the hand moves.[7]

To this process he added the enigmatic and much quoted sentence:

the existence of any additional work is justified by the fact that another step has been taken. The possibilities: "x" movements and another one; "x" components and another one; "x" situations and another one. The curiosity to see the picture in its future condition must overcome the tendency to preserve what has already been accomplished and found creditable.[8]

Kupferman's words, combined with what happens on his canvases, celebrate the entrance of a "new" stylistic category into the artistic discourse – action painting. Kupferman was considered to be the successor of De Kooning and Eve Kline;[9] the canvas or paper were conceived as the field upon which colorful transactions took place.[10] 'Kupferman', claimed the daily newspaper *Al Hamishmar*, 'is one of the last Mohicans of "Action Painting", the 1950's American abstract movement. Kupferman is the "stormy" sketcher and least modest of them all.'[11] The canvas or paper became the grounds for a struggle.[12]

The act of painting became an event, and the canvas became an arena in which the 'creator' encounters the material and becomes a mystical channel enabling the image to slip out of his consciousness, as a result of the clash between the two material entities. There is no primal knowledge in this process; the image is a result of 'the adventure of creativity.'[13] The gesture is an act of revelation, and the plain bears testimony to it. Under the influence of the theoretical discourse of American action painting, local critics saw the manual gesture as an act of admiration. This "self-centered" discourse is well summed-up in Harold Rosenberg's classic writings.

> A Painting that is an act is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting itself is a "Moment" in the adulterated mixture of his life - whether "moment" means the actual minutes taken up with spotting the canvas or the entire duration of a lucid drama conducted in sign language. The act-painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. [...] Action Painting has to do with self-creation or self-definition or self-transcendence.[14]

'Kupferman', wrote one critic, 'is the essence of Modernism'[15], and indeed he was connected with a certain reading of Modernism that stood for the essential purification of the medium and expressed the autonomy of aesthetics. The sketches exhibited in the Mabbat Gallery (1971) were described as follows:
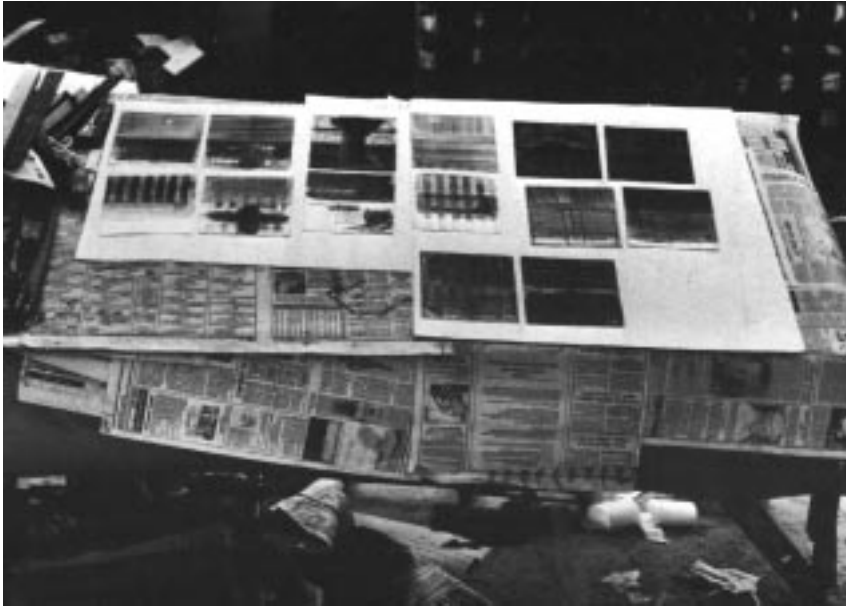
Fig. 3: Meidad Socholovsky, *Kupferman's Atelier*, 1989 (After Pleynet 1989, 18)

'Here too, the principle of painting for painting's sake holds...'[16] These early paintings were conceived of as presenting varied colors, with brush strokes creating the layering effect. These paintings demonstrate the 'expressive autonomy of the painted forms.' In this way, every figure becomes 'pure pictorial reason'.[17] This is a direct continuation of the notion of self-presence. 'He holds to that most Romantic of modernist beliefs: that art should pursue the self. And in that pursuit, he has endeavored to close the interval between imagination and image, not merely to translate mind into picture, but to picture mind. His Art stands as a fundamental affirmation of being.'[18]

In 1988, Meidad Socholovsky photographed a fascinating portrait of Moshe Kupferman's work (Fig. 3). Next to several tools, blunt objects and knives, newspapers cover the horizontal surface of a table. Most of the surface is covered by two sheets of rough paper, different in size, which have been sketched on in several places, thus presenting a small exhibition of the way in which the works are perceived by their maker, as slices of reality. The table seems to slant slightly, in a state of indecision between the horizontal dimension that we can identify with the material practice itself and the vertical orientation aiming upwards to the theoretical. The works contain both of the constant conflicts that characterize their maker; they represent horizontal and vertical features. The image and

the gaze flow between the axes of the different coordinates. The image is not complete, the pattern is not framed in a clear, obvious way, the image does not float above the background, a winding line appears randomly, and the image's contour curves before it meets the next coordinate. In his essay "The Jesuve", Bataille distinguishes between two images representing different types of movement. Plants grow upwards, while animals roam horizontally on the ground: 'Man appears in this brutal system as an animal exceptionally animated by the erection movement that project plants in a vertical direction.'[19]

The image in Kupferman's works hangs between those two movements: he is patently committed to the horizontal, with the slanting serving to remind us of the vertical. The motorics that bring about the images in his work mean that they are never complete; yet they arrive at a state of visibility, which is an inevitable and unwanted outcome of the practice that made them. The practice constantly mutilates the homogeneity, visibility and finality of the image: the emergent image which might hint at vertically is a random factor, meaning that this patterned image, as constituted through practice, or as formed by gestures, is a pseudo-module. Kupferman's horizontal leaning table, together with the mutilation inherent in his practice, reveal the notion of horizontality and signify the attempt to distance himself from the residues of the paradigm of verticality.

Walter Benjamin wrote one of the major texts on the differences between the horizontal and vertical in a short essay entitled, "Painting and the Graphic Arts." The graphic arts, he claims, are not ordinary paintings; they are very different from paintings as their meaning is manifested in a horizontal manner, and not a vertical one: 'There are two sections through the substance of the world; the longitudinal section of painting and the cross-section of certain pieces of graphic art.'[20] Benjamin differentiates between the vertical representational position, the one that contains objects, and the horizontal position reminiscent of reading, and as such is affiliated to signs. Disregarding the issue of the validity of this distinction, the basic intuition clarifies the differentiation between the two modes of production.[21] Another distinction Benjamin notes is between two types of signs. One appears in the discussion on the various meanings that the line has in a given realm. The graphic line is dependent on the background; it is inseparable from it. The line defines the background, but cannot exist without it. The background has a constitutive function, without which the line would merge into the mass. On the absolute level, the same mark is a manifestation of 'the mythological essence of the sign', appearing, says Benjamin, in a "mysterious" moment. The sign is of spatial relevance, and as
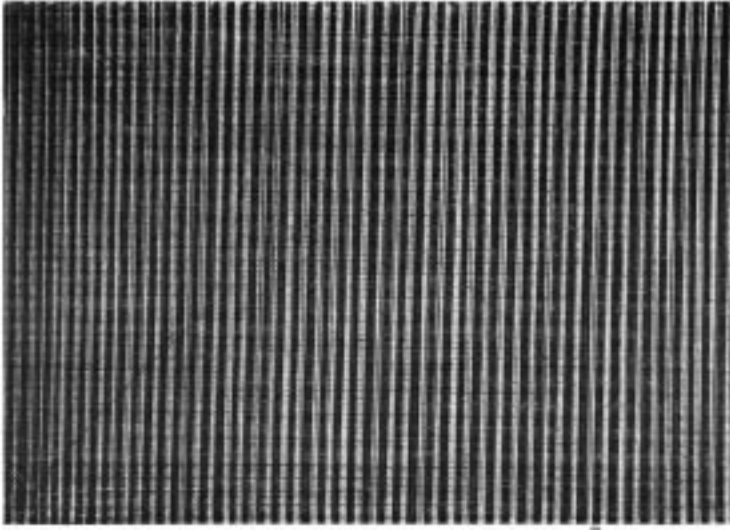
Fig. 4: *Drawing*, Pencil on Paper, 1977 (After Barron and Tuchman 1978: Fig. 21)

such it refers to a specific object: the person. Benjamin calls the "mark" – the second type of sign – temporal, and tends to omit the reference to the person. While the sign is embedded in the ground, the mark rises up from it.[22] Kupferman's signs emerge from the process, they do not take part in the constitutive mythical moment of presence, but remain in movement and are suspended in an indecisive situation. Verticality relates to the transcendental world, and as such it is allied to concepts such as representation and theory. Horizontality represents immanence; it is concerned with representation, homogeneity, distancing, conceptualization and theory. It relates to ritual, difference, horror, silence and heterogeneity.[23]

Kupferman's works from the mid-seventies are characterized by a relinquishing of colorful screens; the receptive dimension of the canvas is no longer a place of multiple layers, but rather the canvas itself becomes an artistic matter. Parallel lines often appeared in Kupferman's work from as early as the sixties. They continued through to the seventies and can be seen in grid patterns as a significant and distinct image (Fig. 4).[24] These images, with their emphasis on the ground, primarily indicate the importance of the horizontal dimension in Kupferman's work. They are not characterized as images aiming for the vertical, but rather as mapping the territory and the validity of the horizontal plane.
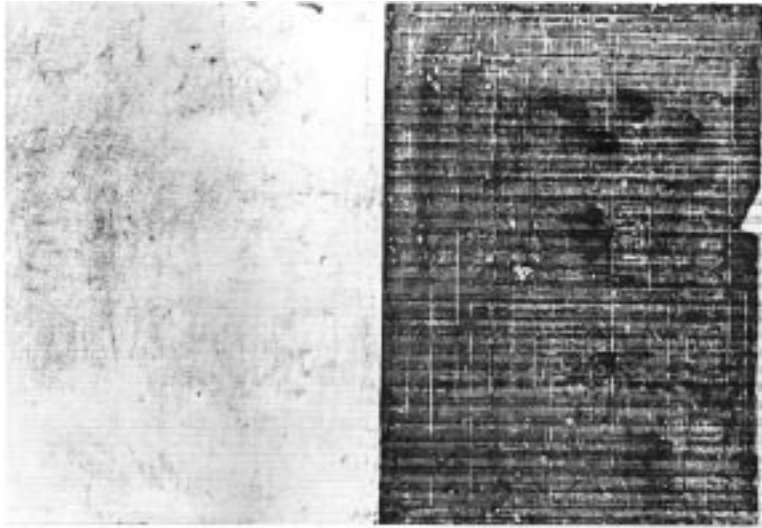
Fig. 5: Work-Table Paper, Monotype, 1977-8. (After Breitberg 1978:
Fig. 53)

In a 1978 exhibition in the Tel Aviv museum monotypes were also exhibited, supplying the clearest manifestation of the importance of the horizontal dimension and its epistemological and material significance in Kupferman's work (Figs. 5-6). [25] The monotypes are clear remnants of action, they are the background on which the work sheet was placed. The acts of drawing, painting, engraving, rubbing, coloring, pressing and erasing leave their mark on the monotypes. Kupferman does not make do with presenting the image he arrives at as a result of his action, but further manipulates the surface, such that it bears the mark of the work process and the painting's horizontality.

In 1975 Kupferman spent several months in New York, where he mainly worked on paper. His notebooks, overflowing with horizontal images, show a double opening of the space, thus creating a complex relationship between left and right, and systematic and arbitrary movement (Fig. 7). The hand moving across the surface indicates the possibilities that wandering offers; it moves from one side to the other, rubbing the material surface, realizing the full potential of motorics. This practice is a type of horizontal writing that allows for the possibility of signifying. It is a slow, continuous motion, characteristic of the inertia of motorics, and results in a semi-pattern, unacceptable and undesirable in that it halts the practice of motorics. One way of dealing with this is to subordinate the figure with a sign that negates it. The painter opts for
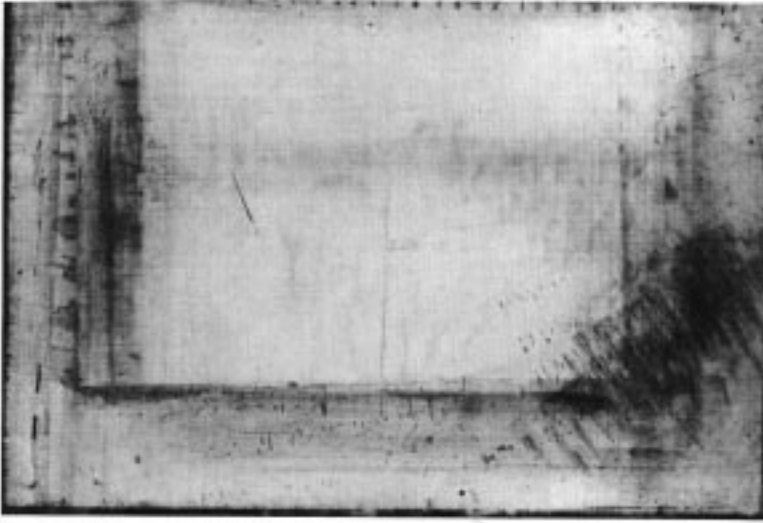
Fig. 6: Work-Table Paper, Monotype, 1977-8. (After Breitberg 1978: Fig. 54)

another possibility, seemingly repeating the process, turning the wandering into a blur, concealing evidence, erasing the rational narrative -- according to which the artistic process is supposed to lead to the placement of coherent images on the surface - that, for Kupferman, is impossible. In this way, the motorics make the traces unclear, and linear mazes of strings weave across the surface to challenge the immediateness of the beholder's experience, to set the entire realm in an undetermined state of time .

At the end of the seventies Kupferman made *Populated Pages*, presenting a multitude of seemingly disconnected images (Fig. 8). It is commonly accepted that these works show the use of a variety of technical possibilities to express one idea. Furthermore, it has been said that the piece represents a 'Jewish scholastic' methodology, 'arguing an issue from all possible points of view.'[26] These claims show Kupferman as a scholastic artist, adhering to a unitary monolithic idea that expresses the same concept as found in the perspective model, namely, the epistemological exclusiveness of the vertical. The critics' attempt to subordinate the immeasurability of the signs to a harmonious unity is an ethical revision of the visible. An alternative is to accept the impossibility of mapping the surface as a conclusive crystallized image. The dispersion of signs, almost analogous to molecules, which demonstrates the indeterminate plane's lack of borders, is an example of the objection to the monolithic concept of expression.
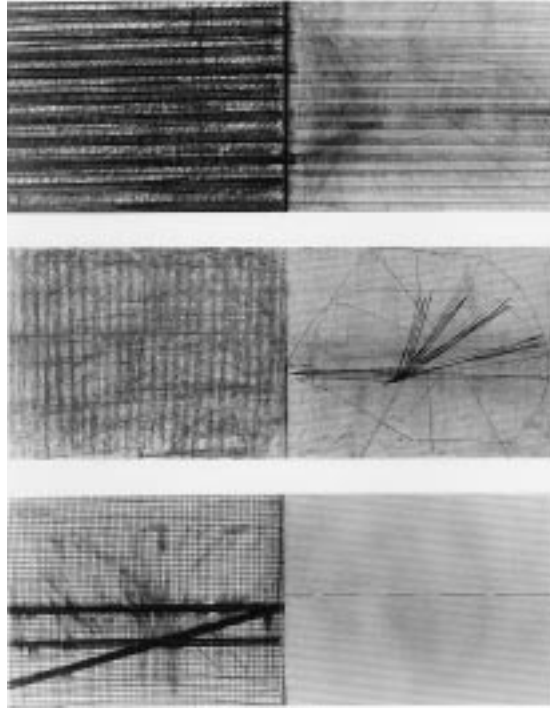
Fig. 7: *Three Sketchbooks*, Mixed Media on Paper, glue
bound (After Coffey 1991: Figs 9a-c)

In 1985, Kupferman exhibited a collection of drawings in the Sara Levi
Gallery, entitled *In Pencil Only*. These pencil drawings strengthen the horizontal
tendency found in Kupferman's work throughout the years: 'My hand is very
significant, and it sets more accurately from left to right in a horizontal motion,
so lately I find myself working more and more on the width of the page.'[27] The
works present simultaneous activities of images in several places in the same
realm of the page. They combine areas of stains that carry out various functions.
They are, at one and the same time, a daring, overwhelming gesture that
assimilates other images; an expression of negation; an example of the signs'
ability to relate to the sense of inevitability of the manual motorics; and,
according to a more reserved outlook, tending to a scheme that may be read as
a type of order. The images on the surface exist simultaneously in several places,
while the empty space in which they float and act nonetheless is of central
importance. In their pointed horizontal outlook they relate to *Populated Images*
from the early seventies. The later works, as well as the early ones, reveal
Kupferman's struggle against the exclusiveness of the syntax and logocentrism
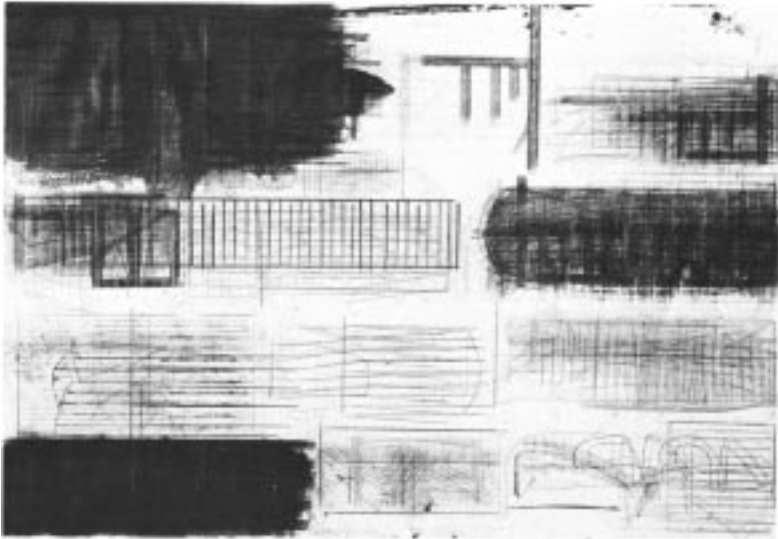
Fig. 8: Work on Paper in the Series *Populated Pages*, Graphite, Pencil, Turpentine, Sand paper, 1979 (After Fisher 1984: Fig. 121)

of order. The scheme, ostensibly appearing through the vague infrastructure, is perceived as an image confronting arbitrary sketching, and the dark multiplying, mounting stains. The characteristic practice of these works is to evoke the scheme, and then to strike it out, not through a bursting expressive gesture, but by a compulsive erasing gesture that rubs its own existence into the matter, seemingly refusing to disappear.

The confrontation is between the vertical, which perceives itself as an entire entity whose validity originates in its substantial power as an absolute shape, and the horizontal, which spreads through the material base of the real (back)ground: 'This opposition between the vertical and horizontal axes is thought specifically throughout the operation of rotation.'[28] Under discussion here is the substitution of the mental axis with one that relies on the biological bestial model; the vision turns from the 'ideational to the bodily'. Bataille, as Krauss demonstrates, suggests the story of the Minotaur as an alternative to the constitutive myth of art: that of Narcissus. Rather than "self-duplication", painting becomes "self-mutilation". Painting, therefore, is an 'act which strikes at the architecture of the human body.'[29] One of the early canonical interpretations of image-making in the ancient caves was that the practice of representation was used as a type of possession. Placing the image on the canvas is the key to grasping it, appropriating it by vision. Vision, for the Paleolithic

artist, enables him to identify things. Once the object is captured, a repetition of the sign, the image, the visible, is made possible. Krauss presents both aspects. The other aspect of the practice, Krauss claims, is represented by Bataille, who regards this early scientific occurrence as an acceptable appropriation. However, he points at another aspect, formerly omitted from the discussion. This second aspect, which involves destruction and delusion, relates to the way in which the early drawings express violence towards the image of the maker. These drawings manifest a destructive formlessness, a demolishing force, which presents self-depiction as auto-mutilation.[30]

Characterizing the relationship between the different images upon the canvas led to the use of a terminology of struggle: one image invades another, it becomes difficult to determine the borders of the shapes, and the gap between turning inward and expanding outward becomes more and more conspicuous. The works confront what seems to be an amorphous chaos simmering beneath, with the documentation of motorics snared as an "arbitrary" image organizing the materialism of the surface. There is tension between beating a path through a space, and the enclosure of that very path. 'Kupferman's reactions are total. He does not react to a single shape, a partial image on the surface of the painting. His reaction is to the entire canvas, in an uncompromising violence of wild brush strokes, with which he covers and removes, adding tones with a small roller, and removing them...'[31] The violence of destruction is a statement against organization as a kind of subordinating system.[32] Sometimes it emerges from the movement's intensity, and sometimes from a pointed gesture and the use of the impulsive mechanics of the automatic as a means of (non-illusionary) expression.

Kupferman himself uses a terminology of struggle, violence and destruction.

> There are a lot of loves. Also a lot of repelling hates. They all appear. There is also naturally an attitude to pictures: It was difficult for me, for example, to *destroy* them. I did that too. And still do. To destroy them, to give up on them ... Now there was a time when I worked, canvas after canvas. And not without *quarreling*. And with *erasing*. Obviously, because erasing is a process.[33]　　［…］ Every stage in the process is meaningful. Even things which do not appear in the final result, in the completed picture, that were used as a point from which to go on, that were destroyed - every canvas is some ruins and some constructions - exist with me.[34]

Fig. 9: Drawing (two-sided), Graphite on Paper ,1973 (Fisher and Perry
1974: Fig. 39)

As early as the canvas works of the sixties, one can see Kupferman's powerful
shapes as a type of violence, not a sterile abstraction, but an active area in
which figures seem to be in the midst of a struggle.[35] As we saw above, from
the very beginning these works embody the conflict between covering and
revealing, vertical and horizontal, such that they constitute a threat against
order. The chaotic element seethes below the surface and subverts the
organizing principle.

In 1973, Kupferman employed a pencil and acrylic technique. He worked
in three stages: drawing in pencil, coloring with acrylic and engraving, which
damages the acrylic surface. The grid emerges as an image, somewhere between
presence and absence. A year later, Kupferman exhibited drawings that
presented the act of marking as a mixing of one material with another; the
paper is a scrubbed surface on which some of the drawings are etched. The
result is a surface where the excess material, that which is removed from the
page by scratching at it, is blended into the image's code. The removed particles
accumulate in the gaps between the paper molecules, and they are suspended
between their role as a remnant of a lost entirety, or the reminder of a violent
act, and their being a "renewed" semblance of an image (Fig. 9).[36] These works
reveal a new level of intensity and show the duet of negativity and demolition
as accompanying practice. In his works from this period, Kupferman tried to
annihilate the distinction between the two sides of the paper through the

engraving and sanding of the images and the canvas. In the drawings exhibited in the Gilat Gallery in May of the same year, he confronts the surface in such an aggressive manner that it is unclear whether he is trying to fuse the two sides of the paper, to mutilate the image or to subvert the canvas. The violence gains germinating qualities, it provides the image with distinct characteristics, it is an indication of surplus energy. It enables Kupferman to avoid the stagnation of completeness, and it is the main characteristic of most of the stages of production.

In the eighties paper is the dominant medium in Kupferman's work. He does with the material as he pleases. He works on both sides of it, engraves it, creates furrows that echo on the other side of the page as a result of the insistent physical pressure of the hand. The canvas is charged with the material remnants of the intensive processing, with its energy finding expression in the material particles and disseminating over the entire image. The surface carries a significant load. Marcelin Pleynet, in "La peinture deux fois signée Moshe Kupferman", asks whether the processed (sanded) page does not 'become a relief (slightly chaffed), which cancels the surface and snares the picture in its minuscule thickness.'[37] The page, therefore, does not disappear as a result of the rubbing, but rather it becomes injured; the scheme embodied on the surface carries the sign of wounding.

In 1982, Kupferman paints a series of works following the Lebanon war, *With Beirut After Beirut With Beirut*. A year later he produces *Times of Collapse*, as well as a series of drawings following the murder of Emil Grunzweig.[38] The first half of the eighties then, is when the dimension of time assumes a political historical meaning in Kupferman's work in the most direct manner. Yet this is not the first time Kupferman reacts to the difficult and problematic political events of the region in which he lives and works.

In 1970 he paints the In *Times of War* series, which reflects his reactions to the "War of Attrition". *Painting in Times of War* (Fig. 10) presents us with Kupferman's lexicon of broad strokes, some of which seemingly join an impossible structure, while others present a powerful arbitrariness, with the combination of an image and its utter destruction. Kupferman "enthusiasts" were less than appreciative of these paintings, with their concrete, political element. Kupferman had been perceived as a private persona, creating, "making" from his own inner, supra-temporal world; an artist whose genius is valid and relevant for any given trans-historical criterion. Gabriel Tadmor wrote the following, after an interview Kupferman gave to the newspaper *Davar*, in which he explained the affinity between his work and the current event:
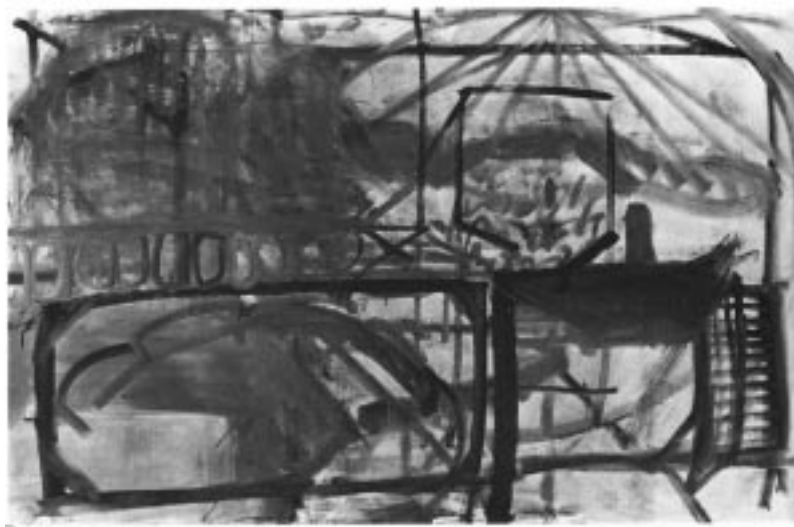
Fig. 10: *Painting in Times of War*, Oil and Oil Chalk on Canvas ,1970 (After
Fisher 1984: Fig. 58)

> In *Davar* the artist said some things about his own reactions to the
> events of our times which I think were very wrong - that they are
> alien to him, and do not express his essential self. Toulouse Lautrec
> [and in analogy Kupferman N.G.] did not paint the actual reality…
> it served him as a pretext, a vehicle to express his own substance,
> his feelings, his inner reality, his personality.[39]

Immediately following the Yom Kippur War he paints *Painting of October 9-
10.10.73* (Fig. 11). The painting is composed of a schematic, asymmetrical
division of a coarse white tone, with a dark shade beneath. The surfaces are
not continuous, and are made of strong, powerful strokes, upon which
Kupferman engraved lines devoid of material, and created above all a strong
sense of raking material, leaving the ground scorched. In the lower right corner,
the movement of raking the material left raw crystals that serve as a reminder
of injury. In the left-hand quarter, the surface is again injured, here by scratching
the color mass.[40] Kupferman carries on painting under the influence of the war
until as late as 1975, when he exhibits some works at "The Kibbutz Gallery".

Kupferman related to the Lebanon War in general, and the Sabra and Shatilla
massacre in particular, as the event that most upset and shocked him and brought
about an increasing sense of rage and impotence.[41] Two weeks after the massacre
in Sabra and Shatilla, Kupferman felt compelled to portray the events on canvas.

Fig. 11: *Painting of October 9-10.10.73*, Oil on Canvas, 1973
(After Breitberg 1978: Fig. 6)

'The topic overpowers me, becomes a thing I cannot shake off... The slaughterers are different and they change, but the victims, eventually, are similar. I do not need to make any effort to see myself on the side of the victims.' Kupferman relates to the drawings as a necessary means to keep on working. His work becomes a means for preventing a fragile situation from deteriorating into a complete loss; his practice is a way of channeling violent energy in such a way as to avoid the total materialistic collapse (of the image). Once the idea becomes clearer, Kupferman describes the urgency with which he detached himself from these images: 'The need to remove it from my possession – to take it out immediately, graphically...'[42] The drawings were collected in a volume entitled *With Beirut After Beirut With Beirut*.[43] The events taking place on the canvas are not a translation of the visible horrors of the war, but an assertion of the trauma as a catalytic experience (Fig. 12). Kupferman's ritual of suppression, destruction and erasing is used in a powerful manipulation of linearity, stains and dark gestures, that turns the canvas into a surface bearing conglomerates that are suspended between the arbitrary and the pseudo-structure, which is made chaotic by the gesture. These preverbal states are concentrated together around the nervous rhythm they embody, and which, through the appropriation of the work by its name and historical and political context, become an image that has a feeling of perishing to it.

Fig. 12: Drawing, Marker, Pencil and Color on Paper, 1984 (After Kupferman 1984)

Kupferman's identification with the victims is connected to the loss he deals with in his work. An account of the process through which this loss emerges could explain the way in which he moves towards a system that includes the sacrifice and the sacrificed, where the result can never be profit, or a leap from punishment to reward. His practice activates an apparatus in which compulsivity can be interpreted as a kind of sacrifice, with the witness gaining neither reward nor purification. Thus, the loss is channeled into an intermediary situation in which both reward and total loss are negated. This is motorics on the threshold of the abyss, a motorics that neither produces a coherent figure, nor embodies a complete loss. 'It is a process of occasions of loss and achievement...,' wrote one critic,[44] while Kupferman, in his own words, links the work and reality as it is manifested on the surface of the works: 'just as reality moves along a continuum of action and reduction, demolishing and destroying a certain situation, in order to lead to another situation, I remove in order to add, in order to emphasize our connection to the present, to the time of human experience.'[45] The manifestation of loss and destruction as base elements in the reality of doing is also embodied in the way the canvas, a crucial factor in Kupferman's practice, carries the signs and wounds of struggle, as if any achievement connected to loss appears through violence, mutilation and

denouncement. Violence remains in Kupferman's works through radical action, which unleashes energy as if from a compressor. This violence transgresses the borders of self.

> Violence, according to Bataille, is a means of releasing masses of extreme energy, it contains the seeds of destruction, but also serves as a manifestation of heterogeneity: 'Violence, excess, delirium, madness characterize heterogeneous elements to varying degrees: active, as persons or mobs, the result of breaking the laws of social homogeneity. Heterogeneous reality is that of a force or shock.'[46]

Kupferman's canvases have been described in terms of demolition, destruction, extermination, reduction and negation. These characteristics of his works should be seen in the light of his practice. Through the use of force that erases, concentrates or spreads radical energy, which, when it strikes the logical, linear and distinguished structure, undermines its stability and the fantasy of homogeneity, Kupferman strikes at the scheme in order to allow the heterogeneous to burst out and flood the ground. Kupferman suggests a mode of action that transgresses the limits of an image evoking a gesture; it is an act of destruction, in which the pictorial sign is sacrificed through violence. The transgression echoes through the pictorial sign, subverts it, and sacrifices it, but retains its distinctiveness from its surroundings. The distinction between ground and the sign woven by the gesture is not nullified. Had a total energetic outburst occurred, with no distinction between the radical release of energy and the body upon which it acts, we would have faced the absoluteness of death.

The stress on motorics, on the work of art as a segmented process, where there is no moment of closure or full realization of the work, but rather a middle situation of constant dependency, is a realization of the horizontal metonymy. Kupferman's practice can be seen as an examination of the spatial affinity between elements. His work challenges the obvious affinity between the utterance and the uttered. We encounter practice as repetition, a horizontal metonymy where passion is channeled into a place in which the sense of loss remains. As a full realization is inevitably impossible, the passion contains the loss, which leads us to an interpretation of Kupferman's practice as an expression of the tension between the metonymy of passion, which produces the work, and the images, which are 'writing to an end in the maelstrom of horror, *jouissance* and death.'[47]

The process of contamination, of the mixing between the components, is a confrontation between elements that are different from one another, and that negate one another. However, Kupferman does not allow one tone to annihilate the other. Another confrontation is between the vertical and horizontal, and although Kupferman rotates between vertical and horizontal, he retains a hint of the vertical. The preference for the terrestrial is not absolute. The pictorial signs on the ground do not reach a conclusion as to which holds superiority over the other; even in works where there is a seemingly distinct image, it fulfills the role of yet another event taking place on the plain. Kupferman juxtaposes the signs without leading to annihilation of any of them. Yet he goes a step further, a step in which violence bursts inwards and threatens the completeness of the sign. The grid – the patent manifestation of the homogeneous fantasy of optics – is woven in such a way as to shake the relation between the signifier and the signified. To collapse the distinction between signifiers and their signifieds is like holding a knife to the eye;[48] releasing the sign from its subordination to significance, is what allows the outburst of energy. Furthermore, breaking the affinity between the two, or between the signifier and signified in the realm Kupferman defines, means the mutilation of the sign.

Notes

1. Berman 1971.
2. Lusky 1984.
3. The "Tazpit" group is not a homogenous group and, besides artists like Rafi Lavie and Moshe Kupferman whom I consider the leaders of a different approach, there are additional artists who continue to reflect the agenda of "New Horizons".
4. The Tazpit Group, *Tazpit 1964 - Exhibition of Israel Painters and Sculptures* 1964.
5 Kupferman in Nahshon 1984.
6. Here are several examples: 'Observing the work reveals the process of creation in the same way as it exposes the personality of the painting artist,' Breitberg 1973; 'These new works confirm Kupferman's position as our leading master of calculated spontaneity,' Ronnen 1976; 'So the painting steps into a persona,' Blaker-Hirsh 1980; 'However, the balance in the painting, whether perfect or imperfect in the final moment, attests to an acute self-consciousness,' Fisher 1991: 7; 'The abstract forms that populate his painting... [can be] clearly ascertained and digested into a deliberate, Sisyphean process of self-renewal', Sara Breitberg quoted in Fisher 1991: 7; 'He holds … that art should pursue the self. …he has endeavored …to picture mind. His art stands as a fundamental affirmation of being,' Coffey 1991: 22; 'Kupferman's aim is the release and affirmation of the deepest self,' Coffey 1991: 12.

8   Zertal 1976.

9.   '...(a) devoted artist… Strongly indebted to the New York school, particularly to De Kooning and Kline for form-types, high powered brushwork, large-scale drawing and paint-quality...' Berman 1969.

10. Shechori 1971.

11. Orgad 1971.

12   'The canvas, then, is a meeting place, field of action, arena for the struggle to overcome, to reaffirm with certainty each time, in each different canvas, in each painting separately,' Fisher 1975. See also 'The Painter has an Outburst and Contains Himself - The Viewer Constructs,' Harashav 1997: 295.

13. Tadmor 1972.

14. Rosenberg 1970: 39.

15. Harashav 1997: 288.

16. Schechori 1971.

17.   Sgan-Cohen 1969.

18. Coffey 1991: 22.

19. Bataille 1996a: 75.

20. Benjamin (1917) 1996a: 82. Cited also in Krauss and Bois 1999: 94.

21. On the relevant and the irrelevant in Benjamin's remarks, see Bois 1990: 10-15.

22. Benjamin (1917) 1996b: 83-86.

23   Lechte 1995: 119-120.

24. Breitberg explains the "origins" of the motif, as Kupferman sees them: 'He speaks of parallel lines as simple forms, ingraining the elements of mechanical repetition which contrast with the sensitive nature of the layers, while providing the basic form,' Breitberg 1978.

25   Sometimes Kupferman would place the paper on which he was working on a larger sheet. As he worked on the paper, his strokes would overflow onto the backing sheet. These backing sheets came to be recognized as legitimate images in themselves, as monotypes.

26. Coffey 1991: 16.

27. Gelbatz 1985.

28. Krauss 1993: 80.

29. Krauss and Denis Hollier in Krauss 1993: 82-83.

30. Krauss 1986: 149.

31. Lusky 1984.

32. 'Disorder, failure, weakness and destruction are elements of no less vitality and legitimacy in Kupferman's art than order, construction and power. ... The final result only alludes to the struggle that led up to it, but does not "spill it out",' Breitberg 1978; and 'the artist attacks the gridded surface with a few impulsive swipes of scrapper,' Coffey 1991: 18.

33. Ophrat 1972.

34. Zertal 1976, my emphasis.

35. 'There exists a sufficient transparent "soul landscape", a landscape of hope and despair, passion and disappointment… there is drama and tragedy in these

canvases… the plain remains almost always active, the forms as if frozen in a moment of struggle, which is a speculum of psychic struggle,' Tal 1969.

36. Kupferman describes this technique as an attack. 'These are preoccupations.' He says, 'When one side of the paper is attacked, the other acquires a special quality. There is an almost endless continuity in my work, a detachment from the condition of completeness. Each action remains, does not cancel the one which came before it. The result includes all stages,' Fisher 1974.

37. Pleynet 1987.

38 During a demonstration of "Shalom Achshav" ("Peace Now" – an Israeli protest movement) in Jerusalem against the Lebanon War and demanding the resignation of Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon a hand grenade was thrown at the protesters, killing Emil Grunzweig.

39. Tadmor 1972.

40. For an interesting discussion of Kupferman's paintings from 1973-74 in the context of the Yom Kippur War, see Breitberg 1975.

41 In September 1982, Christian Phalange troupes massacred 850 Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shetila south of Beirut, a region that was under Israeli control.

42. Kupferman 1984. For the affinity between these works and the *Times of Collapse* series, see Breitberg 1984: 54- 55.

43. Kupferman 1984.

44. Harashav 1997: 288.

45. Lusky 1984.

46. Bataille 1996b: 142, 143. This subject is discussed and analyzed in an article that forms the basis of my discussion in Bataille, Boldt-Irons 1995: 91-104.

47. Lechte 1995: 26.

48. This famous surrealistic image is taken from Luis Bunuel, *Un Chien Andalou*, 1928.

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'To be of one's time': Technology and Inhumanity in Tumarkin

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When the Futurists declared the racing car more meaningful for our century than the *Victory of Samothrace* (which they saw as an embodiment of the classical values perpetuated by the humanistic tradition) the relationship of culture and technology emerged as one of the major issues of modern art.[1] The Futurists envisioned a modern civilisation in which art would be subservient to technology, but since then the interaction has become reciprocal. Contemporary industries avail themselves of the services of creative designers to produce machines that are far more attractive than those that aroused the Futurists' enthusiasm, while cars and high speed trains actually seem to imitate the dynamic forms originally evolved by avant-garde sculptors. Artists' attitudes to technology are less unanimous. There are two mutually exclusive ways of thinking. One takes up the argument that technologically undeveloped civilisations have produced superb works of art that are still appreciated in our society, and contends that aesthetic achievement is essentially independent of technological progress. Some go even further and claim that industrial technology in the service of commerce has proved to be detrimental to aesthetic values. The second theory insists that an artist should be 'of his time',[2] and ours being the age of machines, contemporary art should follow the general trend by glorifying the spectacular technological advances as a sign of the cultural progress of mankind. Creative individuals are encouraged to avail themselves of new methods and new materials, and their works are often mechanically reproduced for the benefit of large numbers of people, sometimes on a truly industrial scale.

The impact of technology is reflected in various attempts to break away from the concept of sculpture as a quiescent object. Rejecting the traditional

evocation of movement by static gestures or frozen folds of carved draperies, as in the *Victory of Samothrace*, artists create mechanically activated kinetic sculptures and non-functional machines whose only purpose is the representation of perpetual motion. Such works are sometimes seen as an appropriate expression of a civilisation dominated by technology, but their real dynamism also offers an opportunity to consider the relationship between art and movement, and to take a new look at the special significance of works that, though potentially mobile, are motionless. Here I propose to examine some of the aesthetic meanings assigned to motionlessness and the anti-humanistic connotations that contemporary Israeli artist Igael Tumarkin assigned to modern technology in a series of assemblage works produced in the eighties and nineties. The bizarre stuff of which Tumarkin composes his works ranges from useless appliances found in the flea market to cast-off agricultural implements, eroded fragments of boats and dismembered motors; he is even known to have scoured combat areas for discarded weapons and has included whole tanks in his compositions. However, the most significant aesthetic transformation attended the prosaic railway trolleys incorporated in his assemblage compositions. These vehicles are remarkable not only as an unusual kind of artistic material but also because rather than alluding to speed and technological progress, they are progressively enriched by other meanings that, though related to their original function, convey very different conceptual messages.

During his early studies Tumarkin worked with Israeli sculptors who, subscribing to the idea of art being timeless, took vivid interest in natural materials and organic forms.[3] Later, however, he went to Europe, where as a result of his contact with various avant-garde intellectuals he adopted the ideology of the artist's moral duty to be of his own time. For him this meant not only working with contemporary techniques and materials but also taking an intense personal interest in the social and political issues.[4] However, unlike some of his fellow artists he did not place his art in the service of a definite political ideology nor did he aim it at a popular level. Carefully preserving his intellectual independence, he often comments on social problems by symbolical and allegorical means and gives his works allusive names drawn from history and literature. Reflecting his struggle for authenticity, his titles are in some instances in foreign languages, including the German that Tumarkin spoke in his early childhood. He was born in Germany in 1933 to a Jewish mother and a German father, who in response to the Nazi racial laws divorced his wife. She eventually emigrated with her son who grew up as an Israeli.[5] His

familiarity with the language, and with other aspects of German culture, made him aware of the special German pride in technological achievement, which is the course of the Second World War enabled the Nazis to perform their crimes. His personal experience of the disastrous consequences of a civilisation dominated by technology is reflected even in works ostensibly dealing with other topics.

Tumarkin's choice of machinery as an artistic medium also conforms to the current notion that the manual execution of a work of art is no longer a per-requisite. Machine produced objects as well as machine parts may be assembled into sculptural compositions; in some cases individual industrially produced objects are presented as legitimate art works. Artists also use machines as "concrete metaphors", that is objects which besides their familiar function have an additional meaning. These machines are like symbols but they have no conventionally determined signification and may have more than one connotation, changing according to the context. Like their literary and poetic counterparts, the metaphoric machines usually involve a conceptual interaction between essentially disparate factors: the thing being metamorphosed, which may be an abstract idea or an emotion, and the material thing that metamorphoses it. Because the content of a work of art is never limited to its factual reality, all works of art can be seen as metaphors, but in some cases the ambiguities of a multilevel message are the very purpose of the creative enterprise. Because the attraction of the assemblage technique consists in adding new and unexpected dimensions to familiar things, frequent artistic usage of machines erodes their aesthetic effectiveness. When such works become commonplace they are no longer perceived as works of art. The phenomenon is of course not limited to machines. In antiquity the human size dimensions of an arbitrarily shaped object were enough to suggest its lifelike vitality, but later viewers impressed by the non-movement of otherwise realistic figures called them statues. When the mimetic mode prevailed the lack of motion no longer prevented sculptures from being praised as being lifelike. The advent of the cinema and other kinds of dynamic representation has again made us aware of the stillness of sculpture as an expressive characteristic.

The conceptual traditions are also reflected in the perception of artistic materials. In being used to sculptures being carved in stone, we no longer see a statue as "stone man", but once the artistic medium is exchanged for a less conventional one, such as an assemblage of machine parts, we perceive the figure as a "mechanical man" or a "human machine". According to the context such works may refer to the complexity of the human organism or man's

seeming lack of emotions or even to his existential situation in a dehumanized society.[6] Our spontaneous grasp of the metaphoric implications of such works supports the frequently repeated aesthetic dictum 'the medium is the message', which postulates that the conceptual understanding of a work of art is always defined by its material substance.[7] The notion is also implicit that by altering the material one may give the work a new meaning. For instance, a figure modelled in clay means something quite different from the same figure cast in bronze or carved in stone. The alteration of form has a similar effect. A broken statue or a torso are of course very different from a complete figure and this applies also to the changeable aesthetic connotations of machinery. Marinetti used the racing car's dynamism as a sweeping metaphor for modern life; but a car crashed in an accident or a derailed train might convey the perils of modern technology. Even undamaged conveyances such as Tumarkin's discarded trolleys, may stand for complex existential meanings without losing their identity. A stationary vehicle – not one which does not move, but one which is unable to move – may become an effective symbol of the failure of purpose, negating the notion of industrial progress, or even of a moral deadlock caused by the destructiveness of technological society. Seen in this way the machine in art conveys a message radically opposed to that which it represents in real life. This is what happens to the run aground trolleys Tumarkin included in his compositions.

His creative transformation of a standard vehicle into a polyvalent concrete metaphor can be exemplified in the composite sculpture called *Chichen Itza*. The assemblage consists of a large ring set on a four wheeled trolley prevented from moving along a short segment of rails provided for it by vertical obstacles: a low triangle and a rectangular sheet of iron set before and behind the contraption. A coat of bright blue industrial paint sprayed over these various components emphasizes the technological character of the assemblage and at the same time secures its aesthetic coherence (Fig. 1).[8] The assemblage is set in the middle of the road running between the modern Tel-Aviv and Jaffa, the old part of the city and someone driving past in a hurry might take it for a smashed car left as a warning against speeding, or perhaps a discarded carnival float. However, as in many other works by Tumarkin, the immediate visual impression is not enough. To grasp the meaning of the composition one must give some thought to the seemingly enigmatic title which provides the key to its conceptual message.

Chichen Itza is the name of a famous archaeological site of the Maya culture on the Yucatan, where besides the monumental religious buildings, of

Fig. 1:   I. Tumarkin, *Chichen Itza*. Assemblage with a trolley, 1986-1994.
Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, on the road linking the two parts of the city.

which some were erected by later Meso American cultures, one may also explore the great ballcourt of a ritualistic game known as *Tlatchli* which local tourist guides describe as resembling modern basketball.[9] Judging from the architectural remains and the evidence of manuscript illuminations dating to the period of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the game was played by two teams of players who without using their hands tried to pass a hard rubber ball through one of the rings set vertically in the side walls of the enclosure. The game was not an innocent sporting event; reliefs decorating the court show that when the game was over the victorious team would sacrifice their defeated opponents to the gods.[10] Tumarkin, who in the course of his travels visited the site, was apparently impressed not so much by the fact that the ancient inhabitants of Mexico invented the ball game, but by its seemingly senseless cruelty. However, being aware of the theory of the relationship of technology and culture he was apparently even more interested in the fact that although the people of Chichen Itza had been capable of fashioning wheels for the ball game, they never applied this skill for utilitarian purposes. This remarkable lack of technical enterprise is even more surprising when one considers the absence of Mayan pack animals, which meant that everything had to be transported in small boats sailing the narrow canals or simply on human backs. This obviously constituted a major handicap to the evolution of the economy

and finally it became a major factor in the population's defeat by a small number of technologically more advanced European invaders. However, this lack of technological acumen did not prevent the ancient Meso-American civilisations from creating splendid works of art, which contradict those who believe in the necessary correspondence between cultural sophistication and technological progress.

In choosing Chichen Itza as his topic Tumarkin avoided any direct reference to the ancient monuments, as incompatible with his credo of making an art of his own time. The same ideology is reflected in his choice of modern machinery as his medium. As a result his *Chichen Itza* seems the very opposite of the real Chichen Itza's rudimentary technology. The paradox of the Maya is represented by the large non-functional ring which, in evoking the Tlachli game, may be seen as a symbol of the ancient culture being transported into the modern era. But on further reflection one sees that the message is really opposed to this: the contrast between the non-functional wheel and the mechanical conveyance on which it is set suggests how the ancient inhabitants of Mexico might have exploited their wheels. The assemblage may therefore be understood both as a memorial to their incomprehensible lack of practical sense, and a celebration of the technological advance of our own civilisation. However, in proceeding along these lines of interpretation one cannot miss the fact that what at first glance purports to be a metaphor of progress is really an immobilized railway trolley. Because it is set on rails that lead to nowhere, one gets the idea that even modern machines become obsolete and are only fit to be recycled in a composite work of art. Seen in this way the trolley is really not much different from the non-functional Chichen Itza wheels.

But there is still another level of meaning: moved as he may have been by the fate of the ancient peoples of Mexico, Tumarkin's work seems to refer to the realities of his own society. The juxtaposition of a symbol of the ancient culture with the discarded trolley conveys the idea that without a constant pursuit of technological progress our civilisation will soon be reduced to the state of Chichen Itza; but at the same time the assemblage also serves as a reminder that technological superiority may lead to social injustice. The position of the composition on the road linking the modern Tel-Aviv with Jaffa, which was formerly an Arab town, suggests a parallelism between the establishment of Jewish rule and the Spanish defeat of the technologically inferior peoples of Mexico. The apparently anachronistic comparison may be related to Tumarkin's life experience. His traumatic early memory of being a Jewish child driven out by the Nazis made him especially sensitive to any kind of social violence,

Fig. 2: I. Tumarkin, *For Goya (Homage to Goya)*. Assemblage with a trolley, ca.1989

including that perpetrated by his own people. On various occasions he identified with the tragedy of the Palestinian Arabs who were expelled from their homes in the course of the Israeli War of Independence.[11] The *Chichen Itza* assemblage may be related to this ideology. Its position between the Jewish and the Arab parts of the largest Israeli city makes it a concrete reminder of the tribulations of the local Arab community, conveying the idea that the technological superiority of one people may have tragic consequences for another. Seen in this way the assemblage is also an eloquent statement of the moral task of an artist in society.

The role that Tumarkin assigns to the artist is again the subject of another assemblage work, called *For Goya* (Fig. 2).[12] Goya is a master whom Tumarkin admires for combining an extraordinary artistic freedom with courageous social involvement. The tribute refers to one of Goya's best known paintings, the *Witches' Sabbath* (in the Prado), in which a huge goat being worshipped by a crowd satirizes the Catholic authorities' encouragement of religious superstition.[13] Tumarkin juxtaposed a cut-out silhouette of Goya's goat with an owe-inspiring piece of machinery mounted on a trolley that is rolling towards the silhouette, seemingly about to overturn it. This can be read as an allegory of the old credulity being overthrown by modern technology. However, once again the concrete metaphor has more than one meaning. Considering that the

Fig. 3:   I. Tumarkin, *Homage to Picasso*. Assemblage with a trolley, 1989.

goat represents Goya's painting and implicitly also the entire artistic tradition that culminated in Goya, one wonders whether the mechanical attempt to demolish the goat really represents a cultural advancement. The goat does not yield to the attack and the trolley is stranded in its forward motion, and this in turn allows one to conclude that timeless artistic values can withstand the onslaught of modern technology.

The collision of technology and art is also the theme of two assemblages ostensibly inspired by the work of leading modern art pioneers, but referring to subsequent developments. The *Homage to Picasso* is a commentary on the problems of contemporary painting (Fig. 3),[14] while the other one, called *Homage to Brancusi*, addresses those of modern sculpture (Fig. 4).[15] Both works feature the derailed trolleys that we have come to recognize as Tumarkin's concrete metaphors of stagnation. The immobility of the conveyances in this context may be understood as an observation that the revolutionary works of the great pioneers were not followed by further advances of equal importance, but again the meaning conveyed by these works is not limited to a single message. Both works refer to the impact of technology on modern culture.

The *Homage to Picasso* features cut-out silhouettes of fragments of one of his best known still lifes, the *Goat's Crane with a Bottle and a Candle*,[16] whose emphatic flatness is a good example of Picasso's abating the mimetic purpose of painting as a means of stressing the material reality of the representation.

Fig. 4: I. Tumarkin, *Homage to Brancusi*.
Assemblage with a trolley, 1989.

However, in choosing this particular picture as the object of his tribute Tumarkin did not refer to its style but to the conceptual implications of the objects represented. The crane may be seen as a symbol of the past and the lighted candle as conveying a hope for the future, so that their juxtaposition seems like an allegory of the historical role of Picasso as an artist who bridged venerable artistic tradition and modernity. As a homage to Picasso's leadership Tumarkin mounted the cut-out fragments of the still life on a trolley, which, suggesting the mobility of painting, seems to make it even more 'progressive'. However, the mechanical conveyance apparently refers to another sort of dynamism: that of the art works. In our culture not only the works of Picasso but most celebrated masterpieces become ambulant by travelling to exhibitions in various cities. Ostensibly this makes the works accessible to an ever growing audience, but the crowded viewing conditions of such shows seldom allow more than a fragmentary glimpse of each work. This may explain the fragmentation of the Picasso composition. The fact that the vehicle that carries these fragments is stranded is a mute reminder that an indiscriminate application of modern means of transportation to art sometimes fails to achieve its purpose.

The *Homage to Brancusi* carries a partial silhouette of Brancusi's *Unending Column* much admired as this artist's most innovative work. The original consists of a three meter high series of rhomboid elements carved from a single

Fig. 5:   I. Tumarkin, *Von der Dicken Berta bis zur Roterosa*. Assemblage, 1989.

tree trunk. Writers have observed that Brancusi's title is somewhat misleading, since rather than the need to be completed the column represents a continuous evolution.[17] The integrity of the tree trunk suggests an organic development which may be seen as a concrete metaphor of progress. The mechanical conveyance on which Tumarkin set the silhouette of Brancusi's work seems to endow the theme of perpetual renovation with real dynamism, but the derailment of the vehicle again suggests that a naive association of art with the forward march of technology does not necessarily improve it. The stranding of Brancusi's symbol of progress may also be seen as a pessimistic view of a civilisation dominated by technology.

Tumarkin's use of trolleys was not limited to their implications as emblems of cultural stagnation. In some of his works the vehicles represent the destructive consequences of technological advance. The latter meaning is especially evident in two closely related works that share the same German title *Von der Dicken Berta bis zur Roterosa* (From the Fat Berta to the Red Rosa). "Fat Berta" was the huge mobile cannon used by the Germans in the First World War while "Red Rosa" was the popular nickname of Rosa Luxemburg, leader of the workers' movement and anti-militarist activist assassinated by German army officers in 1919. The seemingly incongruous association refers to the connection between the traumatic political murder which was the

Fig. 6:   I. Tumarkin, *Von der Dicken Berta bis zur Roterosa*. Assemblage, 1984-1991. Berlin, public square.

precursor of anti-democratic terror and the German pride in technological achievement which eventually led to World War II.

The first of these assemblages combines three elements: a mobile gun running on rails between a large cut-out profile of Rosa Luxemburg and a silhouette of a Second World War German soldier (Fig. 5).[18] The entire composition is painted bright red, the colour of Nazi banners, also alluding to the bloody consequences of the German technological progress. The other version is structurally more concise and its multilevel moral message is more explicit. Here the cut-out profile of Rosa Luxemburg stands in the path of a trolley on rails bearing a huge replica of the Iron Cross, the German military decoration awarded for outstanding valour on the battlefield (Fig. 6).[19] The blockage of the trolley's advance by the image of martyred political leader not only suggests that democracy should have restrained aggressive German militarism in the past, but also that it should do so in the future. The work also conveys the idea that art in the form of a public memorial may be a preventive antidote to the dire consequences of dehumanized technology.

The horrors of war are also the theme of yet another memorial, the *Calvaire de Brest*, which again features a stranded trolley on rails (Fig. 7).[20] Here too the title provides a key to the work's humanistic meaning. Brest is a port on the coast of Brittany, which during the German occupation was converted

Fig. 7: I. Tumarkin, *Calvaire de Brest*. Assemblage with a trolley, 1989. Brest.

to a base of submarines at that time considered the last word in technological warfare. In evoking the mechanical contrivances on which the submarines moved from their housing into the ocean, the trolley represents destructive German technology. Because of its strategic importance Brest was the target of constant bombardments followed by a lengthy siege during which the town was razed to the ground. *Calvaire* is the French form of "calvarium", the Latin name of the skull-like hill of Golgotha on which Christ was crucified. The association of the Golgotha with Brest obviously refers to the martyrdom of the French city, but in Brittany *calvaire* also denotes a type of folkloristic statuary group representing the Passion, which one can see on many local parish squares.[21] Referring to the indigenous tradition Tumarkin created a modern *calvaire* consisting of crosses set on a stationary trolley which symbolizes the tragic results of the technological advancement. However, the fact that the vehicle is chained to the rails defines this *Calvaire* as a reminder that the horrors of modern warfare can be restrained.

My next example is another "homage", but rather than a city it is a tribute to an individual. Its title, *Keine Passage für Walter Benjamin* (No Passage for Walter Benjamin), evokes the tragedy of the noted German-Jewish thinker who sought to flee Nazi persecution. He reached the Spanish border post at Port Bou but was refused passage. Made desperate by the supposedly neutral

Fig. 8:   I. Tumarkin, *Keine Passage für Walter Benjamin*. Assemblage with a trolley.

Spanish authorities' decision to deport him to Germany, he committed suicide.[22] The assemblage sculpture intended as a memorial to Benjamin's plight seems at first sight quite realistic: the components are a two-wheeled railway trolley on rails blocked by a large vertical sheet of iron to which is attached a heavy padlock, obviously alluding to the arbitrary closure of the Spanish border; the message is enhanced by the fact that the rails lead to nowhere (Fig. 8).[23] However, it is worth noting that although Port Bou is an obligatory stop on the railway line to Spain, Benjamin did not arrive there by train. To evade the pro-Nazi French guards he tried to get into Spain by walking over the mountains. The stationary conveyance therefore does not represent the real means of transportation and the padlocked gate is not a physical obstacle preventing the advance of the train. Together the pieces form a concrete metaphor of allegedly neutral European countries' refusal of humanitarian assistance to the victims of racial persecution. The rails leading to nowhere represent the physical impossibility of escape.

The most significant use of a trolley as a metaphor of the technological civilisation inhumanity can be seen in the monumental assemblage that Tumarkin erected in 1992 at the Open Air Museum of Hakone in Japan (Fig. 9).[24] The work bears the double title *Macht Arbeit Frei?* (Does Work Make Free?) and *Portrait of the Artist as a Mummy*. The German phrase is immediately

Fig. 9:   I. Tumarkin, *Macht Arbeit Frei? Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
Assemblage, 1992. Hakone (Japan) Open Air museum.

recognized as an echo of the infamous inscription above the gate of Auschwitz
– "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work Makes Free) – which was meant to mislead the
transports of Jews destined for extermination. The paraphrase shows that in
the concentration camps work led not to freedom but to death – this defines
the assemblage as a solemn Holocaust memorial. The composition consists of
three loosely related elements set in a rectangular area of grey pebbles whose
aridity contrasting the surrounding greenery sets the mood of the death camp.
In the centre is a stretcher on rails bearing a cadaver, which may be seen as one
of the bodies burnt in the Auschwitz crematorium, here represented by a large
pyramid structure. The third element of the composition is a small mound of
ashes, obviously referring to the victims' remains. All this is consistent with a
Holocaust memorial, but the work's subtitle: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Mummy*,
a paraphrase of the title of James Joyce's novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young
Man*, suggests that the commemoration of the Holocaust tragedy has a special
personal meaning.

The reference to a mummy, evoking ancient Egypt in an Auschwitz
memorial, may seem incongruous, but the term mummy may be understood
as referring to the emaciated concentration camp inmates who even when still
alive resembled cadavers. Having being born in Germany Tumarkin barely
escaped the death camps himself – the subtitle he attached to the assemblage

Fig. 10: I. Tumarkin, *A Study for Macht Arbeit Frei?* Collage and paint on paper, 1992-93.

alludes to what he feels might have been his fate if he had joined those who passed through the gate of Auschwitz. Since in other cases Tumarkin used trolleys as concrete metaphors of technology, the stretcher on which the body is transported to the crematorium and the crematorium itself may be seen as metaphors of the destructive German technology, but one wonders why the crematorium has the form of a large pyramid, which does not seem to belong to this context.

The pyramid is a symbol that Tumarkin employed on other occasions as well. Several years before the *Macht Arbeit Frei?* He composed a work commemoration the tragic Jewish destiny, called *In the Beginning Was the Pyramid*.[25] The first part of the title is a partial quotation from the verse: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earch' (*Gen*. 1:1). The association of the beginning with the symbol of Egypt, which in the Jewish tradition is remembered as 'the land of slavery' (according to a popular but mistaken notion the Egyptian pyramids were built by the Jewish slaves), conveys the idea that Jewish history began with servitude. In a comment about this work Tumarkin explained that the pyramid symbolizes the technology and logistics the Egyptians developed in erecting the huge structures and that the same skill eventually made Auschwitz possible.[26] However, contrary to what one might expect, that assemblage features no pyramid. What one does see is a small
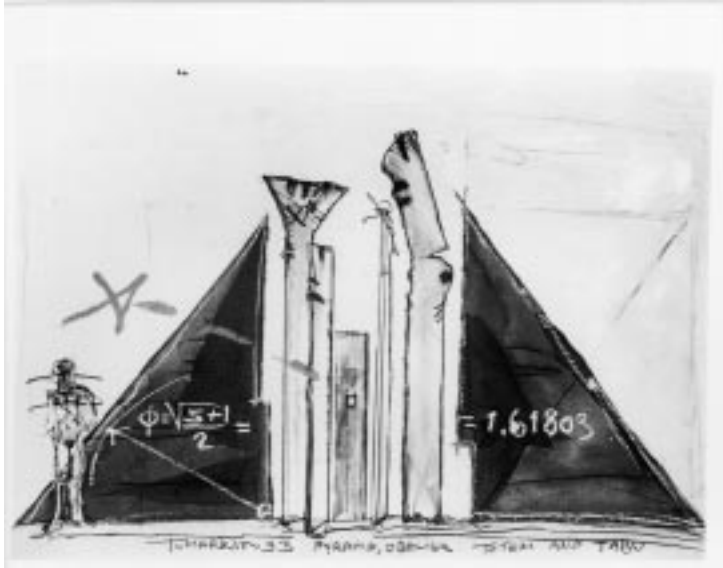
Fig. 11: I. Tumarkin, *A Study for Macht Arbeit Frei? with a totem* Collage
and paint on paper, 1993.

mound of ashes and an inverted-pyramidal hollow sunk in the earth. The surfaces of the hollow are painted red, indicating a receptacle for blood. Assuming that it symbolizes the suffering that began in the land of the pyramids, its linkage with the mound of ashes suggests that the tragic Jewish fate runs from Ancient Egypt to the German camps of extermination.

In *Macht Arbeit Frei?* A similar mound of ashes is juxtaposed with a real pyramid, which makes more explicit the linkage between the ancient Jewish slavery and the Holocaust, which marked our culture's disenchantment with its former enthusiasm for the potential of technological progress. Tumarkin elaborated on this idea in some preliminary maquettes and sketches, which add to our understanding of the message. One of the early drawings shows a human figure between an obelisk and a bisected triangle representing a pyramid, one half of it marked with the number 1.61803 and the other inscribed with the formula $1/2\sqrt{5}+1$ (Fig. 10).[27] Both inscriptions represent the mathematical expressions of a proportion known as the Golden Section, traditionally considered as the artists' secret formula of beauty.[28] In the present context the numbers define the pyramid as the aesthetic foundation of the Western culture that also produced Auschwitz. In a later sketch the symbolic triangle is split into two parts between which are inserted some vertical elements which recalling the crosses in *Calvaire of Brest* suggest that the sublime perfection
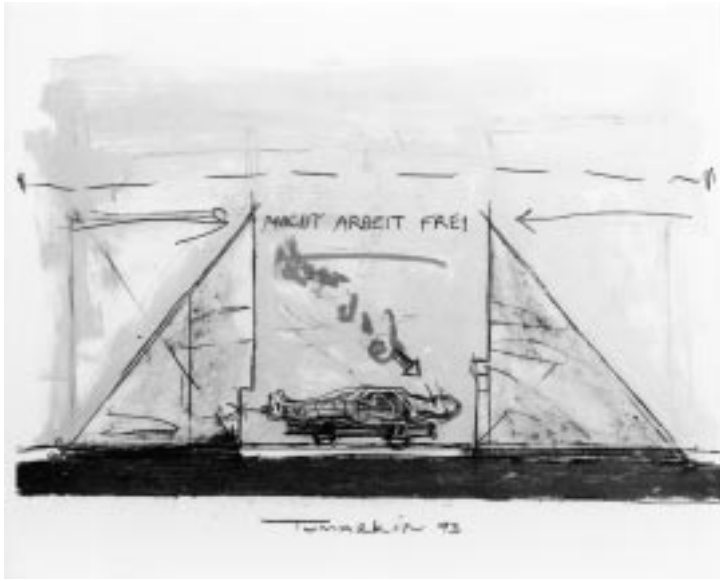
Fig. 12: I. Tumarkin, *A Study for Macht Arbeit Frei?* Collage and paint
on paper, 1993.

of the pyramid conceals the martyrdom of many victims (Fig. 11).[29] In calling
the sketch *Macht Arbeit Frei with a Totem,* Tumarkin re-defined the conventional
symbol of Egypt as a tribal emblem of the collective Jewish memory, which
needless to say also includes the memory of the Holocaust. Though the image
does justice to the historical facts Tumarkin was apparently dissatisfied with
it. In a later version he introduced into the pyramids a mobile stretcher bearing
a human corpse (Fig. 12).[30] In the final stage the stretcher was set before the
reassembled pyramid whose surface is perforated by a small iron door,
transforming the structure into a crematorium.

Tumarkin could easily have given the stretcher effective movement, which
would have turned the static composition into a sort of happening. The periodic
re-enacting of the dynamic linkage between the pyramid and the mound of ashes
might perhaps appeal to the wide public, but the artist stopped short of such an
obvious exploitation of technology. Though the conveyance seems to transport
the bodies into the crematorium and then carries the ashes to the mound, all this
happens only in the viewer's imagination. The objective immobility of the
composition gives it a character of a memory image permanently imprinted on
the collective consciousness. Thus seen, the assemblage is not only a statement
of the Nazi atrocities but also a parable warning against the disasters that
unbridled technological progress may bring about.

The consistently moral tone of Tumarkin's assemblages distinguishes them from most of his contemporaries works, especially the post-modern reinstatement of "art for art's sake", which is now often understood as art for the sake of entertainment. Nothing could be less appropriate for Tumarkin. In an answer to a recent survey among Israeli artists and intellectuals about what it means to be an artist of our time, and what are the most urgent issues that should be raised in the current art discourse, Tumarkin wrote that despite all the changes that have occurred in our century, for him "art is still a poetic yearning of the human spirit conveyed in a very personal and inexplicable expression of an individual soul inspiring life into inert substance; it is capricious and totally unpredictable but it demands intuition and much professional skill as well as rich cultural baggage; but above all else, it presupposes an innate talent which can neither be learned nor taught".[31] The series of assemblage compositions that we have discussed here illustrates this credo. The viewers' instinctive perception of the contradiction between the implicit dynamism of the machines and the immobility of the composite works shows that Tumarkin assigned a special expressive meaning to the potential but unrealized motility. This defines a new meaning to immobility. The stillness of the trolley assemblages associates them with traditional statuary, but whereas the quiescence of figural sculpture has always been perceived as an allusive movement, the immobility of Tumarkin's works conveys the idea of stagnation. The reality of the machines in not negated, but by being incorporated in assemblage compositions they have become concrete metaphors of the failure of technological culture. Paraphrasing the Futurist Manifesto, one may perhaps say that these tokens of modern technology are indeed more significant for our time than the *Victory of Samothrace*, but their special meaning consists not in being artistic metaphors of progress but in the validity of the other humanistic messages which they so effectively transmit.

Notes

1. Marinetti 1909.
2. The motto ascribed to Daumier was first pronounced by Courbet. It was originally proposed by the romantic poet Emile Deschamps, who wrote 'above all else an artist must be of his time' cf. Gauss 1966: 13; see also Hauser 1951: 63-64.
3. In his biographical notes Tumarkin says that initially he worked under the Israeli sculptor Rudi Lehamn, known for his carved wooden animals, and later befriended Itzhak Danziger, who was interested in stylized natural forms; cf. Tumarkin 1981: 13-19.

4. Tumarkin was influenced by the socialist ideologies prevalent in Israel in his youth. Later he worked under Bertholt Brecht in Berlin.
5. For the biographical data, see Tumarkin 1981: *passim*.
6. The idea is best illustrated in Jacob Epstein's *Rock Drill*; cf. Black 1942; Hughes 1980: 48, fig. 27.
7. McLuhan 1964: *passim*.
8. Tumarkin 1992. Photos not numbered.
9. Miller 1990: 184; Vaillant 1961: 69.
10. Miller 1990: 185, fig. 152.
11. In the eighties Tumarkin produced many works referring to the fate of the Arabs deprived of their land; cf. Tumarkin 1981a.
12. Tumarkin 1994: no. 16.
13. Arnaiz 1924: no. 6.
14. Tumarkin 1992: non numbered entry.
15. Tumarkin 1994: no. 17.
16. Penrose 1970: no. 43.
17. Teja 1955: 159-163.
18. Tumarkin 1992: no. 63.
19. Tumarkin 1992: non numbered entry.
20. Tumarkin 1992.
21. Michelin 1983: 32.
22. Scholem 1981: 22-25f.
23. Tumarkin 1994: 48.
24. *Ibid*.
25. Tumarkin 1992: non numbered entry.
26. Bar Kama 1991 (Hebrew).
27. Tumarkin 1994: no. 63.
28. Tumarkin 1994: no. 66.
29. Tumarkin 1994: no. 65.
30. Tumarkin 1999: 100 (Hebrew, my translation).
31. For additional studies of Tumarkin's work see: Posèq, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1989a, 1991, 1991a, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c.

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On Art and Credibility
Avigdor Arikha's Phenomenological Practice of Art

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*I*n a conversation that took place in 1977 between Avigdor Arikha and Maurice Tuchman, Arikha pointed to the accelerated substitution of pictorial systems by new ones – a prominent feature of the story of modern art – as simultaneously taking place with the wearing out of a 'normative doctrine of art', and interpreted it as the symptom of a crisis of credibility:

> It seems that the flowering of varied doctrines in the Twentieth Century seems to be in reversed proportion to the credibility of a unique normative doctrine.[1]

'Credibility' may be taken as a key-word, revealing of the nature of Arikha's ongoing criticism of Abstract art, of any kind of art explicitly grounded on theoretical premises - as supposedly opposed to praxis, to art evolving from the artist pondering on his practice. Pondering on practice seems to be propounded by Arikha as the natural - appropriate and legitimate - modality of thinking for the artist, an idiosyncratic philosophical activity that stands in sharp contradiction to the primacy of philosophical outlook over practice, to preliminary theoretical debating on ends and means. From it stem schools and styles looked upon with contempt by Arikha and defined by him as 'mannerisms'.

Proliferation of doctrines and the disappearance of commonly held views are perceived by Arikha as the syndrome of a crisis conceived by him in terms of the scope of the expressible and the ability to express. The anxiety and doubts he voiced are directly projected upon considerations of practice and practices of painting, on pictorial means and processes, with his Merleau-Pontian 'seeing body' put to the service of painting as the enactment of being-in-the world.

Spiritual and practical dead-end is felt by artists who experience the loss of credibility of forms deduced from theoretical premises. Those are - following Arikha's strain of thought - what preclude an artist's awareness of perceptual and emotional strata in his own being and prevent him from applying his attention and ability to the discovery and manifestation of this being.

For Arikha, awareness of being and the ability to paint are ineluctably linked. Their meeting point, the spatial and temporal interface where they reciprocally allow for one another, is the intertwining of being/body and the world, where the world is aesthetically met and known by the senses. Out of the workings of this aesthetic acquaintance, the workings of this never-ending process, comes the artist's practice of his art. This explains why the alternative offered by Arikha to this anxiety is that every artist should personally re-examine the extent of his own sincerity and the sincerity of his means of expression. This solution requires a two-fold process: the reduction of subject matter to what Arikha calls 'emotion' as the immediate manifestation of being-in-the world; and the opening up of the forms in the painting to the shapes of the visible and concrete world. Articulating the most intimate gesture – the expression of emotion – indirectly, by re-presentation, the painter is able to retrace his steps to the event in the outside world from which his emotion originates, the first mover of this necessary move, painting.

Restoration of the credibility of art depends on restoration of the credibility of the world as manifested in all its forms and elements in the eyes of the artist. Credibility is to be regained by giving back credibility to perception, to the seen and to vision as the primordial dimension and the primordial tool. The history of the obstacles and separations that have been erected between painting and manifested world is as long as the history of art itself. This history is packed with what Arikha called 'corpses of the mind'[2], 'plastic formulae', single forms, key forms interpreted by him as devices of the mind by which to classify the concrete and visible world. These ever more abstract patterns present the regular and predictable surface of a chessboard, they are the result of views about art that, from the onset, deny any meaningful insights to modes of representation devoid of conceptual exhaustive hermeneutic finality. It is precisely these modes of painting that Arikha claims to be the only ones that may pretend to some kind of credibility, to some measure of truthfulness.

Whether figurative or abstract, Arikha perceives a form of art presenting homogenized systematic appearance and structure as plastic mannerism, i. e. a systematic and barren repetitive manifestation, a formal system emptied of the traces of its actual unfolding and those of the artist's involvement in the actual process of their making. Mannerism in the context of Arikha's thought

is the sign of a quasi-mechanical activity that replaces a genuine search for expression, a search for form begun from scratch, time and again.

The existence of these foundations in the works of art of a whole generation led Arikha to call them '*collective styles.*'[3] Abstract mannerisms he sees as the worst, since they are actually painting from painting, replicating stylistic patterns.

Arikha mentions in all his writings a fundamental antinomy between emotion and knowledge. He constantly emphasizes the genuineness and primacy of emotion as opposed to knowledge and thought in the process of creation. It is emotion that enables direct contact with the visible that attracts the artist, while thought and knowledge enable only mediated contact or leads to a radical distancing.

There are two theories that express this antinomy with regard to the visible world, contends Arikha, two similar but opposed processes, resulting in the implementation of a style or a value-laden theory of form mediating the approach and representation of perceptual reality: one is the creation process as conceived by the 17th century classicist theory; the second is subsumed by Arikha under Cezanne's name and the Cezanne-derived type of painting that presents formulaic or systematically patterned plasticity - i.e *abstract* appearance. On the one hand there is the classical ideal as described by Arikha: 'an aspiration towards an expression of ideas, of perfect forms derived from reality'.[4] On the other hand the formation of the Cezannic and Post-Cezannic grid allows for the substitution of a conceptual (i.e. abstract and arbitrary) system of plastic notations – the Cezannian 'chessboard' - 'le damier'[5] - for the notations built upon the immediacy of perception and which keep referring to it.

In classicist theory, as in modernist implementation of plastic concept, a plastic language is formed, a pictorial code that changes the appearance of the visible world and is parallel to it. Cezanne calls the pictorial language 'a plastic equivalent', originating, says Arikha, in the deliberate implementation of a reductive ratio or proportion: 'Between the picture plane and the visible Cezanne established a relationship founded on a ratio basis'.[6] To establish a 'rational' approach to the visible, means forcing a predictable and uniform order on the natural manifestation of things, in their more organic and less organized forms as perceived from a naive perspective. In the-Cezanne derived styles the constraints of the medium – flatness of the canvas, systematic nature of the language – overcome the constraint that arises from the forms that exist in nature. This is the reason for the widening gap between the two worlds and the autonomy acquired by the work of art in relation to its source of inspiration

in nature. In the process knowledge has overcome emotion. The separation between vision and its illustration has become the fact described by Arikha in these terms: 'Stemming from Cezannian interpretation the chessboard will have enabled the rupture between seeing and making visible'[7]

Classicist thinking is summed up by Arikha in his short article on Poussin; 'The classical ideal was a search and a demand for the golden age, expressed in the golden number"[8]. He is seen as having created and practiced a set of principles used to achieve the harmonious image of a predictable formal and spiritual order. The credibility it achieved seems to be the outcome of a wonderful combination of form and content, both of which illustrate a theoretical and quasi-mythical measure, the 'golden number'. By contrast, Realist painting of the 19th century deals with Man and his world as part of 'reality', a new concept relating to the contiguity of physical, social and individual facts, to the whole sum of events that take place in a newly apprehended temporal unity, the present, the actual. It consists in a representation or a presentation of a state of things that entails an explicitly proclaimed rejection of the value attached to forms as such and the use of the exhaustive repertory of forms found - ready-made - in Nature.

What is prominent here is the difference between Courbet's 19th century approach and presentation of a certain concept of reality and that of Arikha, a difference reflected in the scope of their aspirations. Courbet aspires to the 'most complete expression of the existing thing'.[9] Arikha, living in times of shrinking certainties, pretends neither to the exhaustive rendering of reality, of the reality of the object, nor to the encompassing power of his vision. As Arikha puts it :

> By "reality" we mean the whole of reality. But I do not think we are able to grasp it and to express it. We are capable of expressing ourselves by referring to the visible through the equivalent scope of our vision.[10] (my translation)

Arikha's criticism of Abstract art relates to the existence of a formal order conditioned by its own laws and, therefore, almost decorative. As opposed to the material continuity and synthesis that exist in the concrete world, the abstract creates a language that consists of isolated pictorial elements. It is possible, at this stage, to take apart and reassemble these elements, either according to rules or as one wishes. This process which began with Impressionism continued with Neo-Impressionism, with Cezanne, until it became accelerated and extreme in abstract art. Colors can acquire

characteristics and meanings that arise from the imagination, and the use of these colors can be systematic and rational or totally intuitive. In any event, use of these colors is, like all the other elements of abstract art, not attributed to concrete reality. The justification for this is rooted in the pictorial system in which it is integrated. In his article "On abstraction" (1981), Arikha analyses the beginning of what he calls 'the tyranny of decoration on art':

> Toward the end of the century the theories of 'pure design' gradually permeated painting: The search for the secrets of form and color went on parallel to a loss of the tradition of painting from nature. The idea of the color weakens the sense of color and the color loses the power to capture the visible; at the same time the interest in the visible quickly lessens in favor of the 'pure painting' which directly arises from 'pure design'.[11]

The characteristics of decorative art as described by Riegel fit Worringer's commentary on abstract art. These characteristics tend to show that the abstract forms, mostly geometrical, constitute a conscious and consistent distancing from the variety existing in the natural world.

For Arikha, style, in the sense of an absolute system of ideas and forms, is a lie, an escape, made possible at the cost of ignoring the only truth: our immediate physical and emotional presence, that cannot be split and should not be lost in esoteric forms and signs:

> The belief that painting is a style before it is truth, that it can be realized through the artistic will – the *Konzeptwohlen* alone, the belief that art must be *Stylgerecht* resulted in the collective style. Thus began the tyranny of the decorative over art.[12]

Eight years of work with various graphic techniques, including drawing in pencil, ink drawings, engravings and lithographs, provided Arikha with a credible basis for his paintings and enabled him to formulate an artistic conception through liberation from the modernist norms of the abstract. This occured without falling back upon earlier norms of representing reality. Arikha aimed to release all the plastic elements from any 'artistic language', from any fixing style, and to use them as tools with no significance in themselves. With regard to content, he found his credibility in restricting himself to those forms and figures taken from the concrete world that the artist conceives when in the continuous grip of emotion:

> One can be informed about the world but cannot express it. Our relationship with the visible world in painting is equivalent to the Peau de chagrin. There is entropy. Therefore the need for restriction to a minimum of means, space and time – all submitted to what is truly possible to express, through seeing and painting on a flat surface […].[13]

Artistic self-doubt regarding the ability to convey exhaustive truth with regard to external reality would appear to grow worse when the artist is expecting to create forms stemming from some inner necessity, as a disincarnate primary mover. This brought Arikha to reject abstract patterns of forms, to devote himself totally to punctilious observation of the incarnate model and to let himself be absorbed by its presence, as he gradually caught himself in the net contrived to catch the other embedded in a space of his own. This interlocking of catcher / caught is the only viable approach for Arikha, the only way to grasp and delineate the elusive outlines of feeling. The way to capture it, to remove it from the inner darkness, is to mold it into an image of the visible world, a world born again in the image shaped out of an unexpected encounter between being and the surrounding world that nourishes it.

In his comments on illustrations to the text of Beckett's ''From Afar the Bird'',[14] Arikha summarizes the confrontation between the imagination and the concrete with regard to the credibility of expression. From the start, he, in fact, dismisses the validity of the illustration as a plastic expression of form aiming to convey in their full scope the sensations of the poet. Arikha goes on to emphasize the total foreignness that exists between the world of imagination and the world of plastic expression. The illustration's right to exist is found, rather, in the concession made in advance regarding the aim of conveying and expressing the spiritual quality that exists in the text.

The to and fro between concepts and their visual embodiments contrived by generations is conceived by Arikha as an attempt to bridge the gap and compromise between pure imagination and the plastic medium by inventing arbitrary forms. He considers the forming of this impossible equation between the non-concrete nature of thought and imagination and the non-reality of the forms, the sign of a failure, 'corpses of the mind' [*cadavres de l'esprit*] that 'filled his eyes with a savage hunger.' With these words Arikha indicates his turning towards the material, visible nurturing world, his renewed awareness of its being there, looking intently upon it, keeping trace of every slightest tremor it awakes in him.

Building upon this wild hunger of eyes Arikha is able to tackle the task of illustrating Beckett's short text. He deliberately limits himself to the depiction of the most humble, worn out and familiar things – some stones, a coat - letting the tense play of his gaze make them appear on the surface of the sheet, lending to their presence the enigmatic quality of things making themselves visible to our eyes, revealed to us for the first time in the opacity of their being.

For Arikha, re-orienting sight towards the visible awakes fear in the artist, who surrenders to its polymorph appearance, a fear analogous to the sense of helplessness that overcomes the illustrator of a text. To overcome it, he clings to what meets the eyes, thereby hoping to restore the credibility of his forms, the credibility of a vision that only claims to express the hinted, fragmented, mediate perception of self.

Credibility and the visible

> The painter takes his body with him, says Valery […] It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that […] which is an intertwining of vision and movement.[15]

From 1965 onwards, his work attests to the fact that a renewed perceptual approach to the visible is what enabled Arikha to work his way out of a crisis. He achieved this by his readiness to surrender to perceptual, sensual encounters with the world out there to which he keeps referring during the different steps he takes. By tracing and retracing these steps into the sensible outside, Arikha provided himself with a kind of consistency, a stable frame of reference with which the practice of an abstract mode of painting could no longer provide him.

A heavy emphasis is placed in Arikha's texts on vision, vision as passive exposure to the visible world, vision as the instrument of mimetic uncovering and visual embodiment, the same vision that fuels what Arikha calls the 'constant hunger of the eyes.' Vision has to be recovered. The distinction between passive vision and active 'realizing' vision, between 'seeing and making visible'[16] has to be blurred if it is to register the traces and jolts of existence in the world as a constitutive and positive step. Therefore, the images and forms offered by the artist should play a role in the observer's self-discovery as he sees himself reflected in them. For Arikha, however, it is imperative that

these forms and images be taken from the visible and not created in an 'arbitrary' manner out of the imagination. The two-way traffic between the seen and the seeing subject is crucial. It is Being experienced in movement as the unfolding coordinates of time and space.

Forms that do not arise at juncture points between vision, the visible and the means at the disposal of the artist, forms that do not originate out of the struggle led by the artist with each of them, are void of life and constitute deceit, conceit or corpses. In this respect, Arikha comments:

> The more the rift between the vision of the visible and the exposure of the visible deepens, the more deceit there will be and arbitrariness will rule and will blur the borders between painting and image, between painting and decoration and will cause lack of clarity and confusion.[17]

Any deviation from the visible is perceived by Arikha as a deviation from experience and from the direct expression of experience:

> I regard art as the echo of being, in its most elemental sense, I see the role of observation as a sort of lighting power which used to be called inspiration.[18]

Arikha's deep belief in the vital relationship between vision and art, vision and feeling, reveals his natural affinities with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological description of perception, its instrumentality and its workings as the locus of aesthetic, bodily dealings with the outside world. Arikha finds the answer to the 'reading of the void' [*kriat -ha-reik*] in the reading of the visible and concrete, in the gaze, the glance and what it is able to see, in a mode of seeing that measures the scope of its own limits.

In 1961 he sensed a certain direction in painting which would 'lead man towards himself with less and less mediation'[19]. Art is transubstantiation, a metabolism, a passage from spirit to matter, from idea to form or, as Arikha writes: 'a passage from the idea to nature'. How can pure spirituality exist within concrete shapes in an era which jeopardizes the ability, the effectiveness of forms taken from the material, concrete world to express extra-sensory, transcendental subject matter?

Before 1961 Arikha had believed in the capacity of abstract shapes and forms to reveal, to give manifest expression and image of the intimacy of self. By

1966 he was writing: 'For the artist there is no progress on the level of the work of art, his calling is to unfold beyond matter, [*il immaterialise*].'[20] This could take place by removing forms rooted in the reality of the visible world. But in 1968 Arikha noted: 'In the invisible the isolated look is helpless'. The alternative propounded by Arikha was to effect a reduction of all experience to what affects the seeing subject, the sight and the seen. It is the latter where experience originates and where it keeps unfolding in the form of the data - the affects - processed by the painter, which provide the kind of raw material necessary to reactivate this isolated blind gaze, to reanimate the artist's sense of self through vivification of the vital and creative link with the ongoing life of the senses. Disconnected from the raw material of perception the artist's hand cannot sketch since the shapeless must not be sketched, and if the hand sketches nevertheless, this sketch is a lie, a superfluity.

The way to escape from a form detached from the genuine and direct expression of existence, the way to escape from a formula that restrains the hand, is to re-orient one's glance away from oneself and towards one's surroundings, to change direction. Rebirth can then occur. Looking inward, absorption in one's self, appears to hinder creativity. Such obstacles are seen in abstract art as a grid of absolute shapes that repeat themselves and set a trap for the artist. Absorption, introspection, lead to barren conceptualization of felt experience. Wondering is opposed to the jolt – la *saccade*. In order to release creativity and to reattain form, one must release emotion, liberate it from thought and purpose, what Arikha has called 'orientation':

> Orientation [*as deliberate choice, as intention*] has predominated over all the other qualities of painting, but in the invisible the gaze by itself cannot achieve anything. Led astray by the orientation, it impairs the workings of the hand which [should] drive forward, then, aestheticism abolishes expression and intention altogether […][21]

Re-orienting the gaze means renewing or gaining acquaintance with the outside world. Arikha posits the primary nature of 'subjective time', of feeling as the unexpected 'jolt', sight as idiosyncratic, part and manifestation of his being. In order to come to terms with himself, an artist must dissociate himself from the past and present, from collective memory and from current knowledge. Arikha gropes and aspires towards a reality designed according to the scope and nature of his feelings, his sensitivity to distance, alienation and intimacy,

his fears and desires, a reality cut from historic - what he terms 'collective' times, a reality whose shrinking perimeter becomes the expanded field of the gaze reborn to sight, this inquisitive gaze whose presence is felt in Arikha paintings.

In the inks and pencil drawings of the sixties one may perceive more easily Arikha's feverish response to the mute ecstasy of sight restored to eyes and hands. Eyes and hands are motivated by vision – not of the ordinary classifying kind, but, rather the practical, productive vision of the artist.

Restoring credibility to the visible – perception

> Vision is the meeting, as at a crossroads, of all the aspects of being.[22]

Claiming no pretension to give either an exhaustive - or for that matter even a preliminary overview of the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty – I will content myself with quoting from the philosopher's late work *L'oeil et l'esprit* [Eye and Mind] published posthumously in 1964. I hope to draw attention to the affinities and parallels that may be detected between his definition of perception and sight and Arikha's insights, particularly Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the painters' practice as the illustration of the instrumentality of sight. Sight provides raw data to perception, to the workings of perception substituted for consciousness. Perception allows for integration of data and articulation of Being as Being-in-the world, 'immersed' and 'moving' in the unfolding process of this relationship inscribed in the common soil of what Merleau-Ponty calls *'nappe de sens brut'*, 'pool of [raw] brute meaning':

> Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the see-er does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches by looking, he opens onto the wold. And for its part, that world of which he is part is not *in itself* or matter. My movement […] is the natural sequel to, and maturation of, vision. […] my movement is self-moved. It is not ignorance of self, blind to itself; it radiates from a self… [23]

> Scientific thinking […] must return to the 'there is' which precedes it; to the site, the soil of the sensible and humanly modified world such as it is in our lives and for our bodies […] this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and acts […] Art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning.[…][24]

Perception is insertion of 'humanity', the enigmatic body in the world, the world *'sensible et ouvré'*, the world as felt, as perceived by the senses, and worked upon, articulated by and for the senses. This physical being is a primordial dimension. The artist draws on this ever present 'pool of raw meanings' activated by sight and perception that takes place - for the common viewer - beneath the deliberate acquisition and implementation of knowledge. He builds upon the 'crossover' worked out by vision between things and the body, the resulting duplication of their manifest visibility into what Merleau-Ponty describes as the secret visibility of the body. It is this hidden visibility of the world in the body that is this brute fabric, the raw material of the painter as a seeing body whose work is 'a carnal icon':

> Since things and my body are made of the same stuff, vision must somehow come about in them; or yet again, their manifest visibility must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility […Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence. […These correspondences in turn give rise to some tracing rendered visible again […] Thus there appears a 'visible' to the second power, a carnal essence or icon of the first.[25]

For Arikha, restoration of the credibility of art by means of the visible world is an attempt to experience existence by simultaneously expressing it, willfully renouncing analytic and exhaustive definition of the seen but relying on perception for a wishfully unmediated or less mediated approach of self and world as intertwined in Merleau-Ponty's 'distinctive reflexivity'.

> The sensible is access to everything and my body is my insertion in the sensible. It is gifted with the distinctive reflexivity that makes it both subject and object and so allows it to transcend the distinction of subject and object […] This is the mute contact with self […].[26]

The relation between inner and outer world, between body and concrete world, between vision and what is visible – is what drives the structure of experience. Therefore the passionate 'seeing' artist finds himself at this meeting point between world and man. It is he who feels the touch and is aware of the gap that exists between vision and illustration of the visible. Due to this, painting

constitutes the paradigmatic activity, the paradigmatic illustration of the workings of perception as experience of self and world. Quoting Sartre's words, in his *portrait* of Merleau-Ponty, we could say that the artist is the 'privileged performer''[27] of this necessary and mediated reciprocity that takes place in the act of seeing, intricate, individed reciprocity conjured up by Merleau-Ponty's words :

> That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognizes, in what it sees, the 'other side' of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching;[…] It is a self, not by transparency, like thought […] but a self by confusion, narcissism, inherence of the see-er in the seen, […] My body is a thing among things […] the world is made of the very stuff of the body'.[28]

Being born out of a struggling perception making its way into the visible and back to the formation of its means, gives such a practice the credibility Arikha could no longer find - back in the sixties - in art built upon severed ties with a mimetic, emphatic and perceptual approach to the sensible world. Here, art as an expression of being is nourished by no other source than that same concrete connection from which being itself is nourished, and it cannot be based on anything else other than perception, which is the instrument that creates and leads to the functioning of this being.

Merleau-Ponty describes the constant duality of vision and the visible, and the mutual definition of the inner and outer world in the ongoing interaction between being and world:

> The painter's vision is not a view upon the outside […] The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible.[29]

Vision and creation for an artist like Arikha appear as a feverish race back and forth between the visible and the realized, between the look and what is looked at. They are what Merleau-Ponty calls 'the interrogation of painting': '[But] the interrogation of painting in any case looks toward this secret and feverish genesis of things in our body.[30]

This eye and hand activity turns art into a model of the process of the creation of life itself. Arikha calls this process 'revelation.' Merleau-Ponty calls it 'birth'.

If previously the question related to the internal unseen – existence – by means of concrete forms, a question faced by Abstract artists, who claimed spiritual expression in art – an appropriate answer is found here. Existence is not one, a unifying / unified state expressed by one concept and one word. Rather manifold, it has as many facets as the concrete world. Thus, while Arikha can claim to express existence in the shapes of the visible, he is also aware of his ability to encompass but one moment, one petty event of this double-track Being: 'The sketch is only footprints, footprints with a double track, the inside seen through the outside'.'[31] Arikha's words here precisely echo those of Merleau-Pontys:

> Neither the drawing nor the painting belongs to the in-itself any more than the image does. They are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of feeling [*le sentir*] makes possible and without which we would never understand the quasi presence and imminent visibility that make up the whole problem of the imaginary. [32]
> Art bursts out of the felt [*le senti*] and reverberates in the felt.[33] (my translation)

The similarity of these two sentences conveys, more than any paraphrase, the closeness of these two intuitions, that of the philosopher and that of the painter, in their worship of the visible and of perception.

> The artist must keep himself alert to be able to receive what moves him. But, marching from painting to painting he is prey to growing self-awareness and diminishing faith. In the end he knows what his form is like. This is the alarm signal, to turn back on oneself, the starving eye will rule over the hand putrefied by habit.[34] (my translation)

To rely on perception for unplanned conveying of the visible constitutes a challenge to the artist's ingenuity, the proof that perception – as opposed to concept – is thought unfolding through the materiality of paint, giving back to texture, color and compositional devices the effectiveness of tools, tools able to play back the recurrent jolts of emotions, primitive, archaic tools the artist uses to cope with feelings.

Emotion

> The painter is at work. He is carried away. The head interferes, all comes to a stand. When the hand is left to itself, all comes to a stand. Carried away, he [the artist] is neither past nor present but only what truth there is inside him. If nothing carries him away, he will stand inert in front of his picture, arbitrary moves [l'arbitraire] his sole way out […] Art is nothing, it is a breath. It goes through the breath and stays in the breath. [35] (my translation)

Emotion is the breath of a two-fold desire, the need to express or emit, to imitate or receive, an urge to make visible irremediably linked to the seen object of desire:

> [The painter] is caught between the irreversibility of time and the dead angle of his own moment, surrendering to the need to express (to emit) and to the lure of imitation (to receive), attracted by what impresses itself forcibly on him from outside and haunted by that which dwells inside him, he probes himself in darkness and is able to make visible [*rendre visible*] only by [*through*] that which moves him [*ce qui le meut*] .[36] (my tranlation)

This inspiration (or breath) gives birth to the work of art, and then passes on. Self and the work of art are intertwined in a necessary relationship. The nature, identity and significance of this rhythm is incomprehensible to the artist experiencing it. A style whose nature is a process that is formed from one shock to another conveys no rational or comprehensive message. It is utterly private, it is a self-discovery that is constantly being renewed, without conveying, says Arikha 'a proposition', an hypothesis to be examined:

> The step from painting to painting can only continue as a step in darkness. As a process of revelation. A step from within to without, from feeling to knowledge […] Art alone includes […] the formation of the word. Formation is a process. Not a proposition. It is to the artist what the sound of the voice is to oneself; a quality of truth.[37]

Emotion has for Arikha indisputable legitimacy. It is contrasted with slower and more analytic and systematic modes of dealing with perception, of

apprehending the connecting links between the inside and outside, a connection thought by Arikha to be probed by feeling, by bouts of darkness and light, in the inchoate state of 'beginning', as he wrote in 1972:

> Art is possible only in a state of beginning since expression is like transmitting a radio wave in which transmission operates on an energetic principle. Transmitting energy is only possible in a state of beginning. There is no continuous progressing, because continuousness means shutting out. In order to be in a state of beginning the artist must struggle with a preliminary state.[38]

In this art of touch and shock, emotion becomes a bridge, a vulnerable but continuous bridge:

> Feeling is a perpetual verb which includes factual propositions but cannot be included in them. Feeling can only be transmitted by feeling and experienced, like pain, individually.[39]

Abstract art and Arikha's art share a common reductive principle tied however to different conceptual backgrounds. Reduction in Arikha' practice contrasts with the reductive tendency characteristic of what is meant by abstract configuration of forms, where formal reduction stands in inverted ratio to the conceptual, philosophical intimations of style. With Arikha, proliferation of forms and images, sheer visibility and sensuality of the pigments and texture, aesthetic fullness and redundant marks signify reduction of the philosophical or conceptual scope to the unique, the specific and intense occurrence of the event, the perceptual and emotional preliminary jolt.

We have remarked previously on the tight relationship acknowledged by Arikha between being, the visible and perception, but existence is not considered by Arikha as one absolute idea or essence, isolated from the world. It is what he defines as 'the little event of being', limited in its scope, direct and unexhausted, located in the meeting point with the most trivial forms of the outside world: 'It [art] is insignificant in comparison with world events. It is about the little event of being. All the rest is too vast. Culture, fashion, ouside events [...]'.[40]

Being has no single or unchanging form – no identifying icons. The ways of expressing or manifesting its existence are as varied as the forms of the visible. Selecting the means to achieve it is carried out by emotion, processed between

eye and hand. From this arises the dramatic equation between experience and the visible, which in itself constitutes a drastic reduction in one sense and an expansion in another. Creating such an equation does not solve, for the artist, the problem of expression since he can neither grasp and express experience as a whole, nor create on canvas the whole visible world. The dichotic quality of this experience appears best in the final reduction and recurrent appearances of the artist' s subjects - the emotional tenor of the event depending not on the novelty of the encounter with a model but, in contrast, on the repeated approach to the same one - and on reduction of ideas of time and space – expressed in the structure of the work of art and its image.

Form, 'Drawing According to Nature'
Arikha's conception of painting as events being enacted and re-enacted through processing of perpetual data in paint and gesture is what lends it credibility.

Painting and drawing are paralyzed by 'purpose'. Purposefulness is what is criticized by Arikha in an interview with Germain Viatte[41] in which he presents the power of unpredictable emotion as canceling itself out when facing purposefulness. He uses terms such as 'determinism' in order to point out that same foreknowledge that directs the content and form of a new work of art. It is this knowledge that blocks the way to the formal randomness that illustrates unpredictability, strength and uniqueness of experiences.

Drawing, notes Arikha, is not a reconstruction of form, it is rather a struggle against knowledge of the form. Limiting himself to drawing for eight years was for him a process of learning the visible all over again by means of eye and hand. Lines can expand to a surface or split into spots. Drawing is a loyal expression of the forming of the form between eye and hand until it appears on the page. Drawing follows movement from perception to creation, by seeking the origin of emotion and the means to memorize it. Arikha's drawing isolates the object and turns it into a means of adhering and focusing upon both the visible and the hidden. 'Drawing according to nature is what is sensed through that which is understood,' writes Arikha in his analysis of Ingres's drawings, because drawings are direct prints of all the most minute waves of emotion.

> A drawing, an immediate trace marking the slightest eddy of feeling, is a sort of jolt provoked by perception. To seize the unseizable other by the inexpressible I – that always has been his [Ingres] aim. More than painting, drawing, once it achieves this miracle, remains closer to the soul (as song did for Aristotle) than any other means of expression.[42]

Notes

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1. Arikha and Tuchman 1977 : 22.
2. Arikha 1979 (a) : 103.
3. Arikha 1977: 22.
4. 'L'idéal classique […] était une vision abstraite exprimée avec les données du réel soumises à l'harmonie, au beau idéal […] Le modernisme a emprunté le chemin similaire et inverse, du réel à l'abstraction'; Arikha 1979 (b).
5. 'Le damier illustre parfaitement la méthode issue de l'héritage cézanien étant une sorte de trame permettant la réalisation et la distribution du visible sur la superficie plane. Progressivement, le damier permettra d'affermir l'autonomie du tableau par rapport à toute représentation'; Arikha 1977: 22.
6. *Ibid.*: 17.
7. *Ibid.*: 16.
8. Arikha 1979 (b): 142.
9. 'I maintain in addition that painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the representation of the real and existing things. It is a completely physical language, the words of which consist of all visible aspects, an object which is abstract, not visible, non existent, is not within the realm of painting'; Courbet 1861: 35.
10. 'Par le terme de réalité nous comprenons la totalité de la réalité. Or je ne pense pas que nous sommes capables de la saisir et de l'exprimer. Nous sommes capables de nous exprimer par rapport au visible dans l'équivalence du regard'; Arikha and Viatte 1973. Five years later Arikha expressed the perception of a shrinking relationship between painting and the visible, see below n. 13.
11. Arikha 1981 (b): 62.
12. *Ibid.*: 64.
13. Arikha 1978: 3.
14. 'En fait rien n'est illustrable vraiment […] Tous ces cadavres de l'esprit, rendant insupportable l'autonomie de l'imaginaire, de la fiction, ont provoqué par réaction une sauvage faim des yeux. Le havre de l'`imaginaire, le code du modernisme, l'arsenal de l'avant-guerre délaissés, je me suis trouvé comme Diogène, désarmé devant le visible. Illustrer (c'est à dire revenir à l'imaginaire) dans ces conditions-là, n'était plus possible. J'ai donc pris dans cet admirable texte quelques motifs concrets qui entourent le personnage […] seuls motifs concrets et accessibles au regard.'; Arikha 1979 (a): 103.
15. Merleau-Ponty 1961: 196.
16. 'Au fur et à mesure que la rupture entre voir et rendre visible s'accentuera , l'artifice s'imposera et l'arbitraire triomphera effaçant de plus en plus les distinctions entre peinture et image, peinture et décoration, provoquant la confusion.'; Arikha 1961: 6.
17. *Ibid*.
18. Arikha 1977: 22.

19. 'On peut deviner un certain changement en peinture qui conduit l'homme vers soi-même avec de moins en moins de médiations.'; Arikha 1961: 6.

20. 'Pas d'évolution pour le peintre au niveau de l'oeuvre: il immatérialise'; Arikha 1966.

21. 'L'objet du regard change de génération en génération […] un demi-siècle d'art moderne est déjà clair et clos. Orienté le dos à la nature, il a détourné le désir d'imiter vers un besoin plus vif des forces autonomes. La main et le regard disjoints ont pris des chemins séparés. L'orientation l'a emporté sur toutes les autres qualités de la peinture, mais dans l'invisible le regard seul ne peut rien. Egaré par l'orientation, il empêche la main qui guide, alors l'esthétisme annule l'expression et l'intention'; Arikha 1968.

22. Merleau-Ponty 1964: 147.

23. *Ibid.*: 124. On Merleau-Ponty's conception of perception as a 'natural coincidence of consciousness and things', Cathryn Vasseleu remarks: 'When Merleau-Ponty refers to sensibility as 'empirical pregnancy', he is referring to flesh as a language of self-begetting. Merleau-Ponty has an image of flesh as birth […] Flesh is thus the double medium of being born and giving birth. Sensibility is itself the medium of its transcendence, the medium of its own emergence'; Vasseleu 1998: 33.

24. *Ibid.:* 122.

25. *Ibid.*: 125-126. On 'carnality' and 'flesh' in Merleau-Ponty, see Vasseleu 1998: 'Part II, 'Carnal Light', esp. 36-40.

26. Merleau-Ponty 1967: 259.

27. 'Nul ne peut voir qu'il ne soit en même temps visible […] Pour penser (voir) il faut être: la chose à travers tous par chacun constituée, toujours une mais indéfiniment biseautée nous renvoie chacun pour tous à notre statut ontologique. Le peintre est l'artisan privilégié, le meilleur témoin de cette réciprocité médiée.'; Sartre 1964: 272. This 'mediated reciprocity' is echoed in Arikha's words: 'Our nature is to mediate and we are condemned to be ourselves.'; Arikha 1981 (b): 62.

28. Merleau-Ponty 1964: 125. 'Le corps est pris dans le tissu du monde […] et le monde est fait de l'étoffe de mon corps […] Un corps humain est là quand, entre voyant et visible, entre touchant et touché, entre un oeil et l'autre, entre la main et la main se fait une sorte de recroisement, quand s'allume l'étincelle du sentant-sensible, quand prend ce feu qui ne cessera pas de brûler […] Tous les problèmes de la peinture sont là. Ils illustrent l'énigme du corps et elle les justifie.' For a preliminary discussion of Avigdor Arikha's views on perception and sight, see a critical review of Merleau-Ponty's approach to *sensation* as metaphor in Rudy Steinmetz, 'Rhétorique de la philosophie', in *Passions de la littérature*. Avec Jacques Derrida. Sous la direction de Michel Lisse, Paris 1996, 173-190.

29. *Ibid.*: 124.

30. *Ibid.*: 128.

31. 'Le dessin n'est qu'une trace - une trace à deux sentiers – le dedans par le dehors,' Arikha 1971: 54.

32. Merleau-Ponty 1964: 126.

33. Arikha 1971: 52.

34. 'L'artiste doit être en état d'alerte pour recevoir ce qui le meut. Mais guetté dans

cette marche de toile en toile par la croissante lucidité et la décroissante croyance, il finit par connaître sa forme. C'est l'alarme, se tourner alors contre soi par l'oeil affamé qui gouvernera la main pourrie d'habitudes,' *Ibid.*: 54.

35. 'Le peintre est à l'oeuvre. Il est emporté. La tête intervient, c'est l'arrêt. Emporté, il n'est ni passé ni présent, mais uniquement ce qu'il peut y avoir de vrai en lui. Si rien ne l'emporte, il restera inerte devant sa toile, l'arbitraire son seul recours […] L'art n'est rien, c'est un souffle. Il passe par le souffle et reste dans le souffle,' Arikha 1966: 77.

36. 'Le peintre est pris entre l'irréversibilité du temps et l'angle mort de son instant, livré à son besoin d'exprimer (c'est à dire d'émettre) et à l'attrait d'imiter (c'est à dire de capter), attiré par ce qui du dehors le frappe et hanté par ce qui du dedans l'habite, il se sonde dans le noir et ne peut rendre visible que par ce qui le meut,' Arikha 1971: 52.

37. Arikha 1977: 16.

38. Arikha and Barzel 1972.

39. Arikha 1978: 3.

40. *Ibid.*: 6.

41. 'Entre intention et intensité il y a un abîme. Je ne pense pas que la peinture soit un acte intentionel […] D'abord l'intention abolit l'intensité et puis l'intention est fille du déterminisme, et le déterminisme est une bien naïve illusion,' Arikha and Viatte 1973.

42. Arikha 1981 (a): 16.

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Warburg's *"Pathos Formula"* in Psychoanalytic and Benjaminian Contexts

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*T*he **"Pathos Formula" redefined**

This article is intended to offer some meeting points between Aby Warburg's "Pathos Formula", psychoanalytic thought, and the concept of allegory in the writings of Walter Benjamin. The comparison between the different thinkers will entail an examination from two points of view: first, I shall present the consequences of an encounter between these three formulas of the artistic sign; and second, I shall suggest an understanding of the impact of these concepts and their interrelations on historiographic issues. I will attempt to refer to various questions raised by contemporary writers concerning the "Pathos Formula": What are its limits? To what objects can the "Pathos Formula", as a symbolic mode, refer, and to what kinds of objects can it not? What emotive, cultural, and metaphysical contents is it able to hold or refer to? How can we characterize the theoretical perspective that the "Pathos Formula" creates?[1]

For Ernst Gombrich, the phrase – 'You live and do me no Harm' – seemed to summarize the principles of Warburg's concept of the "Pathos Formula".[2] This phrase expresses the relation between the primitive human and the external chaotic world that surrounds him. It expresses the situation in which the human being is able to bear the existence of chaotic power without being hurt.

The "Pathos Formula", which expresses this traumatic encounter between man and the world, is a result of a visual fixation, the source of which is a process of mimicry of some of the bearable (biomorphic) qualities of the threatening force, that then becomes petrified and fixed as an image. The original referent is one that exceeds the limits of every-day human consciousness, and that threatens its security and coherence. This process is typical of primitive societies and cultures. Warburg writes:

It is characteristic of mythopoetic mentality (cf. Vignoli, Myth and Science) that for any stimulus, be it visual or auditory, a biomorphic cause of a definite and intelligible nature is projected which enables the mind to take defensive measures […] This kind of defensive reaction by means of establishing a link between either the subject or the object with beings of maximal power which can yet be grasped in their extension, is the fundamental act of the struggle of existence […] This may be understood as a defensive measure in the struggle for existence against living enemies which the memory, in a state of phobic arousal, tries to grasp in their most distinct and lucid shape while also assessing their full power in order to take the most effective defensive measures. These are tendencies below the threshold of consciousness.The substituted image objectifies the stimulus causing the impression and creates an entity against which defenses can be mobilized.[3]

The fixated image carries within itself traces of the traumatic encounter with the threatening external force: the image, which is the outcome of the encounter, registers the external force's excessive vitality in forms that usually express movement. Having been created, the image magically "enables" man to use the force of the primordial chaos according to his needs.[4] The "Pathos Formula" has its base in magical action and experience, which characterizes the "primitive" stage of human development, and contains the identification and merging of the external, foreign, menacing, "Other", and non-human force, with the image, which imprints within itself the primordial presence. In this magical consciousness, the image acts as merger and unifier.

The "Pathos Formula" carries within itself two kinds of memory: on the one hand, it carries the memory of the traumatic encounter with the menacing force; and on the other, it remembers the defensive, fixating act that the consciousness of the recipient performs in relation to this encounter.[5] In the course of time, the "Pathos Formula" is fixated as a cultural product, which, as history develops, is able to express different and particular contents.

In his construction of the "Pathos Formula", Warbug used psychological, theological, and aesthetic theories. His reliance on Nietzsche's interpretation of Classical Greek culture at its peak, as containing a dynamic balancing of the Dionysian (the chaotic, changing and violent) and the Apollonian (the symmetric, calm, harmonic and rational) is well known.[6]

In its genealogical development, the "Pathos Formula" has gone through several stages: in the primitive, magical state, the Chaotic Presence and the

Sign were totally identified with one another; but at a later stage the chaotic referent continuously loses its presence in the visual sign, which is still able to be used as a cultural vehicle. The fact that a painter, a writer, etc., uses an image that has its source in a "Pathos Formula" is, for Warburg, evidence of the culture's need to connect with the primordial movements and qualities that enlivened the primitive image. Warburg found important examples of this process in the paintings of Botticelli and the Quatrocento culture in Florence. From exploring Botticelli's work and the lively forms of draperies (which for Warburg had their source in ancient culture), he went on to examine the figure and the formula of the Nymph, about which he wrote: ' Who, then is the "Nympha"? As real being of flesh and blood she may have been a freed slave from Tartary…but in her true essence she is as elemental sprite, a pagan goddess in exile.'[7] The mode of artistic sign that Warburg identified in Quatrocento Florence contains the two human tendencies (the chaotic and the rational) that are the source of the image in Warburg's thought, and that also characterize Greek culture and its revival in the Renaissance.

The later modern stage of development of the "Pathos Formula" has its roots in 17th c. culture, especially in Northern Europe. This culture witnessed the rise of the Lutheran and Protestant theological models, which emphasized the rational and moral content of religious praxis. In Albrecht Durer's work, and especially in his print *Melancholy 1*, Warburg saw the use of images from Classical times, but in a way that bore content and relayed an atmosphere relating to melancholy, reflection, doubt and allegory. In this print, the image of the threatening and chaotic god Saturn becomes a vehicle for representing reflection, genius, and melancholy:

> Dürer has rendered the Saturnian demon innocuous through the active work of reason. […] What Melancholia holds in her hand is no base and servile spade – as Saturn used to carry it […] – but the compass of creative genius. Jupiter, Magically invoked, comes to her aid with his appeasing and beneficial effects on Saturn. On the print the salvation of man through the neutralizing aspect of Jupiter has already become a fact. (Ges. Schr. II, 530-531)[8]

The Northern Baroque is, therefore, an epoch in which the relation to the original referent is mediated, conflictual and doubtful, an epoch that uses the intellectual tools of rational thought in order to transform the destructive and vital force into one that represents values of stability, depression, and reflexive contemplation. In the modern period, the sign gradually lost the merge between

referent and signifier, which had been valid in the magical-associative stage. In the 19th c., Warburg saw Manet's painting *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* as an example of a late development of the "Pathos Formula". He showed that the scene portrayed in this work has sources not only in 16th c. art, but also in ancient sarcophagi. Warburg's stand leads to an understanding of the activity of the "Pathos Formula" as that of an independent agent, cultural, impersonal, which makes itself present in the images of various periods, injecting Dionysian qualities into the image, even without the direct will of the artist, and which can only be read and revealed in the course of historical research. We are talking, therefore, about some kind of unconscious, latent cultural memory that is encrypted in particular images, but whose deciphering and decoding is possible only through the historical research of sources.

The "Pathos Formula" and Psychoanalytic Discourse

A basic problem of the "Pathos Formula" concerns the issue of its transparency, and its being a mimetic reproduction of the traumatic experience, as well of its expressive energy. Is there a simple causal relation between the perceptual experience of the encounter with reality, and the sign created by the recipient-subject? If we accept the claim of most of Warburg's interpreters that the "Pathos Formula" preserves the theoretical tradition that explored the concept of "Empathy" within its theoretical structure, then we are dealing with a model of an unproblematic relation, which does not take negation, rejection, repression and opacity into account, all of which can be found in the transformation of the unconscious matter into the sign that is left on the surface of consciousness. The Empathic model also does not take into account the limited capacity of human consciousness to handle traumatic experiences, and the activity of memory in screening and neutralizing the effects of the traumatic experience on the subject's consciousness. But we can find evidence in Warburg's writings that suggest that he was indeed aware of memory's "screening" capacity:

> The inherited consciousness of maximalized impressions stamped
> on the mind (engram) passes them on without taking cognizance
> of the direction of their emotional charge, simply as an experience
> of energy tensions; this unpolarized continuum can also function
> as continuum. The imparting of a new meaning to these energies
> serves as a protective screen. (Journal, VII, 1929, p. 255) [9]

Even though Warburg emphasizes the protective function of the "Pathos Formula", it is still defined, at least by more conservative interpreters, as able

to serve as evidence, as a testimony, for the primary traumatic encounter. In contrast, the concept of 'screen memory', as defined by Freud, is one that contains a considerable amount of skepticism about the ability to use memory as evidence:

> ... The concept of a 'screen memory' {is one} which owes its value as a memory not to its own content but to the relation existing between that content and some other, that has been suppressed. [….] Out of a number of childhood memories of significant experiences, all of them of similar distinctness and clarity, there will be some scenes which, when they are tested [...], turn out to be falsified. Not that they are complete inventions; they are false in the sense that they have shifted an event to a place where it didn't occur- […] they serve the purposes of the repression and replacement of objectionable or disagreeable impressions […] it may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood. [10]

Freud took into account the opacity of the experience and memories of 'post traumatic' time. He noted that 'There is in general no guarantee of the data produced by our memory'.[11] In his writings, one can find a skeptical stance relating to the ontological nature of the trauma manifested, a stance that would become more explicit in Lacan's writings.[12] Lacan rephrases several times what he calls 'The Freudian Theory of Memory'. For Lacan (psychoanalytic) memory is a form of writing, but at the same time it is separated from consciousness:

> […] The psychoanalytic memory Freud talks about is [...] Something completely inaccessible to experience […] Freudian memory is not located along a sort of continuum from reaction to reality considered as a source of excitation […] What is essentially new in my theory, says Freud, is the claim that memory is not simple, it's registered in various ways. […] It's been known for a long time that the phenomenon of consciousness and the phenomenon of memory exclude each other. […] At the beginning of the circuit of psychical apprehension there is perception.This perception implies consciousness. […] Between the essentially ephemeral Wahrnehmungen (Perception), which disappear as soon as they appear, and the constitution of the system of consciousness and, even at this stage, of the ego […] one has to

assume a prior, and at least partial, organization of language in order for memory and historicization to work. The memory phenomena that Freud is interested in are always language phenomena. In other words, one already has to have the signifying material to make anything signify at all.[13]

The traumatic experience is not present in our conscious apparatuses in a simple positive sense – it can only be represented, become present post-factum, as and through interpretive activity. The notion of inscription and writing as crucial to the Freudian concept of memory should be emphasized:

> …The impression of the external world as raw, original, primitive, is outside the field which corresponds to a notable experience, namely, one that is effectively inscribed in something that […] Freud expresses right at the beginning of his thought as *Niederschrift*, something that presents itself not simply in terms of *Paegung* or of impression, but in the sense of something which makes a sign and which is of the order of writing.[14]

The meaning of the traumatic lies precisely in the fact that the event cannot be comprehended, apprehended, registered and codified by human tools and definitions. Warburg himself related his concept of the "Pathos Formula" to psychoanalytical terms of the trauma:

> The primeval category of causal thought is maternity. The relation between the mother and child displays the enigma of a tangible material connection bound up with the profoundly bewildering trauma of the separation of one living being from another. The detachment of the subject from the object which establishes zone for abstract thought originates in the experience of the cutting of the umbilical cord. The 'savage', perplexed in the face of nature, is orphaned, without paternal protection.[15]

The notion of the traumatic experience as resistant to signification was connected by Freud and Lacan to the problematics of memory:

> One may go so far as to believe that the opacity of the trauma – as it was then maintained in its initial function by Freud's thought,

that is to say, in my terms, its resistance to signification - is then specifically held responsible for the limits of remembering.[16]

For Lacan, the concept of the traumatic encounter responds to the missed encounter with what he calls the 'real'. This impossible encounter, seen similarly by Warburg, is an experience that threatens the homogeneity of the ego, and at the same time initiates the reconstruction of the ego's identity.[17] This encounter with what could really be considered as 'external' to the self is also what constitutes the whole structure of desire and loss that operates in the subject.[18]

In his early text, "The Mirror Stage",[19] Lacan deals with this process of the building of the ego as form and coherency vis-à-vis the external chaotic environment. In many senses, this text recalls the process Warburg describes when relating to imprinting of the image in the "Pathos Formula". Lacan relates to the (non chronological) event in which the little baby, aged one or one and a half, who does not yet possess an identity that separates him from the world, and who is also relatively helpless, recognizes in an external image, and in a paradigmatic manner in the mirror image, the possibility to create coherence and structural identity for himself. Through the external coherent form he recognizes his "I" with a sense of victory, but at the same moment he also splits himself, into the identity of the ego, which actually comes from the external field of the "Other", and a chaotic, incoherent existence, which constantly threatens to break and shake the concept of the imaginary identity of the ego. The Warburgian "Pathos Formula", if we are to understand it from the theoretical angle of empathy, is based on a very similar logic of identification that characterizes the agency of the ego. But we should remember that, according to the logic of the "Mirror Stage", the surrounding world can simultaneously constitute a threat to the ego's coherence, while also being a ground for identification and self-coherence. Therefore, the forces of the ego must constantly be acting in order to preserve its coherence. In accordance with the process of the "Mirror Stage", we can offer a double interpretation of the "Pathos Formula" in psychoanalytic terms, both as an act of victory for the ego in seizing and using the chaotic external reality, and also as a traumatic moment, fleeting but undiminishing, which haunts the action of signification and sabotages it.

Another issue that is explicated and given expression in Lacan's writing, is of the place of mimesis in the creation of the (artistic) image in relation to the role that the subject fills in this process. In his 11th seminar,[20] Lacan maintains that the origin of the act of painting is in mimicking the external environment.

This conception is taken from the writings of Roger Caillois, which describe the tendency of animals to change their appearance by mimicking their natural animal or vegetal surroundings.[21] In Caillois, as in Warburg, this mimetic action is based on a concept of the subject-organism-recipient's fear, and of its mimicking of its menacing environment. By assimilating itself into the strange environment, the organism affords itself a possibility of existing and surviving. Lacan adds new contexts for the action of mimicry: he adds the motivations of seduction and entrapment, and the identification of the organism with the 'gaze' that is turned on him by his environment. The Subject wears a kind of mask, which locates him in the midst of his external visual field, in the visual field of the Other. In this manner, the recipient-subject is no longer located in a simple position of self-defense and of passively reacting to that which comes toward it, but it also acts as initiator, as having desire, as a subject inside a space of rituality. The insertion of desire into the inventory list of concepts of empathic mimicking and identification in Warburg may help in our attempt to reformulate the mode of imprinting the image in the 'magical stage' of Warburg's Pathos formula. The Subject does not merely 'freeze' the external impression, thereby taking hold of it, but it wishes to be this external impression; it wants to enter the field of the external force, and also wishes to be desired by it. The (always missed) encounter of the Subject with the Gaze is a traumatic 'event', forever showing what the eye cannot see. In this reformulation, re-activation of the "Pathos Formula" does not act as an elegiac and nostalgic representation of an encounter that 'has been' – it uses it to seduce both the referent and the spectator, to create a relation of continuous desire toward that same thing that threatened to deconstruct (and destroy) the subject in the primal traumatic encounter. In this manner, the action of the "Pathos Formula" along the pivot of history does not continuously diminish the presence of the chaotic essence – instead, it has a continuous dialogue with it, which defines and dissimulates the building of the ego in relation to it. But the most important thing is that the picture, which holds within itself the Gaze, contains not just the conscious sign of signification, but also the primal inscription, which can never be conscious.

The "Pathos Formula" and Walter Benjamin's concept of "Allegory"
We have seen that, in his writings, Warburg has given us some key pointers that enable a complex reading of the relations between memory, expression and traumatic encounter. The most salient dialectic that characterizes the action of the "Pathos Formula" is that between mourning (understood as the cutting

off of the 'self' from its surrounding 'maternal' environment, and the construction of its identity in this dual structure), and desire (understood as the subject's drive, expressed in its wish to seduce the external environment, to be seen by it by looking at it). These two poles of the dialectic oscillate between passive and active positions, as master and as slave, in a process that encompasses these two opposite definitions of the subject.

In order to further discuss this dialectic between the mournful emotive charge and the driving force of desire, I turn to Walter Benjamin's concept of allegory. The meeting between the latter and Aby Warburg's "Pathos Formula" can lead us to further refinements of Warburg's theoretical concept of the symbol. Various researchers have already noted some connections between Warburg's and Benjamin's thinking. Benjamin cited the works of Warburg and his circle several times, and wished to join their studies in London.[22]

We have already noted the problem of the transparency of signification and expression, which is implicated in the "Pathos Formula". As we have seen, the Dionysian aspect of Warburg's thought is characteristic of the "Pathos Formula" in its magical mode, as a first-degree representation of an essential, vital and chaotic presence. The concept of the "Pathos Formula" performs a rhetoric of vitality: the menacing 'living movement' itself is registered and inscribed, in a process of mimicry, of fixing and petrifying the image, which afterwards will serve as an agent for communicating and disseminating the essential presence. Therefore, there is an inherent connection between the 'transparency' of the sign of the "Pathos Formula", and the vitality reflected in it. When Warburg discussed the later stage of the "Pathos Formula", for example in Manet's painting, he related to the fading of the formula's power in a continuous and permanent connection to this essential presence; and the sign, torn out of his original context, is simply understood as less adequate for the "Pathos Formula", and is used to supply other cultural needs of expression and action. The problems of transparency and vitality are rigorously examined in Benjamin's thought. His concept of allegory, however, unlike Warburg's thought, does rest on the vital and menacing primordial presence.

Similar to Warburg, who saw the 17th century as the start of a new era of the symbol, Benjamin locates the essential formation of allegory in the 17th century, even though it relied on earlier, basically medieval, mystical and hermetic traditions.[23] From the start, the Benjaminian allegory relinquishes the immediate presence of 'truth' and 'the idea'.[24] It only allows the 'occurrence', and not the presence, of truth, and only within the evolving (and destructive) actions of signifying and representing. The meeting, the encounter, is only created as an

event inside the signifying processes, which are also reading, hermeneutic, processes. The 'missed encounter' of truth and the lineage of significance leads to the conclusion that the Benjaminian allegory presupposes that the possibility of an encounter disappears. In the allegorical economy of the Baroque, any meeting with 'truth' or 'being' is only possible in a non-causal, miraculous, manner, which comes from an external Godly intervention: the German *Trauspiel* is taken up entirely with the hopelessness of the earthly condition. Such redemption as it knows resides in the depth of the destiny itself rather than in the fulfillment of a divine plan of salvation.[25] Because the allegorical mode of expression is built on ever continuing decay and destruction, Benjamin sees the images of the skull, the corpse and the architectonic ruin, as the most central expressions of the allegorical impulse in Baroque culture.

If, as mentioned above, Warburg's concept rests, at least at first glance, on the continuous rhetoric of traumatic relation to a vital presence, Benjamin's allegory leans on the understanding of the image's coming into being as continuous dissociation, degeneration and fading, in a space that does not have a measurable relation to a source of experience. Nevertheless, both Benjamin and Warburg see the ritualistic source of all works of art. However, Benjamin's emphasis is not on the Dionysian side of the ritual, but rather on what he calls 'its use value':

> Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of the ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritualistic function. In other words, the unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. [...] The Ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty.[26]

Experience and expression, which in Warburg are split into two successive moments, in Benjamin, are turned into one, non-dichotomous entity, which presupposes the giving up and disappearance of being and presence. In the introduction to his *Tragic Drama* text, Benjamin directs his words against the romantic and neo-Kantian aesthetic tradition, which distinguished between the symbol, considered to be the paradigmatic artistic mode of signifying, because of its aspiration to be actually 'pregnant' with the presence of the

sublime idea of which it was a representation, and the allegory, understood as the making-use of image-conventions, without being open to the full, abstract presence of the idea. Benjamin criticized the Romantic concept of the transparent symbol:

> The unity of the material and the transcendental object, which constitutes the paradox of the theological symbol, is distorted into a relationship between appearance and essence. The introduction of this distorted conception of the symbol into aesthetics was a romantic and destructive extravagance […]. As a symbolic construct, the beautiful is supposed to merge with the divine in an unbroken whole.[27]

The dichotomy between the allegorical and the symbolic that was presented by the Romantics is, in Benjamin, made into one basic impulse, the allegorical one, which produces, in extreme cases of despair, the symbolical impulse. Even the German romantics condemned allegory in the 19th century, and Benjamin recognized a revival of the allegorical praxis in the writings of Baudelaire.[28] But this allegorical way of writing has some other characteristics apart from those of the Baroque allegory:[29]

> Melancholy bears in the 19th century a different character, however, to that which it bore in the 17th. The key figure of the early allegory is the corpse. The key figure of the later allegory is the "souvenir". The "souvenir" is the schema of the transformation of the commodity into a collector's object.[30]

If, as quoted above, the Baroque allegory comes from 'the hopelessness of the earthly condition', the Baudelairian allegory is founded on:

> [The allegorical vision is always founded on] a devalued phenomenal world. The specific devaluation of the world of things that one encounters in the commodity is the foundation for the allegorical intention in Baudelaire […] The inanimate body, still offered up to pleasure, unites allegory and the commodity.[31]

The Baudelairian allegory is a product of the flow of exchanges and reproductions in modern society and culture, which leads to and comes from a 'shock' experience, and it generates a work of art that presupposes and exhibits

the exchangeability of the signifier and the commodity, and the turning of every sign into interpreter and reader of another sign. In the modern age, it is not the natural, external, physical world that is degrading, but rather that of internal experience. The shock, which is the modern subject's mode of encounter with his surrounding reality, and which entails a malfunctioning of everyday experience, consciousness and memory, is expressed in the image of the 'souvenir', which is the 'inanimate' object in which authentic experience has been inscribed and buried.

Benjamin exchanges the anxiety and fear directed toward the vital presence and the defense procedures against it, which are latent in the concept of the Warburgian "Pathos Formula", for a melancholic concept of continuous mourning for a presence that never was. The phrase, 'you live and do me no harm', is exchanged for the phrase, 'you're dead (or dying) and so cannot give me redemption'.

The object in the allegorical image is simultaneously charged with both secular, mortal content of degeneration and decomposition, and with religious, sacral content.

This characterization of the allegorical image (in its baroque and 19th century versions as well) differentiates it from the "Pathos Formula" (at least in its magical version), which involves a relation of transparency and which is filled with the presence of the primordial force. The pathetic image is continuously emptied, and only becomes an empty shell when chronological events force it to draw away from the 'source'. In Warburg, the degeneration of the image occurs over a continuous sequence of time, in contrast to the allegorical Benjaminian image, whose debasement and sanctification take place all the time and simultaneously. The connection between the sacral relation to the essence and the agency of the image exists, in Warburg's theory, on a vector that points to the encounter's declining intensity, which proceeds on a temporal axis, and which operates through an economy of using and exploiting; whereas in Benjamin's theory these aspects are inherently necessary qualities of every image. The exploitation and reproduction of the image in the allegorical mode is permanent evidence and an expression of its debasement and sanctification.

The question as to whether, according to Warburg, the relation between the magical state of the image and its allegorical-disjunctive state is one of a break or succession, has not yet been answered definitively. Because we can identify the modern phase of the "Pathos Formula" with the Benjaminian allegory more easily, we should ask whether we are talking about two theories that relate only to the Modern period, or whether we can refer to these two theories as general theories of the symbol.[32] It should also be asked whether this comparison

between Warburg's "Pathos Formula" and Benjamin's allegory could relate to the contemporary discourse dealing with the allegorical impulse in postmodernism, best expressed in the writing of Craig Owens,[33] a line of interpretation that relies on the artistic praxis of collage or montage. The allegorical image, according to this line of interpretation, is represented in an image that is built on the continuous praxis of its own interpretation within itself, an image composed of a plurality of signs and spaces of discourse, of juxtaposition and "gluing" together different items and entities. My suggestion, based on the conclusions of the psychoanalytic part of this essay, is that, while giving up the presence of a vital primal idea, an image can be split up inside itself and sustain a plurality of acts of readings within itself, and still sustain a nostalgic, mournful attitude toward presence, without being a literal work of collage or montage. The image's "skin" can be united, as though it is a case of a harmonic unity of wholeness, and at the same time be a complex of juxtaposed interpretations, destructions and remembrances of past images. As Freud and Lacan suggest, memory and mimicry are both instances of a primordial plurality and splitting-up of the Subject and the Other, vis-à-vis the impossible, traumatic and missed encounter. It should be noted that Benjamin uses Freud's exact formula of psychoanalytic memory:

> Becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory trace are processes incompatible with each other within one and the same system. Rather, memory fragments are "often most powerful and most enduring when the incident which left them behind was one that never entered consciousness". Put in Proustian terms, this means that only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject of experience, can become a component of the *memoire involuntaire* (*Illuminations*, 159-160).

It is essential to add to this discussion the issue of the disciplinary, methodological and historiographic implications of the meeting between Warburg and Benjamin's conceptions of the sign. As is evident from their writings, both Warburg and Benjamin saw their work as an action and reaction of memory. It is illuminating to compare two random texts taken from their writings. Warburg writes:

> Memory is nothing but the collection of those stimuli which had been responded to by vocal utterances (overt or internal speech).

> Therefore I envisage as a description of the aims of my library the formulation: a collection of documents relating to the psychology of human expression. The question is: how did human and pictorial expressions originate; what are the feelings or the points of view, conscious or unconscious, under which they are stored in the archives of memory? Are there laws to govern their formation or re-emergence?
>
> The means of my library should serve to answer the question which Hering formulated so aptly as 'memory as organized matter'; likewise it should make use of the psychology of primitive man – that is the type of man whose reactions are immediate reflexes rather than literary responses- and also take account of the psychology of civilized man who consciously recalls the stratified formation of his ancestral and his personal memories. With primitive man the memory image results in a religious embodiment of causes, with civilized man in detachment through naming.[34]

Two important points should be noted here: first, Warburg relates his activity and scholarship to the universal activity of remembering; second, he characterizes this praxis of memory as composed of two enveloping moments: the 'primitive' one, based on 'immediate reflexes', and the 'civilized' one, which works through detachment and 'naming'. In a similar way, Benjamin maintains that '…history is not just a science but also a form of memoration. What science has "established", memoration can modify'.[35] And, like Warburg, Benjamin sees the (historical, dialectical) image as one in which 'It isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past: rather, an image is that in which the Then and the Now come into constellation like a flash of lightning.'[36] This 'flash of lighting' connects to the Warburgian concepts of 'primitive reflexes'. As Benjamin puts it: 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger'. (*Illuminations*, 255)

Now we can make the concluding move of our study, and relate to the triple connection between the "Pathos Formula", the psychoanalytic traumatic encounter and the allegorical mode of sign in Walter Benjamin: all three concepts are based on an experience of a shock relating to the external environment.[37] All three concepts see the process of mimicking, of mimesis, as a vehicle for the process of the construction of the image.[38] All three concepts, therefore,

implement the concept of the image in a concept of (cultural) temporality and therefore of history. In this way, all three relate their actions as historians and researchers to their concept of the image. They are all built around the problematics of the 'source', and construct the development (or history) of the image, according to my reading, as oscillating between mourning and desire. In all three theories there is wide space for the act of destruction.[39] In all three concepts, the underlying question is the problem of the 'self' (which includes the 'self' of the historian) and its auto-construction in face of the plurality of the cosmos. This essay has attempted to offer an uneasy encounter between these three concepts, in the hope of creating a dialogue between them, and not by forcing them into becoming identical. Not one of the three should become a 'source' of which the others will become representations. Nonetheless, Aby Warburg's ""Pathos Formula"" has been the focal point of our discussion. Warburg being an art historian, this discussion should serve to contextually, culturally and theoretically locate both his methodological tools, and ours.

Notes

1. See Ferretti 1989; Forster 1996: 5-24; Ginzburg 1992: 17-59; Gombrich 1984: 117-138; Martin 1998: 4-36; Michaud 1995: 43-73; Rampley 1997: 41-56; Recht 1994: 5-23; Wind 1980**:** 21-36.
2. As quoted in English in Gombrich 1970: 71.
3. A quote by Warburg from *ibid*: 217.
4. See Wind 1980: 31-32 ; Gombrich (1970: 221) quotes from the notes of Warburg: 'My starting point is that I regard man as a tool-using animal whose activity consists in connecting and separating. In this activity he is apt to lose the organic sensation of the ego. The hand permits him to manipulate things which, as inanimate objects, lack a nervous system but which nevertheless provide a material extension of the ego [ ] there exists indeed a situation in which man can become assimilated to something that is not he himself precisely by manipulating of wearing objects which his blood-stream does not reach …'
5. Gombrich 1970: 222.
6. This approach by Warburg differed from the traditional one, which wished to see Classical Greek culture as an ideal only of the Apollonian side of Humanity. Many writers of our days see in this endeavor of Warburg a real revolution in the concept of the Classical Image and the Image in general, which Warburg presented as not just a calm reflection of an idea, but as containing chaotic, Dionysian energies as well; see Iversen 1993: 541-552.
7. Gombrich 1970: 124.
8. *Ibid*.: 213.
9. *Ibid*.: 249.
10. Freud 1899: 320-322. See also Freud 1901: 43-52, "Childhood Memories and Screen Memories".

11. Freud 1899: 315.
12. Terdiman 1993: 240-288; Freud 1914; Lacan 1977b: 53-67.
13. Lacan 1993: 152, 181.
14. Lacan 1992: 50.
15. Quoted in Gombrich 1970: 220.
16. Lacan 1977b: 129. For Freud dealing with traumatic experiences, see, for example: Freud 1916-17: 273-285.
17. On the double action of the traumatic experience, see Boothby 1991: 87-95; Lacan 1977b: 55.
18. Lacan (1992: 52): 'The whole progress of the subject is then oriented around the Ding as Fremde, strange and even hostile on occasion, or in any case the first outside […] The world of our experience, The Freudian world, assumes that it is this object, das Ding, as the absolute other of the subject, that one is supposed to find again. It is to be found at the most something missed.'
19. Lacan 1977a: 1-7 - " The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I".
20. Lacan 1977b: 98-101.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Rampley 1997: 52 – 3.
23. Benjamin 1998.
24. Cowan 1981: 109-122; Day 1999: 103-118; Hannoosh 1994: 38-54.
25. As quoted and translated from the German source of "The Origin of the German Tragic Drama" in Rochlitz 1996: 96.
26. Benjamin 1968: 224.
27. As translated from the German source in Rochlitz 1996: 100.
28. See Cohen 1993: 205-208.
29. Benjamin 1973, and Benjamin 1968: 155-200, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire".
30. Benjamin 1985: 54-55.
31. As quoted and translated from German in Rochlitz 1996: 205-206.
32. From the writings of the two scholars, it seems that both saw the two modes of development of the human consciousness as being present in the modern as well as in the primitive stages. For example, Warburg writes (as quoted in Gombrich 1970:221): 'All mankind is eternally and all times schizophrenic. Ontogenetically, however, we may perhaps describe one type of response to memory images as prior and primitive, though it continues on sidelines. At the later stage the memory no longer arouses an immediate, purposeful reflex movement – be it one of a combative or religious nature – But the memory images are now consciously stored in pictures and signs. Between these two stages we find a treatment of the impression that may be described as the symbolic mode of thought.' And Benjamin (1989: 49): 'It isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past: rather, an image is that in which the Then and the Now come into constellation like a flash of lightning. In other words: image is a dialectics at a standstill. For…the relation of the Then to the Now is dialectical – not development but image [,] leaping forth – Only dialectical images are genuine (i.e., not archaic) images; and the place one happens upon them is language.' Benjamin also says elsewhere (Benjamin 1978:157) 'Modernity…is always quoting primeval history'.
33. Owens: 1984.
34. Gombrich 1970: 222.
35. Benjamin 1989: 61.
36. *Ibid.*: 49.

37. For a discussion of the concepts of "encounter" and "shock" in Benjamin and Lacan, see Cohen 1993: 145-154, "Tuche and Misrecognition: Modern Materialism, Lacan, Althusser".
38. Benjamin relates to the important role of mimesis in his text: "On the Mimetic Faculty", Benjamin 1978: 333-336.
39. Lacan (1992: 209) writes: 'Remembering, "historicizing", is coextensive with the functioning of the drive in what we call the human psyche. It is here, too, that destruction is registered, that is, enters the register of experience.'

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Returning To The Forbidden Zone: Strategies of Deformations and Transformations

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> The artist seeks to destroy the stability by which society lives, for the sake of drawing closer to the ideal. Society seeks stability, the artist — infinity. The artist is concerned with absolute truth, and therefore gazes ahead and sees things sooner than other people. As for the results, we answer not for them but for choosing to fulfil or not to fulfil our duty. Such a starting-point lays on the artist the obligation to answer for his own fate. My own future is a cup that will not pass by me-consequently it must be drunk. Andrey Tarkovsky. [1]

*F*irst Prologue

I would like to recall a museum that any of us could theoretically have in the home, and yet a place almost impossible to reach. I refer to a museum that summarizes a text, reflects in the title of Luis Borges' short text, "Museum", which has an enormous influence on the art discourse of the last twenty years.[2] Indeed, the Postmodern era has considered Borges' "Museum", or more properly "Post-museum", to be its most suitable metaphor, text and site - or "Post-site". I call it a "Post-museum" because Borges' "Museum" does not comprise the content of a traditional museum; i.e., immortalized objects of a consistent and a continuing world. Borges' Museum is rather closer to what Adorno called a 'Museum-Mausoleum'. Borges describes his "Museum" as a world that disappears under a map that covers it entirely. The map then disintegrates and beneath its traces the screen of linguistic signs disconnects and vanishes. The Borgian picture is thus quoted by Jean Baudrillard as a metaphor for his "Procession of Simulacra", a contemporary cultural expanse in which only simulacra that stem from simulacra exist; their points of reference also being simulacra alone.[3]

From the eighties onward, many artists have regarded this view of the world as an image of the state of Postmodern art which "follows" Baudrillard, who "follows" Borges, who follows a world sinking under its own traces, which are sinking under themselves. The question to be asked is whether this sequence can be narrated in reverse: the last vestiges of the signs recreate the map's traces, which coalesce into the map, which embroiders the earth that gives birth to the world, which emits Borges out of the darkness and into the light. In order to imagine it thus, it is necessary to bring back into the picture the margins of Borges' story, which were somehow neglected by Baudrillard and, following him, by all those who understood this metaphor only in its socio-economic-Marxist context. By 'margins of the story' I refer to what is described at the end of Borges' story as terrain where the remnants of the map, of languages, are surrounded by earth, climate and seasons, which are violent, bleak and savagely arid. Such are Nature's conditions, typical to deserts, to eschatological domains, to the termination or lack of life; and, as such, they appear with full force. Those 'deserts of the West', in Borges' terms, that are doomed to the 'cruelty of the sun and winter', reappear the moment the screen of linguistic signs reaches its final stage.

Second Prologue
This wilderness that erupts to become a post-linguistic world, that "Museum" of Borges, recalls to mind the 'forbidden zone' in Andrey Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* (1979) (Fig. 1)**.** There, a writer and a physician are guided by 'Stalker' to the 'forbidden zone', a bewitched, bewildered and wild landscape that had erupted after the disappearance of the former civilization. Its architectural and industrial ruins become the 'forbidden zone''s jungle, a labyrinthine and primordial nature that is posterior to the existence of culture and its structured language. This post-cultural maze, the 'forbidden zone', appears as a magical site where all desires and wishful thinking materialize. In Freud's terminology, it is a physical and mental zone animated by 'omnipotence of thoughts' and unrestrained desires and, therefore, it is made a taboo, forbidden and censored by the agents of the law. [4]

The zone is neither a subject nor an object. As in Tarkovsky's other films (e.g. *Solaris,* 1972) this kind of deterritorialized territory is also a brain that re-creates the world; an animistic surrounding that traps, hypnotizes and motivates the mind. The zone is an archaic magical sphere; or an Heideggerian space where Man, the human, is betwixt and between the world that both creates him and is re-created by him.

This kind of space becomes the goal, as well as the missing element, the

Fig. 1: Andrey Tarkovsky, from *Stalker*, 1979, the three principal actors
on the trolley that leads them to the 'forbidden zone'.

'black hole' within the world of the celebrated writer figure in *Stalker*. In one of
the first scenes, the writer confesses that he wishes to go to the 'forbidden
zone' because he expects to regain there the inspiration that he had already
lost a long time ago. Later on, he will claim that it isn't even an inspiration for
which he is searching and yearning, but something that can not be termed,
pre-conceived, figured out, imagined or even be-wished. In one of the last
scenes, when they are finally allowed to enter into the core of the 'forbidden
zone' and to use its energies, the writer discovers that he has nothing to wish
for, no desire to be fulfilled.

Although they seem to walk towards the same destination, there is a slight
difference between the motivations of the writer and those of 'Stalker': as one
of Tarkovsky's personifications of solitariness and marginality (and even
deformations since 'Stalker' has a crippled daughter) that become media of
knowledge about to be lost, 'Stalker' approaches the 'forbidden zone' as an
immanent part of his whole being, a spiritual state to be achieved at the end of
the initiatory journey. But for the famous writer, the man of legitimized and
'trendy' texts, on the other hand, the 'forbidden zone' is just and only an object
of desire that motivates his continuous writing, but at the same time remains
an empty point that is always beyond professional reach. Whereas 'Stalker'
still approaches the 'zone' as a no-man's land whose 'emptiness' is mostly

significant and potent for his mental and spiritual path — i.e. he still experiences the 'zone' as a 'full emptiness' — the writer partaking in the up-to-date discourse, conceives its wasteland as mere emptiness, a vacuum that swallows up any meaning, presence or possibility for his own salvation.

* * *

The 'forbidden zone' will be considered here as an image that narrates a dominant, even a crucial pace of the modernist and postmodernist Avant-Guard. The evocation of that 'forbidden zone' is bound to the moment when the metaphysics of presence or the metaphysics of origin went wrong, the components of the work of art remained as formal, linguistic, external data - as mere borders. Spaces between the components were understood as a semiotic and 'empty' site, based on linguistic, cultural and political relationships. In such formalistic fields, the art work's space could no longer be actualized as the medium for "making present" factual and material elements in the field of art. Furthermore, art could no longer be experienced as the "making present" of the empty spaces that exist in-between the visible and factual elements. The space, the in-between area, was turned into an empty nomadic zone where the indexes of the art field could merely be shifted and displaced. These empty spaces of contemporary, Postmodern works of art are no longer touched by the miracle that makes empty spaces present and penetrable by our field of visual awareness. In other words, the empty art spaces are expelled from the bliss, from the aura that was once incarnated and revealed in and around the space of the traditional work of art.

But are not we all, Postmodern consumers, still somehow searching for a specific presence of at least something surprising? With all our awareness of the cultural sites, the inter-textual field or the 'expanded field',[5] do we not still perceive Postmodernism in relation to the history of Modernism? For example, when Minimalist art, though portrayed within the framework of Capitalist Mechanism, is still understood in the context of Malevich or Brancusi?

When we make such a comparison, we are actually shifting bodies lacking aura and presence into a field, an artistic field, in which expectations still exist for the uncovering of presence and origin. Thus, the reproduced and duplicated artistic elements are also a testimony of trauma of loss: the artistic field of activity is turned into a memorial site and testimony to the 'Loss of Aura' (Benjamin), 'The Death of God' (Nietzsche), 'Twilight of the Gods' (Wagner) or 'Patricide Complex' (Freud). With all the obscurity in the realm of art, it is still a space in which the traces are not merely a historical landmark, not just components of the linguistic mechanism and not even symptoms of art becoming more critical

Fig. 2: Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by the Bachelors, Event* (*The Large Glass*). 1915-23, Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire and dust on two glass panels (cracked), mounted between two glass lintels with five glass stripes and aluminum foil, in a wood and steel frame.

and politicized. They are also evidence of the loss of things possessing aura, loss of things incarnated with inner, blissful light. Inside the global village that is flooded with 'empty' signs and reproduced products, the art space is a zone in which aura-less things are experienced not only as the negation of things with aura — but also as a loss of light, as a light that 'falls', almost in the theological meaning of the term. The artistic space becomes the site where the viewers are invited to be aware of the delay in their expectation for a certain exaltation, a certain transformation - and thereby the transformation failure is presented and experienced as a 'Fall'.

Marcel Duchamp included such a 'Fall' event in the *Large Glass* (1915-23) (Fig. 2): the Bachelors are located at the bottom of the piece and turn their gaze toward the Bride, who is in the upper part, unavailable to them, becoming their 'forbidden zone'. They stand at the bottom like still and empty vessels, empty signs that are formal elements, dead objects, indexes. Like bodies whose entire identity is defined in relation to the Bride, the Bachelors are tools that had been intended to soar upward, to be transformed into grooms of that

Fig. 3: Marcel Duchamp, *Given* (Etant donnés), 1945-66, mixed media assemblage (including: an old wooden door, bricks, velvet, wood, leather stretched over an armature of metal, twigs, aluminum, iron, glass, plexiglass, linoleum, cotto, electric lights, gas lamp).

heavenly Bride, but had failed to realize this act: in the end, remaining fallen vessels. Despite this, they continue to gaze at the Bride in the upper part, who remains the focus of a possible apotheosis. Their very existence as a group of duplicated Bachelors is contingent on her being a missing element, a missing apotheosis - which is the 'forbidden zone' in the scene of their communal masturbation. Their latent 'homo-sexuality', or latent 'homo-textuality' (to use Michel Foucault's term), is motivated by their desire for their impossible and absolute Bride. and so they renounce the realization of their desire in a concrete object, and exchange it for an abstract one, a fetish — which in this case might also be understood as a metaphysical figure.

This realm of artistic fetishes and reproductions foreseen by Duchamp seems to be motivated by the Bride, the 'forbidden zone' that is absent from the mechanism of reproduction, but simultaneously and secretly continues to function as its magnetic power, its 'black hole'. Writing on Duchamp's two

Fig. 4: Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe,* 1962, silkscreen on canvas

major pieces: *Large Glass* and *Given* (1945-66) (Fig. 3), Jean-Francois Lyotard points out that while the earlier piece has a Utopian horizon and refers to what is 'not yet' here (but might arrive), the later work has an eschatological edge and presents what is 'no longer' here (and will never return).[6] Indeed, in *Given* the female figure no longer exists as the upper horizon of the space. Instead, she is stretched out in the anterior like a corpse, a fallen figure. The background reflects an Arcadian landscape portrayed with artificial lighting, almost like Baudelaire's artificial gardens, a spectacle or a cinematic picture. Through the key-hole, one faces an imaginary "natural" landscape which is created artificially by means of an instrument. The viewer gazes at an auraless image, a delusion of light emerging from darkness, something like a cave or a movie, from the dead and still spaces inside the instrument. It is a light that is almost satanic, imprisoning within itself an expanse that has collapsed and a figure that is a fetish and is associated with falling.

Spotlights, movie lighting and neon lights were subjects frequently dealt with in Pop Art. But is the strange, pale and almost sickly light emanating from Andy Warhol's work, for example, connected only with a search for the given shades of the 'world of glamour'? Or is he perhaps also seeking the secret light of this world? Sometimes the light becomes the subject of his pieces, as in cases in which he focuses on images related to the enormous energy that generates a great light, like the power that operates the electric chair, or that of the atom bomb. Warhol's bomb images have often been connected with Marc
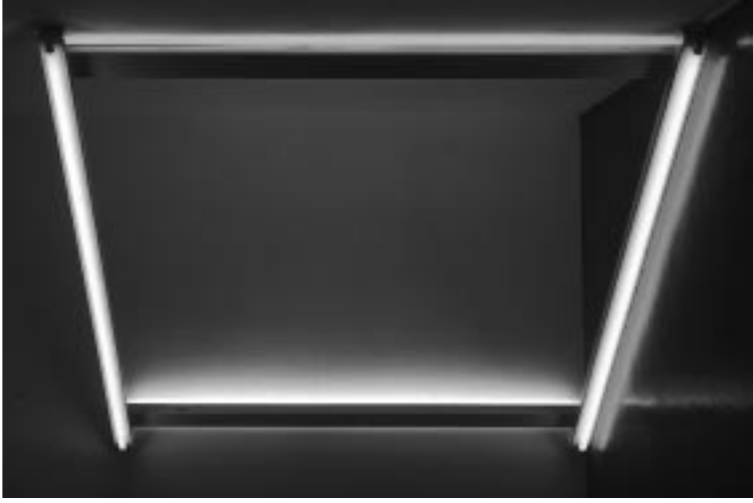
Fig. 5: Dan Flavin, Untitled, 1972, neon tubes.

Rothko red abstractions. It is possible to understand Warhol's relation to Rothko as a marking of ghosts of the lost and 'forbidden zone', those lost energies are connected to the 'origin' that reappears and immediately disappears in any reproduction of Warhol's series.

In the of reproduced image of Marilyn Monroe (Fig. 4), for example, every additional reproduction of her magnifies her absence and the awareness of it. Each reproduction constitutes another distance from her existence in reality and the aura attributed to it. But, simultaneously, her existence in a virtual, 'Hyper-Real' galaxy is also strengthened with each additional reproduction. The proliferation of such reproductions and the accumulation into an ongoing series, a Rhizome (in Deleuze and Guattari's terms) of formal signs and technical acts forms another continuity, not a material one perhaps, but a given, a virtual existence. Any additional reproduction of Marilyn is also a mirror of the previous image of her previous appearance in the series. It is a mirror of glamour, a mirror of a blazing light which becomes a blinding device.

The glamour of the media stars presented by Warhol is related to the desire that they evoke and to the media machine that produces and manipulates that desire. This 'desire machine' is connected by Warhol to various glamorous figures who ended their lives in tragic circumstances: Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Elvis Presley, John Kennedy. It is worth mentioning in this context George Bataille's   poetic descriptions of different kinds of executions and sacrificial rites as the ultimate intensification of desire, the ultimate *jouissance*. Warhol's 'desire machine', his endless 'factory' is also carried on and nourished by these
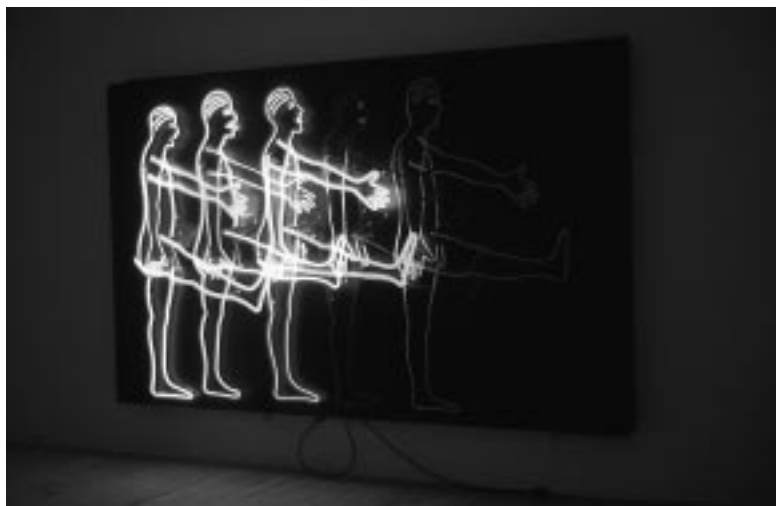
Fig. 6: Bruce Nauman, *Two phases of Sex and Death by Murder and Suicide,*
1985, neon tubes mounted on metal monolith.

glamorous victims that at a certain point in the series are turned into 'empty signs' and 'empty bodies' that are saturated with desire and thus become another species of virtual zombies.These animated 'empty bodies' are created by light that emanates entirely from the screen of signs accumulated on it. This is not an 'inner' light that materializes through the screen of language and through procedures of restraining or sublimation. On the contrary, it is an exterior and immediate light that is produced through artificial media that, at a certain moment, out of their empty and darkened mechanism, generate a blazing and magical light.

Dan Flavin employed the most artificial light when he referred to such a magical moment in his translation of the primal light in Rothko's paintings into neon light (Fig. 5). In the blinking of neon light, in 'clips' of light disappearing and reappearing out of darkness, Bruce Nauman revives electric zombies that perform raw gestures and violent movements. These neon pieces of Nauman are not just reflections of advertisements and street signs, but are also a shifting of all those social media into an artistic and magical device that, out of darkness and out of its emptiness, evokes an extreme manifestation of desire: *Two Phases of Sex and Death by Murder and Suicide (*1985) (Fig. 6).

Neon lights also serve the French artist Jean-Luc Vilmouth in writing the creation stories of primal bodies and spaces: creation of the first house, the first child, the first vessel or the first word (from the series *L'Histoires: Decouvrir,* 1982-87). Using Bruce Nauman's neon-morphology, Vilmouth is less interested
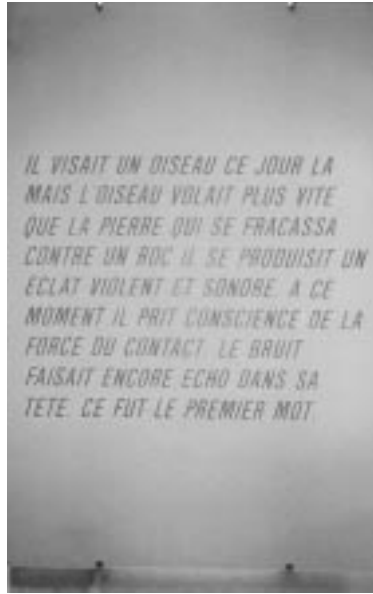
Fig. 7:   Jean-luc Vilmouth, *Histoires: Discover
3*, 1987, plexiglass, fluorescent tubes.

in the socio-political aspect of the former's work and even less interested in a
Postmodern strategy that quotes and reproduces the work of others. Nauman's
textual textures are actually taken by Vilmouth as a kind of text that utilizes to
the extreme the emptiness of recent cultural language, while also pointing
towards the magical potential of those empty elements. The absence that is
echoed by the later is taken by Vilmouth as a potential, even a potency, that
allows him to function like an ancient storyteller re-creating moments of genesis:
e.g. *The First Word (Le Premier Mot)* (1987) (Fig. 7).

Another dominant series in Vilmouth's oeuvre is that of his bars and cafés:
Bar des Acarains (Acarinas Bar) in Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1991, *Café Whale
Songs* in Gallery Hubert Winter, Vienna, 1992 or the *Café de l'Olivier (Olive Café)*
in Gallery "Anadiel", East Jerusalem, 1994 (Fig. 8). In all of these installations
Vilmouth invites his spectators to a bar or a café, places described by Walter
Benjamin as the citadels of the *flaneur*, the urban wanderer, the persona of loss
and absence in the age of mechanical reproduction. On the tables of the cafés**,**
Vilmouth places photographic images that are 'frozen' and 'dead' states of
organic beings: animals, plants, fruits: in Paris and Vienna the acarina and
whale images brought to mind certain pictures featured in *The National
Geographic* magazine; in East Jerusalem it was a photographic image of an olive
being surgically, almost sadistically dissected. Sitting at these tables, sipping a

Fig. 8:   Jean-Luc Vilmouth, *Café de l'Olivier,* 1994, an olive
tree, photographs, neon tubes, chairs and tables.

drink over an object, an altar, that holds representations of dead beings, the spectators are probably *flaneurs*; but they are also participants in a sacrificial rite, a sacrament, a 'totem meal' (to use Freud's terminology) where animistic and Dionysian energies might generate a newborn order.

This animistic potency is represented in its activity, and yet confined in its media, presented only as a potential, a possibility, not yet expanding into the whole field. This kind of animistic energy also prevails in *I Want to be Happy* by the Japanese artist Shuji Ariyoshi (Fig. 9). In 1994, at the Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo, he installed 70 pairs of small TV screens each of them projecting his face, his mirror image confronting and talking to a sunflower. This artificial garden of sunflowers could be the Japanese sun goddess, Amaterasu in her virtual version – or it could also be Baudelaire's artificial and fossilized gardens in their Japanese version. Whatever their nature, Ariyoshi's sunflowers constitute a total artificial field that is dominated and animated by the virtual energy of TV mirror-images – just as they are an artificial field that is dominated and animated by the energy of the sunflowers, the flowers of Van Gogh and the agents of the blazing sun which is, according to Bataille, the personification of devouring desire. Even more than being charged by its different elements, Ariyoshi's artificial garden turns into an animated jungle through the reciprocity of its elements: the video images, like a magician's voice, are echoed in the sunflowers

Fig. 9: Shuji Ariyoshi, *I Want to be Happy,* 1994, TV screens, sun-flowers planted into pots.

touching their hidden animistic being; and vice versa, the reproduced self-images of the artist are touched by the vitality of the sunflowers. If the group of Ariyoshi's self images, his electric mirror-images, can be perceived as his version of Duchamp's *Bachelors*, then his guys refuse to be just a gloomy 'cemetery of uniforms' (to use Duchamp's definition of the Bachelor's zone). Instead, in their nineties version, Duchamp's *Bachelors* w*ant to be happy*: thus, they talk to the living thing, try to communicate with the image of desire, strive to penetrate the "forbidden zone" and inflame its *jouissance*.

Another version of Duchamp's *Bachelors* can be found in a major piece by the Israeli artist Moshe Ninio**,** *Avodath Ach* (1977-88) (Fig. 10). The title of this work has a double meaning in Hebrew: "Fireplace Work" as well as "Brother Work" and even "Brother Worship" (this later meaning is closer, of course, to the connotations of Duchamp's *Bachelors*). Upon a wooden structure, Ninio placed pairs of steel plates, each of which supports a perpendicular photographic image of a helicopter taken years ago by Ninio from the TV. In its latest transformation this image of the helicopter continues to be related to photographic products; Ninio even thematizes their photographic procedures while coupling each image with its negative one. But by giving these images the appearance of a cross or an Egyptian *ankh* – two archaic media for the

Fig. 10: Moshe Ninio, *Avodath Ach,* 1977-88, wooden structure, photo-
graphs printed on metal plates.

transformation of the dead - these media images and techniques are also shifted towards different and more archaic worlds. Appearing as mirages, placed on the wooden platform like as icons on an altar, Ninio's helicopters are presented less as a continuation of the chain of reproductions and more as primal signals that come at the end and after a certain world. Embedded into the metal plates, forged by fire, they could be taken as the sign or the ideograph of a sacred brotherhood - according to Freud, one of the most archaic communal forms in which a latent homosexual desire links between the brothers and initiates the beginning of a social order after the 'murder of the father' (driven by the 'Patricide Complex') has been committed.[7]

I have mentioned several works by American, French, Japanese and Israeli artists including those realized in New York, Paris, Vienna, East Jerusalem, Tokyo and Tel-Aviv, all of them using, reproducing and thematizing elements of the 'Gothenberg Galaxy' (in Marshall McLuhan's term) and the 'Media Galaxy'. But all of them participate in the 'Global Village' for the sake of transforming it into a different kind of village. In other words, they perform in the "Global Village" for the purpose of activating its 'forbidden zone'.

This is a zone where the image becomes real and no longer perceived as an imitation or an index of anything else in the world. It is a zone generated by

conceptual and post-conceptual art , if we take into consideration Baudrillard's comment that the outcome of the conceptual periods is an art that imitates nothing: not views, not thoughts, not senses. Instead it is an art that evokes what is always primal to the world and to our comments on it.[8] According to Freud, this kind of evocation happens in sites of art and magic: sites where art is magic and magic is art. In these sites, writes Freud, forbidden repression breaks down, and the 'omnipotence of thoughts' becomes real.[9] Desire then unravels the screen of language and pushes the images that have been emptied of meaning back into the world. Disappearing and repressed images are driven forwards, performing their 'Eternal Return', as primal things, as beings just born.

These phenomena, writes Freud, can be found on the margins of society, in neurotics, in children, in rituals in 'primitive societies" - in ceremonies that Victor Turner calls 'rites of passage' in which the social order disintegrates completely on the way to a new order and meaning.[10] Rites of passage such as these played a familiar role in the psycho-physical map of archaic societies: the release of desire in those 'forbidden zones' was measured in relation to the 'zones of meaning' and the 'normal' screens of language. The 'forbidden zones' were the boundaries that measured the center and led the return to it: they were the horizon lines, the distance marks, the goal of the journey, the means by which the return home was made possible.

In contradistinction, contemporary art invokes the marginal sites of desire out of mechanical means interwoven in the network of the mass media that is spreading everywhere - no longer as marginal, other places but as an unending, dense and all-encompassing net of deformed and mutated linguistic signs. They are mutated or deformed because they are the continuation, the outcome, the addition and the redundancy of techniques and networks that have accumulated ever increasing signs, traces, linguistic codes and acts of repression, which at a certain moment begin to crack and to mutate.

After years of discussing art in linguistic terms, interdisciplinary and inter-textual, art that acts as just another media element, another loading of the network, does not in fact clarify its reading in the cultural or lingual mapping. On the contrary, such art which adds to the over-loading of the cultural network, only blurs its ideological or political coordinates and thus intoxicates our critical distance and creates a jungle of signs. This condensation of signs, however, is turned not only into a 'black hole'; it also constitutes the artistic activity that places its elements as solitary signs that confront a hole in the linguistic network, where any context and meaning (including the meaning of the negation of meaning which Western metaphysics imparts) are irrelevant.

Tarkovsky's *Stalker* ends with 'Stalker' leaving the labyrinthine 'forbidden zone' and returning to his most personal, marginal, unique and lonely world, where in the middle of the night (in the final scene of the movie), his crippled daughter can perform her telekinesis i.e. she actually carries onwards the magical potency of the brain, which is synonymous to the realm of the 'forbidden zone'. In a similar way, at the end of the century and its ex-Modernism or Post modernism, a strange and fascinating artistic activity has become a haven for refugees and mutants of language, information and communication networks. The sign that is operated by this kind of art functions as an isolated, almost out of context means that strives to open a way to the most basic understanding, clarity or initiation of culture, almost like a pre-historical graph, or a post- historical image in a science fiction story.

The medium of the shaman or the tribal storyteller was often used for telling tales of journeys to the lands of the dead. The signs of the cave painter or the vessels of the prehistoric potter bore messages from or to the dead. These tools of the "savages" helped them to survive and became bearers of a memory of destruction and apocalyptic imagery. Likewise, the artistic traces of linguistic and media networks operate simply, physically, charged and driven forwards by their very belonging to something that has been lost. Their appearance, or reappearance, as manifestations of forgetfulness and void, enables these empty textual data to present themselves in the world as strangers, loners, always distant, far from the viewers, different to them and alien to their interpretations; and yet also facing them, driven towards them, as a beginning of a process of drawing closer. To a certain extent this is a return to art's archaic place in the world, to its ancient role as mediator for the dead and for loss. It is a certain return to art as magical praxis, as a site of animism, and therefore as an activity that restores the aura to the heart of cultural activity. But it is an aura that also returns along the twisted paths and the darkened maze of the 'forbidden zone'.

Notes

1. Tarkovsky 1994: 192.
2. Borges 1974: 840-845.
3. Baudrillard 1984: 253-291.
4. Freud 1985: 132-158.
5. The term 'Expanded Field' was proposed by Rosalind Krauss as the characteristic of the field that includes and produces Minimalist and Post-Minimalist art works, see Krauss 1983, 31-43.
6. Lyotard 1991: 78-80.

7.   Freud 1985: 208.
8.   Baudillard 1994: 13-15.
9.   Freud 1985.
10. Turner 1969: 94-130.

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