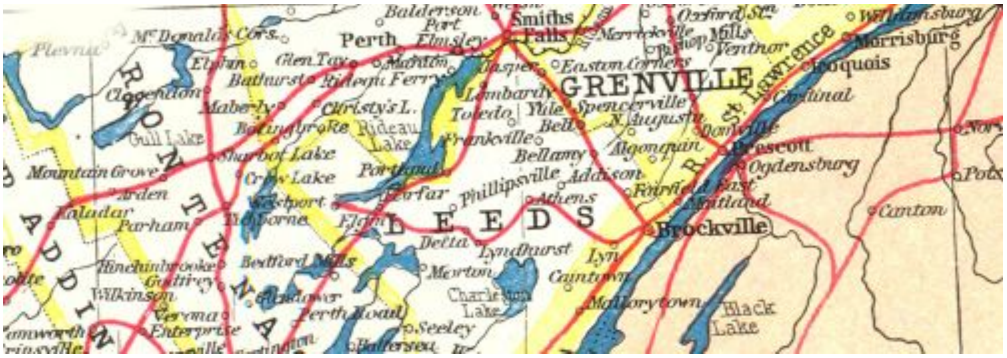
NON
SITE • ORG

8

THE MUSIC ISSUE

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities
affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668



EDITORIAL BOARD

Bridget Alsdorf
Jennifer Ashton
Todd Cronan
Rachael DeLue
Michael Fried
Oren Izenberg
Brian Kane
Ruth Leys
Walter Benn Michaels
Charles Palermo
Robert Pippin
Adolph Reed, Jr.
Victoria H.F. Scott
Kenneth Warren
James Welling

Lisa Chinn, editorial assistant

SUBMISSIONS

ARTICLES: SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Please direct all Letters to the Editors, Comments on Articles and Posts, Questions about Submissions to nonsite.org@emory.edu.

Potential contributors should send submissions electronically via nonsite.submishmash.com/Submit. Applicants for the B-Side Modernism/Danowski Library Fellowship should consult the full proposal guidelines before submitting their applications directly to the nonsite.org submission manager.

Please include a title page with the author's name, title and current affiliation, plus an up-to-date e-mail address to which edited text and correspondence will be sent. Please also provide an abstract of 100-150 words and up to five keywords or tags for searching online (preferably not words already used in the title). Please do not submit a manuscript that is under consideration elsewhere.

ARTICLES: MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

Accepted essays should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents (either .doc or .rtf), although .pdf documents are acceptable for initial submissions.. Double-space manuscripts throughout; include page numbers and one-inch margins. All notes should be formatted as endnotes.

Style and format should be consistent with *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. or above. Second and later references to a previously cited work should be made in the text, giving the author's last name and the title of the work. Do not use op. cit.

POETRY: SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

We accept unsolicited poetry via nonsite.submishmash.com/Submit. Please submit your work in .doc or .pdf formats. Your submission should be a single file consisting of no more than ten pages, and may include, if you wish, a cover letter listing a few of your recent publications. We consider only previously unpublished work, and while we encourage simultaneous submissions, we request that you notify us (poetry@nonsite.org) immediately if your work is accepted elsewhere.

MEDIA AND PERMISSIONS

Authors must obtain permissions for illustrations that require permissions. A 300 dpi file (JPEG, GIF, PIC, or TIFF) of each illustration will be needed, though a legible scan is acceptable for initial submission. Hyperlinks will need correct URL addresses; video clips should be in MPEG, MOV or Quicktime formats; sound files should be high-quality MP3s.

Nonsite is subject to the same copyright restrictions and intellectual property laws as all publications. It is the contributor's responsibility to obtain necessary permissions to reproduce images, video clips, and sound files in the article text. Permission is not required for the inclusion of hyperlinks; the use of links may offer a more efficient way of including video, music, and image files. Image captions should include appropriate credits and permissions.

ABOUT NONSITE

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

ISSUE #8:THE MUSIC ISSUE
WINTER 2012/2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Trans-Canada Express: Glenn Gould, Petula Clark, and the Possibilities of Pop 8
J. D. Connor

Formalism, Fair and Foul 28
Patrick McCreless

The Rock Novel and Jonathan Lethem's ***The Fortress of Solitude*** 46
Florence Dore

Musicophobia, or Sound Art and the Demands of Art Theory 76
Brian Kane

FEATURES

The (Super)Naturalistic Turn in Contemporary Theory 98
Jason Bartulis

Miró's Politics 128
Charles Palermo

REVIEWS

What Do We Mean by Autonomy? 166
Todd Cronan

ARTICLES

TRANS-CANADA EXPRESS:

GLENN GOULD, PETULA CLARK, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF POP

J. D. CONNOR

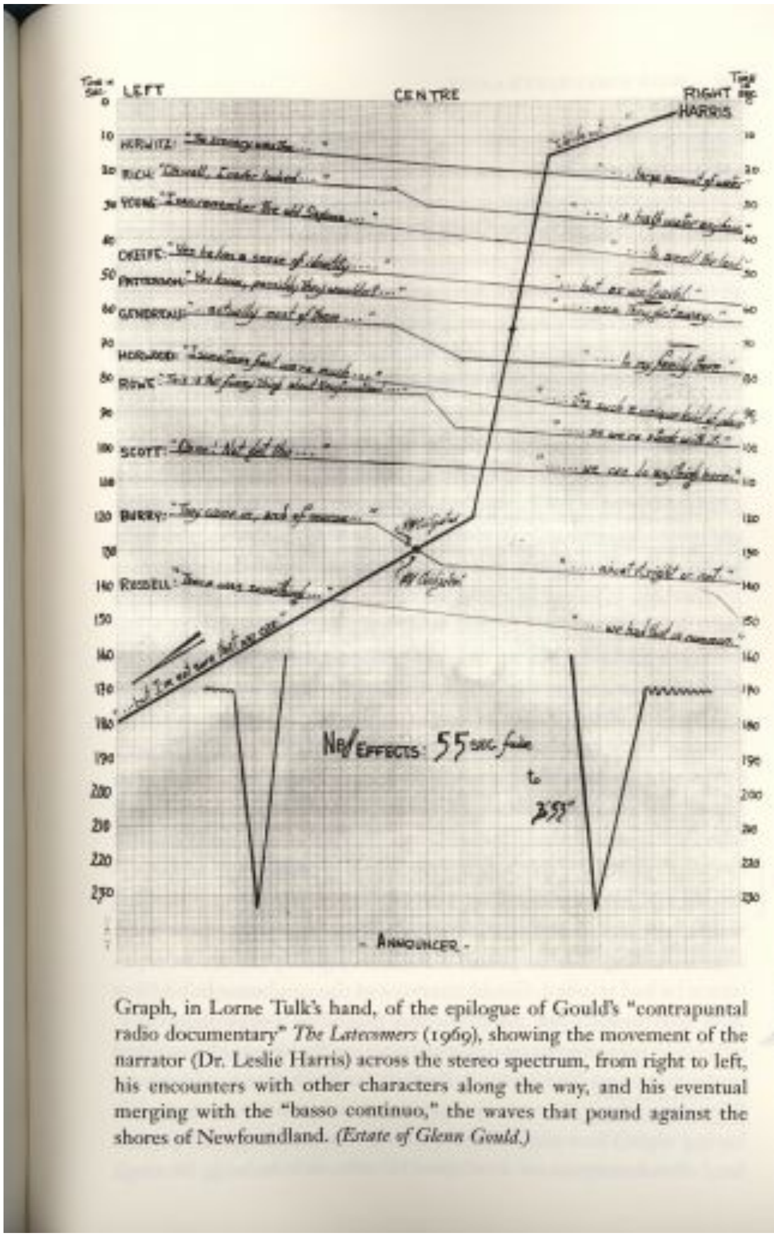
Glenn Gould stopped performing for live audiences in 1964. Freed from the rigors of the concert circuit, he dove into radio and television at just the moment when he and Canadian state media could parlay his immense musical popularity into something more. Gould would continue to perform and record new music—always in studios, to be sure—at a remarkable pace. But in conjunction with those performances, Gould constructed a media theory of his own. In print, on television, and, most important, on radio, Gould became the great complement to Marshall McLuhan.

When Gould was not playing piano (or organ) he was fashioning something else—interview shows, portraits of artists, and oddities such as his arch dialogue on the dire impact of competitive sports on the world. But the peaks of Gould's non-piano involvement with the medium were three sound documentaries, instances of what Gould called "contrapuntal radio" that were retrospectively grouped together as "The Solitude Trilogy." The first, "The Idea of North," was about just that, the enduring mythological significance of the Canadian North in the postwar era when its national integration was proceeding rather quickly; it first aired Dec. 28, 1967. The second, "The Latecomers," was about the forced depopulation of Newfoundland outports as the colony became part the Canadian confederation; it aired Nov. 12, 1969. And the last, "The Quiet in the Land," dealt with Mennonite accommodations to contemporary mass culture. It was completed in 1975, but did not air until Mar. 25, 1977.[1] These three pieces are, by all estimates save one, fascinating, technologically adept incursions into questions of nation, sound, space, and media. The one reserved judgment belongs to Darrel Mansell who called them "uninteresting."[2] He is more than balanced out by Richard Kostelanetz, who places Gould in the Text-Sound art pantheon—"a radio artist of the first rank, if not the greatest in North America."[3]

The standard interpretation of these pieces is biographical, and it runs more-or-less like this: After 1964, as Gould attempted to grapple with his own mediated career, he found in Canada's national experience a collection of ready allegories. As his best biographer, Kevin Bazzana, puts it: "The train trip in *The Idea of North* stands in for the *inward* journey Gould had been taking since 1964. 'It's very much about me,' he said of the program. 'In terms of what it says, it's about as close to an autobiographical statement as I am probably going to make at this stage of my life." (300) What is more, Gould's explorations of contemporary solitude were not only allegories of his own solitude and mediated public presence, they were original compositions, and as such they were compensation for his failure as a composer of music. Again, Bazzana: "Creating successful works in a new genre of radio art took much of the sting out of his failure as a composer." (313) As Kostelanetz puts it: "In 1967, Gould told me that he wanted to compose more difficult contemporary music, in the Schoenberg tradition…Whether he ever composed such music I do not know—nothing has turned up since his death in 1982. Rather, he produced these radio pieces that, let me suggest, represent the fruition of his compositional ambitions." 567) Radio as compensatory, allegorical autobiography.

Of course if one has put aside formal analysis, then the standard way to think about virtually all sorts of music has been through something like compensatory, allegorical autobiography. Still, Gould is an odd candidate for that convergence since his particular genius was for the strictures and systems of composers such as Bach and Schoenberg, what he would call a kind of "puzzle solving."[7] One can persist in regarding form a stalking horse for psychic torment, but whatever the source of Gould's interest in form, he was, indeed, interested in form. For us, then, that translates into a need to explain allegoresis itself. More simply: why do Gould's documentaries have a contrapuntal form? Needless to say, I don't think that this is a biographical question but something like an aesthetic question, and to begin to answer it, I will turn to a shorter piece that is often left out of the Gould radio documentary canon, "The Search for Pet Clark," a 23 minute essay that first aired Dec. 11, 1967, two and half weeks before *The Idea of North*. "Pet Clark" is a rehearsal of the great Gouldian themes—mobility, documentary, solitude, mediation—in a far more explicitly autobiographical vein. Those open commitments help us resist the temptation to see Gould's radio career as a sustained yet unconscious effort to manifest his own unspoken self-involvements. Instead, we will catch Gould at a moment when his commitment to allegory will be raw.

"Pet Clark" is also technologically raw. Gould's plunge into documentary making resulted in dramatic leaps forward in complexity; he built his later pieces at the very limits of what the CBC studio was then capable of. "Pet Clark," in contrast, is utterly conventional. The text of the broadcast comes from Gould's Nov. 1967 article from *High Fidelity* to which he was a frequent if irregular contributor; he reads that text with surprisingly few alterations.[4] Clark's recordings are brought in at opportune moments, and, when Gould begins reading again, they are ducked under his voice. In contrast, his more "contrapuntal" recordings "eschew foreground-background distinctions," as Bazzana puts in, and they usually inspired mildly angry or simply confused responses from listeners. *The Latecomers* was specifically commissioned to help launch the CBC's new stereo service—an Ottawa station went online for the broadcast—and makes extensive, if sometimes florid use of the possibilities of stereo for the spatialization of narrative.


TIME – SEC.
LEFT
CENTRE
RIGHT
HARRIS
TIME – SEC.
HORWITZ:
RICH:
YOUNG:
O'KEEFE:
PATTERSON:
GENDREAU:
HORWOOD:
ROWE:
SCOTT:
BURRY:
RUSSELL:
NB/EFFECTS: 55 sec. fade to 3'55"
– ANNOUNCER –
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
110
120
130
140
150
160
170
180
190
200
210
220
230

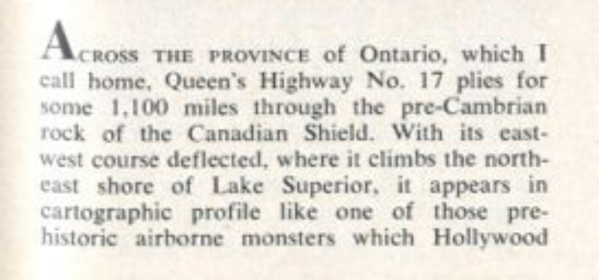
Graph, in Lorne Tulk's hand, of the epilogue of Gould's "contrapuntal radio documentary" *The Latecomers* (1969), showing the movement of the narrator (Dr. Leslie Harris) across the stereo spectrum, from right to left, his encounters with other characters along the way, and his eventual merging with the "basso continuo," the waves that pound against the shores of Newfoundland. *(Estate of Glenn Gould.)*

The Latecomers, conclusion. Graph by producer Lorne Tulk.

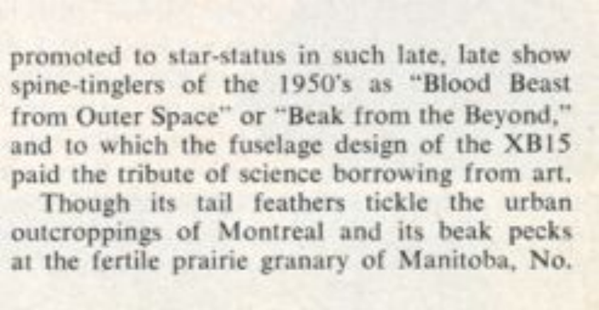
In the concluding section, the central narrator is describing a trip away from Newfoundland, and as that trip progresses, his voice migrates from the far right channel—where it has been throughout the piece—toward the left. At the same time, the thirteen other voices of the piece move from the left channel to the right by turns. All the while, the sound of the waves—what Gould called the "basso continuo" of the documentary—lap below the voices. The piece thus spatializes the narrative's migration to and then from the island, and does so according to standard cartographic conventions in which North is at the top and Newfoundland is off to the right. The planning and execution of this section was a massive undertaking, beginning with a complex charting process—seen here in the legible version produced by Lorne Tulk, Gould's tireless producer—and culminating in what was surely a ludicrous scene of the two of them grappling with strips of magnetic tape all throughout the studio, draping them over chairs and lying them across tables in order to keep them at the appropriate height. Each of the hour-long documentaries took roughly 300 hours to compose.

The recording of "The Search for Pet Clark" was comparatively simple, and the architecture of the piece was as well. It falls into three easy chunks: an opening section describing Gould's drive around the north shore of Lake Superior, a long middle dealing with Clark's career and style and contrasting her favorably with The Beatles, and a concluding section that returns to Gould's car, ending with a simulated montage. The A-B-A structure is simple enough, and one Gould would return to. The opening puts him on the road; this is the way it sounds.

(For audio, click here.)

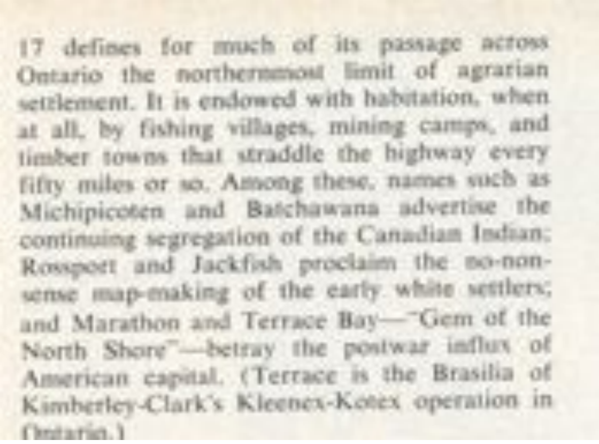


ACROSS THE PROVINCE of Ontario, which I call home, Queen's Highway No. 17 plies for some 1,100 miles through the pre-Cambrian rock of the Canadian Shield. With its east-west course deflected, where it climbs the north-east shore of Lake Superior, it appears in cartographic profile like one of those prehistoric airborne monsters which Hollywood



promoted to star-status in such late, late show spine-tinglers of the 1950's as "Blood Beast from Outer Space" or "Beak from the Beyond," and to which the fuselage design of the XB15 paid the tribute of science borrowing from art.

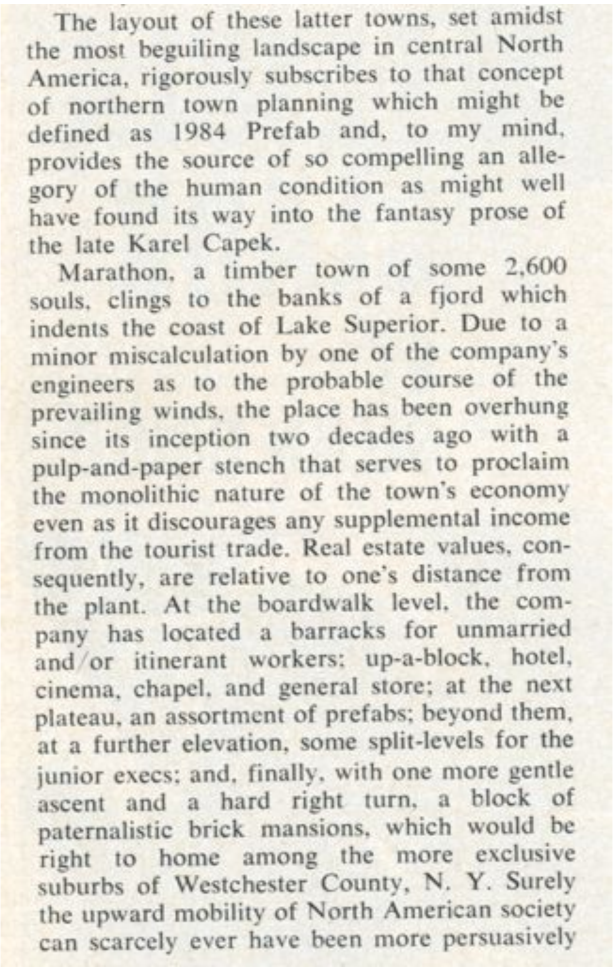
Though its tail feathers tickle the urban outcroppings of Montreal and its beak pecks at the fertile prairie granary of Manitoba, No.



17 defines for much of its passage across Ontario the northernmost limit of agrarian settlement. It is endowed with habitation, when at all, by fishing villages, mining camps, and timber towns that straddle the highway every fifty miles or so. Among these, names such as Michipicoten and Batchawana advertise the continuing segregation of the Canadian Indian; Rossport and Jackfish proclaim the no-nonsense map-making of the early white settlers; and Marathon and Terrace Bay—"Gem of the North Shore"—betray the postwar influx of American capital. (Terrace is the Brasilia of Kimberley-Clark's Kleenex-Kotex operation in Ontario.)

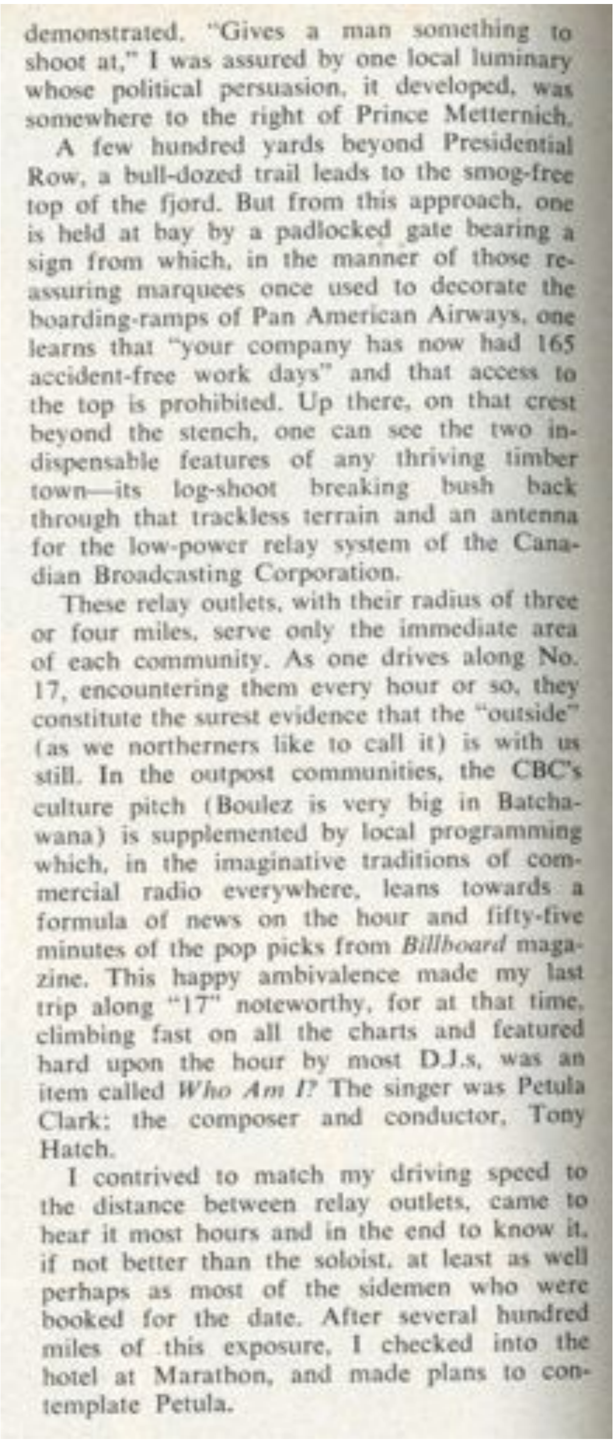
As you hear, the simple structure is complicated by its content, a content carried by sentences that abound in baroque folds that match the zigzag path of the road up the Eastern shore of Lake Superior. But that baroque folding exists not only at the level of the sentence but in the more sustained motives of the piece. Thus, in the midst of the prefatory opening section, Gould reckons with a double allegory. The first is an "allegory of the human condition" and it lies in the layout of the town of Marathon. The second is an allegory of national-existential consciousness and it exists more fitfully. Here is how Gould works from the one to the other.

(For audio, click here.)



The layout of these latter towns, set amidst the most beguiling landscape in central North America, rigorously subscribes to that concept of northern town planning which might be defined as 1984 Prefab and, to my mind, provides the source of so compelling an allegory of the human condition as might well have found its way into the fantasy prose of the late Karel Capek.

Marathon, a timber town of some 2,600 souls, clings to the banks of a fjord which indents the coast of Lake Superior. Due to a minor miscalculation by one of the company's engineers as to the probable course of the prevailing winds, the place has been overhung since its inception two decades ago with a pulp-and-paper stench that serves to proclaim the monolithic nature of the town's economy even as it discourages any supplemental income from the tourist trade. Real estate values, consequently, are relative to one's distance from the plant. At the boardwalk level, the company has located a barracks for unmarried and/or itinerant workers; up-a-block, hotel, cinema, chapel, and general store; at the next plateau, an assortment of prefabs; beyond them, at a further elevation, some split-levels for the junior execs; and, finally, with one more gentle ascent and a hard right turn, a block of paternalistic brick mansions, which would be right to home among the more exclusive suburbs of Westchester County, N. Y. Surely the upward mobility of North American society can scarcely ever have been more persuasively



demonstrated. "Gives a man something to shoot at," I was assured by one local luminary whose political persuasion, it developed, was somewhere to the right of Prince Metternich.

A few hundred yards beyond Presidential Row, a bull-dozed trail leads to the smog-free top of the fjord. But from this approach, one is held at bay by a padlocked gate bearing a sign from which, in the manner of those reassuring marquees once used to decorate the boarding-ramps of Pan American Airways, one learns that "your company has now had 165 accident-free work days" and that access to the top is prohibited. Up there, on that crest beyond the stench, one can see the two indispensable features of any thriving timber town—its log-shoot breaking bush back through that trackless terrain and an antenna for the low-power relay system of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

These relay outlets, with their radius of three or four miles, serve only the immediate area of each community. As one drives along No. 17, encountering them every hour or so, they constitute the surest evidence that the "outside" (as we northerners like to call it) is with us still. In the outpost communities, the CBC's culture pitch (Boulez is very big in Batchawana) is supplemented by local programming which, in the imaginative traditions of commercial radio everywhere, leans towards a formula of news on the hour and fifty-five minutes of the pop picks from *Billboard* magazine. This happy ambivalence made my last trip along "17" noteworthy, for at that time, climbing fast on all the charts and featured hard upon the hour by most D.J.s, was an item called *Who Am I?* The singer was Petula Clark; the composer and conductor, Tony Hatch.

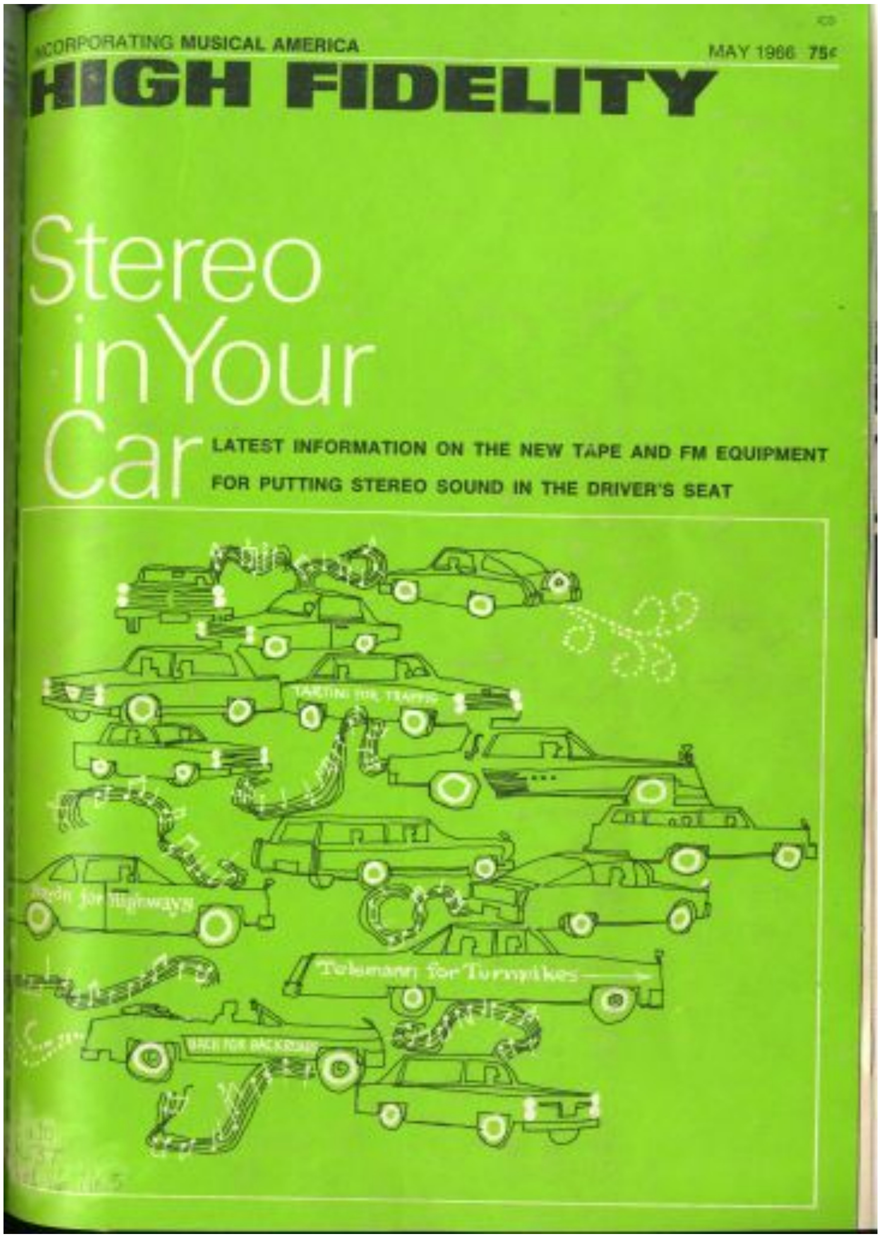
I contrived to match my driving speed to the distance between relay outlets, came to hear it most hours and in the end to know it, if not better than the soloist, at least as well perhaps as most of the sidemen who were booked for the date. After several hundred miles of this exposure, I checked into the hotel at Marathon, and made plans to contemplate Petula.

There is a geology, and over that lies a design. Overlaying both is a very particular media web in which a network of low-power relay stations create islands of access to the national broadcast feed. This is the radio space. Gould, in his car, traverses that space at a rate of his choosing, and that vector syncs up with the radio space in such a way that Gould can create within the car a punctuated soundstream. What is more, the radio soundspace, considered outside of Gould's temporal encounters with it, has its own generally cyclical temporality: news on the hour and 55 minutes of hits. But that cycle unwinds in time so that as the hits ebb and flow, a song that is moving up the charts will find its way to a particular slot in the broadcast cycle for a given span before it is eventually released from heavy rotation. This is the broader soundstream, and, according to Gould's prologue, when he was driving across Ontario, the song that was then climbing the charts and that would be aired "hard upon the hour" was Petula Clark's "Who am I?" By measuring his speed, then, Gould claims that he could sync up the car's punctuated soundstream with the radio's soundstream and thus hear Pet Clark's new single "most hours."

Three things are obviously necessary for this convergence. First, there must be an uninterrupted road. The Trans-Canadian highway officially opened Sept. 8, 1962, and the stretch that Gould is driving was only built in 1960-1961. It was some of the most difficult construction in the system, but when it was done towns such as White River were accessible by car. (One has to imagine the oddity of towns that could only be reached by boat and railroad, but where residents might have their own cars to drive around in town, and where, if they wanted to have their car in, say, Toronto, they would have to ship it by rail until they reached the continuous highway).

Second, there must be a national broadcasting system. In 1962, the CBC folded its "Dominion" network into the "Trans-Canada" network to create "CBC Radio" (now CBC Radio One). The low-power relay system had been built out beginning in 1940, and more than 90% of the nation's population had access to some version of the CBC signal in 1961, even if that was via 40-watt relays like Marathon's CBLM.[5]

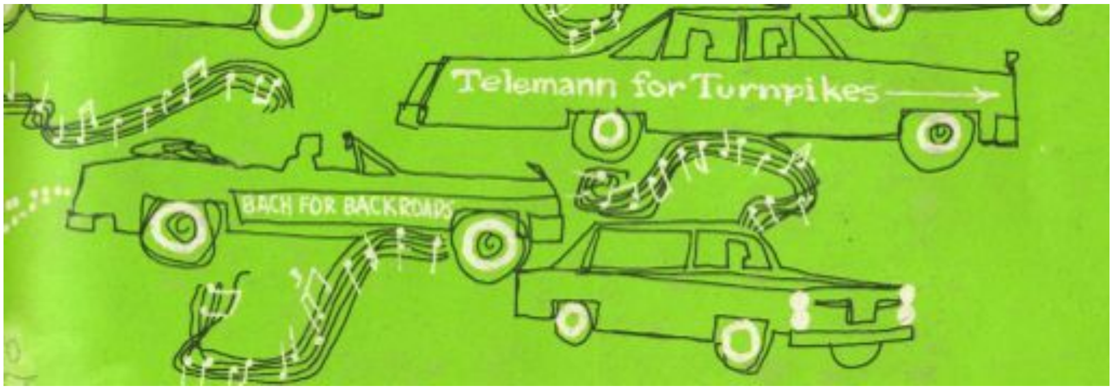
Finally, one needs a car to link the road and the radio. Gould was a prodigious driver, and he drove enormous American convertibles—Lincolns and Cadillacs. In addition to their size, these cars always featured state-of-the-art sound systems at a time when car audio was undergoing remarkable changes. Stereo intensified the in-car audio experience, but more important was the impending 8-track revolution. If the CBC had labored for decades to make Canada one nation under radio, in-dash tape decks would fragment it, perhaps beyond repair.


INCORPORATING MUSICAL AMERICA
MAY 1966 75¢
HIGH FIDELITY
Stereo in Your Car
LATEST INFORMATION ON THE NEW TAPE AND FM EQUIPMENT FOR PUTTING STEREO SOUND IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT
Telemann for Turnpikes
BACH FOR BACKROADS

High Fidelity, May 1966

In May 1966, the month after Gould's expansive essay "The Prospects of Recording" appeared in *High Fidelity*, the magazine featured a cover story on car audio. The cars are all listening to their own music, and this independence seems to have carried over dangerously to their driving habits. If one looks closely, the car labeled "Bach for Backroads" seems to be Gould's big Lincoln.

Glenn Gould in his Lincoln



Detail from High Fidelity, May 1966

Gould was not the first to link nation-road-radio-relay-and-auto. Doug Brophy, Ron Hunka and Ken Frost of the CBC crossed the country in 1960, in a Chevy Impala complete with a heavy duty springs to take the unpaved sections of the highway and a heavy-duty battery to power the on-board Magnecorder tape-editing machine. They filed dispatches each day as they made their way westward, chatting up local politicians and on-site engineers. [6]

ST. JOHNS to VICTORIA
Listen Nightly to Reports on
CBC RADIO
TRANS-CANADA

Brophy, Hunka, and Frost for the CBC

Again, it might seem that the difference between the CBC documentarians and Gould is that Gould's trip originates in, and seeks answers to, properly biographical questions. Yet the reporters' crossing points up exactly what is at stake in Gould's own journey: the shift from a linear narrative to a narrative that is, decisively, multitrack.

If the Trans-Canadian Highway and the CBC are the necessary media behind Gould's autobiographical allegory, the structure of that allegory depends more broadly on certain properties of the recording. Gould spends the long midsection of "The Search for Pet Clark" thinking through just what, exactly, is up with her records, how it was that she got from *Downtown* in 1964 through *Sign of the Times* and *My Love* before hitting *Who am I?* He pursues that path in two versions. One, an account of the songs' lyrical content, is simpler and I'll begin with that. The second centers on a critique of the diatonic; more technical, it is, nevertheless, consistent.

Lyrically, Gould finds in Clark's singles an epitome of adolescence. "The twenty three months separating the release dates of *Downtown* and *Who am I?* being but a modest acceleration of the American teen-ager's precipitous scramble from the parental nest." (68) And while the biography is always present—"Pet Clark is in many ways the compleat synthesis of this experience" (68)—and while marketing is always there—"the title, tempo, and tonal range of a performer's hits should observe a certain bibliographic progression" (69)—there is something else. "Each of the four songs details an adjacent plateau of experience." (68)

Within "The Search for Pet Clark," the plateaus of experience are modeled on the plateaus of Marathon, almost literally: Clark's pop career is launched "Downtown" and "Who am I?" begins "The Buildings reach up to the sky." These are the resting points of the allegory, the irreducible nuggets that make it possible for one story to stand for another; the vertical connections. And while they could be understood as moments in a life or elevations on a fjordside they are, more abstractly, the precipitates of a particular sort of analysis, one that yields both plateaus and "progression" or "modest acceleration," what we might simply call nodes and links.

Musically, the "harmonic attitude is, at all times, hymnal, upright, and relentlessly diatonic." (69) How is it to be saved? Gould works through contrast. If Clark is diatonic, then so is virtually all pop. The difference is that the Beatles are lauded for their C-major—a "credible …accident of overtone displacement"—while Clark is looked down on. Their "common triad" is "purgative," while Clark's is hopelessly square. Gould uses the distinction to launch his disagreement. For producer Tony Hatch, tonality is "a viable and continuing source of productive energy with priorities that demand and get, from him, attention." (70) What saves Clarks songs, then, is not simply that the lyrical content is managed across a host of instances, but that the musical content finds itself in tension with the lyrical progression. On the one hand, the music matches its lyrics. The perfect fourth of "Downtown" embodies "the improvisatory fantasies of youth" while "Who am I?" is "locked into a diatonic spiral"—f,e,c; c,a,g (70). On the other, the fit between lyric and motive seems to support the idea that Clark's emotions are too easy, that she and Hatch are today's sentimental equivalent of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Felix Mendelssohn (69). Can Hatch's commitment to form save the songs from their overwhelming tendency to pander?

"Pet Clark" works because at the moments we think Gould is overreaching—at the moments when Gould can't possibly support the kind of distinction he wants us to uphold—he himself falls back from the claim to something like the urge to make the claim in the first place. It's not that Petula Clark and Tony Hatch are secret Schoenbergians; rather, it's that Gould can't help himself. When the need became severe, he had to pull over to contemplate Petula. That need drives him to a consideration of the possible "vertical synchronizations" in the bass line. At length, though, he turns on his initial investment in the profundity of the song, and on Clark. Her voice carries no more than the "tenor of mindless confidence and the tone of slurred articulation." Still, the possibility that there is some "vertical synchronization" between real existential dread and "mindless" pop interrogation remains; there is always the potential spur to analysis, Schenkerian or otherwise.[7] And the urge to analyze, however "biographical" it might appear, is, for Gould, profoundly tied up with his contemporary mediascape.

Gould in the Studio

APRIL 1966
HIGH FIDELITY
15th Anniversary Issue
The Prospects of Recording
GLENN GOULD

High Fidelity, April 1966

For Gould, his sort of analysis only became possible, and desirable, with the advent of modern recording techniques. In "Dialogues on the Prospect of Recording," a CBC radio documentary from 1965 published in 1966, he schematizes the basic difference between recordings that aim to reproduce the concert experience and those that aim elsewhere.[8] In place of reverb and rubato, the new style of recording depends on exceptional clarity achieved via close-miked intimacy. And while that description captures Gould's own musical and vocal recording strategies, he makes his case most forcefully in a discussion of differing approaches to recording the early Schoenberg. Here is Gould describing Robert Craft's version of *Pelleas and Melisande*:

> Craft applies a sculptor's chisel to these vast orchestral complexes of the youthful Schoenberg and gives them a determined series of plateaus on which to operate—a very baroque thing to do. He seems to feel that his audience—sitting

> at home, close up to the speaker—is prepared to allow him to dissect this music and to present it to them from a strongly biased conceptual viewpoint, which the private and concentrated circumstances of their listening make feasible. Craft's interpretation, then, is all power steering and air brakes. (51)

Now, it is *possible* that Gould was thinking of driving around Lake Superior when he described Robert Craft's approach to Schoenberg, and that the analogy originates with the automotive geology of the Pet Clark piece. But whichever came first, the decisive concept is indirect control through amplification: power steering and air brakes. At the same time, I want to stress that while this control is indirect, it is not virtual. That is, there are real amplifications of the driver's actions in the car's ideal response.

Why does that indirection matter? In part, of course, it matters because we are trying to account for the origins of a need for allegory, for masking, and this is a way of dragging an aesthetic preference closer to technology than biography. But indirect control matters more because it is essential to the recording studio. That is, if an older recording tradition attempted to reproduce the *auditory* experience of the concert hall, the new recordings attempt to capture and induce the *cognitive* experience of the studio.

It was that cognitive experience that drew Gould away from the concert stage, but he was not alone. The studio defined by multi-track tape-recording offered a new understanding of popularity—popularity as synthesized sociality—that proved irresistible to all sorts of culture purveyors in the decade. Most famously, the Beatles played their last concert August 29, 1966, but even then they couldn't play any of their most recent album, *Revolver*, because it was unreproducible live. Richard Poirier accounts for their turn to the studio as the result of "a self-delighting inventiveness that gradually exceeded the sheer physical capacities even of four such brilliant musicians. The consequent necessity for expanded orchestral and electronic support had reached the point where the *Sgt. Pepper* album had to be wholly, if randomly, conceived in studio." [9] [116]

It wasn't "self-delighting inventiveness" but something that seemed more revolutionary that attracted Jean-Luc Godard to the Rolling Stones' marathon recording sessions in *One Plus One* from 1968. For Godard, and perhaps the Stones, process had replaced product, even at the heart of popular artmaking. Actually, replaced is too strong a term. What was necessary was a doubled dialectic. First, one needed a sense that process *might* replace product, that what went on in the studio might be as important as whatever emerged from it. Then one needed something to emerge *anyway*. Whatever that new product was, it would come marked as studio-project, as improvisatory, as the necessarily false concretization of the necessarily absent scene of authentic art(making). Whatever the balance might be between process and product in a given instance, though, the overwhelmingly important feature of the studio turn was the emphasis it placed on the control over the moment of emergence. Great artists exquisitely managed their workflow; against the metered drip of official releases came periodic floods of illicit tapes; while artists and fans conjured images of malign corporate powers hellbent on releasing material not intended for public consumption. The studio turned popularity from a matter of saturation into a matter of regulation. Who was in, and who was out.

There were other possible explanations for the studio turn. Writing in 1965, Tom Wolfe regarded Playboy mogul Hugh Hefner's new reclusiveness as part of a much broader trend. Like conservative social critics before and after, Wolfe aligned Hefner's cocooning with a general trend toward affluent suburbanization. He was not the marketer of a lifestyle but the avant-garde of a rebellion against social climbing, "The King of the Status Dropouts." In this he was different in degree, but not in kind, from the average American. "Through the more and more sophisticated use of machines, Hefner, and to a lesser degree millions of …*homemakers* outside of New York, have turned their homes into wonderlands, almost complete status spheres all their own. Certain basic technologies, the car, the telephone, televisions, radio, have enabled them to keep in touch with the basic realities of the…*outside world*, such as making a living, keeping in touch and so forth." (67)

Wolfe's argument neatly glosses the difference between Hefner's mancave aesthetic and the escape from manual drudgery that postwar domestic mechanization advertised. In reality, the Hefner version of autonomy and control relies on a highly developed studio sense. His revolving bed—"It goes 33 1/3, 45 and 78!"—carries him past banks of dials, "*the dials, the dials*" to control the hi-fi set up, and, most importantly, the self-taping apparatus. "'I have a whole $40,000 Ampex videotaping console,' says Hefner 'so I figured I might as well have the camera, too. It would be like having a tape recorder and no microphone.'" (59) The console, the camera, and the Ampex technician on call 24/7 are necessary to make the sort of media-baron-by-remote-control possible. Gould had a similarly expensive taping system, beginning with two Ampex two-tracks and eventually graduating to a 8-track Tascam console.

Whatever the biographical reasons behind the self-sequestration of the Beatles, or the Rolling Stones, or the Beach Boys, or Hugh Hefner, in all of them the studio installs a dialectic of disclosure, a barrier that can be dropped or opened at will, a way of controlling and thereby cultivating intimacy. Some of that dialectic is a product of the actual layout of the place, as Susan Schmidt-Horning's work has made clear, with its evolving *spatial* separation between performer and producer. But for that dialectic to become the figure of the popular as such, it required an emblem of its *operation*. That emblem took two forms, one technological, one temporal.

The technological form we have already encountered: "*the dials…the dials*." "Dial twiddling is in its limited way an interpretive act." Gould said in "The Prospects of Recording" (59). The reduction of performance, from public to private, from the sorts of manipulation required by a piano or a guitar or a string section to the sort of manipulation required by a Tascam console can seem to be a great loss. Gould's analytic listening or the Beatles "self-delighting inventiveness" is hard to distinguish from the onanistic regression that Adorno ridiculed in "The Fetish-Character in Listening"—those "countless radio listeners play[ing] with the feedback or the sound dial." (310) The dial is the barest index of interpretive will. For Adorno, that reduction is a falling away from the challenges of real listening; for Gould, the attenuation of effort opens up the possibility of analysis. For analysis to take hold, then, it needed more than technological support; it also required a *temporal* form: ABA, counterpoint, Romantic revelation.

For Poirier, the Beatles' form is revelation, and the contrast is with linear development of the sort Gould favored: "*Sgt Pepper* wasn't in the line of any continuous development. Rather, it was at the time a sort of eruption, an accomplishment for which no one could have been wholly prepared." (115) Gould abhorred those sorts of studio "eruptions," and contrasted the Beatles negatively with Pet Clark. For him, the "amateurishness" of their material "is actually surpassed only by the ineptitude of the studio production method. (*Strawberry Fields* suggests a chance encounter at a mountain wedding between Claudio Monteverdi and a jug band.)" (70) Some of that animus is clearly a projection. "Strawberry Fields" was famously the product of several separate recording sessions in two different keys. George Martin slowed one and sped the other in order to intercut between them. And while Gould would have hated what we now call the song's "pitchiness," he also emulated the technique, splicing together different takes of a fugue and, more appositely, "pulling" the tape in order to emphasize particular words in his documentaries.

Ultimately, though, Gould's documentaries have a contrapuntal form because he believes, contra Poirier and for reasons as technological as they are formal, that only through the establishment of a reliable basis of expectation can the possibility of transcendence be preserved. The citizens of Marathon remain trapped between Pet Clark's promises of "escalation" and her omens of "decline [which] effectively cancel each other out. The result, despite the conscientious stratification of the town, is a curiously compromised emotional unilaterality." (71) They live in one track. In contrast, on the road above Marathon, above Lake Superior, in his studio on wheels, Gould achieves "an astounding clarity of AM reception. All the accents of the continent are spread across the band, and, as one twiddles the dial to reap the diversity of that encounter, the day's auditory impressions…recede, then reemerge as part of a balanced and resilient perspective." (71) Down in Marathon, Pet Clark's question, "Who am I?," seems to be part of the stream of "interminable mid-morning coffee-hour laments." It is mere biography; it wears no mask. But at the highest point in Ontario, against the multitrack background, the trite question achieves its existential possibility. It takes form—individual, national, mediated. The driver performs his transcendental magic and the car becomes a mobile studio, uncovering the roots of Pet Clark's popularity, and Gould's own.

NOTES

[1] Biographical details from Kevin Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004).

[2] "Glenn Gould: The Idea of South by North," *Iowa Review* 15:3 58–65, 58.

[3] "Glenn Gould as Radio Composer," *The Massachusetts Review,* 29:3 (Fall 1988), 557–70, 557.

[4] It appears in *High Fidelity* on 67–71, and is reprinted in *The Glenn Gould Reader*, Tim Page, ed., intro. New York: Vintage, 1984, 300–07. Some of the same material appears in Gould's "Why Glenn Gould *loves* Petula Clark," *Toronto Daily Star*, 11/17/67, 31. For this article and the drafts of the Pet Clark piece, see the *Glenn Gould Fonds*, reel 4, Canadian National Library.

[5] Geoffrey J Matthews, Donald Kerr, *Historical Atlas of Canada* Toronto: U Toronto P 1990, Plate 65. The information on the Marathon relay is from http://www.northpine.com/broadcast/on/radio.html

[6] http://archives.cbc.ca/science_technology/transportation/clips/3899/

[7] In the manuscript discussion of the bass line, Gould contrasted the "delight of all Schoenbergian motive-excavators" with the "fury of all Schenkerian analytic pragmatists." (Draft I, § 4 p. 2; *Glenn Gould Fonds* reel 4).

[8] The version in *The Glenn Gould Reader* (331–52) is less satisfying than the *High Fidelity* version (April 1966, 46–63). The radio broadcast included input from a number of recording artists and media theorists of differing viewpoints. The magazine version reproduces chunks of their commentary in the margins, alongside Gould's own running text. The *Reader* eliminates these other voices.

[9] Richard Poirier, "Learning from the Beatles," *The Performing Self: Compositions and Decompositions in the Languages of Contemporary Life*, 1992 (essay originally 1967?), 112–142, 113.

J. D. Connor is an Assistant Professor of the History of Art and Film Studies at Yale. This essay is part of a history of tape recording called *Voiceover: Taping, Transcription, and Reality from World War II to Watergate.* His work on contemporary Hollywood includes *The Studios after the Studios* (forthcoming) and a project on Hollywood math.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

FORMALISM, FAIR AND FOUL

PATRICK MCCRELESS

> Fair is foul, and foul is fair;
> Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Thus chant the three witches at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* Now it's clear enough that the witches weren't talking about formalism; they had more sinister, bloodier business to attend to. But suppose for a moment that they *were* talking about formalism–in aesthetics in general, or about formalism in musicology, music theory, and composition in particular. What then might their words mean? Shakespeare's two threatening lines about the *fair* and the *foul* resonate eerily with the reception history of the word *formalism,* and the concept to which it refers. In music and the other arts, perhaps the most striking feature of formalism, in the 150 or so years of the word's existence, is the conflict and controversy that it inevitably stirs up. It's difficult to hear, or think of, the word, without reflexively calling up its opposites, its Others: *formalism* vs. *expressionism, formalism* vs. *hermeneutics, formalism* vs. *Marxism; formalism* vs. *historicism, formalism* vs. *postmodernism.* In the conflicted and bitterly contested "fog and filthy air" that *formalism* seems so frequently to generate, it is indeed difficult to tell what is fair and what is foul. The fog and the stench blur our senses and disable our minds. Even if we *think* we know what formalism means, the intensity of emotion that its mere utterance sometimes releases makes it impossible for us to keep our heads and remain objective. The word seems to be at its very essence *emotional* and *political;* and in our fields of music, music theory, and musicology, it is emotionally, and politically, that we often respond to it.

To illustrate the emotional charge that has accompanied the word since its origins, I offer two examples, one from over 150 years ago, one from a bit less than 100. First is a sentence that I culled from the *Oxford English Dictionary,* in my search for the very earliest use of the word *formalism*. Tellingly, this first example in the OED—an example that dates, handily, from exactly 1850—turns out not to be about matters aesthetic, but about matters political. In the relevant sentence, the author decries the fact that in the English universities of the time, admission was denied to capable and honest students from the working class, whereas students whose parents came from the higher classes, and especially those whose parents were members of the Church of England, were admitted automatically—or *formally,* as it were–even if they lacked academic and personal merit:

> Useless formalism! which lets through the reckless, the profligate, the ignorant, the hypocritical; and only excludes the honest and the conscientious, and the mass of the intellectual working men… the real reason for our exclusion, churchmen or not, is, because we are poor.[1] (OED, vi, 83)

The bitterness of the initial expression "Useless formalism!" is typical of the rancor that the word arouses. And there is no doubt in this example that the author considers formalism *foul;* the very thought of the injustice inherent in "useless formalism" unleashes from him a powerful stream of rhetoric.

My second example comes from an author who, in contrast, finds formalism to be *fair:*

> Formalism screamed, seethed, and made a noise. . . . [But it] is worthwhile to say a few words about the name. . . . [I]ts future biographer will have to decide who christened it the "Formal method." Perhaps in those noisy days it itself courted this ill-suited designation. (quoted in Steiner 1984, 16)

Now initially this quotation may sound as though it comes from an anti-formalist, but it doesn't. Its author is Boris Tomachevsky, a leader of the Russian Formalist school of literary criticism in the early twentieth century. The quotation dates from 1925, and Tomachevsky was looking back to the heady days of the founding of his group ten years earlier. Tomachevsky, a brash, iconoclastic theorist in the group, was obviously proud of the screaming and seething and noise-making that he and his colleagues indulged in when they rejected all previous literary theories and went off in their own new direction. It is also worth noticing that he strongly objects to the designation "formalism," labeling it as an ill-suited description of his group's critical efforts; yet he still wears it as a badge of honor. That he simultaneously flaunts and repudiates the label is typical of formalists. Looking over the formalist schools of the past, we find that formalists often don't call themselves formalists, and they don't like to be called formalists, even though, paradoxically, they take great pride in being formalists. This ambivalence, this inconsistency, is one of many reasons why *formalism* is fair game for Shakespeare's three witches, with their toggling between the fair and the foul.

And so what does formalism have to do with musicologists, music theorists, and composers, in 2013? We know that in contemporary music and musical scholarship we encounter the word frequently, as both scholars and composers, often in politically charged language, and virtually always with negative connotations. We thus need to have a grasp of the term and its history, and we need to learn to be sensitive to its political overtones. Accordingly, let us now consider two very recent and characteristic examples—both from Richard Taruskin's *Oxford History of Western Music*. Taruskin uses the word *formalism* only twice in the five volumes of his history—and both times, significantly, he acknowledges the charged quality of the word by putting it in quotation marks. In Volume 5, in a chapter on twentieth-century Russian music, he tells of the brutal denunciation of Shostakovich, Prokofieff, and other prominent composers by the Soviet Ministry of Culture in 1948:

> All were charged with "formalism," a vague term with a checkered history, defined in a post-1948 Soviet music encyclopedia as "an aesthetic conception proceeding from an affirmation of the self-sufficiency of form in art, and its independence from ideological or pictorial content." In practice it was the code for elite modernism, something that the [Soviet] doctrine of socialist realism expressly forbade. (Taruskin 2005, v, 9)

In another passage, describing musical education in the US a few years later, in the 1950's and 1960's, "formalism" rears its ugly head again. But this time it is not the Soviet government leveling the charge of "formalism." It is Taruskin himself. Taruskin is a writer, as is well-known, who is not afraid to reveal his own biases in his telling of history; and surely, his strongest bias is that against musical modernism. And thus he writes of American musical education:

> when . . . the aesthetics of modernism finally gained the upper hand in American institutions of higher education, music appreciation was altered to accord with a new ideology . . . that of 'formalism,' (the study of structure rather than meaning),

> reflecting the interests of composers rather than marketers. (Taruskin 2005, iii, 783)

This is precisely the kind of political usage of the term of which we would do well to be aware. When we read about the Soviet government's denunciation of its best composers, we instinctively side with the composers, and we are righteously indignant that a government would thus persecute its creative artists, demanding that their music be explicitly "for the people" (whoever *they* are) and accusing them of claiming the "[lifeless] self-sufficiency of form in art." But when we read what he has to say about American musical education, we are subtly led to take the opposite side. Now we instinctively resent those modernist composers, who impose their formalist ideology upon presumably innocent students. And now, suddenly, *formalism* is not a vague term with a checkered history, not a *code* for elite modernism; now it is neither vague nor coded. We now know exactly what formalism is, because we can read its definition in Taruskin's parenthetical comment: formalism is, simply, the ideology (not the *claim,* I should note, but the *ideology*) that favors the study of structure over meaning. Although Taruskin does not say so, his language, as is so often the case with formalism, implicitly suggests that formalism favors *lifeless* structure over *human* meaning. ("Fair is foul, and foul is fair;/ hover through the fog and filthy air.")

In our current musical and music-scholarly world, it is not only certain sorts of composers, but also music theorists and analysts, who are vulnerable to charges of formalism. It has most frequently been musicologists of a critical orientation, especially so-called New Musicologists, who complain about music theory's formalism. From scores of examples, here are two. First is a statement by Joseph Kerman, in his well-known essay "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out." Kerman refers to the statement by Eduard Hanslick, the quintessential musical formalist, to the effect that music is "sounding form in motion":

> For if music is only "sounding form," the only meaningful study of music is formalistic; and while Hanslick was not an analyst, later critics took it on themselves to analyze music's sounding form in the conviction that this was equivalent to its content. (Kerman 1980, 314-15)

In other words, the problem with analysts is that for them, music is only "form," and if it is only form, music is thus devoid of content. And again the implication is that a "formalistic" approach is almost by definition a lifeless one.

Second is a trenchant quotation from the young American musicologist Robert Fink, in his book on minimalism. In the following passage he savages academic music theorists who, in his view, for years considered minimalist music simplistic, vapid and beneath contempt, only to find, at the eleventh hour, that it does have musical relationships of the requisite level of complexity to be, after all, worthy of music-theoretical attention:

> Unfortunately the belated intervention of academic music theory has only exacerbated matters: after decades of ignoring minimalism because it had so obviously upset their modernist compositional heroes, some music theorists began to realize in the 1980s that this music in fact resonated perfectly with the extreme formalism of musical analysis that held sway within their discipline. (Fink 2005, 18)

Now it is absolutely not my intention to refight the music-scholarly battles of the 1990's. Those battles have had their day in the sun, and it's time to move on. Indeed, the very title of my paper suggests a reconciliation of sorts: the title is "Formalism, Fair AND Foul," not "Formalism, Fair OR Foul." Still, as Kofi Agawu has memorably said, "We are not finished with formalism" (Agawu 2004, 273). It remains very much in play, and it is still contested turf—still cherished by some, scorned by others. But now, more than ever, it is used in tandem with historical and critical approaches in productive and insightful ways. What I hope to do here is to clarify what *formalism* means, to sketch out its history in a synthetic way that relates its usage in music to that in the visual and literary arts, and to raise a number of issues that affect our musical and scholarly lives as we read, write, listen, and compose. I will thus divide the remainder of my paper into two parts: "Definition and History," and "Issues to Ponder."

I. Definition and History

Anyone trying to define formalism precisely, or even claiming that it *can* be defined precisely, treads on dangerous ground. The slipperiness of the situation is readily apparent just in the quotations that I have offered thus far in my paper. Sometimes writers have no doubt about what formalism—whether in the arts or elsewhere–means. In the example from the *Oxford English Dictionary,* the British writer, protesting admissions policies of English universities in 1850, seems to be absolutely confident that he knows what formalism is. So do Robert Fink and Joseph Kerman. So does Richard Taruskin, when he defines formalism straightforwardly, without comment, as "the study of structure rather than meaning." But Taruskin also calls formalism "a vague term with a checkered history," and he explains how this vagueness works in the real world, when he shows how the Soviet government used it to persecute and control its own creative artists. And yet Boris Tomachevsky, even while carrying the banner of formalism, suggests that the word is indefinable, and that in no way does it capture the essence of his project. Other cautions are not hard to find. For one example among many, the literary scholar Peter Steiner, in the Preface to his 1984 book on the Russian Formalists, observes the evident lack of consensus regarding the meaning of formalism: "Because of the great variety of meanings that the label 'Formalism' has attracted in the course of time, it seems legitimate to question its utility and to offer my own understanding of the term as a historical concept" (Steiner 1984, 9).

I will attempt here to do likewise. And, despite the many cautions and the lack of consensus as to what formalism means, I venture to suggest that the term does bear a core meaning that, while it in no sense captures all of its varied meanings over time, does nevertheless manage to tie most of these usages together—at least those meanings associated with music and with aesthetics. After all, just because a word has meant many things over the years does not mean that it means nothing. In this spirit, I will employ the following as a working definition of formalism: *formalism* is the claim that the essence of any art resides in relationships of elements within an artistic work itself, not in relationships to anything outside that work. Recent historical accounts and reference works on aesthetics offer virtually the same definition. For example, the *[Oxford] Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* defines formalism as "the aesthetic doctrine in which [the formal elements of a work of art] are said to be the primary locus of aesthetic value, a value that is independent of such other characteristics of an artwork as meaning, reference, or utility." (accessed online, 16 March 2012) Two corollaries to this definition (whether in my version or the encyclopedia's) follow naturally. First, the artwork is a kind of black box that is hermetically sealed from all that is outside it–the work's creator, any feeling or emotion that that creator is imagined to be expressing, its representation of actual things in the world, animate or inanimate, and its historical and social context. Second, formalism stipulates *relationships* within the work of art: it not only seals the work from the outside world, but it requires that there be definable entities within the work that relate to one another in coherent, cognitively describable ways. The positing of such relationships entails the further claim that the formal elements of a work be capable of *abstraction*—e.g., material, shape, line, and color in painting; notes, timbres, and rhythms in music; meter, rhythm, and line in poetry.

Using the above definitions and their corollaries, I will offer here a historical sketch of uses of the term *formalism* in music, visual art, and literary art. Much of my sketch will draw on previously published work in aesthetics or in the individual arts, but what is new here, and what I hope will be useful, is a synthetic approach that focuses primarily on music, but that also coordinates ideas in musical aesthetics, both conceptually and chronologically, with formalism in the visual and literary arts.

The notion that a well-formed or beautiful object involves the coherent and appealing organization of its component parts goes back to ancient Greece and Rome, and it appears variously in ideas attributed to Pythagoras, in classic works on rhetoric, and in the works of Plato, Horace, St. Augustine, and others. Similarly, in the Renaissance, rhetoricians, as well as theorists of painting such as Leon Battista Alberti, described how the elements of a literary work, painting, or sculpture must be put together (i.e., composed) harmoniously, and how a beautiful work of art could have nothing removed from it or added to it without ruining the whole. A few hundred years later, in the eighteenth century, at the time when the discipline of aesthetics had its formal beginning, writers about all the arts attended to the notion of form, and attributed the qualities of beauty and aesthetic value to works that were well-formed, and that embodied unity within variety. Yet, even though such writers identified form and valorized it, they were not formalists, nor did they represent *formalism* in the modern sense. Why? Because their system of aesthetic values judged works not on the basis of their form, but on the basis of *mimesis*—how well they reflected nature. It was only when the possibility that form may trump representation or some other aesthetic value that formalism became possible: it was thus *not* possible through most of the eighteenth century.

But that possibility was realized at the very end of the eighteenth century, with the publication, in 1790, of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment,* the *fons et origo,* the foundation of philosophical aesthetics. (Kant 1987 [1790]) Kant writes about both beauty in art, and beauty in nature, and he sets the same criteria for both. Of the two, it is the application of his ideas to art that has been determinant for aesthetics. The central ramifications of Kant's aesthetics for formalism are his requirements for the judgment of beauty in art: that artistic beauty must be "purposive without purpose," and that the appreciation of it must be "disinterested." By "purposive" he means, in the words of Ernst Cassirer, a twentieth-century German scholar of the Enlightenment, that intentional quality by which "a totality is converted from a mere aggregate into a closed system, in which each member possesses its characteristic function . . . [and where] all these functions accord with one another so that altogether they have a unified, concerted action and a single overall significance" (Cassirer 1981 [1918], 267). But at the same time, this manifest "purposiveness"—this impression of intentional organization—must, paradoxically, be "without purpose': that is, the aesthetic object in question must not have a practical, real-world function. This first requirement refers to the beautiful object itself–the object being perceived. The second requirement, then, refers not to the object but to the perceiver: the perceiver must be "disinterested," in the sense that s/he must experience the object for its beautiful, formal qualities, in themselves, not for any practical purpose in the real world. An experience counts as an aesthetic experience, and the object in question qualifies as an aesthetic object, if the subject perceives it disinterestedly, and adjudges it as beautiful—and here are more requirements—not cognitively, on the basis of concepts, and not according to emotion or to what Kant calls *charm (Reiz)*. There is much more to Kant's aesthetic system, and I have simplified his ideas in certain ways. But it should be clear that his notions of purposiveness without purpose, disinterestedness, and aesthetic judgments based on form and formal relationships could lay the foundation for formalism, and that they indeed resonate strikingly with formalism as defined above.

Kant's *Critique* laid the foundation for a whole century of work in philosophical and practical aesthetics in Germany, much of it centered on music, and much of it also centered on what eventually came to be labeled, in the second half of the nineteenth century, *formalism.* The colloquy unfolded in three separate but interrelated planes: academic aesthetics, philosophical aesthetics, and music criticism. Initially, the focus, at least so far as music was concerned, was on the separation of purely musical relationships from notions of expression and emotion. Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), a professor of philosophy at Königsberg and Göttingen, is best known for his work in metaphysics and educational psychology, but he also wrote influential essays on aesthetics. As to the question of what composers express in their music, Herbart's answer is simple: "Nothing at all. . . . Their thoughts [do] not go outside of the art works but rather into their inner essence" (Rothfarb 2012, 177).[2] And again, disallowing subjective interpretations of music, he turns out to be a formalist *avant la lettre:* discussions about music must be "of tones"—of structural relations of musical elements alone (Rothfarb 2012). We find strikingly similar statements in the work of an exact contemporary of Herbart's, Hans Georg Nägeli (1773-1836). Nägeli was a musician, critic, and historian who had no academic position, but who published extensively in matters musical, including a series of lectures on music and aesthetics in 1826, and who was well-known in musical circles at the time. At times he sounds exactly like Hanslick, or even a twentieth-century musical formalist:

> *By nature,* music is thoroughly and completely a *matter of play,* nothing more. It has no content, as some think, and which some have wanted to ascribe to it. It has only *forms,* ordered connections of tones and tone series to create a whole. (Rothfarb, 180)

For him, the essence of music lies only in its "play of forms" (*Formenspiel*).

Hanslick, who had read both Herbart and Nâgeli, understood that his musical aesthetic was influenced by theirs, and he cites their work in his famous 1854 pamphlet, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Hanslick 1986 [1854]). His musical formalism was also close to that of his friend Robert Zimmermann (1824-1898), a professor of philosophy in Vienna, who published a massive two-volume work on aesthetics, a central part of which was a formalist musical aesthetics that builds substantially on Herbart's. Yet, for all his reputation as the quintessential musical formalist, Hanslick's view of musical aesthetics also relied to a degree on the musical aesthetics of G. W. F. Hegel, who articulated a view in tension with that of his contemporaries Herbart and Nägeli: that although works of music do depend on their inner musical coherence, their ultimate purpose is to express some *Geist,* to articulate some deep and inner life of the individual subject. As Rothfarb has insightfully pointed out, even though Hanslick did indeed deny that music expressed emotion, and even though he valorized purely musical relationships for their very purity and lack of external referents (unlike Hegel), he still unequivocally accepted the Hegelian view that music embodies an inner spiritual essence (Rothfarb, 195).

Perhaps predictably, given the idiosyncratic history of the term *formalism,* the word itself seems not to have appeared until it could be put to pejorative, rather than positive, use. All the above writers wrote of form, formal relations, and the play of forms, pressing some claim regarding the centrality of same in art in general and music in particular. But we hear nothing from them of formalism. It was not until a school of aesthetics arose in explicit opposition to their point of view that we begin to encounter the words *formalism* and *formalist.* That school has been dubbed by Rothfarb and others as the *empathists,* the first of whom was Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-1887), a professor at Zürich and later Tübingen, who produced a massive, four-volume treatise on aesthetics from 1846 to 1857. His position is in many respects precisely the opposite of that of Zimmermann and Hanslick: the content of music *is* emotion; we cannot speak of pure form in music, but only emotion-laden spiritual content (Rothfarb, 189-93). Vischer explicitly attacked Zimmermann as a "formalist," and his ideas formed the basis of the aesthetics of his student Karl Köstlin (1819-1894), who further defined aesthetic spiritual content as the mental projection of human sympathies, of which music and the other arts can function as symbols. Vischer's son, Robert Vischer (1847-1933), developed further the idea of the aesthetic symbol, which became a central feature of his *Einfühlungsästhetik*—the aesthetics of feeling, or of empathy. Rounding out this anti-formalist, empathist line in the nineteenth-century German aesthetics was Johannes Volkelt (1848-1930), who characterized Zimmermann's formalism as reducing the aesthetic object to a "dehumanized, meaningless surface"—language that resonates with countless descriptions of formalism in the twentieth century—and who developed an aesthetics of symbolic forms that shared numerous features with the growing science of psychology.[3]

And so the concept of formalism had its birth in Germany. Although we do not begin to encounter the word itself until the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea is traceable to Kant, and it proliferated in the history just recounted. Significantly, music, which in the eighteenth century (and especially in Kant) had not fared well in aesthetic discussions because of its lack of semantic or visual reference, now takes a central, if not *the* central role in the nineteenth-century German aesthetics of form. Arguably, Hanslick's music criticism represents the first great flowering of formalism within one of the fine arts, and the only one in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the notion of formalism expanded geometrically and geographically. Considering Hanslick's work to be the first, I will now focus on what are surely the five best-known instantiations of formalism from the twentieth century to the present. Second was a school of formalism in art criticism and art history, initiated by the British critic Clive Bell in his book simply entitled *Art,* in 1914. Third, and almost at the same time, was the literary-critical school of Russian Formalists, noted above, from 1915 to 1930. Fourth, also in literary criticism, was the American school of New Criticism from the 1930's to 1950's. Fifth was the period of Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union, beginning in the 1930's and climaxing in the late 1940's, with the official government denunciation of the country's most prominent composers. All of these critical periods of formalism are exceedingly well-known; most reference works on aesthetics, and histories of aesthetics, refer to them. The sixth instance is closer to musicians and musical scholars, and is well-known to us, but not necessarily to other artistic communities—it is not something that one will find in dictionaries of aesthetics: that is, the formal(ist) work of music theory and analysis in our own time.[4]

If we date the first flowering of formalism to the publication of Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* in 1854, the second and third flowerings of occurred, interestingly, sixty years later, both at almost exactly the same time. Slightly earlier was formalism in the visual arts—or, to be precise, in art history and criticism regarding painting and sculpture. Clive Bell's approach, as he argues forcefully in his book of 1914 (Bell 1914), turns on the concept that he calls "significant form," by which he means technical elements such as line, color, balance, and the like. He argues that significant form—that is, the play of "forms and relations of forms"–arouses a specific "aesthetic emotion." He goes so far as to claim that the subject of a representational painting—that is, the person or thing or scene represented—is irrelevant to its artistic value. The essence of meaning in a representational painting is not its subject, but the interplay of line and color that it achieves—its significant form. In a characteristically iconoclastic statement of his position he notes:

> . . . The rapt philosopher, and he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own: that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life find no place. It is a world with emotions of its own.
>
> To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space. (Bell 1914, 27)

Bell's theory obviously has strong Kantian overtones; it suggests that a painting has no real-world function, but its formal relations are in a sense, in Kant's formulation, "purposive without purpose." Similarly, it implies that the viewer of a painting or sculpture finds in it no real-world meaning, but experiences aesthetic pleasure simply in the contemplation of its purely formal relations.

Close on the heels of Bell's work came the Russian Formalists. Their aggressively stated goal was to overturn completely the sorts of literary criticism that were practiced in Russia at the time: first, biographical criticism, focusing on the relation of a literary work to its author's life; second, sociohistorical criticism, focusing on the cultural and historical context of literary works; and third, philosophical criticism, which interpreted works as embodying a particular philosophy. Against such critical practices the formalists proposed the study of literary language in and of itself—or in words coined by their two best-known members, the "literariness" of literary language (Roman Jakobson), and the "defamiliarization" characteristic of that language (Viktor Shklovsky). What the Russian Formalists proposed was a "scientific" study of the material and formal aspects of literature, not the critical and historical interpretation of its meaning. Their concern was with literary techniques or *devices,* as they termed them, and how these devices functioned in literary works. By the mid-1920's the so-called Formalists began gradually to come into conflict with the Marxist literary theory imposed from above in the newly minted Soviet Union. Leon Trotsky, writing from a position of power in the Soviet government, published an influential book, *Literature and Revolution,* in 1924, in which he contrasts the Formalists' work negatively with Marxist criticism, while, significantly, praising their work nonetheless, and suggesting what aspects of it might be useful for the further development of Marxist aesthetics. But within just a few years, by the time Stalin had gained power in the late 1920's, there was no one of influence who sympathized with the Formalists, and they had utterly disbanded in Russia by 1930. Yet their influence in literary studies in the twentieth century and beyond has been extraordinary. Jakobson moved from Moscow to Prague, and was instrumental in establishing the school known as Structuralism there in the 1930's. The work of this structuralist school eventually combined with the structuralist school of linguistics founded by the earlier Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure, and fed into the structuralist movements of the 1960's and 1970's—notably Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology and Roland Barthes's literary and cultural criticism.

American New Criticism, the fourth major flowering of formalism, flourished in the late 1930's through the 1950's, in the work of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, and others. What the New Critics did for English and American literary criticism was to a degree the same as what the Russian Formalists did for Russian literary criticism. They excluded authorial intention, cultural context, historical position, and moral or philosophical interpretation from consideration, in order to concentrate on the literary work itself. They did not concentrate so exclusively on form, material, and technique as did the Russian Formalists (and the Structuralists who followed), nor did they not ignore meaning to the extent that the Russians did. Rather, they theorized that meaning and form are inextricably intertwined. Their preferred genre was British and American lyric poetry, and their analytical method, which involved detailed consideration of both syntactic and semantic elements, came to be known as *close reading*—a technique that was taught to generations of American college students, and that held sway until deconstructive criticism began to gain popularity in the 1970's and 1980's.

The fifth instance of formalism, unlike the previous four, involves the political use of the term as a tool of political slander. It takes us back to Russia, and to the condemnation of a number of Soviet writers in 1946, and of Soviet composers, as already noted, in 1948, by the Soviet Ministry of Culture, led by Andrei Zhdanov. Composers were reprimanded for writing music that was "subjective-idealist," or "formalist," rather than the strictly prescribed "socialist-realist"—that is, music that allegedly was for the selfish use of creative individuals, rather than for the social use of "the people." Composers either had to take refuge in works with text–but only texts that could pass through the censors—or in conservative instrumental works that quoted folksongs or military marches. From the point of view of the present essay, the very type of work that lends itself to formalist analysis, with its concentration on purely musical relationships, and whose meaning could not be specified in everyday language, was precisely that which was condemned.

Having reached the 1970's and 1980's, we are now in a position to consider our last instance of formalism—one that is much closer to our own work. Briefly, what happened in North American musical scholarship of the late 1970's and 1980's was that many teachers of music theory found themselves ill-served by both the work of the American Society of University Composers and the American Musicological Society. Composers were interested in their own new music, and musicologists were interested in archival research, biography, and musical style, while theorists were interested in analyzing musical works *as* music. The establishment of the Society for Music Theory and of professional journals in music theory signaled the beginning of a vital period of theory and analysis in the academic musical community. Analytical publications flourished, with enormous interest in Schenkerian analysis of tonal works, set-theoretical and other formal methods of analysis for post-tonal works. All this set the stage for the revolt of the so-called New Musicologists of the late 1980's and the 1990's—musicologists who took music theory to task precisely for its formalism, for its studied exclusion of social, political, and historical meaning from its considerations. [5]

And so we have six incarnations of formalism in the history, criticism, and analysis of the arts since 1854. What do they have to do with us, as historians, theorists, and composers? How might we understand them in our language of *formalism fair, formalism foul?* In Part II, in the remainder of my paper, I will simply comment on some issues relevant to this topic, and I will raise some questions—all with the aim of helping us understand what the formalism of the past has on that of the present, and helping us come to grips with it in our creative and scholarly lives.

II. Issues to Ponder

1. Formalism in music, as opposed to the other arts

It is significant, and in fact not surprising, that music was the first of the arts in which a formalist approach flourished. From the history of aesthetics, and from the history of music, we know that around the turn of the nineteenth century, instrumental music, which had long been ranked at the lower end of the fine arts because it had no representational content, began to be valued for its very non-specificity of meaning. Rankings of the arts were turned upside down, and suddenly, music, which had always been at the bottom, was now at the top. And so, in the work of Schopenhauer, the first top-tier philosopher thus to honor music, only music, with its absence of external referentiality, could embody the essence of the individual will. Furthermore, instrumental music, with its reveling in purely musical relationships, lent itself naturally to formalism. The growing prestige of chamber music and the symphony also was linked to the development of music analysis. Even as early as 1810, E.T.A. Hoffmann's well-known essay on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony combined interpretive and hermeneutic criticism with what we now call analytical close reading—identification of motives and their development, harmonic structure, and the like. Analyses of this sort became more and more common as the nineteenth century progressed into the twentieth, all the way up to the late twentieth century, with its new societies for music theory and analysis. An aesthetic issue that we might ponder, then, with respect to music and its relationship to the other fine arts, is as follows. Leonard Meyer, in his book *Music, the Arts, and Ideas,* of 1967, with a revised version in 1994, suggests that music, of all the arts, is the art that best lends itself to, or finds itself most vulnerable to (depending upon one's point of view) formal abstraction and formal analysis. Do we agree?

2. Hanslick and Musical Analysis

Hanslick's tract published in 1854 became the lightning rod for a formalist approach to music. Indeed, given its prominence in writings in aesthetics over the past few decades, one might argue that it is the central statement of formalist aesthetics *ever,* in any and all of the arts. We might expect that accordingly he would show an interest in musical analysis, since it is analysis that uncovers and tries to explain purely musical relationships. Musical analysis was becoming a common practice by the 1850's, and it makes sense that a philosophically oriented musician such as Hanslick would be drawn to it.[6] Yet Hanslick himself was not an analyst. There is no analysis of music in *On the Beautiful in Music,* nor anywhere else in his writings. And even though he famously had close relationships with some of the best musicians of his time—most obviously Johannes Brahms and the violinist Joseph Joachim, with whom he drew up a hostile manifesto against Liszt and the New German School in 1860—he did not get his ideas in musical aesthetics solely, or even primarily, from his musical friends. Rather, as we have seen, he was knowledgeable about philosophy, particularly Kant and Hegel, and he was also able to plug into the burgeoning tradition in formalist aesthetics—both its academic (Herbart, Vischer, and Zimmermann) and its music-critical (Hoffmann and Nägeli) sides. An intriguing issue that arises here is thus as follows. In general, the academic world of philosophical aesthetics is quite separate from everyday activity in the arts. But Hanslick's work had an immediate effect on the musical culture of his time, and in fact, ever since; musicians, not just philosophers, know his work well. We thus might pursue the question of how academic formalist aesthetics relates to aesthetics "on the ground"—the aesthetics of artistic practice, music analysis and criticism, and public discourse.

3. Some etymological questions

The wide range of uses to which the word *formalism* has been put, and the polemical charge that it usually carries, both suggest that a study of its etymology would be revealing. Below are some informal observations from my research so far in this area, along with some questions still to be answered.

> i. A straightforward question about the word: is the term *formalism* simply charged in and of itself? Is there in fact *no* possible objective use of the term, or is it polemical in its very being? The German *Historical Dictionary of Philosophy* (*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*)

has a revealing entry in this regard. The dictionary's first definition of *formalism* involves not aesthetics, but ethics, but what it says is relevant to our concerns nevertheless. At the very head of the definition, we read a telling parenthetical phrase that suggests that *formalism* is polemical by default: "*Formalismus:* a term (that is, a *polemical* term, because of the suffix *–ismus*). . . " (translation mine, vol. 3). The authors of the dictionary would thus probably come down on the side that claims that *formalism* is an intrinsically polemical, and thus an emotionally and politically charged, term. Might they then claim that there is no *fair* usage of the word, only *foul?* What do we think?

ii. Much recent work, both in musical and literary scholarship, tacitly equates *formalism* with *modernism.* A telling example is the book *A Poetics of Postmodernism,* by the Canadian literary scholar Linda Hutcheon—who has also written trenchantly about opera. If you look up "formalism" in the book's index, you read: "formalism: see modernism." If you then look up "modernism," and check out all the examples in the book, they all use the term "modernism"; "formalism" is never used at all (see Hutcheon 1989). And so, for us, does *formalism = modernism,* or not?

iii. Richard Taruskin, in his *Oxford History,* uses *formalism,* as we have seen, only twice in the book. But he uses a term of his own coinage, *maximalism,* scores of times. The relationship of maximalism and formalism is fuzzy—he never equates the two, but they are surely related. Taruskin's *maximalism* seems to refer to the claim that aesthetic value in a musical work varies proportionally to the abundance and richness of purely musical relationships embodied therein. This statement, it seems to me, accurately describes the aesthetic of a number of composers (and theorists)—Milton Babbitt comes immediately to mind. When we write, read, and evaluate musical analyses, might it be useful to ask how the "maximalist" claim relates to our own work, or to that with which we are engaging?

iv. This point suggests a related point: to what extent do writers who use the term *formalism* equate formalism simply with music analysis? One can make the argument that when scholars such as Kerman, Taruskin, Fink, Lawrence Kramer (see Kramer 1992) and many others refer to formalism, they refer simply to the contemporary practice of music analysis. Is this the case, and if so, do we agree or disagree with the claim that formalism and analysis are equivalent?

All these etymological questions bring us full circle, back to our central topic, "Formalism, Fair and Foul." Our formalist adventures suggest that the aesthetic issues that we face are rather more complex than my title would suggest. As we have seen, the word *formalism* has had a short, but exceedingly lively and colorful history. And there is still much to learn about it, and to ponder about it. I would guess, as a matter of fact, that it is incumbent upon me, here at the end of my short essay, to offer an opinion, to take a position on formalism, rather than just to describe it from the outside. My position, briefly, is that I believe we can arrive at a clear, working definition of formalism: again, *formalism* is the claim that the essence of any art resides in relationships of elements within an artistic work itself, not in relationships to anything outside the work. In this regard, and in fairness to Richard Taruskin, I should note that, even though I took him to task for using the term rather inconsistently, and in a polemical way in his book, my definition of formalism is compatible with his: it is the study of structure rather than meaning. That said, I categorically reject the claim that formalism is in itself *foul*. Formalism has made vast contributions to our understanding of music, and will continue to do so. It has given us the insights of Rameau, and Schenker, and David Lewin, and many more theorists. Even though these theorists conceived of their systems in such a way as not to require any explicit consideration of composer biography, or social and historical context, or hermeneutic meaning, I am in no way willing to do away with their insights. I find these insights inherently valuable in and of themselves, and history shows us that if a formal musical system is worth its salt, it can eventually lend itself to interpretation of musical and socio-cultural meaning.

I close with an example from relatively recent musical scholarship. In the late 1990's, my music-theoretical friend and colleague Richard Cohn conceived of a notion that he called *hexatonic poles*. He did so solely in terms of relationships inherent in the twelve-note equal-tempered system and the major and minor triads embedded in that system. As it has turned out, his conception is hugely relevant to all sorts of chromatic tonal music—certainly that of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century composers such as Wagner, Brahms, Franck, Mahler, and Elgar; but also to music of composers going back to Schubert, and even to Gesualdo; and forward to Prokofieff and Shostakovich. Music theorists and analysts have appropriated *hexatonic poles* in a variety of ways, most often in analyses that are indeed essentially formalist: an analyst notices hexatonic relations in a piece, describes how they work, usually with all sorts of interesting harmonic and tonal ramifications, and usually with a certain sense of awe that a composer could use the relationships in such a musically interesting way. Pure formalism! But many scholars, beginning with Cohn himself (Cohn 2004), have also shown that composers have employed hexatonic poles to articulate all sorts of musical meaning—tragic, ironic, and much more. They get expressive use, as well as technical use, from the abstract relationships. If Cohn had not done his formalist work on hexatonic poles, music hermeneutics and criticism would have less to work with in the interpretation of chromatic tonal music, and they would accordingly be impoverished in a way that they in fact are not. And so formalism, far from being merely a sterile exercise for academics, can in fact serve as a valuable, even essential, tool in interpretation.

NOTES

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary.* Second ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. The source cited is Charles Kingsley's *Aton Locke* (1850).

[2] My discussion of nineteenth-century German aesthetics in this and the following two paragraphs is deeply indebted to Lee Rothfarb's illuminating essay, "Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of Musical Formalism" (Rothfarb 2012). All the quotations in these paragraphs are from Rothfarb's essay; all the translations are his. See also Lippman 1992.

[3] For a detailed discussion of the work of Köstlin, Robert Vischer, and Volkelt, see Rothfarb, 197-211.

[4] The visual and literary arts have offered significant new instantiations of formalism that are intriguing, although they must remain beyond the scope of this essay. Noteworthy in the visual arts is Whitney Davis's distinction between High and Historical Formalism (Davis 2008 and 2010). In literature and literary studies, first is the New Formalism in American poetry, which advocates a return from free verse to traditional poetic forms with standard patterns of meter and rhyme (see Gioia 1987). Second is the more recent New Formalism in literary criticism, which advocates a return from the deconstructive and postmodernist modes of criticism in play since the 1970's, to the close reading of texts (see Levinson 2007). Both the poetic and literary-critical "new formalisms" are, in terms of the present essay, "formalisms fair," since they clearly represent a reaction *against* an earlier anti-formalism.

[5] For a historical-critical view of the development of modern Anglo-American music theory, see McCreless 1997.

[6] The classic account of the history of musical analysis is Bent 1987. For examples of analysis in the nineteenth century, see Bent 1994 and 1996.

REFERENCES

Agawu, Kofi. "How We Got out of Analysis, and How We Can Get Back in Again." Music Analysis 23 (2004), 267-286.

Bell, Clive. Art. London: Chatto and Windus, 1914.

Bent, Ian. Analysis. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.

________. Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century. 2 vols. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Cassirer, Ernst. Kant's Life and Thought. Trans. James Haden. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.

Cohn, Richard. "Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age." Journal of the American Musicological Society 57.2 (2004): 285-323.

Davis, Whitney. General Theory of Visual Culture. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

________. "Subjectivity and Objectivity in High and Historical Formalism." Representations 104 (2008), 8-23.

Encyclopedia of Aesthetics. Ed. Michael Kelly. 4 vols. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Fink, Robert. Repeating Ourselves: American Minimalism as Cultural Practice. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

Gioia, Dana. Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1992.

Hanslick, Eduard. On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music. Trans. and ed. Geoffrey Payzant. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986 [1854].

Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie. Ed. Joachim Ritter. 13 vols. Basel and Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1971—

Hutcheon, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Judgment. Trans. Werner Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987 [1790].

Kerman, Joseph. "How We Got Into Analysis, and How We Can Get Out." Critical Inquiry 7 (1980), 311-31.

Kramer, Lawrence. Haydn's Chaos, Schenker's Order; Or, Hermeneutics and Musical Analysis: Can They Mix?" 19th-Century Music 16 (1992).

Levinson, Marjorie. "What Is New Formalism?" Proceedings of the Modern Language Association 122 (2007), 558-569.

Lippman, Edward. A History of Western Musical Aesthetics. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

McCreless, Patrick. "Rethinking Contemporary Music Theory." In Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987, 13-53.

Meyer, Leonard B. Music, The Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture. With a new postlude. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994 [1967].

Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Rothfarb, Lee. “The Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of Formalism,” Journal of Music Theory 56 (2012), 167-220.

Steiner, Peter. Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Taruskin, Richard. The Oxford History of Western Music. 5 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Patrick McCreless is Professor of Music at Yale University. He has published on the operas of Wagner--including a monograph, *Wagner's Siegfried: Its Drama, Its History, and Its Music;* and (with the literary scholar Adrian Daub) the articles on the *Ring* in the forthcoming *Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia.* He has also published essays or book chapters on the theory and analysis of chromatic music in the nineteenth century; Schenkerian theory; rhetoric and music; musical gesture; the music of Shostakovich; and the history of music theory.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

THE ROCK NOVEL AND JONATHAN LETHEM'S *THE FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE*

FLORENCE DORE

The last section of Jonathan Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude* (2003) opens with the protagonist Dylan getting dumped by his girlfriend Abby. As Abby screams at him, she sorts through his CD collection and finds one by a non-fictional band, Dump, an off-shoot of the group Yo La Tengo led by bassist James McNew. "What's this, *Dump?*," Abby asks, "You actually listen to something called Dump? Is that *real*?" Abby takes Dylan to task for evading intimacy, for his rude enthrallment "with negritude"—she is black, he is white—and, crucially, for his collection of CDs.[1] The narrative of this couple's demise is punctuated by a cataloguing of 1980s and 1990s independent college bands and the early soul and blues artists who made their music possible. In what follows, I am going to explain why. Starting in about 2000, rock and roll started to get noticeably more play in the novel, and indeed *The Fortress of Solitude,* published the same year independent film guru Richard Linklater released *The School of Rock* (for Paramount), is part of a new subgenre in contemporary American fiction: what I call the rock novel.

Abby accuses Dylan of being obsessed with "*sad black folks*." As they argue, she tosses his CDs on the ground one by one, reading the names of the artists aloud to comment on Dylan's misery, a brand of abjection the narrator will eventually associate with his "funkywhiteboy geekdom" (136):

> "Let's see, Curtis Mayfield, 'We People Who Are Darker Than Blue'—sounds like depression to me." She chucked the CD to the floor. "Gladys Knight, misery, depression. Johnny Adams, depression. Van Morrison, total fucking depression. Lucinda Williams, give her prozac. Marvin Gaye, dead. Johnny Ace, dead, tragic. " As she dismissed the titles she jerked them down from the shelf, the jewel cases splitting as they clattered down. "Little Willie John, dead. Little Esther and Little Jimmy Scott, sad—all the Littles are sad.… Gillian Welch, please, momma. The Go-Betweens? Five Blind Boys of Alabama, no comment…. Brian Wilson, crazy. Tom Verlaine, *very* depressed." (315)

Abby's accusations resonate with the familiar view that white practitioners of rock and roll appropriate their material from African Americans, and James McNew's band is a typical example: fronted by a white man, Dump's 1998 release "That Skinny Motherfucker With the High Voice?" is an album's worth of covers by the Artist Formerly Known as Prince.

We will return to this racial dimension of Lethem's novel. First, let this fact go on record: rock and roll became a salient aesthetic category in the American novel at the turn of the twenty-first century.[2] The contemporary American novel's tendency to cannibalize rock seems most obviously announced in the jacket design for Michael Chabon's *Telegraph Avenue* (2012). Complete with perfectly scaled record label—glued, as on a vinyl LP, right on the novel's cover, listing its chapters as if they were recorded tracks—Chabon's book jacket makes vivid a new cultural fantasy: the American novel has transmogrified, has *become* an album. We find rock in a broad swath of the best contemporary American novels, and all partake of the desire for cultural melding Chabon's cover crystallizes. Rock features importantly in virtually all of Rick Moody's fiction, for example, starting with the 1994 *Ice Storm*. In that novel, Moody, who is himself a rock enthusiast and musician, encapsulates Paul Hood's adolescent exile in a scene in which he and his girlfriend, who is vomiting her drugs and alcohol out onto the street, stand outside of a Big Star show at Max's Kansas City in downtown New York.[3] The American novel's turn to rock is also clearly what fuels Jennifer Egan's *A Visit From the Goon Squad* (2011). Egan's Bosco describes adulthood as a move from being a "rock star" to being a "fat fuck no one cares about" (96). Dana Spiotta's 2006 *Eat the Document,* whose title is taken from the 1966 Bob Dylan documentary for ABC that was never shown*,* features a fugitive protagonist who remakes her identity by naming herself after

Caroline from the Beach Boys song, "Caroline, No." And rock is no trivial concern for these writers: for many of the best American novelists now writing, rock and roll provides more than a novel's worth of material. Spiotta's 2011 *Stone Arabia* centers on the loss by a sister of her former-rock-star brother, and Lethem's 2009 *Chronic City*, in which protagonist Perkus Tooth, who does not connect with any girls at all, is meaningfully glossed in his relationship to the Rolling Stones' 1978 album *Some Girls*. Perkus comes to be defined in particular in relation to the song "Shattered." Lethem repurposes the Stones megahit for his novel, employing its "shadoobie" giddiness to add serious meaning to Perkus' own shattering dissolution as a human.[4] In a 2011 keynote address at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Rick Moody announced that the "synergy between the pop song and the contemporary novel" is now "endemic" to the craft.[5]

This tendency has led rock writing to stray into the pages of the *New York Times Book Review,* where rock critics in the twenty-first century publish their musings about novels. In June 2012, pop enthusiast Howard Hampton observed that some of his "favorite music writing of the last decade has turned up in novels," and in September of the same year, rock writer Jay Ruttenberg noted that four of the novels he had recently read just happened to be about rock. This coincidence led him to wonder "whether rock music, long rumored to be deceased, was functioning better on the page than in the recording."[6] In what follows, I will explore the question of what this means for the novel as a genre. Over the decade or so after 2000, novel after novel takes some feature of rock and roll as basic to its project.[7] Why? Why has rock started to matter so much to American novelists, and what change in the novel does this tendency perhaps mark? What should we make of the fact that we encounter in so many contemporary American novels material we are more accustomed to finding in columns written by Robert Cristgau, Peter Guralnick, or Greil Marcus? Is this another reason to point out that the novel is a dead form?[8]

R.I.P. R.E.M.

The rock novel is in part a generational phenomenon: these writers were all born in the mid- to late sixties: the British Invasion years in rock, when Cristgau, Guralnick, and Marcus were all in their twenties. But the appearance of these novels also comes at an endpoint of sorts in the history of rock and roll music, an end marked by three crucial events in the first decade or so of the twenty-first century: the 2011 breakup of R.E.M., the most successful of the 1980s college bands; when the mega-corporation Clear Channel crushed college radio by going private in 2008; and the ascendance in 2005 of *American Idol* to most watched television series.[9]

In retrospect, the independent college radio bands whose CDs end up strewn on the floor of Dylan's apartment, along with similar artists to whom Lethem refers throughout the novel— the dB's, Lucinda Williams, R.E.M., Ron Sexsmith—comprise a canon of white independent musical artists who began recording on vinyl and ended up on iTunes, and who gained notoriety on independent college radio stations in the 1980s and 1990s. The rest of the musicians in this novel, including the fictional soul has-been Barrett Rude Junior, are the "*black folks*" from which rock and roll historically sprang. Lethem incorporates rock music into funkywhiteboy Dylan Ebdus' thoughts because the indie-rock artists with whom his protagonist is affiliated institutionalized a historical experience of self that these novels memorialize.

It is the rock novel's portrayal of this experience of self that raises the question of whether the novel as a genre has been altered by rock. And things do seem different. In Spiotta's *Eat the Document* we find Jason, teen-aged son of protagonist Mary Whittaker, spinning Beach Boys records on his turntable. Jason explains that listening to *Pet Sounds* through his headphones creates a sense of community, but Spiotta frames this view parodically. Jason achieves only a virtual community, the only version of social life available to those N. Katherine Hayles and others call the "digital subjects" of the computer age. As Jason puts it:

> the thing of it is I don't necessarily feel connected to Brian Wilson or any of the Beach Boys. But I do, I guess, feel connected to all the other people, alone in a room somewhere, who listen to *Pet Sounds* on their headphones and who feel the way I feel. I just don't really want to talk to them or hang out with them. (76)

In this moment and in others like it found in rock novels, the presence of the virtual might lead us to worry, as critics from T. S. Eliot to James Wood have been doing for over a century, that the novel is finally a dead form.[10] We might be concerned that the turntable is the first in a series of impersonal technologies that undo humanity, and that its ubiquitous presence in these novels is a sign of the genre's self-defeating collapse. Whether we celebrate or mourn the apparently disappearing bodily human, what Ian Watt identified in 1957 as the novel's "private orientation"—that which aligned the novel with Descartes and Locke in creating the modern self—seems altered by the presence of virtual bodies that rock music brings to the form.[11]

But rather than simply killing off the novel, contemporary American novelists who make use of rock and roll preserve the genre, update it to make it suitable for life in the twenty-first century. Rock novelists revivify the novel by reanimating, precisely, "private experience," but in the context of the posthuman, a moment Mark McGurl has associated with a "critical fiction" he calls the "posthuman comedy."[12] In *The School of Rock,* recall, Led-Zeppelin-obsessed proselytizer of rock (played by Jack Black) Dewey Finn gets his elementary students into the Battle of the Bands by telling the organizers that the kids are "terminal," that they are dying of a rare blood disease called "stick-it-to-de-man-eosis." Jack Black as Dewey says: "the last thing they wanted to do before they bit the dust was play battle of the bands."[13] In less parodic but related ways, rock novelists address questions of mortality with reference to what they identify as one of rock's key formal attributes: its ability to render the personal public and anonymous, as well as the reverse—its ability to render the anonymous singular. These novels indicate that to be human is not just to be mortal; it is to be diminished by the relative brevity of mortal existence. This is an understanding of mortality that science—as McGurl, Wai Chee Dimock, and others have taught us—describes as "deep time."[14] Contemporary novelists look to the rock lyric to supplement private experience in this context, to reassert it, but without Romantic inflation. As we shall see, it is the rock lyric as public expression in "the Anthropocene" that helps rock novelists to achieve a version of the novel's private subject.

Named in 2000 by chemist Paul J. Crutzen and marine scientist Eugene F. Stoermer, the designation of the present as a geological epoch called the Anthropocene comes from the scientific knowledge of a past before and the prediction of a future beyond humans.[15] As Crutzen puts it, "the present," is a "human-dominated, geological epoch," and this idea emerges across disciplines as a sense that humans are insignificant. In making explicit humanity's inevitable and rapid move toward "biting the dust," the idea of an Anthropocene—an epoch that eclipses the Romantic self because of its acknowledgment of humanity's marginality—alerts us to the possibility that "there will be a time," to borrow from theorist Claire Colebrook, "when the human species might be read as a scar on an earth in which 'man' is no longer present." Bruno Latour has said that in the Anthropocene, "the time of time" has "passed." And, according to historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, a "shared sense of catastrophe" unites humanity in this context. A similar set of concerns has led philosopher Quentin Meillasoux to ask the question, if thinking itself is younger than the earth, what does it mean to think about the origin of the earth? In his words, "How are we to grasp the *meaning* of scientific statements bearing explicitly upon a manifestation of the world that is posited as anterior to the emergence of thought and even of life?" (9-10).[16]

But why rock and roll? What does rock music do for novelists writing in the Anthropocene? In a memorable moment in *School of Rock,* iconic slacker Dewey marshals exceptional gusto to merge his voice with Robert Plant's screaming in the first bars of Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song," which is blasting through the stereo speakers of his toxic-exhaust-spewing van.[17] The comic delirium Jack Black's performance produces in this scene, in which Dewey is transporting elementary school children off-campus in a vehicle whose expiration seems imminent, might suggest that rock offers a frivolous if affectively potent diversion in humanity's similar careening. Considered from the vantage Linklater et al offer here, the rock novel might seem like the novel's last "battle of the bands" before the human "bites the dust." Even James Wood, who charged that rock makes the characters in *The Fortress of Solitude* "hollow," has confessed to participation in such exuberance. Gatekeeper of the high-literary—Lethem calls him "the most apparently gifted close reader of our time"—Wood takes on shades of Linklater's rock nerd when he avows, in a 2009 essay on *Quadrophenia* (1973), "The Who playing at full throttle is, for me, one of the indices of life."[18] "Everyone secretly wants to play the drums," says Wood in a yet another article about The Who—this one his homage to drummer Keith Moon—"because hitting things, like yelling, returns us to the innocent violence of childhood."[19]

S*chadenfruede*, then? Rock is bodily, novels are not; the affect created by hitting things and screaming is what these novelists—mired in realism, an aesthetic category which Sianne Ngai calls the "merely interesting"—seek.[20] Surely this is right. I would like to suggest that in addition, though, rock and roll offers novelists a way to thematize solutions to the crisis of self that humanity's impending expiration creates. In particular, rock novelists find in rock an experience of the middle—of averages. They suggest that this average, if it cannot restore humanity to its former centrality, can make us feel better about our insignificance by lending hyperbole to it. In *The Fortress of Solitude* and other rock novels we find authors suggesting that this middle is the best anyone can hope for given the utter marginality of the human. As we shall see, rock and roll is the aesthetic mechanism allowing for this redefinition of Watt's idea of "private experience." In rock novels, we find a private self that has been returned from the brink of complete dispersal, from a sense of the self's nothingness. Instead of a restoration of Romantic genius, though, rock novels offer a deflated version of self, a human whose diminishment is a key feature of its new significance.

Before examining this in Lethem, it might be instructive to consider the same fictional move in Thomas Pynchon's 1966 *The Crying of Lot 49*, which I argue elsewhere is an important predecessor for the rock novel.[21] Mucho Maas, Oedipa's disc jockey spouse, tries to convey the bliss of being on acid and listening to the Beatles' 1963 "She Loves You": "When those kids sing about 'She loves you,' yeah well, you know, she does." Mucho exults, "she's any number of people, all over the world, back through time, different colors, sizes, ages, shapes, distances from death but she loves. And the 'you' is everybody."[22] For Mucho this togetherness amounts to a mathematical increase, a way for him to be literally mucho mas, much more. And notice that, emerging as it does so close to Civil Rights Act of 1964, this "togetherness" includes a blending of "colors" among other distinctions. If this assimilation of personal experience to public lyric feels like inter-racial merging to Mucho, his boss Funch worries that he is becoming "generic" (114): Mucho "hasn't been himself," Funch tells Oedipa. And Oedipa asks, "who…pray, has he been, Ringo Starr?… Chubby Checker?… the Riteous Brothers?" (114). Even if Pynchon is making fun of Mucho here, which he surely is (listening to the line in an ad, "rich chocolatey goodness," brings him the same groovy sense of oneness with the color brown), the rock lyric enables the author to portray Mucho as more; in letting "she loves you" speak for him Mucho can be the "you" that is "everybody." He can be a giant rock star—John Lennon or Paul McCartney—and, at the same time, he can be the "*sad black folks*" from whom the Beatles and other rock giants "borrowed" to create their music. Where the rock lyric provides shelter for his insignificance, even if it is unspecific and generic, Oedipa, in her affiliation with more literary construals of meaning, remains lost. Is *The Crying of Lot 49* the novel's swan song in the onslaught of rock as the more influential cultural force? Any way you read it, Mucho's oneness with everyone illustrates why rock holds such appeal for contemporary American novelists.

Returning now to the breakup in *A Fortress of Solitude*, we can understand more clearly why Dylan's record collection figures so importantly in the novel. Abby charges Dylan with modeling his love for her on an attachment to his CD collection, and in particular to the black artists and the musical genres they created. Nothing in the novel suggests that she is wrong. This leads to her stinging accusation that Dylan "collects" her like an early soul record: " 'I said to myself, Abby, this man is collecting you for the color of your skin' " (317). That Dylan's feelings for humans are mediated by his relation to records by black people has already been confirmed when we discover what Dylan is thinking about at the beginning of the scene: "she made a picture—one suitable, if you discounted the Meat Puppets emblem on the thin stretched white shirt, for the jacket art of an old Blue Note jazz LP" (309). When Abby leaves, Dylan indicates that the intimate facts of their relationship, so far portrayed in novelistic dialogue, can, like Mucho's, be more succinctly put in terms of a lyric from one of his records. Dylan picks up the one CD that had "skated to the top of the small heap" (316) when Abby storms off; it is the 1970 soul recording, Syl Johnson's *Is It Because I'm Black?* With this, Lethem performs the signature move of the rock novel: he glosses his fictional character's consciousness with reference to a historically real recording by a musical artist. Soul artist Syl Johnson helps Dylan read Abby's interior thought, just as the litany of CDs, including the one by Dump, helps emphasize to the reader that she is about to "dump" Dylan. In *Fortress of Solitude* as in the rock novel generally, narrative expressions of the private individual are characterized as better encapsulated in soul and rock's punchy aphorisms.

And crucially, as the assimilation of individual thought to the lyrics of early black soul and jazz artists renders particular characters generic, this process makes them postracial, construing race in utterly constructivist terms. Consider the easy overlap Lethem portrays in Dylan's mind between a Blue Note jazz record and the Meat Puppets. Whatever circuitous route has led from Blue Note artists to this 1980s indie-college band, the image conveys no sense that rock is stolen from black music. We might consider in this regard novelist Michael Chabon's *Telegraph Avenue*. The characters this white author creates are almost all African Americans, and his vinyl nerds collect soul and jazz LPs. What to make of the fact that, in this almost entirely black world, it is the white Carole King's "It's Too Late" that genericizes its characters—and this during a black soul musician's funeral?[23] Is this a happily postracial nucleus in deep time's galactic sprawl of doom? Or is Chabon's Archy a racist version of Nick Hornby's Rob Fleming, the collector-geek in blackface? What I hope my reading of *Fortress* will show is that Lethem in particular connects the dots between apparently postracial art forms—specifically the contemporary novel and indie-rock—and black culture.[24] Lethem's Dylan is a classic rock nerd, a collector-geek like those in *Telegraph Avenue*, and he is cut from the same cloth as *High Fidelity's* Rob Fleming. But in the contemporary rock novel, we find Hornby's quaint indie-rock dude traded up, promoted within a broader cultural "school of rock" to a full-blown, novelistic self with the sort of private dimensions that allow for this kind of historically specific examination, even in deep time. As we shall see, Lethem's Dylan clarifies that persistent inequality indicates that there are crucial remainders in humanity's "shared sense of catastrophe."[25]

The British Hornby must be credited with contributions to the rock novel, to be sure: his *High Fidelity* (1995) and *Juliet, Naked* (2009) are key. And when we consider that rock plays a crucial role in Jessica Hagedorn's *The Gangster of Love* (1996) and Salmon Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) as well, we might decide that it makes sense to describe the rock novel as a global phenomenon made possible by the end of the Cold War. Francis Fukuyama suggests as much in his seminal essay when he notes that the "end of history" manifests itself in the fact that "rock music" is "enjoyed alike in Prague, Rangoon, and Tehran" (3). But in thematizing the extent to which black vernacular culture, in particular blues and soul, have contributed to rock-nerd identity formation, Lethem returns this global, anthropocentric phenomenon to that thorny and historically particular American "love" of blackness that Eric Lott, and Bob Dylan after him, identified as also "theft."[26] In a 2007 essay for *Harper's,* "The Ecstasy of Influence," Lethem described Bob Dylan's infamous use of specific blues melodies and lyrics on "*Love and Theft"* (Dylan's title includes the quotation marks) as issuing from an "appropriating, minstrel-boy self" (59).[27] Lethem's fictional Dylan is an "appropriating minstrel-boy self" too. In what follows, I am going to argue that Lethem and his cohort turn to the figure of the rock nerd, among other reasons, to find a way to explore without inflating social features of human existence like race and history—even in postracial, posthuman, and global contexts. Chakrabarty makes the useful observation that the "geologic now of the Anthropocene has become entangled with the now of human history." The rock novel straddles these nows.

Approximately Infinite Universe

Finding an average between the giant Bob Dylan and the nobody Dylan Ebdus is what the experience of finding a self looks like in *The Fortress of Solitude*. Dylan's best friend from childhood, the African American Mingus to his white Dylan, ends up in prison. Toward the end of the novel Dylan sits on the floor of the prison outside of Mingus' jail cell and hallucinates that he is tiny. Dylan describes this experience as "a recurrence of my childhood micropsia" (487). The hallucinations micropsia and macropsia are neurological difficulties with scale: in micropsia, or "Alice In Wonderland Syndrome," the sensation produced is of being "bigger than usual." Lethem's narrator has it wrong; Dylan feels tiny, and so he experiences what in 1909 was described as "Lilliputian hallucinations," or *ma*cropsia[28]:

> Seated on the chill concrete, I felt a recurrence of my childhood micropsia, a night terror I thought I'd left behind at age eleven or twelve, in my bedroom on Dean Street: the sensation that my body was reduced to speck size in a universe pounding with gravitational force, a void crushing against me on all sides. The ailanthus branches brushing the back windows had seemed to me then like the spiraled arms of distant galaxies. (487)

Dylan's sense that his body is a "speck" in a "universe" that is "crushing" him comes along with a feeling that the very distant is very close—that the "ailanthus branches" outside his window are the "spiraled arms of distant galaxies." Varieties of these perceptual confusions with scale are repeated again and again in the novel, and these ways of viewing of the world—as too far away, too close, too big, or too small—characterize its central organizing logic.[29]

When adolescence hits, Dylan finds his explanation for macropsia: "According to Mr. Winegar, science teacher, the universe was reportedly exploding in slow motion" (118). Lethem's point seems to be that macropsia aptly captures something about the condition of a self in the Anthropocene: here is a human defined in terms of the neurological, an evolutionary being whose extinction is, by virtue of this physicality, made apparent as inevitable. Macropsia's disorienting logic comes up again and again in *Fortress*: Aaron X. Doily is both a flying superhero with a magic ring and an utterly degraded, abject "*pee*-stained" (100) homeless man: "where the flying man's eyes ought to be white they're that same pee-stain color, as though he's somehow urinated even into his own eyeballs" (100). Over the twenty-five years the novel spans, Abraham Ebdus, Dylan's father, creates an abstract film by painting directly onto the "celluloid frames" (9) one at a time every day. Abraham's film, like the two Dylans, and like the poles of Aaron X. Doily's status, vacillates in a wildly all-and-nothing economy, between being an all-consuming activity that slows time down almost to halting and an utterly compressed sped-up version of actual time in Abraham's film: after twenty-five years, Abraham's lifetime masterpiece takes under thirty minutes to watch (357). When at one point a teen-aged Dylan pushes his glasses back on his nose, the narrator observes that the "glasses were shit, made of shit, part of the contemporary ocean of plastic." Abraham "did what he could," we are told, with "a tiny screwdriver," "tighten[ing] the screws, doing his miniaturist's work. This was the level at which things could be improved" (87). The "ocean of plastic" from which plastic shit emerges and the "miniaturist's work"; the ability to fly and the "pee-stain" eyes; twenty-five years and thirty minutes: Lethem presents Dylan's maturation as a reckoning of the massive with the tiny—the universe with the speck of self.

Lethem's novel is not called *Fortress of Solitude* because it is about comics, then, although certainly Lethem presents Dylan Ebdus's discovery of comics as seminal in his personal development. Lethem chooses this title because in the now of the Anthropocene solitude as the coherent subject's fullest expression is also hyperbolic, a cartoonish parody of the potent subject: the superhero. Dylan derides Superman as one of DC Comics' "jokes, ruined by television"; Superman was the "antithesis" of Marvel heroes, "laughable," he says. Even as he disparages Superman, though, Dylan characterizes his father as a version of him. "In truth," Lethem's comic-book voice says, "Superman in his Fortress of Solitude reminded you all too much of Abraham in his high studio, brooding over nothing" (65). The Superman rubric is fitting. His hyperbolic potency notoriously expresses the experience of human diminishment lived by co-creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, Jewish immigrants in Cleveland—"planted in the Midwest," as Jules Feiffer put it in 1996—"during the birth of native American facism, the rise of anti-Semitism, the radio broadcasts of Father Coughlin." Superman delivered a fantasy of the potent subject Feiffer described thus: "Underneath the schmucky façade lived Men of Steel!" (4). Lethem construes Bob Dylan, born a generation after Jerry Siegel and similarly a Jew raised in a midwestern city, as the adult version of Superman, thus drawing a clear line: rock music is the adult version of comic books. Abraham is Superman too, but the speck version, the version who "broods over nothing," the nothing to which Bob Dylan contributes his increase. Dylan Ebdus' mother Rachel clarifies that rock stars are indeed the superheroes of the adult world—a feature of adult life, like sexuality, that Dylan will understand only when he grows up: "Children like Ringo… Boys do. Girls like Paul. He's sexy. You'll understand"

(11). In the rock novel, the adult enlightenment of the *bildung* is construed as grasping and incorporating the hyperbole of rock stars into the self.

I Wish I Was Your Mother

In his review, Wood complained that Dylan Ebdus seems "rather incredibly" to stop thinking about his mother after she leaves. But the world of macropsia is not the world of the psychoanalytic mourner. It is the world of the human being who must make sense of personal experience in terms of the inhumanity that surrounds it, so that Rachel's absence, not so much loss in itself, is a small version of that vaster sense of being lost—an index. Dylan's first act in the novel is to kill a kitten by accidentally stepping backwards on it in his back yard, and Lethem presents this as an event that can be assimilated, one that the space of Dylan's four-year-old consciousness can accommodate: "Dylan was too young to understand what he'd done, except he wasn't; they hoped he'd forget, except he didn't. He'd later pretend to forget, protecting the adults from what he was sure they couldn't handle: his remembering entirely" (4). The way in which this emotion fits into Dylan's consciousness—as "remembering entirely"—indicates a correlation between Dylan's thoughts and the world. The kitten accident is finite. His mother is not. Rachel is equated with another kind of knowledge, a kind the child Dylan associates with information too infinite to grasp:

> She was wild with information he couldn't yet use…. She was too full for the house, had to vent herself constantly into the telephone, and too full for Dylan, who instead worked Rachel's margins, dodging her main force to dip sidelong into what he could make sense of. (11)

Dylan's excessive, "venting" mother is presented as the first of many indications that knowing and feeling are limited, that his mind is tiny in the context of infinity. Emotion is construed here as the speck whose appearance of monumentality protects from the infinity Rachel marks. And although the novel signals Rachel everywhere, a fact that Wood inexplicably misses, it is not mourning that Rachel's absence inspires since her presence was never entirely graspable in the first place.

Thus, in the second section of *A Fortress of Solitude,* entitled "Liner Notes," Lethem portrays Dylan as a music geek to show that rock history, like guilty knowledge, constitutes only a small version of time in the infinite. Lethem presents rock history as staving off what Meillasoux describes as a world "that is posited as anterior to the emergence of thought and even of life," of which particular LPs, in their association with Rachel, emerge as reminders. In his review of *Fortress*, William Dereciewicz observes that "[g]eekdom resists the informational avalanche through the impossible strategy of seeking to master it."[30] "Liner Notes" responds to Rachel as lost, but in a mastery that resembles Abraham's "miniaturist's work," the grasping of a piece of the infinite that she indicates. This section of the novel eschews regular novelistic convention, presenting as narrative the liner notes Dylan has written for a Remnant Records box set of "The Subtle Distinctions," the fictional 1970s soul band that features Mingus' father Barrett Rude Junior. The "Liner Notes" section of the novel is entirely comprised of Dylan's portrayal of an actual moment in popular music history. Although Barrett Rude Junior is a fictional character, almost everything about his career as Dylan has catalogued it in "Liner Notes" is based on obsessively gathered, accurate historical facts concerning rock trivia. Even the rock critic Dave Marsh—frequent writer for *Rolling Stone,* once editor at CREEM magazine—makes an appearance here, as having included Barrett's fictional band in his geek tome *Heart of Rock and Soul*, a book Marsh did in fact write in 1989 (300). Dylan as narrator puts the fictional Barrett Rude Junior at the historical Hi Records with Memphis soul producer Willie Mitchell, and as later working with Motown's Norman Whitfield. Like his guilt over the kitten's death, this actual history of popular music into which the fiction is inserted is offered up to the reader as a comforting limit in an infinite time. This is a key feature of the rock novel: its presentation of human time and emotion as graspable forms of the infinite, as purely invented, created by humans to provide comfort. Rhodes Blemnar, Dylan's boss at Remnant Records, finds this history lacking; his response to "Liner Notes" is to accuse Dylan of being "full of shit." This modulation from the "Liner Notes" section to the novel—*Fortress of Solitude* as also f.o.s.—seems a self-critique of this non-novelistic segment. And indeed Part Two reads as incomplete, an inflated version of the human now.

It is of course tempting to read this novel—along with *Motherless Brooklyn*—in therapeutic terms, since Lethem's own mother died during his teen years. But what then, do we make of the presence of the mother as a recurring and important figure in the rock novel? It turns out that the Romantic experience of hugeness that rock provides in the Anthropocene also characterizes the category of the maternal in the rock novel. A look at Spoitta's Mary in *Eat the Document* will clarify how this works: Mary is a 1960s radical whose political activism has gone awry. Based on Black Panther sympathizer Katherine Ann Power**,** Mary spends her life on the run for murder, and over the course of the novel she sheds her identity and takes a new name three separate times. In order to do this, Mary turns like Mucho to the rock lyric, and decides on "Caroline" as her first new pseudonym.

At the same Rock and Roll Hall of Fame conference cited above, Jennifer Fleissner followed Moody in giving a keynote discussing the relation between literature and rock. Arguing that the pop song is now a ubiquitous fragment in the everyday, and that novels employ rock "less to tell a personal story than to access a historical one," Fleissner observed that Spiotta's Caroline is taken from a Beach Boys song, "Caroline, No."[31] The Beach Boys are form Hawthorne, California, and when Mary decides to become Caroline, she writes down the specifics of her new self in a "document" that clearly refers to the novel's title:

> Her age: twenty-two. Birthplace: Hawthorne, California. Name: Caroline. Hawthorne was just another suburban town in California, which you could bet was more like all the other suburban towns in California than it was different, and it would do just fine even if her favorite band was also from Hawthorne. And Caroline is a pretty girl's name that also happened to be the name of the girl in one of her favorite songs. (9)

The idea of the suburbs here perfectly captures what Spiotta wants from the Beach Boys reference. "Caroline" and "Hawthorne," generic as they are, are what keep Mary from being nobody, by lending the cultural hyperbole of the Beach Boys to what later is described as Mary's "subtracted state" (223)—what we might call her menos.

When Mary again changes her name, this time to Louise, she gets pregnant and has a baby, a baby who will grow up to be the rock nerd Jason whom we have already encountered enjoying *Pet Sounds* alone in his room. When Louise begins tending to the baby she feels "a cosmic calm" (233) in protecting him. Motherhood, like the Beach Boys' name "Caroline," makes her feel less subtracted—mas. Fleissner usefully identified in *Eat the Document* a "different kind of growing-up story, this one involving moms with a rock 'n' roll past."[32] As such a mother, we will add, Louise is also "no longer a unique being in a unique position" (Spiotta 233). Being the mother of a human thus emerges in the rock novel as modeled on a relation to rock and roll—here, the Beach Boys. We find this comparison again in Chabon's *Telegraph Avenue* in which there are parallel plots—one involving Archy and Nate's collection of vinyl; the other, their wives' delivery of babies. Record collecting and midwifery perform the same function in the Anthropocene: they organize their objects, LPs and mothers, to create a sense of graspable comfort. Archy cites "a combination of OCD and existential panic" (34) as the reason for his collecting tendencies, and in the rock novel these comforts are symptomatic. As symptoms, mothers and LPs symbolize private experience in that their designation of psychological origins eclipses any "now" outside of human history. To borrow from another of Fleissner's works—her reading of *Motherless Brooklyn*—symptoms emphasize the human capacity to "generate," as Fleissner puts it, "a clarifying link between brain and world," one that refocuses us from the etiology of the symptom to humans' capacity for pleasurable organization of the world.[33] Understood as the mechanisms by which humans stave off "existential panic," collecting records and loving mothers engage both nows under examination here. Thus, if for digital subjects it makes sense to say, in N. Katherine Hayles' memorable phrase, "my mother was a computer"; for subjects in the Anthropocene as construed in the rock novel, "my mother was a turntable" might have more resonance.

Brother Louie

Fortress clarifies that neither of these claims manages to do away with human importance entirely. When rock novelists incorporate rock music, they do so not to unseat the novel but to clarify that rock has been a key element in contemporary novelists' vernacular sensibility.[34] In *Fortress,* we also find the suggestion that rock lyrics offer the novelist a model for a more ethical, because less human-centric, mode of creating symbols. After Barrett Rude Junior snorts a line of cocaine "clear into his lower gut, into his balls and dick" (104), Lethem presents Barrett's mind in the act of songwriting: "*Nigger,* he thought. *Nig*-guh, major falling to minor, an interval of sevenths" (104). Lethem next presents his narrator as engaging the word Barrett thinks in a more obviously novelistic, rather than in a songwriterly, version of expression: "Fugitive melodies lurked in the space between syllables, niggers themselves crouching in the dark" (104). The failure to write this song is cast as Barrett Rude's:

> Under the marimba and the Mister Softee jingle he breath-chanted *nihhh-gahhhh*, *nihhh-gahhh,* the tune, let's admit it now, going nowhere, unfolding into nothing but itself. *Nigger* would be a song unsung, more dust blown away. (106)

But the more serious failure is that of the omniscient narrator. Barrett's initial articulation of the word—*"Nigger,* he thought*"*—becomes musical in the repetition: "*Nig*-guh.*"* When the narrator takes his turn, though, the term goes from being an innocuous, essentially physical response to snorting a line of cocaine when uttered by Barrett Rude to racist epithet. The narrator spins the song lyric into fiction by animating the apparently de-racialized, meaningless term, turning it into a category of characters: "niggers themselves crouching in the dark" (104). The novelistic repetition re-infuses the word with racial insult—why is this narrator assigning this term to people who "crouch"?—but it also illuminates the first use, the "*Nig*-guh" in Barrett's consciousness, as the white Lethem's construal of a black soul singer's thoughts. This is a version, in other words, of a white artist making use of a black art form.

The question thus raised is whether there is any ethical difference between the two instances, and in particular whether the first is fetish or homage. The ethical slide occurs when the narrator exits the realm of vernacular culture and moves into novelistic omniscience. So, for example, when Mingus first introduces Dylan to his father, Barrett wonders why Dylan is allowed to be in his house. This prompts a moment of free indirect discourse: "The whiteness of the boy in the black man's house" (74). It is hard to know whose consciousness is being recorded in this moment: is Dylan feeling his "whiteness" in the "black man's house," or is Barrett? Either way, what the omniscient narrator records here is the sense that there has been a transgressive entry into a "black man's house," a narrative invasion to match Dylan's physical entry. This is clearly a moment of self-consciousness. Lethem thematizes his own ventriloquizing of black vernacular culture—moments like "*Fuck* you lookin' at, man?" (85)—to announce that they are to be understood as "minstrel-boy" appreciations. In other words, there is a difference, Lethem suggests, between the two uses of the N-word. The second is blatantly racist, and the first—the use of the term by Barrett—is self-consciously appropriating homage. This accords with the idea Lethem proffers in his 2007 essay for *Harper's Magazine*, in which he suggests that all artists, from the metaphysical poet John Donne to Bob Dylan, must plagiarize in order to originate.[35]

Still, the transposition of Barrett's failed song into narrative casts narrative depth as always ethically questionable, raising yet another possible use of rock music: do rock novelists turn to it for its depthlessness? Is the rock novel part of the general aversion to symptomatic reading, an embrace of what Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best have described as "surface reading"?[36] The entry by a white author into a black mind is contrasted with Barrett Rude's response to finding out that Dylan's mother is gone:

> "Your mother know you're here?"
>
> "Dylan's mother's gone," volunteered Mingus from the couch.
>
> "You're mother's gone?"
>
> Dylan nodded.
>
> Barrett Rude Junior weighed in. Dylan's presence in his room was explained, that might have been his first conclusion. Then, in slow-motion, something else dawned. Dylan sensed it in Barrett Rude's heavy-lidded gaze a flare of tenderness, felt it like a headlight's beam turning to enclose him.

> "Mother's gone, but the boy is keeping it together." Barrett Rude Junior spoke the sentence twice. In the first rendition the words emerged thick, deliberate, tongue-mashed. The second was a lilting echo of the first, the line now a song of admonition, a beguilement. "*Mu-tha's gone, but the boy is keeping it together.*" (74)

Here, Barrett's soul-song response to Dylan's obvious loss is a moment of "enclosing" "tenderness" that "dawns." From "tongue-mashed" articulation to "lilting echo," nothing has changed except the pronunciation and the "lilt"; the line is thus completely transparent, an artistic rendering of a personal fact with no symbolic aspect, no creation of a referent. Like "*Nig*-guh," here is the creation of a soul lyric in narrative—it turns a meaningless thought in Barrett's mundane life, "Nigger," into a maxim, a phrase featured as itself rather than elaborated as symbol.

Dylan muses, "Did Barrett Rude Junior remind him of Rachel? Or was this only the longest the word *mother* had been strung in the air since Rachel's vanishing?" (74). Barrett does not refer to Rachel so much as remind Dylan of her, and Lethem presents this as an effect of Barrett's ethical refusal to invoke her as a referent. Without talking *about* Rachel, without invoking her in depth, Barrett conjures her, and this brings a comfort, a plenitude of Rachel in cultural expression that would otherwise be experienced as her impossibly vast loss: "Dylan felt she'd drifted into the room, a mist or a cloud, a formation" (74). The soul song recasts Dylan Ebdus' experience via the logic of macropsia—from the small personal experience of loss to the anonymous but monumental experience of culture. Like graffiti, which Lethem's omniscient narrator describes as "syllables drained of meaning," (77), the lost mother becomes syllables involved in shifts from majors to minors. "*Mu-tha's gone, but the boy is keeping it together"* becomes a "beguiling" pop lyric, just as Barrett's N-word remains diverting and outside of meaning until the white narrator translates it into prose. To be sure, this is an affirmation of surfaces. But as we shall see, Lethem also suggests that novel form inevitably engages in depth. What exonerates the novel—what prevents its omniscience, for example, from being simple racist intrusion—is its self-conscious "funkywhiteboy" admiration for African American vernacular culture as its starting point. Here, we might conjecture, is an idea of the novel as achieving, if not surface itself, something like what was meant by the title of R.E.M.'s first album: the novel as *Murmur* (1983).

Bringing It All Back Home

Watt finds in *Robinson Crusoe* an "echo of the redefined aloneness of Descartes' *solus ipse,*" modulated, as he puts it "into an anguished sense of personal loneliness" (91). This is what Fredric Jameson describes in *The Political Unconscious*as the "private feeling" that separates bourgeois subjects into "monad[s]."[37] In *Fortress,* anonymity seems at first to be a way of eschewing privacy, of dispersing it into versions of the generic—into the rock lyric. Before Rachel leaves, neighborhood bully Robert Woolfolk steals Dylan's bike, and Dylan is afraid that Robert will beat him up for accusing him of doing so. After hiding out in his room for several days, Rachel sends Dylan back onto the street:

> He'd detected in himself a certain translucency today, a talent for being ignored. Rachel had flushed him from a four-day hide in his room, from a retrenchment into the secret power of his books and pencils, into the mysteries of eavesdropping on Abraham's footfalls and Rachel's clangor on the telephone, into the dreary conundrums of the Etch a Sketch and the Spirograph, and something in his conjured solitude had followed him out onto the street, then reversed itself to drape all over him anywhere he sat still. (46)

Anonymity here, Dylan's pleasing sense that he is being ignored, is defined as "translucence," a "reversal" of the privacy achieved by being inside with his "books and pencils." This is what the anonymity of the rock lyric will later give him: it is Dylan to which "*Mu-tha's Gone*" refers, but a Dylan made translucent because unreachable as a specific self.

But it turns out that Dylan is mistaken. He is not "translucent" on his street—not anonymous at all. In fact, in the rubric of the rock novel, what appears as anonymity is hyperbolic specificity, and indeed here Dylan's exile into "everybody" collapses into exposure of his most private self. After he hangs around the stoop long enough, the kids on Dean Street inform Dylan that while he was hiding out Rachel beat Robert up in retaliation for stealing the bike: " 'Your mother kicked his ass, right out on Bergen Street,' " Henry said. 'He was crying and everything' " (47). Dylan's feeling of being nobody is a misperception: he is famous, the kid whose mother beat up the scary kid from the projects. This leads Dylan to invoke a version of himself that sounds posthuman: "Could there be a distant island or hidden room where your life took place without your knowing? " (47). But Lethem dramatizes the ultimate failure of pure anonymity, even in a world where life can "take place" without you.

When Dylan recognizes his anonymity for the exposure it turns out to be here, Lethem creates a skewed primal scene in which parental copulation—what for Freud is a powerful origin in the Wolf Man's personal history—is a public event to which everyone is privy except Dylan: "It suddenly seemed that Henry and every kid on the block might know the sound of

Abraham and Rachel fucking and fighting at night, that only Dylan was protected and blind" (48). What Freud understands as the most ultra-private, secret element in one's personal history is thus construed as the street's, and privacy seems abolished. But even if fragments of his personal experience get re-assigned—seem to belong to everyone—it is still Dylan's shame to which the experience gives rise. "Dylan saw now," explains the narrator," "that it wasn't strict invisibility that had cloaked his presence on the street, had kept him wavering like a mummy on the sidelines, but instead his mother's hidden act hovering over him, a force field, a pale blur of shame" (48). Shame defines a "translucent" self of another sort: not an invisible one, but one that exposes, a paradoxical self that is, in being utterly permeated by the social world, shown to be private. Dylan thus emerges as the solus ipse achieved through dispersal. [38]

This is not a simple return to the monad. Dylan as private self has, like Spiotta's Mary, incorporated a giant everybody into his nobody—or, to put this slightly differently, has incorporated a nobody into his now somewhat less anthropocentric me. And the assertion of this version of self, the self as average, is simultaneously an assertion that racial distinctions matter, even in an epoch in which humans are understood to be bound by a "shared sense of catastrophe" above all else. After all, the move from Dylan's personal loss to the anonymous line, "*Mu-tha's gone, but the boy is keeping it together"* does not utterly anonymize him. The soul lyric does, on first glance, seem to work the way Mucho's everybody does, in this case to give the white, Jewish Rachel the black name "*Mu-tha"* and thus retroactively to confer blackness onto Dylan himself. But the deracialization clearly does not work; the novel ends exposing Dylan as a middle-aged, white guy listening to Brian Eno in the Midwest. When Dylan and Mingus become interested in graffiti as adolescents, Dylan eventually stops "looking for his own moniker," and starts to "throw up his perfect replication of the black kid's tag instead. Dose, Dose, Dose" (136):

> What's in it for the white kid? Well, he's been allowed to merge his identity in this way with the black kid's to lose his funkywhiteboy geekdom in the illusion that he and his friend Mingus Rude are both Dose, no more no less. A team, a united front, a brand name, an idea. (136)

Dylan recognizes even at a young age that the idea of the tag "Dose" as a "brand" melding him with Mingus is an "illusion." And when Abby later accuses Dylan of collecting her for her blackness, she is registering the same failure.

Lethem is at pains to show that the novel as a postracial art form is subterfuge, and he accomplishes this correction by exposing the inequality that subtends "minstrel-boy" affirmations. It is the African American Mingus who ends up a withering crackhead and then incarcerated, not the white Dylan. And indeed, almost all of the black children on Dylan's block end in prison:

> Now it wasn't just Riker's which brimmed with faces from the yards. It was the big upstate houses like Auburn, too, as though the system was inadvertently reassembling the city and its factions here, 1977 trapped in the amber of incarceration. (482)

Recall that it is on the floor outside of Mingus' prison cell that Dylan identifies his macropsia. For Chakrabarty, the "shared sense of catastrophe" in the Anthropocene hardly does away with the now of social history. In his words, "climate change may well end up accentuating all the inequities of the capitalist world order if the interests of the poor and vulnerable are neglected."[39] We might wonder whether Lethem wants us to encounter in Dylan's sense that he is a speck both the planetary distances that deep time makes vivid and the social ones that seem harder and harder to bridge in the twenty-first century. Mothers index the vast, as we have seen, but the vast, those "spiraled arms of distant galaxies" in Dylan's bedroom, also index elements of the everyday. Whether under the auspices of the prison system or indie rock, Lethem suggests that private experience persists, even in the Athropocene.

The Middle of the Road

In the third section of the novel readers are shifted back from "Liner Notes" to traditional first-person narration as if to acknowledge that this is, after all, just a realist novel. The presentation of the realist first-person as an average—here of the omniscient narration in *Fortress'* first section and its surface-y narration in the second—is employed to re-introduce Dylan as, after all, a white, middle-aged fuckup.[40] At the beginning of this section, Dylan describes Abby in openly racist terms as a "brown puppet" (310); and later, as an invisible intruder into the prison where Mingus ends up, he contemplates raping a female guard named Sweeny as she "hummed Cher's Believe to herself, and farted too" (451). About midway through the section, after he moves to California, Dylan earns the appellation "Oakland's Bernhard Goetz" (419) because of a botched attempt to use his superpower of invisibility to fight black drug dealers. When Robert Woolfolk jumps off the gun tower, Dylan has given Robert a ring that Robert thinks will make him fly. Dylan neglects to tell him that the new superpower conferred by the ring is invisibility, and as a result takes the blame and describes himself as a "killer" (499). This is a cataloguing of inflated human imperfections, one Lethem offers as the ingredients in his reaffirmed, average realist self.[41] The fact that even flaws are presented in hyperbolic terms—Dylan is a sexist, raping, murdering Bernhard Goetz—indicates that the first-person role into which the middle-aged Dylan has arrived brings something of rock's potency into what Ngai calls "the interesting." Dylan is a mundane self whose very mundanity is achieved in the author's hyperbolic portrayals of fallibility.

This combination of hyperbolic and the mundane is offered in this novel as a middle borrowed from rock and roll music: something between speck Dylan and His Bobness that encompasses both and yet admits to social position. At the very end of the novel, Dylan reaches for a CD on a road trip back to California, and, driving out of the Midwest, he muses abstractly about "middle spaces." He finds he has grabbed Brian Eno's 1975 *Another Green World* and realizes he has avoided listening to it because, like albums by the Talking Heads and Patti Smith, it seemed to occupy a "middle space": "I considered now that what I once loved in this record, and certain others—*Remain in Light*, 'O Superman,' *Horses*—was the middle space they conjured and dwelled in" (507). Declaring that "we all pined for those middle spaces" (508), Dylan is transported by the Eno record to an earlier moment, the last time he had listened to it riding in a car: "I always associated it with driving, with miles rushing beneath headlights and my eyes. I associated it with one drive in particular" (506). The Eno record collapses the drive back to California at the end of the novel, Dylan's present, back to that other "drive in particular," the drive home to Brooklyn after picking up his belongings from the college that expelled him. This moves the end of the narrative, already in the middle of the country, back to the middle of the narrative, when Dylan was about half the age he is at the end.

The present-day Dylan narrates that earlier drive through a snowstorm with his father, and remarks that in those days he generally avoided middles, avoided Eno, Patti Smith, and the Talking Heads in favor of Barrett Rude Junior and his "defiant, unsubtle pain" (508). Perhaps so, but Lethem has presented soul as the crucial origin of rock music's middles, and rock, Lethem suggests, has something the novelist of the twenty-first century wants: not only an intensity to stave off the affective subtractions of the "merely interesting," to return to Ngai once more, but an ethical tendency toward half-expression. Rock provides an anonymizing generic, perhaps, but one that also specifies; the work of the rock novel, it seems, is to dialectically transform this generic, postracial, boring form of expression to an affectively more powerful one that announces its racial specificity. The novel returns us via *Another Green World* to the middle of the narrative, and as the title of Eno's album attests, rock music helps the contemporary novel manage a world diminished by the possibility of "another" world entirely.[42] Early on in the novel, Mingus and Dylan gaze at some impossibly huge graffiti inked on the Manhattan side of the Brooklyn Bridge, and the description alludes, I think, to what rock novels want to achieve: "The walkway's slats were uneven, some rotten. Just an armature of bolted wire lay between Mingus's and Dylan's sneaker tips and the pulsing, glittering water. The bridge was an argument or plea with space" (77). Just as the bridge refutes the space between the giant graffiti tag and these boys—allowing them to span it without concern—the rock novel bridges, as "an argument or plea," between the tiny and the vast, creating a productive if self-consciously terminal refutation of human finitude.

Amplifier

Writing for *Publicbooks.org*, literary scholar Ivan Kreilkamp makes the shrewd point that rock emerges in contemporary novels as that which "allows novelists to think about their genre's own relationship to storage media, and about what happens to art when it sheds long-standing material forms."[43] We might consider the rock novel as the confluence of two versions of "storage media," and conjecture that the goals of the rock novel, as perhaps expressed in the cover design for *Telegraph Avenue*, involve collapsing one kind of physical record into another in order to stave off what appears to be the inevitable disappearance of both. In this regard, we might consider *Telegraph Avenue* to be a particularly apt comment on obsolescence and note that the teen-aged character Jules switches from eight-track to iPod at the point in the novel where Archy gives up vinyl to become a real estate agent in 2008. The irony of the "real" in "real estate" is explicit in the novel, and at the close of 2012, the year of *Telegraph Avenue's* publication, readers will have the hindsight to recognize that real estate agents as well are about to become obsolete. The rock novel raises questions about any human endeavor in a world no longer interested in physical objects at all.

This concern extends in *Eat the Document* to human bodies. Early on, Mary explains the reason for her obsessive personal hygiene: "You might be in the midst of chaos, terrified, but the ritual of your self-tending radiated from you and protected you" (5). In rock novels generally, LPs stand in for everything "real" that is abandoned in the twenty-first century: the pages on which these novels are printed, the bodies whose brains conceive and whose fingers write them, houses, physical community. Jameson identified attachments to the body as evidence that the novel is involved in the proliferation of centered subjects.[44] We might read Chabon's ultra-thingy LP/novel cover, then, as a redoubling of the physical meant to defend against unbearable virtuality, and to find in this rock novel as well confirmation of the novel's private self. The physicality of the cover thus trumps Chabon's title, which suggests the reverse. Isn't it, after all, the futility of preserving the physical in a virtual world that is conveyed in the road called Telegraph Avenue, named as it is after the first technological instrument Marshall McLuhan argued made roads obsolete?[45]

As I have already intimated, the rock novel clarifies that the novel in the Anthropocene is not dead. Nor does the rock novel allow for the simple suggestion that the centered subject has disappeared as the novel's central concern. We might return to Watt to consider that even in *The Rise of the Novel*—published in the mid-1950s, the decade that saw the birth of rock 'n' roll—impersonal technologies emerge as crucial to the novel's instantiation of the private self. Watt argues that the "impersonal authority of print" (198) was key. Perhaps it makes sense, then, to acknowledge that the impersonal has always been part of the personal; perhaps the generic and anonymity have been part of the private all along. When, in his discussion of *Clarissa,* Watt describes the cult of letter-writing that motivated Fielding as a "microphone already tuned to the tones of private experience" (193), we might be tempted to claim that all novels, at least as filtered through Watt, are rock novels. Still, if the digitization of the book comes along with a weakening of print's authority, perhaps the private experience this authority guarantees is in fact under threat. But if that is the case, then rock novelists' interest in lost and disappearing documents is recursive, ultimately protective of private experience. These authors are writing novels, after all—ones that are printed on paper. Maybe if I "eat" the document rather than losing it to digitization, I can be sure at least that I still have a body.

NOTES

I am grateful to Jennifer Fleissner for inspiration, encouragement, and willingness to read the earliest, messiest, longest version of this. I have done my best to respond to her brilliant comments, and to those provided by Mark McGurl who also graciously agreed to read an earlier draft. I began thinking about the rock novel when I was organizing a conference for Post45 with J.D. Connor and Amy Hungerford at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, "Post45@The Rock Hall." I thank J.D. and Amy, whose work in conceptualizing the conference helped immeasurably with these ideas. Lauren Onkey and the Rock Hall deserve thanks as well for their immeasurable generosity in hosting us, as do Post45 Steering, The National Humanities Center, Oren Izenberg, Gordon Hutner, the anonymous man at the MLA in Boston (2013) who asked what difference genre might make to this argument, and to all who participated in the November 2012 Post45 conference in Stanford.

[1] Jonathan Lethem, *The Fortress of Solitude: a Novel*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 457.

[2] Precedents can be found, to be sure. One might begin with Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), which I discuss in the body of this essay, or, to go back a bit earlier, with the less influential Harlan Ellison's *Spider Kiss* (1961). Fugitive poet Donald Davidson wrote *Big Ballad Jamboree* (1996) in the mid-1950s, but the novel was only published posthumously in the 1990s. Although Davidson's novel contains important elements of the rock novel, its focus is the link between Southern literature and electrified country music—the so-called "Nashville Sound"—in particular. Don DeLillo's *Great Jones Street* (1973) and Brett Easton Ellis' *Less Than Zero* (1985) are also important early examples of the rock novel, and from the UK, Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1996) stands out as crucial to its establishment. We might also include Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* (1989), and Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* (1995) as influential as well. Harlan Ellison, *Spider Kiss* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996); Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, 1st Perennial fiction library ed (New York: Perennial Library, 1986); Don DeLillo, *Great Jones Street.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973); Bret Easton Ellis, *Less Than Zero* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity* (Riverhead Trade, 1996); Roddy Doyle, *The Commitments*, 1st Vintage contemporaries ed (Vintage, 1989); Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Reprint (Grove Press, 2005).

[3] Moody performs in the band, the Wingdale Community Singers, and has collaborated with numerous independent rock singers. Moody has written about rock and roll for *The New York Times Book Review*, is a regular contributor to *The Rumpus.net,* which features Moody's own column "Swinging Modern Sounds," and he published a book of music writing in 2012. Wingdale Community Singers, *Wingdale Community Singers* (Plain, 2005); Rick Moody, "Swinging Modern Sounds: The Means of Production," *TheRumpus.net*, Blog (April 1, 2009), http://therumpus.net/2009/04/swinging-modern-sounds-the-means-of-production/; Rick Moody, "Led Zeppelin, Gods of Rock on the Celestial Staircase," *The New York Times*, December 27, 2009, sec. Books / Sunday Book Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/27/books/review/Moody-t.html; Rick Moody, *On Celestial Music: And Other Adventures in Listening*, 1st ed. (Back Bay Books, 2012).

[4] Rolling Stones. Performer, *Some Girls [sound Recording]*. (Beverly Hills, CA.: Virgin Records, 1980). Lethem's 1999 *Motherless Brooklyn* features a protagonist with Tourette's Syndrome who is notably obsessed with The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, and in 2002 Lethem co-edited the *Da Capo Best Music Writing of 2002*. In 2007 Lethem wrote his follow-up to *Fortress,* the novel *You Don't Love Me Yet*, titled after a song by psychedelic rock legend Roky Erickson, and in that novel again his musical affiliations are apparent. In 2012 Lethem published *Fear of Music* in the 33 1/3 series, and his web site features uncollected writings in which he waxes philosophical about the Clash, the beauty of vinyl, and the band Miller Miller Miller & Sloane: "Do you remember Miller Miller Miller & Sloane? I doubt it. Miller Miller Miller & Sloane was a band from my high school." Lethem, Johnathan, "Jonathan Lethem: Writer," *The Reading Room*, n.d., http://jonathanlethem.com/writings.html Jonathan Lethem, *Motherless Brooklyn* (Vintage, 2000); Jonathan Lethem and Paul Bresnick, *Da Capo best music writing 2002: the year's finest writing on rock, pop, jazz, country, & more* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Da Capo?; Eurospan, 2002); Jonathan Lethem, *You Don't Love Me Yet* (Vintage, 2008); Jonathan Lethem, *Talking Heads' Fear of Music*, 1st ed. (Continuum, 2012).b

[5] Rick Moody, "'Serge and the Paranoids: On Literature and Popular Song.'," *Post45* (n.d.), http://post45.research.yale.edu/archives/921.

[6] Howard Hampton, "'On Celestial Music,' by Rick Moody," *The New York Times*, June 1, 2012, sec. Books / Sunday Book Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/books/review/on-celestial-music-by-rick-moody.html; Jay Ruttenberg,

"Fallen Rock Stars in Contemporary Fiction," *The New York Times*, September 7, 2012, sec. Books / Sunday Book Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/books/review/fallen-rock-stars-in-contemporary-fiction.html.

[7] The list of rock novels written since about 2000 is long and growing longer. In the following list of contemporary novels that make use of rock in varying degrees, I do not include rock memoirs or novels written by rock and roll singers, though both genres might be considered as homologous with the rock novel in the twenty-first century. In addition to the titles I discuss elsewhere in this essay, see also Douglas Cowie, *Owen Noone and the Marauder: A Novel* (Bloomsbury USA, 2005); Douglas Coupland, *Eleanor Rigby: A Novel* (Bloomsbury USA, 2006); Dave Eggers, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Bret Easton Ellis, *Imperial Bedrooms*, 1st ed. (Knopf, 2010); Jonathan Franzen, *Freedom*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010); Eleanor Henderson, *Ten Thousand Saints*, 1st ed. (New York: Ecco, 2011); Laura Kalpakian, *Steps and Exes: a Novel of Family* (New York: Bard, 1999); P Kluge, *Eddie and the Cruisers* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2008); Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Taqwacores*, Revised Edition (Soft Skull Press, 2009); Zachary Lazar, *Sway: a Novel*, 1st ed. (New York: Little, Brown,, 2008); Mark Lindquist, *Never Mind Nirvana: a Novel*, 1st ed. (New York: Villard Books, 2000); Pamela Lu, *Ambient Parking Lot*, First Edition (Kenning Editions, 2011); Colin MacInnes, *Absolute Beginners* (Allison & Busby, 2011); Lorrie Moore, *A Gate at the Stairs: a Novel*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009); Michael Parker, *If You Want Me to Stay: A Novel* (Algonquin Books, 2005); Tom Perrotta, *The Wishbones* (Berkley Trade, 1998); Arthur Phillips, *The Song Is You: A Novel*, First Edition (1 in number line) (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2010); Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice: A Novel*, Reprint (Penguin Books, 2010); Mathew Specktor, *That Summertime Sound*, First Edition (MTV Press, 2009).

[8] It seems noteworthy that so prolific and distinctive a rock writer as Greil Marcus co-edited *A New Literary History of America* with Werner Sollers in 2009, suggesting that the crossover into the *NYTBR* is taking place within literary studies as well. See Alfred L Brophy, Greil Marcus, and Werner Sollors, *A New Literary History of America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

[9] For Michael Szalay, writing a book review of Dana Spiotta's *Stone Arabia* in *The Los Angeles Times Review of Books,* rock is the figural allegory for the authors' ambivalence about participation in corporate culture. "Los Angeles Review of Books – Michael Szalay on Stone Arabia," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, accessed January 9, 2013, http://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article.php?id=753&fulltext=1. *School of Rock's* Dewey (about which more later) seems to affirm Szalay's point. Dewey explains to the wealthy private school kids who have come to be in his charge that the point of rock music is to "stick it to the man." As their substitute teacher, he gives them a lecture inspiring them to write the song "Step Off" by confessing: "I am the man." Richard Linklater and Paramount Pictures Corporation, *The School of Rock [videorecording]* (Paramount, 2003).

[10] See Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (New York Review of Books, 2008), 255. I refer here to Wood's "Human, All Too Inhuman," in which he argues this: "Stories, after all, are generated by human beings, and it might be said that these recent novels are full of *in*human stories, whereby that phrase is precisely an oxymoron, an impossibility, a wanting it both ways." James Wood, "Human, All Too Inhuman," *New Republic* 223, no. 4 (July 24, 2000): 41–45.

[11] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding.* (University of California Press, 1957), 192; N Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[12] McGurl describes the posthuman comedy as "a critical fiction meant to draw together a number of modern literary works in which scientific knowledge of the spatiotemporal vastness and numerousness of the nonhuman world becomes visible as a formal, representational, and finally existential problem." Mark McGurl, "The Posthuman Comedy," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 3 (2012): 537.

[13] Linklater and Corporation, *The School of Rock [videorecording]*.

[14] Wai-chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[15] The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the first use of the word "anthropocentric" in 1863. "anthropocentric, adj." OED Online. December 2012. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/8418?redirectedFrom=anthropocentric&.

[16] Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The Anthropocene," *IGBP [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme] Newsletter* 41 (2000); Paul J. Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415, no. 6867 (January 3, 2002): 23; Claire Colebrook, "The Context of Humanism," *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 42, no. 4 (2011), http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:mla:R04705415; Bruno Latour, "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto'," *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 41, no. 3 (2010): 471–490,691; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 197–222, doi:10.1086/596640; Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An*

Essay on the Necessity of Contingency (London; New York: Continuum, 2008). Chakrabarty reports that in 2008, some members of the Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society of London signed a statement accepting Crutzen's definition and dating of the Anthropocene.

[17] Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III* (Atlantic / Classic, 1970); Linklater and Corporation, *The School of Rock [videorecording]*.

[18] Wood charged that rock music makes the characters in *Fortress* "hollow and singular," and that rock music leads Lethem to create a protagonist without "outline," without "mental personality." Jonathan Lethem, "My Disappointment Critic: On Being Reviewed by James Wood," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, November 7, 2011, http://lareviewofbooks.org/post/12467824780/my-disappointment-critic; The Who, *Quadrophenia* remaster (Mca, 1996); James Wood, "Spaldeen Dreams," *The New Republic*, October 13, 2003, http://www.tnr.com/article/spaldeen-dreams; "'The Kids Are Alright'," *The Guardian*, May 30, 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/may/30/quadrophenia-seminal-album-who.

[19] James Wood, "The Fun Stuff," *The New Yorker*, November 29, 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/11/29/101129fa_fact_wood. Wood took the title for his 2012 collection of essays from this *New Yorker piece*. Ibid.; James Wood, *The Fun Stuff: And Other Essays* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012). On the oddity of finding The Who drummer Keith Moon among James Wood's formative influences, see Mark O'Connell, "The Different Drummer," *Slate*, November 2, 2012, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2012/11/new_yorker_book_critic_james_wood_s_the_fun_stuff_reviewed.html.

[20] Sianne Ngai, "Our Aesthetic Categories," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 125, no. 4 (October 2010): 951; Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

[21] Florence Dore, "The New Criticism and The Nashville Sound: Rock and Roll, Nashville, and William Faulkner's 'The Town'," *Contemporary Literature* (forthcoming).

[22] Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, 117.

[23] Michael Chabon, *Telegraph Avenue: a Novel*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 2012), 370; Carole King, *Tapestry* (Ode SP 77009, 1971). Thanks to Sean McCann and Deak Nabers for helping me clarify this racial dimension of independent college bands of the 1980s and 1990s.

[24] For Lethem, there is no question of crediting vernacular art attributed to African Americans with twenty-first-century novel, and he makes this explicit in his response to Wood's largely unflattering review of *Fortress* when he identifies his own "growth of a sensibility through literacy in visual culture, in vernacular and commercial culture, in the culture of music writing and children's lit, in graffiti and street lore." Lethem, "My Disappointment Critic: On Being Reviewed by James Wood."

[25] Chakrabarty suggests that class is, if not eradicated in the Anthropocene, not enough to protect us against its threats: "the whole crisis cannot be reduced to a story of capitalism. Unlike in the crises of capitalism, there are no lifeboats here for the rich and the privileged (witness the drought in Australia or recent fires in the wealthy neighborhoods of California)." Chakrabarty is at pains to clarify that this broader threat does not do away with the need for class analysis: "Analytic frameworks engaging questions of freedom by way of critiques of capitalist globalization have *not*, in any way, become obsolete in the age of climate change. If anything, as Davis shows, climate change may well end up accentuating all the inequities of the capitalist world order if the interests of the poor and vulnerable are neglected."

[26] Jonathan Lethem, "My Disappointment Critic: On Being Reviewed by James Wood," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, November 7, 2011, http://lareviewofbooks.org/post/12467824780/my-disappointment-critic. On white obsession with black subcultures, Michael Szalay has clarified the extent to which the concept of "hip" is crucially a result of the white idealization of blackness, identifying "a range of predominantly white fantasies about hip" that "have animated the secret imagination of postwar liberalism" Michael Szalay, *Hip Figures: a Literary History of the Democratic Party* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 2.

Also see Eric Lott, *Love and theft : blackface minstrelsy and the American working class* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1993).

[27] Jonathan Lethem, "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1, 2007.

[28] Michiko Kakutani, "'Hallucinations,' by Oliver Sacks," *The New York Times*, November 26, 2012, sec. Books, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/books/hallucinations-by-oliver-sacks.html; Oliver Sacks, *Hallucinations*, 1st ed. (Knopf, 2012); "IoS Book Review: Hallucinations, By Oliver Sacks," *The Independent*, accessed January 11, 2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/ios-book-review-hallucinations-by-oliver-sacks-8348241.html.

[29] Spiotta's Caroline, too, is a "speck of a being in the middle of a vast, multi-highwayed and many-sided country" (6), and the "rock girl" in Phillips' *The Song is You* indicates vast time, engaging, as the narrator explains, in "evolutionary teasing" (27).

[30] William Deresiewicz, "A Geek Grows in Brooklyn," October 15, 2009.

[31] Jennifer L. Fleissner, "The Song That Gets Stuck in Your Head" (Keynote presented at the Post45@The Rock Hall, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; Cleveland, Ohio, April 30, 2011), http://post45.research.yale.edu/2010/10/27/rock-hall-of-fame-conference/.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Marco Roth would surely read the view of the mother as mere comfort in the age of science as an example of the impoverishment of the contemporary Anglo-American novel. Describing the spate of novels that, in his account, take neuroscience over psychoanalysis as a basis for understanding human beings, he ask "what to do after psychoanalysis, and before Dennett's mystery-banishing total explanation of consciousness has arrived?" He worries that the novel in the era of neuroscience will have nothing to say, and charges Lethem with "neurological reductionism" in Motherless Brooklyn, suggesting that like the other neuronovels Roth examines, Lethem tends to "ground special perceptions and heightened language in neurological anomaly," thus "severely circumscribing the modernist project." Fleissner's analysis of the symptom in Motherless Brooklyn challenges this view. Far from disqualifying Motherless Brooklyn from commenting on the human, the protagonist's tics, even understood in neurological terms, humanize him. Jennifer L. Fleissner, "Symptomatology and the Novel," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 3, MLA-IB (2009), http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:mla:R04290200; "Rise of the Neuronovel: A Specter Is Haunting the Contemporary Novel," *N+1*, accessed March 7, 2012, http://nplusonemag.com/rise-neuronovel.

[34] See footnote 22 above.

[35] Lethem, "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism."

[36] Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108, no. 1 (November 2009): 1–21, doi:10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1.

[37] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 156.

[38] It seems at least worth mentioning that legal privacy works the same way. In their 1890 article "The Right to Privacy," Samuel Warren and Louis B. Brandeis define privacy as the right to secrecy, solitude, and anonymity. Samuel Warren and Louis Dembitz Brandeis, "The Right To Privacy," *Harvard Law Review* 4, no. 193 (1890).

[39] Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History."

[40] Samuel S. Cohen aptly argues, contra the wave of early critics who find the third section of the novel shallow, that the contrast to the childhood section is "exactly the point." Samuel S Cohen, *After the End of History: American Fiction in the 1990s* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 178.

[41] Watt's private self, we should recall, emerges in what he calls the novel's "formal realism," and the rock novel continues to be engaged in this endeavor. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding.*, 34.

[42] Lethem's interest in middles truly challenges aesthetic norms. For him, unlike, say, for Peter Brooks or Frank Kermode, it is the retreat from endings that enables meaning. For Brooks, in particular, meaning at ends comes because it must, because of the subject's orientation toward death. But Lethem characterizes this psychoanalytic idea of human meaning—an account that would entail a centered, deep subject of the sort Wood feels is lacking in *Fortress of Solitude*—as too morose, and he emphasizes the middle that rock music offers as a more jubilant, less verbally articulate way that humans experience life in the vast.

[43] Ivan Kreilkamp, "Churches of Vinyl: Archive and Authenticity in the Pop Music Novel," *Publicbooks.org* (December 12, 2012).

[44] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*.

[45] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

REFERENCES

Alexie, Sherman. *Reservation Blues*. Reprint. Grove Press, 2005.

Beach Boys. *Pet Sounds (*Capitol 2001).

Best, Stephen, and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations* 108, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 1–21.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984.

Brophy, Alfred L, Greil Marcus, and Werner Sollors. *A New Literary History of America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press,, 2009.

Chabon, Michael. *Telegraph Avenue: a Novel*. 1st ed. New York: Harper, 2012.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Climate of History: Four Theses." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 197–222. doi:10.1086/596640.

Cohen, Samuel S. *After the End of History: American Fiction in the 1990s*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009.

Colebrook, Claire. "The Context of Humanism." *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 42, no. 4 (2011). http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:mla:R04705415.

Coupland, Douglas. *Eleanor Rigby: A Novel*. Bloomsbury USA, 2006.

Cowie, Douglas. *Owen Noone and the Marauder: A Novel*. Bloomsbury USA, 2005.

Crutzen, Paul J. "Geology of Mankind." *Nature* 415, no. 6867 (January 3, 2002): 23.

Crutzen, Paul J., and Eugene F. Stoermer. "The Anthropocene." *IGBP [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme] Newsletter* 41 (2000).

Davidson, Donald. *The Big Ballad Jamboree: a Novel*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.

dB's, The. "Amplifier," *Repercussion* (Albion 1981).

DeLillo, Don. *Great Jones Street*. Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

Deresiewicz, William. "A Geek Grows in Brooklyn," October 15, 2009.

Dore, Florence. "The New Criticism and The Nashville Sound: Rock and Roll, Nashville, and William Faulkner's 'The Town'." *Contemporary Literature* (forthcoming).

Doyle, Roddy. *The Commitments*. 1st Vintage contemporaries ed. Vintage, 1989.

Dump. *That Skinny Motherfucker With The High Voice?* (Shrimper/ Revolver USA 1998).

Dylan, Bob. *Bringing It All Back Home* (Columbia 1965).

Egan, Jennifer. *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

Eggers, Dave. *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Ellis, Bret Easton. *Imperial Bedrooms*. 1st ed. Knopf, 2010.

———. *Less Than Zero*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Ellison, Harlan. *Spider Kiss*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996.

Fleissner, Jennifer L. "Symptomatology and the Novel." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 3. MLA-IB (2009). http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:mla:R04290200.

———. "The Song That Gets Stuck in Your Head." Keynote presented at the Post45@The Rock Hall, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; Cleveland, Ohio, April 30, 2011. http://post45.research.yale.edu/2010/10/27/rock-hall-of-fame-conference/.

Franzen, Jonathan. *Freedom*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

Freud, Sigmund. *Three Case Histories*. Touchstone, 1996.

Gibson, William. *Idoru*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1996.

Hampton, Howard. "'On Celestial Music,' by Rick Moody." *The New York Times*, June 1, 2012, sec. Books / Sunday Book Review. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/books/review/on-celestial-music-by-rick-moody.html.

Hayles, N. *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Henderson, Eleanor. *Ten Thousand Saints*. 1st ed. New York: Ecco, 2011.

Hornby, Nick. *High Fidelity*. Riverhead Trade, 1996.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Kakutani, Michiko. "'Hallucinations,' by Oliver Sacks." *The New York Times*, November 26, 2012, sec. Books. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/books/hallucinations-by-oliver-sacks.html.

Kalpakian, Laura. *Steps and Exes: a Novel of Family*. New York: Bard, 1999.

Kenner, Hugh. *The Pound Era.* University of California Press, 1971.

King, Carole. "It's Too Late," *Tapestry* (Ode 1971).

Kluge, P. *Eddie and the Cruisers*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2008.

Knight, Michael Muhammad. *The Taqwacores*. Revised Edition. Soft Skull Press, 2009.

Kreilkamp, Ivan. "Churches of Vinyl: Archive and Authenticity in the Pop Music Novel." *Publicbooks.org* (December 12, 2012).

Latour, Bruno. "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto'." *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 41, no. 3 (2010): 471–490,691.

Lazar, Zachary. *Sway: a Novel.* 1st ed. New York: Little, Brown,, 2008.

Led Zeppelin, "Immigrant Song," *Led Zeppelin III* (Atlantic 1970).

Lethem, Jonathan. *Chronic City: a Novel.* 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 2009.

———. *Talking Heads' Fear of Music.* 1st ed. Continuum, 2012.

———. "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism." *Harper's Magazine*, February 1, 2007.

———. *The Fortress of Solitude: a Novel.* 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

———. *You Don't Love Me Yet*. Vintage, 2008.

Lindquist, Mark. *Never Mind Nirvana: a Novel.* 1st ed. New York: Villard Books, 2000.

Linklater, Richard, and Paramount Pictures Corporation. *The School of Rock [videorecording]*. Paramount, 2003.

Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Lu, Pamela. *Ambient Parking Lot*. First Edition. Kenning Editions, 2011.

MacInnes, Colin. *Absolute Beginners*. Allison & Busby, 2011.

McGurl, Mark. "The Posthuman Comedy." *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 3 (2012): 533–553.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994. Accessed May 13, 2009. http://library.duke.edu/catalog/search/recordid/DUKE003453836.

Meillassoux, Quentin. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. London; New York: Continuum,, 2008.

Moody, Rick. "Led Zeppelin, Gods of Rock on the Celestial Staircase." *The New York Times*, December 27, 2009, sec. Books / Sunday Book Review. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/27/books/review/Moody-t.html.

———. *On Celestial Music: And Other Adventures in Listening*. 1st ed. Back Bay Books, 2012.

———. ""Serge and the Paranoids: On Literature and Popular Song."" *Post45* (n.d.). http://post45.research.yale.edu/archives/921.

———. *The Ice Storm*. 1st Back Bay pbk. ed. Boston: Little, Brown,, 2002.

Moore, Lorrie. *A Gate at the Stairs: a Novel.* 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Mott the Hoople. 'I Wish I Was Your Mother," *Mott* (Columbia 1973).

Ngai, Sianne. "Our Aesthetic Categories." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 125, no. 4 (October 2010): 948–958.

———. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Harvard University Press, 2012.

O'Connell, Mark. "The Different Drummer." *Slate*, November 2, 2012. http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2012/11/new_yorker_book_critic_james_wood_s_the_fun_stuff_reviewed.html.

Ono, Yoko. "Approximately Infinite Universe," *Approximately Infinite Universe* (Apple 1973).

Parker, Michael. *If You Want Me to Stay: A Novel.* Algonquin Books, 2005.

Perrotta, Tom. *The Wishbones*. Berkley Trade, 1998.

Phillips, Arthur. *The Song Is You: A Novel.* First Edition (1 in number line). Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2010.

Pretenders. "Middle of the Road," *Learning to Crawl* (Sire 1983).

Pynchon, Thomas. *Inherent Vice: A Novel.* Reprint. Penguin Books, 2010.

———. *The Crying of Lot 49*. 1st Perennial fiction library ed. New York: Perennial Library, 1986.

R.E.M. *Murmur* (I.R.S. 1983).

Rolling Stones, The. *Some Girls (*Virgin 1980).

Ruttenberg, Jay. "Fallen Rock Stars in Contemporary Fiction." *The New York Times*, September 7, 2012, sec. Books / Sunday Book Review. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/books/review/fallen-rock-stars-in-contemporary-fiction.html.

Sacks, Oliver. *Hallucinations*. 1st ed. Knopf, 2012.

Specktor, Mathew. *That Summertime Sound*. First Edition. MTV Press, 2009.

Spiotta, Dana. *Eat the Document: a Novel*. New York: Scribner, 2006.

———. *Stone Arabia: a Novel*. 1st Scribner hardcover ed. New York: Scribner, 2011.

Szalay, Michael. *Hip Figures: a Literary History of the Democratic Party*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination*. New York Review of Books, 2008.

Warren, Samuel, and Louis Dembitz Brandeis. "The Right To Privacy." *Harvard Law Review* 4, no. 193 (1890).

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*. University of California Press, 1957.

Wingdale Community Singers, The. *Wingdale Community Singers* (Plain 2005).

Who, The. *Quadrophenia*. (MCA 1973).

Wood, James. "Human, All Too Inhuman." *New Republic* 223, no. 4 (July 24, 2000): 41–45.

———. "Spaldeen Dreams." *The New Republic*, October 13, 2003. http://www.tnr.com/article/spaldeen-dreams.

———. "The Fun Stuff." *The New Yorker*, November 29, 2010. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/11/29/101129fa_fact_wood.

———. *The Fun Stuff: And Other Essays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

Brother Louie Single. Hot Chocolate: RAK Records, 1973.

"Los Angeles Review of Books – Michael Szalay on Stone Arabia." *Los Angeles Review of Books*. Accessed January 11, 2013. http://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article.php?id=753&fulltext=1.

"Rise of the Neuronovel: A Specter Is Haunting the Contemporary Novel." *N+1*. Accessed January 10, 2013. http://nplusonemag.com/rise-neuronovel.

"'The Kids Are Alright'." *The Guardian*, May 30, 2009. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/may/30/quadrophenia-seminal-album-who.

Florence Dore is associate professor of English at the University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill and current co-editor of the book series "Post45" (Stanford University Press). A member of Post45's Steering Committee, she is working on a book about the rock novel. She recorded a rock album entitled Perfect City for the independent label Slewfoot Records in 2001, and, together with Will Rigby of the dB's, she is making a second to be released in 2014.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

MUSICOPHOBIA, OR SOUND ART AND THE DEMANDS OF ART THEORY

BRIAN KANE

When Suzan Philipsz won the 2010 Turner Prize, it was the first time in the award's history that it went to a sound artist. The mere fact of Philipz's victory often overshadowed critical assessment of *Lowlands,* her winning piece. It was as if her victory were not simply her own, but a victory for sound art altogether. Britain's Channel 4 Culture Editor, Matthew Cain, wrote, "The high-profile win for Susan Philipsz might just build this up to the tipping point needed for sound art to really take off."[1] Even those critical of Philipsz's work, noted the shift of attention from her work to her field. "If we wanted to be slightly facetious," wrote critic Michael Glover, "we could call it history in the making. Sound artists are on the march! Never before in the 26-year history of the Turner Prize has it been won by an artist who had nothing to show for her £25,000 prize money but sounds fabricated by her own voice." The title of Glover's article acknowledges yet avoids the identification of Philipsz's victory with a vindication for sound art altogether: "Three cheers for sound artists. But not this one." To ensure that his critique of Philipsz would not be taken as trampling on the fragile field, Glover nonchalantly wrote, "Sound art is nothing new, of course," offering a potted history:

> Theo van Doesburg was a pioneer. Kurt Schwitters made marvelous sound art in the 1920s and 1930s; his voice sculpts and swoops through the air like a biplane out of control. At one moment it sounds like a bird, and then, moments later, like the rising notes of a revving car. Edith Sitwell was at it too with her fluty voice. As was Allen Ginsberg and Bob Cobbing.[2]

Whether sound art is an emerging discipline or old hat, there is no doubt that the *theory of sound art* is currently a cottage industry. You can test the veracity the claim by perusing at the spate of books that have been published on the topic. To get a representative sampling, I recommend a quick glance at the catalog of books on sound published by Continuum. Starting with Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner's anthology *Audio Culture* from 2004, there's been a new book on sound and sound art on Continuum just about every 18 months: Brandon LaBelle's *Background Noise: perspectives on sound art* in 2006, Paul Hegarty's *Noise/Music: a history* from 2007, Seth Kim-Cohen's *In the Blink of an Ear: towards a non-cochlear sonic art* from 2009, and Salomé Voegelin's *Listening to Noise and Silence*: *towards a philosophy of sound art* from 2010. (We're due for a new one any day now.) Add to that list Doug Kahn's now classic *Noise Water Meat*, Alan Licht's *Sound Art*, Caleb Kelly's edited volume *Sound* from the Whitechapel Galley series and you are on your way to a healthy bibliography.

Perhaps this recent work on a theory of sound art may come as a surprise. Haven't we had an art of sounds for a very long time, and hasn't it gone by the name of music? Not necessarily, at least, according to two of these texts (Seth Kim Cohen's *In the Blink of an Ear* and Salomé Voegelin's *Listening to Noise and Silence*). Both authors explicitly theorize sound art as a practice that is distinct from music—distinct not by its use of sound, but by the perceptual, conceptual and institutional issues raised by soundworks. Both authors attempt to differentiate sound art from music in quite distinct, and quite incompatible, ways.

I will begin by quickly summarizing the arguments of both texts, with a special focus on the distinction between sound art and music. Next, I will demonstrate that Kim-Cohen's and Voegelin's arguments are best understood when situated within current art historical and art-critical narratives. I will argue that music plays the role of a false opponent, that music is occupying a place normally given over to an art-critical opponent. In so far as music—more specifically, certain ways of characterizing the aesthetics of music—functions as a proxy for art historical and art-critical positions, I will argue that both theories are unable to develop appropriate and salient terms for considering the relationship of sound art to music.

I. Kim-Cohen and sonic idealism

In *The Blink of an Ear,* Kim-Cohen advocates for a "non-cochlear" sound art. The term "non-cochlear" is, of course, a transposition of the Duchampian notion of a "non-retinal" visual art into the auditory domain.[3] Kim-Cohen inflects the term in a conceptualist direction. He qualifies "non-cochlear" sound art by invoking Peter Osborne's description of conceptual art, an artform "based on the act of questioning existing definitions." Non-cochlear sound art questions the institutions of the artworld, the relations of artist to spectator and the act of art-making itself, emphasizing process over product, the meaning over the physical artifact. It draws attention neither to the materiality nor the perceptual features of some sounding work, but towards everything that has normally been proscribed by undue attention to the sound itself. Kim-Cohen, following Derrida, uses the term *parergon* to designate the features that typically outside the "work" (*the ergon*).[4]

The power of Kim-Cohen's book relies on the fact that, in addition to offering original readings of specific works of sound art in "non-cochlear" or conceptualist terms, he offers a history of sound art that touches not only the practice of artists like Robert Morris or Bruce Naumann—whose work is primarily visual but also includes a substantial amount of work with sound—but also musicians like Pierre Schaeffer, John Cage, Muddy Waters and Bob Dylan. Kim-Cohen argues that, just as one can trace the roots of "non-retinal" art to Duchamp and the readymade, one can find the roots of "non-cochlear" art in Schaeffer, Cage and Waters. (More on that in a moment.)

The Duchampian and Derridean planks of Kim-Cohen's project dovetail when describing the difference between music and sound art. By the Derridean plank, I mean a commitment to the *parergon*; by the Duchampian plank, I mean a commitment to Duchamp's work understood as an alternative form of modernism radically opposed to the formalist commitments of abstract art, say, as Clement Greenberg defined it. Music, writ large, is unsupported by either of these planks.

> Music has always functioned according to Greenbergian precepts. As a practice, music is positively obsessed with its media specificity. Only music includes, as a part of its discursive vocabulary, a term for the foreign matter threatening always to infect it: 'the extramusical.' (Kim-Cohen, 39)

Perhaps is it beside the point to say that there are probably very few musicologists that would agree with this characterization of music writ large.[5] But, if I can put that aside momentarily, I would rather focus on the logic of Kim-Cohen's argument, in particular, how the categories "music" and "sound art" are defined. So, being generous, let's grant that Music (writ large) is concerned only with its own "tonally moving forms" (to borrow Hanslick's handy phrase, one that Kim-Cohen could have used), and that anything that exceeds these forms is considered peripheral to the work itself. It is precisely this excess that becomes central in sound art—or what Kim-Cohen also designates as "expanded sonic practice." He writes,

> An expanded sonic practice would include the spectator, who always carries, as constituent parts of his or her subjectivity, a perspective shaped by social, political, gender, class and racial experience. It would necessarily include consideration of the relationships to and between process and product, the space of production versus the space of reception, the time of making relative to the time of beholding. Then there are history and tradition, the conventions of the site of encounter, the context of performance and audition, the mode of presentation, amplification, recording, reproduction. Nothing is out of bounds. To paraphrase Derrida, there is no extra-music. (107)

Riffing on Derrida's claim that there is nothing outside the text (or literally "there is no outside-text"), Kim-Cohen argues against the legitimacy of the category of the extra-musical. And it is the nature of an "expanded sonic practice" to expose the illegitimacy of such a position by occupying the forbidden "extra-musical," by inverting the musical work, by *unworking* it, by turning the *parergon* into the *ergon*. Developing the argument into a definition,

> [Sound art] is merely the remainder created by music closing off its borders to the extra-musical, to any instance of *parole* that could not be comfortably expressed in the *langue* of the Western notational system. Instances of non-Western music would not be sound art. Although they may employ specific features, such as microtonalities not represented in the western octave [sic], these features can still be understood and, to some extent, represented in a way that is legible to Western musical methods. Sound art is art that posits meaning or value in registers not accounted for by Western musical systems. Unlike sculpture, and to a lesser extent, cinema, music failed to recognize itself in its expanded situation. (107)

The most provocative claim is that "non-Western music" wouldn't be sound art. For Kim-Cohen, the ontology of sound art is necessarily in opposition to Western Music since it occupies the "extramusical," the supplement proscribed by Music. Sound art is constructed out of the *disjecta membra* of Western music. Sound art is Music's *Other*.

But not all Western music has failed to acknowledge its expanded situation. In fact, Kim-Cohen's book opens with three musical instances from the year 1948, which function as significant moments for the birth of an expanded sonic practice from the conditions of music. The three instances are 1) Pierre Schaeffer and the invention of *musique concrète*, 2) John Cage and his *Silent Prayer*, a silent piece that predates the more famous *4'33"*, and 3) Muddy Waters' electrified recording of "I Feel Like Going Home." Kim-Cohen selects these three because "Schaeffer, Cage, and Waters each represent a different alternative to serialism, or, more generally, to the systematization and quantification of the values of music." (260) Schaeffer constructs a music that sheds the discreetness of the note, by the use of recorded sound; Cage explores forms of compositional non-intentionality and embraces all sounds, even those previously heard as unmusical; Waters creates a music that, by eschewing interest in form, becomes a "kind of cultural flypaper, trapping the concerns of its time and place." (261)

But Schaeffer and Cage ultimately fail to become non-cochlear; both, after leaving behind the "formal system" (261) of music, close themselves off to the extramusical by committing themselves to "sounds-in-themselves", by expanding the palette of sounds that music can use, but without expanding the situation of music. For example,

> The potentially conceptual inspiration [for 4'33"] turns out to be a materialist, listening activity, still very much about the ear—an engagement with sound-in-itself, and thus subject to the same shortcomings we would ascribe to retinal art…4'33" never strays from the condition of music most admired by the Romantic poets: musical areferentiality. (163)

Sounds-in-themselves are the real enemy in Kim-Cohen's book. Insofar as Kim-Cohen understands the history of music to be a history of the sound-in-itself, music is cochlear. Insofar as contemporary sound art becomes interested in sound-in-themselves, it too is cochlear. (For instance, this is a charge made against Christina Kubisch and LaMonte Young). Kim-Cohen's maxim is the following: "As far as the experience of art is concerned, the revelation of phenomena is not enough." (112) Kim-Cohen is committed to a form of *sonic idealism*, in the sense that works of sound art are not to be made intelligible on the basis of their perceptual properties; rather, perceptual properties are to be made intelligible on the basis of their conceptual, social, or institutional aspects. Kim-Cohen's sonic idealism is founded on the tradition of the readymade, because:

> The intention of the readymade is embodied in the act of nominating the object as art, not in the object itself. The aesthetic value is derived, not from the visual or material qualities of the nominated object as it relates to the tradition of art objects, but from the artistic act as it relates to the tradition of artistic acts. (113)

Thus, a piece of *musique concrète* like Luc Ferrari's *Presque Rien*, which has often been understood as a sonic readymade, passes the test—while Schaeffer's compositions fail.

> [In *Presque Rien*] sound is not stripped of its meaning, neutralized as sound-in-itself, to be reconstructed as a composition. Instead, its connection to a social reality is left intact. More than that, the social meaning of the sounds play a part in determining their placement and treatment in the composition. To do this, Ferrari music approach his sounds not just as a listener…he must approach sound as a reader. (179)

The figure of *reading* is central to the defense of non-cochlear sound art. "Reading," for Kim-Cohen, means playing with codes, negotiating with signs, or operating with relations. Reading is always social, intersubjective, and differential. A "non-cochlear" sound art is an art of (and about) reading sounds.

II. Voegelin and sonic phenomenology

In contrast, Salomé Voegelin's book, *Listening to Noise and Silence*, could be characterized as a phenomenological aesthetics of listening. Voegelin describe listening as a perceptual engagement with the world, not an act of deciphering codes. The listener is always in a position of uncertainty, always in the midst of constituting the object heard as well as constituting themselves. Voegelin starts with these ideas on the first page of Chapter 1:

> Every sensory interaction relates back to us not the object/phenomenon perceived, but that object/phenomenon filtered, shaped and produced by the sense employed in its perception. At the same time this sense outlines and fills the perceiving body, which in its perception shapes and produces his sensory self. Whereby the senses employed are always already ideologically and aesthetically determined, bringing their own influence to perception, the perceptual object and the subject. It is a matter then of accepting the *apriori* influence while working towards a listening in spite rather than because of it. The task is to suspend, as

> much as possible, ideas of genre, category, purpose and art historical context, to achieve a hearing that is the material heard, now, contingently and individually. (3)

A few claims stand out: first, she claims that the object/phenomenon (which is already a problematic conjunction in phenomenological terms) is *being "produced"* by the sense modality employed. (We might want to call this the "listener as producer" motif.) Second, sensation "fills the perceiving body," which I take to mean that sensation helps to make the perceiver's body perspicuous. (More on that later.) Third, it is desirable for a listener to suspend aspects of sounds that concern genre, category, art historical context and purpose. The desideratum is a mode of listening that is utterly present, fixed on the perception of "the material heard" (which is not to be mistaken with materiality wholesale but rather with the materiality of perception). The use of the word "suspend" is no accident on Voegelin's part; it is meant to invoke (in a loose way) the famous Husserlian *epoché*.

When I suspend genre, category, history and such, I also suspend vision. Vision overrides hearing, since, according to Voegelin, we are ingrained into "subsum[ing] sound into the visual." "Vision, by its very nature assumes a distance from the object…Seeing always happens in a meta-position, away from the seen. And this distance enables a detachment and objectivity that presents itself as truth." (xi-xii) Listening does not possess the objectivity and security of vision. "By contrast, hearing is full of doubt: phenomenological doubt of the listener about the heard and himself hearing it. Hearing does not offer a meta-position; there is no place where I am not simultaneous with the heard. However far the source, the sound sits in my ear. I cannot hear it if I am not immersed in its auditory object, which is not its source but sound as sound itself." (xii)

(I should note that Voegelin doesn't actually argue for this essentialist epistemology of seeing and hearing; she simply repeats what has become a historically common trope in the literature on sound, media, and in cultural history of the senses.[6] Since it is asserted, to give a fair summary of Voegelin's text we must take it on faith. Perhaps I can illustrate Voegelin's claim by an example. Take the sound of an airplane in the sky. Since the sound takes time to travel to us, when we look up it does not appear where we think it might. Perhaps this contradicts Voegelin's claim that we are always simultaneous with the heard. However, it depends on what "the heard" is. For Voegelin, the heard is simply the sound itself, not the thing to which the sound refers. That is why she differentiates the "source" from the "sound itself." I am always simultaneous with the sound itself, since I don't experience the sound itself unless I'm in the act of hearing it. Voegelin's ontology of sound capitalizes on the observation that sounds can be emitted from objects in ways that their look, or visual attributes, cannot. When

I worry about the fact that the plane doesn't appear in the sky where I hear it to be, Voegelin might think this a case of subsuming sound to the visual.)

The act of suspending genre, category, history and what-have-you, is also an act of suspending vision. Cast in explicitly Husserlian terms, "a sonic epoché…is a stripping away from the sonic anything that ties it to visuality…[The aim is] not to reduce the heard but to get to the wealth of the heard through bracketed listening." (35) By itself, this claim is not all that interesting. It is basically a profession of faith in a fairly unsophisticated form of sonic phenomenology.[7] But Voegelin does something surprising with it. She uses the substantive claims that emerge from the *epoché* against Music, writ large. Music, for Voegelin, means notated music. Insofar as notated music is visual, or depends on the source of the sound, the performer, or the notated score more than the sounds themselves, music becomes visual.

> The impulse to subsume sound into the visual is so ingrained as to blight music criticism and the discourse of sound art, whose focus is invariably on the score or the arrangement, on the orchestra or the performer, the sound source, the installation view or the documentation of the sonic event, in short the visual manifestation rather than the sounds heard. (xi)

And a few pages later, "The text as writing is the musical work, framed by convention; it allows entry to scrutinizing eyes that interpret it, while granting it the space for that interpretation." (8) Music, with its emphasis on the score and the performer, is a legible medium; it becomes an act of reading and interpreting; it is conceptual, not perceptual; its essence is visual. And, although Voegelin insists that, "the issue here is not a distinction between music and sound art, but how both of them are listened to…," (8) I am convinced that that is the case. Here is her strongest case for music as primarily visual—as requiring a different mode of listening than the mode proper to sound art:

> When training as a classical musician you are asked to identify minor thirds, perfect fifths, major sevenths and so on: sounds are given names and are organized in relation to each other, and it becomes a matter of recognizing what is being played and attributing the right term to the corresponding tonal relationship. You cannot possibly give the right answer unless you know what you are listening for, and the 'listening for' is never the sound but its visual point of reference…From this moment on you are listening to the language of music…Sonic experience, which finds no acknowledgement in such a musical orientation…seizes [sic] to be heard. (52-3)

If music requires a mode of listening that seeks out the known, the foreseen, the already determined, sound art requires a mode of listening that seeks out the unknown, the unforeseen. Listening to sound art entails an ongoing act of *knowing*, taken as a present participle, as constituting its knowledge *as* it comes into being.

> An aesthetic and philosophy of sound art is based on…a drive to knowing…This knowing is the experience of sound as temporal relationship. This 'relationship' is not between things but is the thing, the sound itself. (4-5)

The chain of associations is telling. Sound is based on knowing; knowing is a relationship; the relationship is with the sound itself. The sound itself is the source of intrinsic value—"the wealth," as she puts it. Although Voegelin never says it directly, I suppose that insofar as one can listen to music in a "suspended" way, listening to it as sound themselves, then music becomes sound art. The difference between these two modes of listening, between music and sound art, is defined in terms of the difference between the visual and the auditory. The auditory is proper to sound art, and sound art's proper object is the sound itself.

III. Comparisons

At this point, allow me to make a few synoptic comparisons.

First, Kim-Cohen and Voegelin utterly disagree about the value of "sounds-in-themselves." For Voegelin, sound art requires a mode of listening whose aim is directed to sounds-themselves and not to language, context, history, genre, category and such; for Kim-Cohen, sound art is a practice that inhabits the "extramusical," that investigates relationships, institutions, context, sociality, and history; it eschews sounds-in-themselves as a rejection the metaphysics of presence.

Second, for Voegelin sound art is fundamentally perceptual; whereas for Kim-Cohen it is conceptual. Where Voegelin uses the phenomenological reduction as a method for focusing attention on the sound itself, Kim-Cohen critiques the phenomenological reduction as "bracketing out all information that might shade our auditory experience with signification, with historical contingency, with social import." (13) Insofar as both Voegelin and Kim-Cohen understand phenomenology as a perceptual endeavor—a problematic characterization of the phenomenological project from point of view of the history of philosophy—their theories differ about the value of this endeavor. If we take phenomenology to be primarily to be about "the primacy of perception," then Kim-Cohen's disapprobation and Voegelin's approbation both follow.

Third, for Voegelin sound art is an act of listening, which must circumvent our habitual subordination of sound to the visual. Music's historical investment in visual things like scores and performers prevents genuine listening, transforming it into an act of reading. For Kim-Cohen, sound art *is* an act of reading, of making legible a set of social, institutional, and historical traces. Sonic materiality or perceptual evidence is never the proper content of sound art. "The revelation of phenomena is not enough." It is never about the sound of the sign, but only its significance.

These three comparisons are really just ways of naming the difference between Kim-Cohen's *sonic idealism* and Voegelin's *sonic phenomenology*. In the former, the perceptual properties of works are to be made intelligible on the basis of their conceptual, social or institutional aspects; in the latter, the conceptual, social or institutional aspects of sounds are to be made intelligible on the basis of their perceptual properties.

But there is one more comparison to make—perhaps the most telling. Both theories are *Musicophobic*. Both Kim-Cohen and Voegelin develop theories of sound art that necessarily require Music (writ large), but only as a negative, as an altogether-Other. Both define their theories as resisting the hegemony of Music and understand sound art as inhabiting an alternative that Music cannot occupy. Despite the other difference, there is a *structural agreement* between Voegelin and Kim-Cohen. Both require Music as an Other, yet, they utterly disagree about how to characterize Music's Otherness. For Kim-Cohen, Music is fixated on sounds-in-themselves to secure autonomy and proscribe everything extramusical; for Voegelin, Music is fixated on everything that is not the sound-themselves, that is the score, the performer, genre, category, history, and so forth, and thus staves off the possibility of a more proper, attentive and focused mode of listening.

IV. Sound Art and the Demands of Art Theory

Is this simply a disagreement? We might be inclined to attribute the whole dispute to two very different aesthetic commitments, to two different senses of what is at stake in sound art, and choose the one we prefer. I would resist this inclination, because, I think there is more to the situation than that. There is a disciplinary component—an art historical and artworld or institutional component—that is driving this disagreement and shaping, in particular, their claims about music.

As before, I will start with Kim-Cohen. His account is based, quite explicitly, on the work of Rosalind Krauss. Kim-Cohen's theory of an "expanded sonic practice" transposes Krauss' argument from her famous essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" into the register of sound art.[8] In that essay (and elsewhere), Krauss argues that the expanded situation of sculpture (meaning minimalist works, earthworks, installations and such) challenges the Modernist account of the artwork—perhaps epitomized in Clement Greenberg's famous essay, "Modernist Painting."[9]

Krauss characterizes the Modernist as committed to the view that the artwork is a natural (non-arbitrary) sign. (Krauss 1990, 195) The Modernist art historian, for example, might tell a story about how Impressionist painting becomes Abstraction by appealing to artists' deepening investment in the physical interactions of color. According to Krauss, "The result of this was, within the development of modernist painting, the reification of the retinal surface and the conviction that by knowing the laws of its interactive relationships, one then possessed the algorithm of sight. The mapping of the retinal field onto the modernist pictorial plane with the positivist expectation that the laws of the one would legislate and underwrite the laws of the other, is typical of the form in which high modernism established and then fetishized an autonomous realm of the visual." (186) Krauss, following Duchamp, calls this "retinal painting." To clarify, take Impressionism. In terms of "retinal painting," one might argue that the Impressionist painter, by reproducing on the canvas the individual bits of color originally impressed on the retina, would have a non-arbitrary rule for making depictions. The visual system, by offering purely perceptual data, provides a natural, positivistic basis for representation.

But this belief in the artwork as a natural sign comes definitely to an end with the rise of, what Krauss and her co-editors of *Art Since 1900* call, "Antimodernism" and Postmodernism. According to Krauss, "to get inside the systems of this work [Antimodern or Postmodern], whether LeWitt's or Judd's or Morris's, is precisely to enter a world without a center, a world of substitutions and transpositions nowhere legitimated by the revelations of a transcendental subject." (Krauss 1985, 258) Substitutability challenges the security of the natural sign; if one thing is as good as another, if one thing is exchangeable for another, there is no longer a sufficient reason to guarantee the uniqueness of the natural sign or its motivation. The natural sign is unmasked as a brute fact, as arbitrary.

The consequences of "this work" are devastating for the belief in the primacy of medium and material. According to Krauss, "The space of postmodernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material." (289) Notice, neither *material* nor *the perception of material* (the retinal registration of the subject matter or material) can act as the basis for an expanded practice. And, if the material is no longer operative, on what basis can postmodern practice act? According to Krauss, postmodern practice operates "on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium—photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself—might be used."

(288) Each medium is as good as any other—each is substitutable, arbitrary—since what we are now articulating is not essentially material. It is, as Krauss says, a set of cultural terms.

Kim-Cohen transposes Krauss' argument to the register of sound art, preserving even its phrasing and cadence: "A non-cochlear sonic art present[s] itself in **any medium: photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, sculpture**, as well as performance, speech, choreography, social practice, and so on." (156) Analogous to Krauss' critique of retinal painting, we get a critique of cochlear sound, i.e., Music, which tries to ground itself materially, and non-arbitrarily, on the sounds themselves. The transposition is as explicit as possible: "It does not seem too much of a stretch to find some common ground between Greenberg and Schaeffer. Just as Greenberg reduced painting to its essential element, jettisoning anything that wasn't fundamental to its constitution, excising anything that was shared with another mediums [sic], so too did Schaeffer reduce music." (15) Non-cochlear sound, like non-retinal art, is indifferent to media since it eschews a medium-specific grounding in favor of "a set of cultural terms." Artworks become tools for investigating the "cultural lifeworld," (157) an attempt to make the grammar of institutional, social and conventionally codes explicit.[10]

But there is something missing in Kim-Cohen's transposition. In particular, he does not remain faithful to the full connotation of the "non-retinal" in Krauss' usage. Kim-Cohen understands "non-retinal" to be roughly synonymous with "conceptual," to refer to the institutional, conventional and social *parerga* proscribed by the (Greenbergian) Modernist work. The one thing non-cochlear sound art *is not* is perceptual. Yet, when Krauss writes about Duchamp's non-retinal art, perception is *precisely* her focus. In her essay, "In the Blink of an Eye," the term non-retinal is employed to describe how, in Duchamp's work, the viewer accesses "the sensations of vision that are generated entirely by the body of the viewer." (Krauss 1990, 187) These sensations are not retinal sensations, if one thinks of the retina as a site of passive registration of light, akin to a *tabula rasa,* or virgin photographic plate. The bodily sensations Krauss has in mind are those the *body itself* brings to the act of seeing, or, better yet, those bodily conditions that permit the act of seeing: the curvature of one's eyeballs, the production of afterimages, and the rhythmic muscular motion of the eyes in binocular vision. These are the physiological conditions of seeing that cannot be accounted for by the notion of the eye as a *tabula rasa*, or spatial point.

Duchamp's work, according to Krauss, offers us an "interpretive paradox" because, "in the light of Duchamp's vehement rejection of the 'retinal,' we have nonetheless to acknowledge the presence of physiological optics at work within Duchamp's thinking and production." (184) The phrase "physiological optics" is noteworthy because Krauss' contrasts it with a "geometrical model" of vision, the Classical visual order of single-point perspective with its disembodied, mathematized viewer. (The phrase "physiological optics" is also a bit confusing because Krauss eventually uses the word "optics" as a shorthand for the geometrical model, in contrast to the "physiology of vision" which designates the newly discovered, bodily regime of vision.) For Krauss, the classical geometrical model first comes under attack with the birth of the physiology of vision, exemplified in the experimental work of Goethe, Johannes Müller and Helmholtz. Historically, "Goethe initiates the study of a physiology—and no longer and optics—of vision, a physiology that understands the body of the viewer as the active producer of optical experience." (190) Or, referring to Müller's experiments with electricity and sensation, "Color, which can simply be produced by electrical stimulation of the optic nerve, is henceforth severed from a specifically spatial referent." (190) The Classical order of the natural sign is challenged when the physiology of vision exposes optics as the production of the viewer, not the registration of qualities of exterior bodies. Under this new, physiological regime of vision, "the natural sign's necessary connection to the visual field can no longer be maintained." (190) When the artwork can no longer be understood in terms of the natural sign, the consequence is *not only* that it opens up the possibility of endless substitutions of signification, but that it *specifically* allows for the viewer to become aware of their own productivity *as a viewer*.

Krauss interprets Duchamp's work as staging the battle between geometrical optics and physiological vision. What results is the recognition of the viewer's own bodily contribution to seeing. To take only one instance from her many readings of Duchamp, "If the mechanism of the *Large Glass* obeys Duchamp's dictum of 'going beyond' the retina, it does so not to achieve the condition of vision's transparency to itself—which is suggested by the model of classical perspective when applied to the *Glass*—but rather, quite obviously…to construct vision itself within the opacity of the organs…" (187) Krauss offers the same reading for artists whose works, influenced by Duchamp, reflect an alternative to Greenbergian modernism. Describing Richard Serra's *Shift,* she writes: "The viewer of Serra's work, unlike the spectator of constructivist sculpture, is never represented (in the sculpture) as stationary. The viewer is always described as in motion even if that motion is only the constant **micromuscular adjustments** that are the **corporealized condition of bifocal vision**." (Krauss 1985, 270) She repeats the point in her reading of Robert Morris and Donald Judd: "In the minimalist work of Donald Judd or Robert Morris…**abstract geometries are constantly submitted to the definition of a sited vision**." (267) In other words, don't confuse all those cubes and regular polyhedrons with geometric optics. By "sited vision," Krauss means an embodied or physiological vision, one that produces its visual experience.

And here's the irony. If we accept Krauss' reading of "non-retinal" art as a defense of artworks where the viewer is not simply the receiver but a producer—as a defense of artworks where productivity of the viewer is made perspicuous—then, analogously, a *"non-cochlear" sound art begins to look much more like a defense of Voegelin's project than Kim-Cohen's.*

This is because, unlike Kim-Cohen, Voegelin is explicitly interested in moments where, as she puts it, "the listener becomes producer." (38) In fact, this is entailed by her ontology of sound. Sound, for Voegelin, is always ephemeral, evanescent, and immaterial—or, to use another of Krauss' favorite terms, *formless*. "The sonic thing is not perspectival, organized in relation to other things, social functions or ordered in relation to a purpose…neither formed nor deformed, but formless unless it meets the hearing body." (19) Voegelin's dematerialized ontology of sound is always paired with the productivity of the listener. Objects must get their objectivity from somewhere; so, as sounds becomes less and less substantial—more and more formless—the productivity of perception becomes more and more constitutive. For example, Voegelin writes, "In the experience of our own generative perception we produce the objectivity from our subjective and particular position of listening." (14) Or, when listening in the mode proper to sound art, "the phenomenological subject…performs a reduced listening which does not hear a place but produces its own." (163) The "listener become producer" is Voegelin's maxim.

Since everything gets reduced down to the productivity of the listener, some pretty monotonous descriptions of soundworks follow. Here is Voegelin on Bernard Parmegiani's *Matières induites*: "I sense it as a formless shape that **fills me with my form**." (16) "Listening produces the *matière induites* as a subjective object…" (17) When describing Cathy Lane's *On the Machair*, a piece which employs field recordings from the Scottish Outer Hebrides, Voegelin writes, "[the place] that the recordings are from is, in its composition, not a place as a certain geographical location, a dwelling place, but a fictional place **produced in my innovative listening.**" (21) To be fair, Voegelin registers occasional discomfort with this position, claiming that, "this does not mean that there are no artistic intentions nor that there really is equality between composer and listener, because, of course, there is not." (21-2) Yet, despite her scruples, the listener always trumps. On the very next page she writes: "*On the Machair* produces sense as a sonic knowing…I would be very hard pressed to tell you an exact knowledge gained, but I could discuss **a sense of knowing about myself** in relation to the sonic material and **the time and place produced in my listening.**" (23)

Although Voegelin's focus on the *listener as producer* is congruent with Krauss' project, it too misses something important. One virtue of Krauss' account was that the conceptual and perceptual features of artworks were both *necessary*. This is not to endorse Krauss' position, but simply to note something about her work that is reflected in neither Kim-Cohen's nor

Voegelin's theories. The productivity of the visual system could only come into visibility in works that undertook a critique of the conceptual, conventional and ideological features of artworks; the critique of the natural sign is necessary for the disclosure of physiological vision.

When those two features are separated, much weaker aesthetic positions emerge. In Voegelin's work, the affirmation of the *listener as producer* unmoors listening from the object heard. Despite her emphasis on the perceptual features of soundworks, the actual perceptible features of soundworks play little role. Her focus is on exploring how those perceptions are *my productions*. We hear ourselves hearing, and that seems to be enough. Yet, if all we do is hear is ourselves hearing, why does the "formless" stimulus even matter? Why go hear sound art at all if, ultimately, any sound will do?

Voegelin's position, with its emphasis on the productive role of the beholder, is congruent with other, recent work in new media aesthetics—work not necessarily dedicated to sounds or sound art. Mark Hansen, in *New Philosophy for New Media*, describes the aesthetics of new media in neo-Bergsonian terms; the beholder's body operates as a filter, selecting from the barrage of "images" striking the sensorium. Normally, a medium might operate as the ground for an "image," supplying it with a form. But digital works are different; they are medium-indifferent since the data streams upon which they are built can be rendered as sounds, images, or anything else. For Hansen, data have no privileged medium or form; thus, the onus of the artwork, its formation, is placed onto the beholder. "Correlated with the advent of digitization," Hansen writes, "the body undergoes a certain empowerment, since it deploys its own constitutive singularity (affection and memory) not to filter a universe of preconstitued images, but actually to *enframe* something (digital information) that is originally formless." (Hansen, 10) If you replace "digital information" for "sound," the congruence with Voegelin is obvious.

Moreover, it is telling. For Hansen, new media makes the beholder's capacity to enframe formless data perspicuous; thus, new media art is post-medial art. According to Hansen, "For a theory of art in the specifically 'post-medium' condition named by the digital, the body itself is invested with the responsibility of preserving within itself the self-differing condition of media." (32) Voegelin wants to make the same claim about the hearing body: "The sonic thing is…neither formed nor deformed, but formless unless it meets the hearing body." (Voegelin, 19) The hearing body is responsible for forming the artwork, a task formerly grounded in the medium. But unlike Hansen's new media aesthetic, Voegelin's aesthetic of sound art is ultimately contradictory; sound functions as the perfect medium for post-medial aesthetics. The confusion in her position indicates that something has gone awry.

In the case of Kim-Cohen's "non-cochlear" aesthetics, the perceptual features of some specific sound work do not really matter since the purpose of non-cochlear works is to acknowledge the expanded social, institutional or contextual situation of the work. The problem with this view is that one cannot tell why the specific sounds matter. In what ways do *the specific sounds* act as a constraint on the relevant social questions?

The strangest part is the false dichotomy between *sounds* and *society*. It is as if attention to a sound can only occur when one reduces out its social, semiotic, institutional or historical aspects. It is as if *sounds* and *society* were two incompatible aspects of a whole, like the duck and the rabbit in Jastrow's famous figure. The choice is *forced*; one can either hear sounds as "sounds-in-themselves" or as part of a social code. But one can never *hear in* sounds their sociality.[11]

In the conclusion to *In the Blink of an Ear*, Kim-Cohen reasserts this forced choice by way of a quotation. Luc Ferrari, speaking of the Darmstadt Summer Courses, laconically laid out the options that composers of the 1950s and 60s faced: "You had to choose between serialism and girls. I chose girls." (260) Kim-Cohen reads this sentences as symbolic of the two paths available for a sonic art: inward, toward a "conservative retrenchment focused on materials and on concerns considered essential to music" or outward, toward "that which lies beyond the traditional borders of the field," toward the expanded situation, toward non-cochlear sonic art, toward the social. (261) "Ferrari chose to move outward to girls, from music to the world. In the gallery arts, the movement has been decisively outward, away from the center." (261)

This is a *forced* choice; sound art can follow the bad path of Music, or the good path of the gallery arts. (The thumb has been placed on the scale, since Kim-Cohen never offers Music a red-blooded defense.) As I said earlier, few musicologists would agree to the premises. Yet, surprisingly, when addressing the music he really likes—rock and roll—neither does Kim-Cohen.[12]

In some of the best writing in the book, Kim-Cohen offers an impressive analysis of Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone." He argues that "Like a Rolling Stone," exposes "all of Dylan's songs as products of the chaotic bricolage of signifying grids. It exposes Dylan himself. It exposes the desperation and desires of the culture." (209) As part of the argument, Kim-Cohen focuses on the sonic details: he describes Dylan's phrasing on the word "feel," how it is rhythmically displaced from verse to verse, working against the musical patterns set out by the backing band; he describes the details of instrumental parts and the way they change over time; he describes the disruptive presence of the tambourine, pushed into the foreground of the mix; he describes the messy instrumental accompaniment, and how it registers the uncertainty of the musicians following Dylan; he also describes a subtle tape splice at the beginning of the fourth verse, and muses about how that it can offer evidence for Dylan's intent: "If what I hear *is* a tape splice, it would mean that Dylan and [producer Tom] Wilson felt they'd tapped something valuable in the first three verses—something that in spite of its very apparent flaws—or perhaps because of them—was able to communicate the abstract , complex business of the song and the moment." (202-3) In arguing about the presence of tape splice, Kim-Cohen must appeal to the ear. Such moments can only be heard, not read. Attention to those details requires a cochlea. Moreover, Kim-Cohen attends to those moments in order to plumb their social meaning. His descriptions of Dylan's music belie his book's own premises. They demonstrate that we do not have to choose between hearing the sounds or hearing the social.

It only appears otherwise when forced to make a decision between sound and society. That forced choice rests on unsound premises. What Kim-Cohen overlooks is that Music (writ large), even at it most severe claim to autonomy, is always already social. Autonomy is a social fact, despite the composers, sound artists, musicologists or critics who refuse to recognize it. Theodor Adorno made this crystal clear quite a long time ago: "No music has the slightest esthetic worth if it is not socially true, if only as a negation of untruth; no social content of music is valid without an esthetic objectification." (Adorno 1976, 197) That dialectical position in severed in Kim-Cohen's argument. It is traded in for an ideology critique of sounds-in-themselves. But one can hold to the social character of music, even "autonomous" music, without falling prey to the ideology of sound-in-themselves.[13]

The way to argue against the ideology of the sound-in-itself isn't by turning Music (writ large) into a straw man and then doggedly committing oneself to its alleged other, the social. The way to argue against the ideology of sound-in-itself is to demonstrate that sound is always already social—whether notated or improvised, Western or non-Western, Music or Sound Art. Moreover, to say that sounds are social is not to say anything of interest, since that is simply given; everything humans do is part of the "cultural lifeworld." If one wants to pursue the sociality or culturality in sounds, the point is to specify the relation between forms of sociality and the sounds made.

Adorno provides useful corrective to the Musicophobia of Voegelin and Kim-Cohen. He argues, again and again, for the indissolubility of the sonic and social, the perceptual and the conceptual. One example will have to suffice:

> Even Beethoven's music, bourgeois music at its height, reverberates with the roar and ideal of the heroic years of its class just as dreams in the early-morning hours resound with the noise of its day; and the social content of great music is grasped not by sensual listening but only the conceptually mediated knowledge of its elements and their configuration. (Adorno 2006, 100)

Neither Kim-Cohen nor Voegelin are in a position to articulate the dialectical condition of sound and society. No matter how much you foreground the perceptions and sensation of the listener, no matter how much you foreground the social and conceptual aspects of the situation, you cannot get past the elements and configuration of the work. It is the only thing that the listener's ear and expanded situation have in common.

What remains is a theoretical question: is sound art is ultimately a branch of music, or a branch of post-medial aesthetics, or new media aesthetics, or relational aesthetics…? It may turn out that sound art is, as Max Neuhaus argued, a cowardly and imprecise category:

> It's as if perfectly capable curators in the visual arts suddenly lose their equilibrium at the mention of the word sound. These same people who would all ridicule a new art form called, say, 'Steel Art' which was composed of steel sculpture combined with steel guitar music along with anything else with steel in it, somehow have no trouble at all swallowing 'Sound Art'. In art, the medium is not often the message. (Neuhaus, in Kelly 2011, 72)

If there is such a thing as sound art, "the message" must be grounded in the sounds. ("The sounds" are not be mistaken with "sounds-in-themselves" or simply "sound.") A theory of sound art must take account of sound art as *an art of sounds*, where sounds are heard in all their sociality. A theory of sound art is ultimately justified by its ability to support the description and production of soundworks at the level where individual sounds matter. Perhaps the only way to avoid a theory of sound art that simply reiterates the demands of art theory, or music theory (for that matter), is to require that it meet the only set of demands that matter—those adequate to the unavoidable, unruly, unfashionable thing that we used to call "the work."

NOTES

[1] http://www.channel4.com/news/turner-prize-susan-philipsz-wins-prestigious-art-award

[2] http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/michael-glover-three-cheers-for-sound-artists-but-not-this-one-2153048.html

[3] I say "Duchampian" since Duchamp does not use the term "non-retinal." Rather, he says that his art "depended on things other than the retina." See Cabanne and Duchamp, 39 and passim.

[4] In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida analyzes the *parergon* to draw attention to the problem of drawing an absolute boundary between intrinsic and extrinsic features of a work, like that between the image on the canvas and its frame. He argues that the *parergon* follows the logic of the supplement, that it operates, "without being a part of [the work] yet without being absolutely extrinsic to it." (Derrida, 55) Never simply outside or inside, the Derridean *parergon*, gives itself over to stabilize and legitimate the integrity and autonomy of the work; yet, if the work requires such legitimation from "outside," it cannot be simply autonomous.

[5] Instead of appealing to musicological sources, Kim-Cohen relies on the Walter Pater's formula that all the arts aspire to the condition of music. Pater is cited twice, plus two references to "romanticism" that allude to Pater's statement.

[6] See, for example, McLuhan and Carpenter (1960) or Jonas (1966).

[7] Voegelin is alluding to Schaeffer's acousmatic reduction. See Schaeffer (1966) and, for commentary, Kane (2007).

[8] Krauss (1985).

[9] Greenberg (1993).

[10] In this respect, Kim-Cohen follows in the footsteps of Douglas Kahn (1991). For a salient comparison, see Kahn's reading of Yoko Ono's work.

[11] To hold to the dichotomy between sounds and society is to concede too much to the theories of Pierre Schaeffer. Why should someone as critical of Schaeffer as Kim-Cohen simply invert the value he places on reduced listening (*écouter rédiute*)? The Schaefferian position is not overcome by inverting its values; it is overcome by arguing against its premises. For more on Schaeffer, see Kane (2007).

[12] To accurately characterize Kim-Cohen's argument, I should note that he does not consider rock and roll as Music (writ large). Like the sonic arts it seeks the extramusical. "Rock and roll separates itself from the instantiated presumptions of Western music." (142) "While [Western composed music] goes to great lengths to exclude the extramusical from its field of concern, the [rock and roll] courts it and elevates it to the point of all but excluding the 'properly musical.' The repetitious nature of rock and roll means that it ultimately must appeal, not to the ear, but to a broader sense (in both meanings of the word) of experience. Rock and roll is about the confrontation of an audience with a performer. It is understood that both parties may be playing a role, and yet the interaction is nor more and no less 'real' than the social interactions of everyday life. Separated from day-to-day existence and shown of the consequence of actions taken there, rock and roll allows a playing out of desires, fears, and provocations." (144) Yet, Kim-Cohen's claim that rock and roll does not ultimately appeal to the ear, that it is part of a non-cochlear practice, that it embraces the social and cultural (i.e., the extramusical), is belied the moment he starts describing.

[13] Adorno himself had little patience for that ideology: "Music is ideology insofar as it asserts itself as an ontological being-in-itself, beyond society's tensions." (Adorno 2006, 100)

REFERENCES

Adorno, Theodor W. 1976. Introduction to the sociology of music. New York: Seabury Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2006. *Philosophy of new music*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota press.

Cabanne, Pierre, and Marcel Duchamp. 1971. *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*. New York: Viking Press.

Cox, Christoph, and Daniel Warner, ed. 2004. *Audio culture: readings in modern music*. New York: Continuum.

Derrida, Jacques. 1987. *The truth in painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Greenberg, Clement. 1993. *The collected essays and criticism, vol. 4*, ed. John O'Brian.. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hansen, Mark B. N. 2006. *New philosophy for new media*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT.

Hegarty, Paul. 2007. *Noise/music: a history*. New York: Continuum.

Jonas, Hans. 1966. "The Nobility of Sight" in *The phenomenon of life: toward a philosophical biology*. New York: Harper & Row.

Kahn, Douglas. 1999. *Noise, water, meat: a history of sound in the arts*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT.

Kane, Brian. 2007. "L'Objet Sonore Maintenant: Pierre Schaeffer, sound objects and the phenomenological reduction". *Organised Sound.* 12 (1): 15-24.

Kelly, Caleb. 2011. *Sound.* London: Whitechapel Gallery.

Kim-Cohen-Seth. 2009. *In the blink of an ear: toward a non-cochlear sonic art*. New York: Continuum.

Krauss, Rosalind E. 1985. *The originality of the avant-garde and other modernist myths*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Krauss, Rosalind E. 1990. "In the Blink of An Eye" in David Carroll, ed. *The States of 'theory': history, art, and critical discourse*. New York: Columbia University Press.

LaBelle, Brandon. 2006. *Background noise: perspectives on sound art*. New York: Continuum.

Licht, Alan. 2007. *Sound art: beyond music, between categories*. New York, N.Y.: Rizzoli International Publications.

McLuhan, Marshal and Edmund Carpenter. 1960. "Acoustic Space" in *Explorations in communication*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Schaeffer, Pierre. 1966. *Traité des objets musicaux, essai interdisciplines*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Voegelin, Salomé. 2010. *Listening to noise and silence: towards a philosophy of sound art*. New York: Continuum.

Brian Kane is Assistant Professor of Music at Yale University. He is currently writing a book on acousmatic sound.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

FEATURES

THE (SUPER)NATURALISTIC TURN IN CONTEMPORARY THEORY

JASON BARTULIS

Reviewing John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* in 1925, George Santayana charged that the overarching goal of the treatise was incoherent on its face.[1] Indeed, Santayana insisted that Dewey's "naturalistic metaphysics"—the philosophical slogan of this particular work—was a flat contradiction in terms. Years later, Richard Rorty agreed with his hero's interlocutor. In fact, Rorty extended Santayana's critique, complaining of Dewey's ambition to transform philosophy into a credibly modern, *because natural* science. For this ambition, holds Rorty, is predicated on a willful forgetting of what thoroughgoing naturalists don't ever forget but emphatically deny. Specifically: "[N]othing is to be gained for an understanding of human knowledge by running together the vocabularies in which we describe the causal antecedents of knowledge with those in which we offer justifications of our claims to knowledge."[2]

One way of cashing out Rorty's point here is to say that I might explain your affective state, say, your sadness, by reminding myself of the cruel remark that I made last week. Alternatively, I can cite the frequency and rate at which sound waves hit your eardrum, triggering a chain reaction that includes the passage of vibrations through a coiled tube in your ear, and the subsequent swaying of hair-like nerve endings or cilia, which are thought to be responsible for the transmission of messages from the auditory nerve to the brain. In the first case, I'm placing your affective experience in what's commonly referred to as 'the logical space of reasons', a normative space constituted by reasons, beliefs, feelings, and desires of which I am or can become aware and possibly defend.[3] In the second, I'm making your affective experience intelligible by giving an empirical description, by detailing the subpersonal processes that belong in 'the logical space of causes'.[4] Both spaces demarcate kinds of "human knowledge" and Rorty isn't out to secure privileges for one explanatory space over and against the other. On the contrary, he's exposing a temptation to think that *there is* such a thing as a privileged explanation, and that the natural sciences are uniquely equipped to furnish us with them. Acceding to these two premises, suspects Rorty, invites a third temptation, the fantasy of "a jargon that would apply equally to plants, nervous systems, and physicists" (81). But there is no *single* "jargon" that applies "equally" to the explanatory practices of physicists—which are irreducibly normative, given the interplay of beliefs with the relevant, theoretically laden, perceptual experience—and the evolutionary adaptations of an oxalis—which involve causal processes that can be captured by a non-normative vocabulary. Or, to make the same point in slightly different terms: whether or not you can derive a theoretical, or practical 'ought' (the metaphysical component in Dewey's scheme) from an 'is' (the naturalistic component), you cannot reduce an ought to an is.

Leaving behind any further interpretive questions regarding Dewey's susceptibility to an allegedly pervasive theoretical confusion, i.e., naturalistic metaphysics, confusions to which Rorty believed mainstream Anglophone philosophy's scientific fantasies made them especially prone, what's striking and, for us, most salient, is Rorty's prognosis.[5] Specifically, Rorty believed that the way for philosophy to overcome the dualisms inspiring this whole dialectic was not to appropriate "vocabularies" from the natural sciences but to achieve a critical orientation that reflected something like literary theory's own.[6] What Rorty has in mind, I think, is a form of criticism dedicated to giving normative explanations, and a willingness to leave, without shame or pride, strictly causal or naturalistic explanations to the adjacent scientific community. However, the briefest survey of ascendant trends in contemporary theory suggests that Rorty's confidences and contrasts no longer apply. A new generation of prominent scholars is calling for exactly what Rorty couldn't have imagined literary critics ever would or should. "[S]cience illiteracy," insist Wai Chee Dimock and Priscilla Wald, is "no longer an option."[7] So whether or not Rorty was ever justified when imputing, favorably, an anti-naturalistic reflex to literary intellectuals, the current enthrallment to evolutionary aesthetics, neurobiology, cognitive science and animal studies suggests the somewhat belated arrival, in literary studies and aesthetic theory, of what the midcentury's leading analytic philosopher, W.V. Quine, called "naturalized epistemology."[8] And even if Quine remains relatively unknown among literary critics, the naturalized epistemology of his post-doctoral student, Silvan Tomkins, has found a powerful application in affect theory.[9]

All of this begs an obvious question. Why, exactly, isn't science illiteracy an option? One answer is that fewer and fewer literary scholars and cultural theorists seem to think that normative explanations are, in short, explanatory.[10] For more and more scholars seem to believe that *only* a properly scientific investigation, that is, one oriented towards the space of causes, can capture the determinative processes which are ultimately responsible for literary contents and forms—or, in a slightly different context, the aesthetic experiences and responses of the reading, listening, viewing and purchasing publics under critical discussion. Guided by this presupposition what Ruth Leys calls "the turn to affect," and what we might formulate, more broadly, as 'the naturalistic turn', follows as a matter of course.[11] But even if, as Bill Brown seems to suspect, there is no good or theoretically principled answer to his question, "Why wouldn't we want to know about the science behind consciousness?" there might be perfectly good and theoretically principled reasons to oppose the stronger claim underlying the aforementioned trends to which his remark, I take it, is meant to lend support.[12] Which is: until we uncover what's "behind consciousness," we don't have credible accounts of the aesthetic objects, experiences, interpretive decisions and ethical responses *to* those objects that help demarcate literary criticism's explanatory domain. In fact, the stronger claim seems to mandate that, if the humanities want to produce what Rorty calls "human knowledge," they simply *have to* run "together the vocabularies in which we describe the causal antecedents of knowledge with those in which we offer justifications of our claims to knowledge." Critical procedures that don't synthesize in this manner are regarded as inept. Scholars and disciplines that remain beholden to what we might think of as 'folk interpretation' are admonished to "come to terms with the forces of change," lest they become obsolete.[13] How uncanny to find the language of change, force, and progress surfacing in an intellectual domain whose defining critical gestures, for better or for worse, have involved critiques of those very terms as they operate in liberal discourse and other Enlightenment ideologies.

But if *those* are the claims motivating the naturalistic turn, then what began as a methodological revolution in literary studies has profoundly ontological implications and skeptical motivations. Not, however, as a necessary result of the entirely unobjectionable desire to understand the science of consciousness. For logically speaking, no amount of knowledge about that science, or any other, can produce the kind of skepticism under consideration. It's only when the announced methodological innovation is propelled by a vaguely acknowledged skepticism concerning the ontological status of the items populating normative, explanatory frameworks; and a subtending conviction that we *need* strictly causal and ultimately subpersonal explanatory schemas to *replace* what are increasingly cast as outmoded analytics in the study of human behavior, that a subject's putative reasons, beliefs, representations, and other acts of self-reflective consciousness are denied explanatory value.[14] In the hands of reductive naturalists, the denial articulates as follows: putatively normative states can retain their causal efficacy, and so explanatory credentials, providing that a given state is successfully explicated in terms of our best physical theory, that is, providing that it can be reduced to natural states or causes in good, natural-scientific standing. But when norms and normative states, as such, are denied any and every mode of real existence, reductive (literary) naturalism becomes eliminative (literary) materialism, a project that renders cognitive content, linguistic meaning, agency, and, in its strongest versions, subjectivity itself, epiphenomenal. Indeed, at this level of analysis, literary critics gripped by the forces of change have extended not only Quine's naturalized epistemology but have radically construed its most radical construal: "the replacement thesis."[15]

Granted, such commitments are neither framed in these terms, nor are the radical entailments explicitly embraced. More often, scholars of this persuasion tend to fall victim to reductive naturalism or eliminative materialism while championing what they hope will be discipline-wide changes in theory choice, changes they aim to make compelling by exposing the distorting effects of the vocabularies in which literary scholars usually justify knowledge-claims. In Dimock's "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," for example, the target is nothing less than *the very idea* of a national literature, a concept that has organized a great deal of literary-critical knowledge.[16]

Having voiced doubts about the adequacy of a nation-centered hermeneutic in seminal Americanist texts—Dimock's dissatisfaction ranges from F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941) to Walter Benn Michaels' *Our America* (1995)—to account for the international popularity of such figures as Richard Wright and William Faulkner, she asserts, "We don't ask these questions because, for many of us, they are external to the territorial unit that we take to be a natural unit of analysis. But is this unit really so natural? Does it serve all our descriptive or explanatory needs?" (756). The virtue of this statement is that it directly raises the question of what "our explanatory needs" are. And even though Dimock's language is perfectly colloquial, the repeat appearance of "natural" in these two sentences insinuates the need for a naturalistic orientation that can replace what many leading critics have, heretofore, been content to reconstruct: *normatively* intelligible correlations between geographical location, political economy and expressive cultural forms. But is Dimock's answer plausible? Are explanations that remain within the confines of the space of reasons, somehow, unnatural, or unable to account for Wright's international fame, as she implies? Why believe that we must expand both our "territorial units" and temporal frameworks for the purposes of explanation, expansions that require what are, essentially, causal antecedents not just to nationhood but to personhood, like "species" being (763)?

Aesthetic preferences and market trends are not the kinds of "historical phenomena" that require "large-scale" evolutionary analyses (758). Neither are the religious beliefs that should, we might think, play a prominent role in the social history of a religion, just as they do, and quite naturally, in mundane explanatory contexts. And while Dimock does, indeed, sketch a social history of Islam from the perspective of deep time to illustrate her theory—somewhat more intuitively, perhaps, for there's no deep time like theological time—she doesn't, tellingly, say much about religious beliefs. And what that tells us is that, even if Dimock once aspired to make "cognition a category for literary analysis," she probably didn't then, and certainly doesn't now, support an Intentionalist theory of mind and language, which names a family of concepts that encapsulates the main thesis defended here.[17] Saying it all at once: because our capacity for self-conscious reflection is mutually constitutive with the Intentionality, and so normativity, of thought and language—that is, the contents of our thinking, believing, preferring, describing and experiencing are *about* or *directed to* the world, and so can be can be assessed in terms of truth, satisfaction, or some other epistemic concept—to be committed to Intentionality is to affirm the necessity of normative explanations when explicating the relations between mind and world; experience and language; self and self-criticism; and art and art criticism. By contrast, being committed to deep time requires a specious relocation of irreducibly normative phenomena from the space of reasons to the space of merely naturalistic causes. And once relocated, deep time activates explanatory schemes that privilege 'distal' causes—which can't possibly make *a rational* or normatively contentful contribution to our beliefs, preferences and reflections—instead of 'proximal' causes—which can.[18] Indeed, the valorization of distal causes and subpersonal notions of cognitive and sensory experience is the hallmark, not only of deep time, but also of evolutionary ethics, evolutionary aesthetics, and Graham Harman's *Guerilla Metaphysics* (2005), which has seized the imagination of Thing theory and the literary-critical branch of animal and science studies.[19]

Putting things back in Dimock's own terms: to believe that explanations and descriptions of our preferences and beliefs require something like a "*longue durée,"* you'd have to believe, on the one hand, that the critical application of a "shorter time frame" in the determination of such preferences, along with other conceptually articulate and so communicable intentions and (religious) beliefs, "diminish[es] their claim to significance," as Dimock does (758). You'd have to believe, in other words, that normative explanations, constituted by the space of reasons, aren't really "significant," that is, explanatory, which amounts to content epiphenomenalism.[20] On the other hand, *and at the same time,* you'd have to believe that there's a species-specific "significance" that persists through, in Dimock's words, "hundreds, thousands, or even billions of years," an *antecedent* significance that merely causally, not normatively, determines a given reader's pleasures, pains, preferences and beliefs. In fact, Dimock's explanatory scheme invites a theory of mental content that issues from a more comprehensive naturalistic theory of mind that can, if thought through to its logical conclusion, be applied to more than *human* readers' preferences and beliefs.

Jane Thrailkill does think it through. Acknowledging a debt to Dimock and wearing her naturalism on her sleeve, *Affecting Fictions: Mind, Body, and Emotion in American Literary Realism*(2007) is admirably straightforward.[21] "This book is a sustained argument in defense of the Affective Fallacy" (1). Against a critical tradition that includes theorists as diverse as Rene Descartes and Monroe Beardsley, a tradition distinguished by "more cognitivist views of subjectivity" than she thinks are defensible, Thrailkill appeals to the anti-dualist orientation of Charles Darwin, John Dewey, both William and Henry James, Antonio Damasio and Daniel Dennett, all of which are said to advance "ideas about the mindful corporeality of affective experience…" (7).[22] This formulation makes clear that Thrailkill's confidence in the "broader theoretical and practical salience" of the natural sciences isn't motivated by a wholesale rejection of cognitivism (6). Indeed, she takes great pains to stress that she is not conflating but only aligning the hermeneutic orientation of cultural theorists with empirical modes of inquiry that distinguish natural scientists from their ever-interpreting brethren.[23] Foregrounding the biological human body and its physiological processes might mean expanding awareness of human connectedness to members of nonhuman species that rightfully claim our ethical and intellectual attention. But it does not mean, Thrailkill assures us, jettisoning the significance of human mentality. Modestly put, then, her thesis is that a better account of, say, the neurobiological patterns of the human and nonhuman animal body should be taken up alongside folk theories of interpretation.

But even this weaker formulation of her thesis begs all the most important questions, the questions that Rorty, and Santayana before him, insisted we keep clear and distinct. Imagine that we want to put the "neurobiological and affective components of human experience"—Thrailkill is particularly interested in the human *reading* experience, but considers aesthetic, moral, political and religious experience as well—alongside the more generic "realist" concerns that Thrailkill characterizes as "mimesis, referentiality, and fixity" (9).[24] How are these levels of description to be theorized together? What sort of premises are we going to need to establish the normative conclusions at which Thrailkill is aiming? If neuroscience progresses so that we do get satisfying maps of which synapses fire when a reader engages, for example, *The Turn of the Screw*, we might be able to see which causal processes do, in fact, influence a readers judgments. But why believe that these processes *should* have implications vis-à-vis a reader's deliberations regarding the governess's conduct? Do we imagine that *the synapses* are wrong if they fire when a reader believes that the narrator is a reliable Christian but right if a critic eschews such remedial concerns and attends to James' psychosexual development? What would it even mean to think that synapses are assessable in these terms in the first place?

My point, of course, is an anti-reductionist one. No amount of mapping of which synaptic vectors alight when can explain why I think that I should interpret a passage (or character, or author) one way rather than another. Nor can visual mapping, in and of itself, explain what *I mean* to do by interpreting a passage one way rather than another. And that's because neither normative significance nor meaning is something that synapses, simply, *have*, and so normative significance and meaning aren't things that we can, simply, *see*. Stating the position a bit more carefully: at least in the case of human perception—say, listening to a work of art or, more ordinarily, conversing with a familiar foe—there certainly are cases when normative significance and meaning can be seen and heard straightaway. Moreover, there are interpretive contexts when would-be explainers immediately perceive, and so can intelligibly claim to know, that a given subject is *herself* immediately perceiving the meaning of some object. But our best account of those instances proceeds by 'triangulating' them, Donald Davidson might say, with objects, acts, events and percepts that are conceptually, if not phenomenally related to something that the interpreting agent(s) or some other proximate socializing agency, had *already* charged, or recognized to be charged, with significance.[25] That is, by placing those instances in the space of reasons.

The essential point I'm after, however, might be made simpler if we're willing to acknowledge that normative significance, whether immediately perceived, self-considered, or asked about, is something that only human agents can defend. Granting, then, that a full discussion of the pertinence of cognitive ethnology for literary studies is beyond the scope of this essay, I happily concede that human and nonhuman animals are connected by an infinite number of shared, affective and causal relations, relations that make good sense of the ethical significance nonhuman animals might have in our lives. Furthermore, a clear entailment of that mutuality means that we share not just a repertoire of feelings and desires, but of perceptions with nonhuman animals. And because perception is, itself, a cognitive capacity, there are grounds for disagreeing with Descartes—and agreeing with Jane Thrailkill, Graham Harman and, say, Cary Wolfe—that many nonhuman animals enjoy other cognitive states, like beliefs, similar to ours. Some might even possess the conceptual capacities required to form and execute something like an intention. Nonetheless, nonhuman animals can't step back, as it were, from their feelings, desires, beliefs and intentions, in order to weigh, recognize, and communicate the normative authority of reasons as such. That, I contend, is what makes our cognitive and affective lives different, in kind. Therefore, the recognition, construction, and exchange of reasons should, I think, be regarded not as the *sine qua non* of cognition but as a specific rational capacity which is constitutive of our uniquely, because (potentially) deliberative form of practical and theoretical agency.[26]

So let's grant that literary critics and cultural theorists are justified in their search for ways to model the cultural and biological. Because Thrailkill, like Harman and Wolfe, rides roughshod over the constraints that the possession of self-consciousness, language and other forms of conceptual self-mastery place on would-be explainers, she can only obscure the differences between human mindedness and nonhuman animal cognition; between the naturalism and the metaphysics; between the 'is' and the 'ought'.

These distances can be collapsed if, for example, "scientific knowledge of the body" (10) is combined with a profound confidence in the normative significance of causal relations as such, a confidence that credits the coherence of, in Rorty's words again, "a jargon that would apply equally to plants, nervous systems, and physicists." And Thrailkill sets out to do exactly that in her discussion of Oliver Wendell Holmes' *Elise Venner*, which tasks an increasingly ambitious theory of evolution not with illuminating the idiosyncratic preferences of readers and market forces but, rather, with accounting for the aesthetic preferences resulting in marriage. Confident that the science of the nineteenth century has critical purchase on this canonical thematic, Thrailkill writes:

> Even courtship, for the Professor, lends itself to such formulations: "Remember that Nature makes every man love all women, and trusts the trivial matter of choice to the commonest accident." Romance thus becomes fodder for scientific scrutiny, for the "study of love is very much like that of meteorology." Speaking as if to a starry-eyed belle, the Professor…dissects middle-class fashions and societal rituals to reveal their essential Darwinian functionality. (72)

From the incontrovertible fact, discussed in her second chapter, that bacterial infections are best approached naturalistically and represented statistically, Thrailkill moves to the much stronger claim that a person's choice of partner can only be explained along evolutionary lines. Actually, the relevant lines begin with the inorganic objects of "meteorology," and extends not just—backwards?—to organic life, but infinitely outwards. Anticipating the reader's objections, Thrailkill admits how natural processes and the natural laws seem totally determinative:

> The Professor's analogy between maidens and mollusks would appear to entail the eradication of agency: you may think you're dancing and enjoying yourself, he implies but actually this elaborate ritual was designed to display you in a process that sidesteps individual choice. Upon reflection, however, it becomes apparent that the Professor is actually engaged in the extension of agency: the ritual precisely was designed, or at least acts as if it were. This is what Charles Darwin discerned as "natural selection." Dennett puts it this way: "Mother Nature, the process of natural selection, shows her appreciation of good reasons tacitly, by wordlessly and mindlessly permitting the best designs to prosper….We late-blooming theorists are the first to see the patterns and divine these reasons—the free-floating rationales of the designs that have been created over eons." (72)

What's necessary here is not a direct assessment of Dennett but an evaluation of Thrailkill's appropriation of his conclusions. To begin, we should appreciate that for non-theistic naturalists, like Dennett, the language of design is a mere pretext, a bit of flourish when describing evolutionary processes. Indeed, for non-theistic naturalists, the attribution of agency to naturalistic processes is not a metaphysically serious utterance, and can't be called upon to do the kind of metaphysically serious work. However, the more radical claim *motivating* these explanations, the claim that appears, finally, on the surface of Thrailkill's appeal to Dennett, is that "the free-floating rationales of the designs that have been created over eons" are the *real causes of events*. But this implies that, while it's perfectly decent to give normative explanations some discursive space of their own, it's not until we have a naturalistic narrative depleted of normative items and even psychological predicates that we have *the real* explanation of a given behavior. Here, again, we have arrived at a view that can be described as content epiphenomenalism. Reasons, beliefs, mentation, as such, is explanatorily impotent.

So while this passage is deployed to illustrate an expansion of agency, what we have, instead, is its eradication. For persons, not processes, have the requisite capacities to exercise agency: only persons can articulate "good reasons," to use Dennett's words, in some sense, against him. Or, to put the point a bit more dialectically: either this is the eradication of agency because "nature" only looks "as if" it were agentic; or, the question of *human* agency is no longer what's at stake. And, in fact, I want now to argue that for many theorists importing the explanatory vocabulary from the natural sciences into the humanities, the logic of the argument requires the introduction and defense of a nonhuman form of agency to accompany the nonconceptual notion of experience upon which, not just the naturalistic turn, but 'the supernaturalistic turn' in contemporary theory rests.

Now, in Jane Thrailkill's case, the supernaturalistic turn doesn't exactly rest on a reading of William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). But it certainly begins there. However, what's needed in our context is neither exegesis of that difficult work nor an appraisal of its literary-critical appropriations.[27] To focus our analysis, we need only to condense the claims motivating the supernaturalistic turn as concisely as possible. The positive claim runs like this: religious experience *triggers* a set of sensory, physiological, emotional and affective reactions that show themselves to be, in some relevant sense, independent of beliefs and other mental contents. The negative claim runs: religious experiences either result from, or express a general type of cognitive failure—"wonder" is Jane Thrailkill's and even Hubert Dreyfus's preferred term for failure, or, less tendentiously, for what I'd characterize as a closely related, non- or precognitive state—which should be viewed as our primordial, epistemic situation.[28] For some theorists, this situation is better illuminated, sometimes literally, using the audio-visual technologies made available by the best current science, than it is elucidated by humanistic explanatory methods and their subtending normative concepts. In any case, the fascination with religious experience obviously isn't induced by a desire to contribute to a thoroughgoing natural, as opposed to revealed, religion. Typically, religious experience is ontologically and *scientifically* significant, so goes this line of thinking, because it substantiates, or simply leads to superior descriptions of what our lives as evolved, embodied, sensorily affected, and not merely intellectually active, reflective beings amounts to. A proper theory of religious experience, then, is an important step in getting a fully naturalized epistemology. Indeed, for many contemporary supernaturalistic theorists studying, and sometimes exacerbating the so-called "return of the theologico-political problem," constructing a fully naturalized epistemology seems to be a necessary, if not sufficient condition, for developing a leftist politics that can challenge an allegedly hegemonic, secular regime.

Of course, no of such theory of religion, science or politics can be found in Quine's work. But something very much like it does surface in Silvan Tomkins' treatment of religion. Prefacing the third of a four-volume series, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (1991)*,*Tomkins informs us that although he's not a believer, affect theory was, from the very start, "substantially shaped and enriched" by "a truly Christian theologian."[29] However, when filling out his account of what he calls, tellingly, "the religious impulse" (and there are democratic, socialist, and totalitarian impulses as well) Tomkins characterizes Christian beliefs in the way that he characterizes all beliefs. Not theologically—not, in other words, *as beliefs*—which stand in both causal and epistemic relations to other beliefs and to the world, but rather, as essentially affective phenomena. Fleshing this out a bit: beliefs, epistemically understood, are 'judgment sensitive'. That is, I'm always able to alter my belief, and even an emotion, if I judge that it's unsupported by relevant reasons or I determine that it conflicts with another and better supported belief. This profoundly subjective but, nonetheless, objectifying process, secures the potentially normative status of my beliefs and emotions, not by endorsing a desiccated account of cognition, but by placing beliefs and emotions in the explanatory space of reasons. But when beliefs and emotions are understood as *essentially* affective and intrinsically normative—that is, when you don't so much derive, but *identify* an 'is' with an 'ought', insofar as the mere *having* of a given belief of emotion isn't just taken as reason giving but as settling all normative questions—they can, do and should operate independently of the mind, independently, more specifically, of a would-be deliberative subject's capacities for reflection, objective representation, and effective cognitive action e.g., judgment. For beliefs, no less than emotions, are triggered, so goes the positive dimension of Tomkins' account, by genetically based causal mechanisms, which are *themselves* triggered by the involuntary perceptual intake and "imaging" of a merely affective subject's physical environment.

It's hard to say which elements of this naturalistic story would have gone missing had it not been for the gracious intervention of Christian theology in Tomkins' thinking. Perhaps the assumption is that religious beliefs (and emotions) are formed and defended by such obviously noncognitive means that even allusions to this peculiar domain help to illustrate, and secure normative authority for, the intuition motivating affect theory's most basic, noncognitive commitments? It's not clear. Clearer, perhaps, is that even if Tomkins' research program has no necessary relation to theology or religious practice—many theologians and believers would emphatically reject the suggestion that their religious commitments and practices were the upshot of a material interaction that left no room for their deliberative, mental actions, for, in other words, their autonomy—it is entirely compatible with the basic, explanatory framework of midcentury behaviorism. Indeed, it's appropriately regarded as yet another variety of behaviorism, where belief formation is theorized according to a stimulus-response model. Such models, past and present, isolate and then valorize beliefs that we, like all nonhuman animals, *simply* have or *are caused* to have—Tomkins' own interest in nonhuman animal cognition indicates his appreciation of this point, to say nothing of his notion of 'automata'—from beliefs that we, unlike nonhuman animals, actively and consciously deliberate about and decide to affirm, based on genuinely reason-giving considerations.

Refocusing religious belief to make the point: accepting behaviorist premises, we'd have to conclude, for instance, that my cognitive and emotive attitudes towards the doctrine of transubstantiation aren't to be made intelligible by reciting what reasons I have or haven't accepted in its favor. Any affect theory worthy of the name would have to begin, instead, by describing (potentially) conscious attitudes as non-epistemic, emotive states. So reduced, these nominally 'mental' states could *only* be explained by determining the spatio-temporal coordinates of my body in relation to the bearer of a relevant theological 'script', and then identifying what adaptive incentives are offered by the governing power to help condition and re-enforce what can only be described as my causal, even if doctrinal, *reaction.* If this rendering of Tomkins' position sounds outlandish, it's actually an understatement given the scale on which he believes his premises can be extended and coherently applied. For Tomkins goes so far as to explain and endorse the triumph of Christianity, and rejection of Judaism, as an "inevitable" outcome, due to what he regards as the plain facts of our biological constitution—or what he refers to as "the reality of the pluralism of the biological inheritance of potentialities for love and for hate, for life and for death, and for the potential for romantic love of the saint against the hate of the sinner" (405).

In Tomkins, interestingly enough, there are stretches of argumentation wherein the cognitive components of confessional Christianity are recognized and weighted. But strictly speaking, the cognitive dimensions of religious faith can't account for religious emotions, affects, preferences, actions or any other ostensibly minded expression i.e., behavior. For the whole point of Tomkins' stimulus-response-cum-evolutionary theory of religious consciousness is to identify a set of subpersonal, hardwired, bio-ontological facts about the human body—even stronger: about bodies—that are both explanatory and predictive of world-historical developments. This is a naturalistic metaphysics with a theologically inflected vengeance.

For a perspicuous view of how Tomkins' supernaturalistic premises have been radicalized by critical theorists explicitly committed to the primacy of affect in politics, religion and religious studies, William Connolly's *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (1999) is as good as it gets.[30] Here, Connolly, who is no more religious than is Tomkins or, presumably, Thrailkill, makes an admirable plea for cultural critics to take religion but not, importantly, religious beliefs more seriously. After all, religious beliefs can only do what beliefs do: mediate (theological) knowledge, which is, like all knowledge, representational and so susceptible to error and refutation.[31] In fact, it's precisely because Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian* (1927) takes religious beliefs seriously in just this way that Connolly takes Russell to task in the opening pages of his anti-secularist tract. For what Connolly most wants isn't what Russell did when discussing religion, namely, the giving and taking of reasons for our religious beliefs and disbeliefs. Instead, Connolly campaigns for a scientific appreciation of religious affects. That is, Connolly holds that religious affects should be taken seriously, because like all genuine affects, but *unlike* "secular models of thinking, discourse, and ethics" (6), they can be theoretically assimilated into a larger class of subpersonal, and so nonrepresentational 'events' that have an *immediate* causal impact on cognitive processes heretofore mischaracterized in epistemological terms. Indeed, Connolly maintains that if we can come to understand the full reach of those causal impacts, beliefs will prove less recalcitrant to naturalistic treatments and we can produce a naturalized epistemology serviceable for a critical, post-secular politics.

But even if such treatments can be given so that our concept of belief starts to look a lot more like, at least, *Connolly's* concept of affect, how can we know that a given nonrepresentational event—that is, an event that can't be placed in the space of reasons—*should* bear on what we might regard as a paradigmatically representational activity, namely, politics? Connolly doesn't answer that question. At least, he won't answer it in those terms. In fact, he compounds the epistemological dilemma he's generated with an indeterminate notion of causality, which he's just as happy to leave a mystery or "inscrutable" (175).

The appeal to inscrutable mysteries should immediately signal that epistemological dilemmas aren't Connolly's dilemmas anymore than they are the theologians and theorists inspiring *Why I Am Not a Secularist:* John Caputo, Talal Asad and Gilles Deleuze. Connolly celebrates these three, in particular, and welcomes productive interplay between naturalistic explanations and nonconceptual conceptions of religious experience, in general, because they all reinforce his own desire to leave the entire modern epistemological problematic behind.[32] In place of bygone methods reputed to explain, and to distinguish what it means to self-consciously endorse a candidate perception, belief, or ethico-political proposition from what it is *to be* in a mental state *tout court*, we are given what many of those advancing the supernaturalistic cause give us: a summary discussion of cognitive science's way of naturalizing epistemology, which is meant not to justify—justification, remember, is the preeminent concern of modern epistemology—but to show, "literally," as Connolly says when illustrating a related point, the sources of normativity (29). For it's the fluid form of cognitive science's experimental data that best enables us to visualize which 'is' causes which 'ought'. In praise of Joseph LeDoux's microscopic dimension, Connolly writes,

> His study not only confounds behaviorist and computer models of thinking, it may expose insufficiencies in linguistic models of thought and discourse. Let us focus on the relation between the amygdala, a small, almond-shaped brain located at the base of the cortex, and the prefrontal cortex, the large brain developed more extensively in humans than in other animals. The amygdala and prefrontal cortex can receive messages from the same sources, but each registers them in a different way. When receiving, say, a sign it has stored as an indication of danger, the amygdala reacts quickly, relatively crudely and with intense energy….The prefrontal cortex receives its version more slowly, processing it through a linguistic network in a more refined way and forming a complex judgment. In a situation of

> stress, the amygdala also transmits its interpretation and much of its intensity to the prefrontal cortex. (28-29)

Above, Connolly indulges a strategic equivocation that occurs among many posthumanists. He begins by casting suspicion over attempts to model thinking and discourse on language, then identifies various organic sources of intense energy, only to end up sketching a picture of thinking that is, itself, despite his ambitions, modeled on language. But having noted a flat contradiction in Connolly's presentation, I want to focus on a few obvious analytic points, whose force seems almost entirely lost on supernaturalistic theorists. Consider that, while the sort of "maps" in which LeDoux and Connolly trade are no doubt complex, that complexity—visual, systemic, causal, whatever—is different in kind from the complexity of a person's judgments and interpretations. For unlike the imputed 'judgments' of the prefrontal cortex, or the 'interpretations' of an amygdala, the complexity of a person's judgments and interpretations consists, in part, in the fact that a person, not a subpersonal process, or an almond-shaped brain, has judged them to be right or wrong. Indeed, it's only because judgments are some *person's* judgments that judgments have truth-values and every other variety of complexity with normative import. And what goes for a person's judgments, which materialize, paradigmatically, in sentences and other speech acts, goes double for neurological "messages" and triple for religiously inflected, affective "signs": they can be *counted* as messages with normative significance insofar as I, or the research community, or the faith community to which I belong, take them as such.

The point of stressing the normativity-affirming, and sometimes conferring, act of judgment, however, isn't to reinforce, from *the opposite* side, so to speak, the wedge that Connolly erects between intense, affective experiences and linguistic judgments. On the contrary, I'm saying that, no matter how that wedge is conceived, once it's firmly in place, neither our theological or, for that matter, our scientific speech acts, nor the normativity of experience, can be properly theorized. Now, if Rorty is right, we can't confidently draw on the John Dewey of *Experience and Nature* to get a sense of what logical shape a proper theorization would have to take. But we can take a cue from Dewey's *A Common Faith* (1933) and say something like he does in that synoptic work: it's only if, when and because "climacteric experiences" are, to some extent, already meaningful, and so capable of generating more meanings and communicable language, that both our experiences, and our language about our experiences, accrues normative significance.[33] Rejecting this, we can't possibly do what Dewey tried to: place religious experience, language and practice squarely within the space of reasons.[34]

But even if we stress, as Dewey might, and Connolly does, that some of my affective experiences—some of my "intense" perceptual 'is's', if you like—are *immediately given* by what can be partially described as a subpersonal process, and so *not* mediately and intentionally taken, we need to appreciate what Connolly, and those he depends on, don't: a theory of perceptual experience may lead to the conclusion that a given visual (or audio) presentation can't be right or wrong. But insofar as I take myself to be a competent judger, I know that my perceptually based beliefs and judgments must be.[35] Acknowledging that necessity is just what it is to possess the interdependent concepts of objectivity, judgment, and Intentional perception. And the activation of judgment in perception seems just as inevitable, and perhaps constitutive of both human perception, and action, as such. But whether or not human perception is constituted exactly like that i.e., discursively, an amygdala's deliverances are nothing like that. For unlike an amygdala's deliverances, a competent judger is (or can always become) aware that her instantaneous belief-like deliverances e.g., 'the shapes in the water are sharks', are reliable, and upon further investigation, justifiable, to the extent that she already knows how to discriminate between, say, the reflection of a helicopter, and the look of a school of Blue Reefs; and believes, moreover, that her sensory deliverances are in good working order. That last, factual judgment is normative through and through. And recognizing it to be so helps clarify what Connolly either 'explains' through a bio-semantic, causal process, which is, by his stipulation, beyond rational influence, or is, in other moments, content to leave a brute, supernaturalistic mystery: how an 'is'—in this case, a perceptual given about a watery environment—can lead to an 'ought'—*my* belief, endorsed "for reasons we can share," in Christine Korsgaard's familiar, Kantian phrase.

So while an analytical description of perception might factor out mediated beliefs, immediate representations, interpretation, self-knowledge, linguistic articulation, and truth-value, I'm insisting that these all come (and go) together as a single package. Indeed, it's the actual or potential operation of all these rational and causal, but never *merely* causal organic capacities, in perception, that links my automatic, visual perceptions and my self-conscious, epistemically structured, and so normative beliefs. And a full account of that link, I think, will always point up salient differences between the structure of human perception and our most charitable account of nonhuman animal affective reactions. But the critical point is less that we should insist on what Connolly and company take pains to ignore, i.e., the constraints that our conceptual capacities put on would-be explainers, than it is to stress that subpersonal reactors, as such, can't be right or wrong. An amygdala just is. Its reactions just are.

Presumably, Connolly isn't claiming that his prefrontal cortex has the capacity for apperception, to put things in Kant's terms. And wouldn't Connolly concede that he sometimes vacillates between a recognizably intentionalist vocabulary—where notions like interpretation and judgment do some real explanatory work—and a physicalist vocabulary—where notions like "registers," "triggers" and "reacts" do the heavy lifting and, when directed to answering "How" questions, as Connolly calls them, do just fine—but argue that his deeper point concerns the ontological "gap" between "prerepresentational sites of appraisal" (26) or "thought-imbued intensities" (27) and determinate representations? And couldn't Connolly also say that those gaps are exactly what underwrite his overarching ambition to transform thinking, and so politics and religion, from an agent-theoretic enterprise, performed by what he calls, "nervous cultural unitarians" (176) to, in his later work, a full-blown evolutionary-theoretic enterprise?[36] Once we put the point this way, we can see that everything turns on getting a more precise understanding of how Connolly understands his project. And we can achieve that precision by attending to the full articulation of the distinction alluded above: the distinction that Connolly makes between "How" questions and "Why" questions.

In *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (2008),Connolly makes clear that his reformist vision of political theory has him focused on the former, not the latter.[37] But "How" or "is" questions are, as the philosopher John McDowell puts it in *Mind and World*, "engineering" questions (21). They are questions that we can get answers to "from sideways on," that is, from a third-person perspective, so that we literally don't have to ask…anybody. For in order to answer "How" questions, engineering questions, we *need* only to map our object's brains or power up some other audio-visual equipment. "Why" or "ought" questions are normative, that is, they ask after the implicit and explicit standards governing, and reasons for, action, not in deep time, but in a given historical, and even national context, *pace* Dimock. If the twain happen to meet, as they do in Connolly's construction of what he calls, coincidentally, "deep pluralism," (*Secularist*, 184) the proffered synthesis can only rationalize actions by retaining their normative character. Rationalizing an action through the rubrics of a normative explanatory scheme doesn't, of course, mean re-instating Cartesian epistemology. Neither does it mean believing that every single intention is preformed and fully available for critical reflection in advance of action; nor denying that subpersonal causal processes are in effect in every action, as they are in perception. And it especially doesn't mean denying that causal processes do, as a matter of empirical fact, influence our behavior. But if that's all that Connolly is getting at, his argument is trivially true. No one doubts that subpersonal processes affect our judgment anymore than anyone feels shocked by his proclamations that normative commitments aren't "contestable" (53).

But that's not all he's getting at. Connolly's stronger methodological thesis is that the human sciences need the natural sciences because normative explanations don't explain what motivates *that* contest or any other human behavior. And his stronger anti-epistemological but ontological and, indeed, theo-political thesis pushes him, as he says, to move " 'from is to ought"' (157) with the help of theologians and any other "a-theistic" thinker who believes what he does: that normative explanations are not sufficient (79).[38] For either of the stronger theses to be even so much as plausible, however, he's going to have to make several moves to close the gaps that his indeterminate notions of causality and (religious) affect have widened, if not opened. More minimally, he'd have to say that the thought behind the thought is, in some meaningful sense, *thought*, and so normative, which he sometimes *does* say, only to later deny it. Or, at the very least, he'll have to say that the affective events in which he's so invested—biological, perceptual, religious, whatever—aren't constitutively "opaque" (135) but susceptible to linguistic articulation and made intelligible by a normative explanation. Then again, if he says that, he's given up the game.

Instead of giving up the game or giving a clear exposition of how to perform the is-ought derivation motivating his positive theoretical task, Connolly makes a set of rhetorical moves that are representative of a whole argumentative genre. He denies that his embrace of a decidedly "non-Kantian transcendental field…of the infrasensible" (*Secularist*, 40) entails dispensing with the analytical categories of interpretive theory and hermeneutics. Indeed, he repeatedly insists that he's only supplementing the categories of belief, desire, and reflective judgment—the categories that make up what Kant called "the human standpoint"—with the findings of "immanent naturalists" working in evolutionary biology, chemistry, neuroscience, and, in later work, wave science.[39] But, as we've already seen, the former categories *must be* supplemented by the latter's findings, on both sea and land, because they are constituted by the all-too-restrictive—because, he thinks, all-too-secular—vocabulary of interpreting and interpreted persons, specific, in other words, to the act of interpretation as such. Weary of such categories and secular standpoints; skeptical of the analytic nexus associated with the modern(ist) conception of interpretation and human personhood; but certain of the normative import of nonconceptual notions of sensory experience for the development of a properly pluralistic politics, Connolly makes various appeals to the evolutionary advantageous functions of the amygdala. It's these nonconceptual, organic delivery systems that condition conceptually structured *and so*, on his account, "second-order" mental actions (*Capitalism and Christianity* 157). And even if second-order mental actions are adequately captured by what can only be, at least from Connolly's scientistic perspective, second-order explanations, 'the real' causal source of "becoming" resides elsewhere: in organs, in the ocean, and beyond the strictures of what he, and Tomkins, and Thrailkill, all characterize as an exclusionary secular regime.

It turns out, however, that appealing to religion, opposing scientism and advocating for secularism can all fly under the banner of a single name: Slavoj Zizek. In fact, Zizek manages to embody both the positive and negative sides of the supernaturalistic turn. I want to conclude, then, by looking at Zizek as he looks to Christian theology in order to widen the scope of his long-standing attempt to reconceptualize experience as an irreducibly subjective activity. Indeed, Zizek's *On Belief* (2001)[40] aims to overcome deflationary accounts of subjectivity by stressing the act of believing, thereby approximating an agentic conception of belief, and helping us to locate, precisely, what's motivating his more recent critique of the so-called New Atheists—Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris—in *The Monstrosity of Christ*: *Paradox or Dialectic?* (2009).[41] There, Zizek opposes, not what Connolly would, namely, the New Atheist's secularist ends, but their formal *means* to secularism, which Connolly's work anticipates. More specifically, Zizek opposes the New Atheist's exaltation of naturalistic methods e.g., neuroscience and evolutionary biology, through which they reduce not just religious experience but "subjective experience" as such to "objective brain processes" (109). Effecting the contrast between what he clearly regards as a reductive, because *merely* "scientific materialism" (93) and his own and very particular variety of Christian materialism, Zizek asserts the epistemic significance of Christ, which reads like a militant defense of mindedness in art, religion, and *pace* Connolly, in politics: "All that remains of reality without Christ is the Void of meaningless multiplicity of the Real. This monstrosity is the price we have to pay in order to render the Absolute in the medium of external re-presentation, which is the medium of religion" (80).

Whether or not the position that Zizek is staking out here, namely, a "reconciliation" between Christianity and Idealism, is so much as tenable (58), he presupposes a hotly contested, because *fundamentally experiential,* notion of Christianity, drawn not from William James, and certainly not John Dewey but, above all, from Alain Badiou's decidedly unorthodox pneumatology. What's contested isn't, or shouldn't be, the positive role of experience in a coherent presentation of a Christian's beliefs and communal believing. The problems start when our interest in the varieties of religious experience becomes dissevered from our interest in—or, short of interest, our theoretical appreciation of—the role that experience plays in justification. Zizek is neither interested nor appreciative. For, not only does he, like Badiou, deny that Christian experience can ever be veridical, thus reinforcing what looks to many supernaturalistic theorists like an internal connection between noncognitivism and religious faith.[42] Zizek denies that experience can even be so much as meaningful. That is, Zizek fixates on Jesus' "Cry of Dereliction" in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" both because it captures the absence of religious truth but, more importantly, because Jesus' cry dramatizes "the meaninglessness of it all" (57).[43] What seem to be expressions of minimal sapience i.e., Jesus' cries of pain, then, are—like all ostensibly minded expressions and mediums—hollow, (super)naturalistic products of *merely* animal sentience. This is content epiphenomenalism with an anti-theological vengeance.

And where meaningful expression goes, so too must belief. And go it does, by way of what Zizek persists in calling the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, the Holy Spirit can't possibly be for dogmatic Christians what it is, exactly, for Zizek, namely, the animating projection of a comprehensive secularism, forever working through the full implications of what Hegel called "the Death of God," and Weber "disenchantment."[44] Indeed, Zizek suspects that our enthrallment to vaguely theological forms of postmodernism has made us irresolute, inclined to project some dimly perceived significance onto some 'Other' or another. About this, I mostly agree. But in response, he appropriates the third person of the Trinity in a provocative figuration of the absolute indifference of 'reality's' "virtuality" (41), appealing, eventually, to the explanatory significance of Heisenberg's indeterminacy thesis to dramatize a thoroughgoing nihilistic outlook, an outlook that Zizek finds haunting what he thinks is best conceptualized as a noncognitive or objectless notion of Christian experience (89). About this, I disagree.

And I needn't reproduce the details of Zizek's concept of virtuality to say what's problematic about the use that he makes of it. Moreover, my account of the problem shouldn't be taken as tantamount to a rejection of any petition made by or on behalf of natural scientists for recognition of an independent, explanatory space—a space that is not opposed to but is, nonetheless, logically distinct from the normative structure found in the human sciences—as they grapple with the implications of indeterminacy. "The world," as Hilary Putnam says, "has many levels of form," and those forms, which include morally and religiously significant actions and perceptions, "can't be reduced," continues Putnam, "to the level of physics…".[45] But reduce is exactly what Zizek is attempting to do. So just as I doubt that Dimock's *longue durée* can explain the experiences and beliefs that help to identify just what is and isn't Islamic about Islamic believers and history, my point here is: once Zizek has embraced "meaninglessness" and granted virtuality and indeterminacy explanatory sway in his account of human experience, religious and otherwise, he can't possibly execute the task he assigns himself in *The Monstrosity of Christ* or in *On Belief*. He can't *explain* the meaning of a Christian's subjective experiences, beliefs, deliberations, or actions. Saying this a bit differently: even if Zizek begins with the assertion that Jesus embodies "external re-presentation," and so counts as something like the objective correlative of Intentionality, he ends by championing the formlessness of experience and " 'unbelief,' the pure form of belief deprived of its substantialization…" (101). But by depriving beliefs of substance—of objects, meanings, and justifications—Zizek hasn't naturalized them. Much less has he explained them. He's eliminated them.

Furthermore, to the extent that Zizek's deprivations obscure the logical and epistemological status of even our empirical perceptions, that is, our experience, it's not at all clear how he can account for the experience—of God, of *the illusion* of God, of the illusion of meaning in pain, or the meaningfulness of *any* affective state—that he takes as raw data for his dialectical procedures in the first place. Whatever Hegel might have meant to convey when speaking of God's death and Christ's monstrousness, once Zizek negates meaning, and belief becomes unbelief, what's monstrous about Zizek's medium of choice in this particular dialectical exercise, i.e., Jesus' crucified body, is exactly what's monstrous about the body in affect theory and every other variety of reductive naturalism that theorizes experience as a trauma, shock, or subpersonal 'event' that we suffer, instead of a "re-presentation" that expands as it expresses our form of cognition, our human standpoint. For expressive, according to Zizek, is what experience can't ever be. And insofar as experience doesn't name an epistemically significant transaction, nor requires a normative explanation, it reduces to a brute, if not brutal "encounter" (53) with the "constitutive" (274) Void. Indeed, because Zizek's Void is constitutive, he can only leave us with a dissociated and restrictive picture of subjectivity, a picture in which being a subject *just is* to be shut out from the possibility of self-consciously forming and justifying true beliefs i.e., knowledge. And that brings Zizek's position even closer to the eliminative materialism of the New Atheists, while making incoherent the theological materialism he's aiming to defend.

Continuing to focus, then, not on Zizek's *Christian* materialism, but Zizek's *materialism*, we can also measure the distance between his philosophy of mind and the view of human mindedness offered by what he refers to, dismissively, as "the so-called Pittsburgh Hegelians (Brandom and McDowell)" (26).[46] But measuring it will not establish that Zizek's theologico-political beliefs are obviously false. In fact, the truth or falsity of Zizek's politics is a totally independent question. What's at stake here is showing that, given Zizek's premises, it's not at all obvious how his beliefs, in particular, or a concept of belief, in general, can even so much as coalesce. For if Zizek, following *his* Hegel, assigns the monstrosity of Christ a mediatory role in clarifying our epistemic and existential situation, that's only because Christ's suffering and death dramatizes that our "incessant activity" (73) is "groundless" (98). And what makes our sense-making or explanatory practices—that is, the exchanges that make up our ordinary language, as well as our artistic, religious and scientific criticism—groundless, incessant and ultimately indeterminate or Void, is that there isn't a reality with which we can ever make epistemic contact, and so no experience *of* reality that provides sufficient grounds for us to so much as believe anything. Lacking such grounds, "thinking in action"—the title of the series in which *On Belief* appears—can't amount to anything more than a celebration of what the Pittsburgh Hegelians are trying to overcome. More directly: insofar as Zizek's version of Idealism proceeds like his version Christianity, that is, by insisting on "the meaninglessness of it all," his notion of language, knowledge, thinking and, for that matter, affect, reduces to a mere "frictionless spinning in a void" (McDowell's terms). For nothing in Zizek's presentation of mind stands in a cognitive, much less justificatory relation to a subject's thinking in the way that *the world* does in the thoroughgoing conceptual account of minded perception that we find in John McDowell and, for whatever it's worth, in McDowell's Hegel. Insofar as Zizek lacks *a normative* account of the mind-world relation, and so the meaningfulness of language, it's not even clear what entitles him to regard the 'beliefs' that he has as beliefs. What Zizek has are supernaturalistic affects/effects, which fall squarely within the jurisdiction of engineering issues and "How" questions.

Why 'only' affects? Because in order for a perceptual state to count as a cognitive state, it must be susceptible to the kind of treatment normative explanations aspire to give of intentions, actions, representations, and, paradigmatically, beliefs. And for a belief to be a belief, it must involve, as Zizek himself says, an existential and collective commitment; and, as Walter Benn Michaels stresses, because Zizek fails to, truth-value. What I'm emphasizing here, however, against Zizek, with the Pittsburgh Hegelians, and deepening Michaels' critique, is that beliefs can only generate meaningful commitments, truth-values, reasons to which an agent can be responsive, and a normative explanation *of* that response, because they have truth-conditions. And beliefs only have truth-conditions in virtue of having 'aboutness'; by being what all beliefs necessarily are: objective. Here, the relevant sense of objective is not 'certain'. Beliefs are objective because they have objective purport; they, at least, *seem to refer*, some rightly, and some wrongly. Summarily put: beliefs are Intentional.

But Zizek's beliefs can't be Intentional because his beliefs' referents, and so truth-values, "exist only insofar as subjects act as if it [truth] exists," only insofar as "the community," or a virtual "transsubjective 'it,'" he says, "believe in it" (76). Baptizing beliefs as communal, however, doesn't itself make them any more credible. Speaking more positively, Zizek recapitulates one half of the problematic framing long-standing debates in the analysis of religious language. For what religious language, specifically, and language, generally, expresses, on Zizek's account, cannot be an empirically contentful, conceptually guided, and so epistemically vulnerable 'belief that', as in "I" or "We believe that Jesus rose from the dead." Rather, Zizek's believer merely 'believes in', a formulation devoid of content, and for that reason, *full* of supernaturalistic affect. And to whatever extent content does remain in the less-obviously propositional of the two locutions, Zizek is without the theoretical resources to explain how so. He has surrendered the constitutive norms of everything but engineering questions into the Void.

What Zizek can give with the Void in tow, however, he does. Indeed, in *On Belief*, Zizek indicates how we should approach "the 'big' ontological questions (are humans really a subspecies of animals? is Darwinism true?) the question of God or nature" that the Pittsburgh Hegelians, he says, in *The Monstrosity of Christ*, ignore (26). Zizek prods us to "risk…the philosophical potential," that is, the normative authority, of "modern physics" when explaining human behavior, whose "results seem to point to a gap/opening discernible already in the pre-ontological nature itself" (10). Here, the typically disenchanted Zizek isn't stuck between naturalism and religion, as Jurgen Habermas might say. Zizek is re-enchanting the world by way of quantum mechanics and particle physics, two of the most naturalistic of all the natural sciences. But however much frictionless spinning there is in those voids, explanations of our life with norms cannot come.

Of course, Zizek can take the above criticisms in stride. His version of cultural criticism isn't Rorty's; his Christ isn't Orthodox; his Hegel isn't Pittsburgh's; and he's certainly never marketed himself as an "Intentionality All-Star".[47] But what's emerged here is the implication that Zizek's commitments require him to reject *any* discursive regime—secular liberal, dialectical materialist or religiously orthodox—that privileges belief and believing in a theory of experience or in a given explanatory structure. And that suggests associations that Zizek wouldn't welcome and doesn't seem to anticipate. Specifically, insofar as Zizek forfeits the explanatory significance of cognitive content in favor of subpersonal explanatory schemes, we might ask what makes Zizek's variety of "postsecular" nonconceptual experience, "evental processuality" (39) substantially different from Derrida's *differance* or Levinas' Other, both of which he critiques, in part, because of their flirtation with nominalist, death-of-god theologies (94). After all, Zizek's positivistic anti-theology seem to have the same practical consequences as postmodern negativity, following, as it does, the trajectory that I outlined in the previous sections. He begins by writing *On Belief*, but in accepting supernaturalistic premises, ends by endorsing *On Creaturely Life* (Eric Santner's title.)[48] Here, Zizek is nothing if not consistent. For the only remaining constructive theoretical tasks befitting a cultural critic after jettisoning normative explanations are the engineering questions for which naturalized epistemologies are made. And while engineering questions have little or nothing to do with the meaninglessness embraced by theorists in the 80s and 90s, they have everything to do with what isn't openly embraced but is, evidently, becoming increasingly popular: the meaninglessness of strict naturalism—and, at the limit, of eliminative materialism.

But my point isn't to safeguard (or to attack) a thoroughgoing doctrinal theology against Zizek's sublations. Neither do I endorse what Dimock rightly campaigns against, "science illiteracy," nor support the suspicion, "Perhaps there is no such thing as a natural science…".[49] Moreover, I am not, here, defending, or even characterizing what Michael Warner dismissively calls, "secular rationality."[50] I've been arguing, rather, that engineering questions can only be answered in engineering terms. Conversely, I've tracked the infelicities attending the importation of the explanatory vocabulary of the natural sciences into human sciences to demonstrate why engineering explanations can't work as explanations to normative questions. Thinking they can is one way of committing, not the Intentional, but the Naturalistic Fallacy in (literary) epistemology and in the philosophy of mind that subtends most attempts to make cognition a category for literary and cultural analysis. Focusing on what one commentator has rightfully characterized as a renewed interest in religion and theology among critical theorists, specifically, and in the humanities, in general, we have found other ways.[51] But perhaps we should follow G.E. Moore, who, in 1903, first coined the Naturalistic Fallacy, and say that we have found, if not exactly a fallacy, then the same mistake playing out across several domains.[52] For while Moore's version of the Naturalistic Fallacy addressed issues in metaethics, his critique anticipates the strategies of the supernaturalistic turn—if, that is, we construe his argument as trying to show why our traffic with moral terms or, more broadly, with evaluative concepts, can't be explained by going *below* conscious meanings and into the subpersonal processes that comprise the investigatory domain of the natural sciences; or by searching *above* the human standpoint.[53]

Of course, neither Moore nor more recent developers of the Naturalistic Fallacy's scope double down on the human standpoint in the hope of stifling inquiry. They invoke the Naturalistic Fallacy to steady it, to bring inquiry back from whatever deep depth it's submerged and see what we get.

Following Zizek *et al* as they subsume "the vocabulary we use to justify our knowledge claims" into "the vocabulary we use to describe the causal antecedents of knowledge," hoping, thereby, to develop "a jargon that would apply equally to plants, nervous systems, and physicists"—adding "religious believers" to Rorty's otherwise exhaustive list as they go—what we get, *or have*, I think, is the beginnings of a more comprehensive historicization and critique of reductive varieties of naturalism. And if uncovering shared premises between strictly naturalistic conceptions of affect with nonconceptual notions of religious experience now abroad means offering a different diagnosis of affect theory's noncognitive predilections than those currently on offer, it also means tracking how the competing, critical intuitions regarding linguistic meaning and interpretation that generated "Against Theory" have relocated to the issue of perceptual experience. Or, to put this in slightly different terms:

by shifting attention to the Intentional Fallacy's *logically* prior relation, I'm not claiming that affective experience lacks theoretical significance. I'm insisting that the explanatory power of affect, religious or otherwise, can be defended only on the condition that affective experience is viewed as cognitive; and cognitive because, at some level of description, continuous with the Intentionality of experience, just as human experience, at least, is susceptible to the intentional and so normatively governed operations of human judgment. And it's only by appreciating those continuities that we can develop a more positive account of subjective experience than some might find in, say, Walter Benn Michaels' *The Shape of the Signifier*; lend credibility to Jane Thrailkill's notion of "aesthetic entailments" (17); or develop a coherent version of what Dorothy Hale finds among, not the New Atheists, but in "The New Ethics" inspiring literary theory: an "epistemology of the body."[54] When persuaded of those continuities, the Affective Fallacy has no more force than the Intentional fallacy—the Pathetic Fallacy might go the same way—for you can see why neither affect or intention nor even creaturely life develops out of some allegedly primordial nonconceptual experience that can *only* be explained in strictly naturalistic, much less in (super)naturalistic terms.

NOTES

I would like to thank Oren Izenberg and Robert Pippin for comments on portions of this essay that appeared in another form. I am also grateful to Jason Bridges and, more recently, Bjorn Ramberg, for stimulating my thought in directions that have allowed me to see how issues in the philosophy of mind bear on issues in literary theory, specifically, and in aesthetics, generally.

[1] George Santayana, "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," *The Journal of Philosophy* 22, no. 25 (December 1925), 673-688.

[2] Richard Rorty, "Dewey's Metaphysics," in *The Consequences of Pragmatism*, *Essays: 1972-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 81. In Rorty's essay, this point first emerges as a consequence of T.H. Green's Hegelian critique of empiricist epistemology, which Dewey internalized, before, that is, Dewey's enthusiasm for Darwin, says Rorty, muddied Green's best insights. At this juncture, I should also add that while the "running together of vocabularies" constitutes something like what John McDowell—following another one of Rorty's heroes, Wilfred Sellars—would call a Naturalistic Fallacy in epistemology and the philosophy of mind, that fallacy (if it is one) is related to, but isn't identical with, the 'is-ought' problem in metaethics. My own discussion assumes the intimacy of these two issues, whereas my targets, we will see, conflate them. For McDowell's Sellarsian appropriation of G.E. Moore's Naturalistic Fallacy, see *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), xiv-xv, *passim*. For a characteristically pithy discussion of the Naturalistic Fallacy as that problematic articulates in the philosophy of language, see John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), especially Chapters 6 and 8.

[3] Admittedly, Rorty never put things quite this way. However, insofar as Rorty shares Green's anxiety about the need to keep our vocabularies clear and distinct—and the need to do so is, I take it, the moral of Rorty's story in "Dewey's Metaphysics"—I think my gloss is faithful to the spirit of Rorty's thought, if not the letter. But that doesn't clear everything up. Imputing to Rorty a positive concern with things that he himself sometimes placed in scare-quotes, e.g., "Knowledge" and "Reason," might also strike some as counter-intuitive or simply false. Yet, I think that Rorty's admiration for Donald Davidson, Wilfred Sellars, Robert Pippin and Robert Brandom, among others, signals that there was room enough in his thinking for a conception of knowledge and reason that didn't fall prey to the habits of mind provoking the polemics for which he is justly associated and remembered. Furthermore, returning to some of Rorty's earlier essays helps to complicate the standard picture of Rorty-as-postmodern-apologist. That's the picture that literary critics still reading him tend to depend on and circulate, with a few notable exceptions e.g., Robert Chodat. And while there's obviously a lot that can be said in defense of that reading, there's a lot more to Rorty than that, including a very early version: Rorty-as-eliminative-materialist. Needless to say, no synthesis of Rorty's thought is offered in these pages, much less do I believe that (Rorty would believe that) one can or need be given.

[4] The *locus classicus* for this terminology comes from Wilfred Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. Hebert Feigl and Michael Scriven, vol. 1, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 253-329. Drawing on Sellars, John McDowell contrasts the logical space of reasons not with the logical space of causes but 'the logical space of nature'. See *Mind and World,* xiv, *passim*. For a sympathetic but critical reading of McDowell's desire to find positive philosophical uses for a re-conceptualized and, indeed, partly re-enchanted 'nature', see Robert Pippin, "Leaving Nature Behind, or Two Cheers for Subjectivism: On John McDowell," in *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 186-205. My way of thinking about these issues, I happily acknowledge, has been influenced to a very profound extent by Pippin's work.

[5] In this connection, we might also note that some of Rorty's best critics believe that his own commitments open up a back door for more of the same. For a criticism along these lines, see John McDowell, *Mind and World*, 147-156.

[6] Of course, Rorty had plenty of bad things to say about a literary criticism that suffered from being "over-philosophized," and sometimes talked as if his ideal of literary and cultural criticism is a form of intellectual engagement that eschews the quest for knowledge entirely. Moreover, Rorty often defended literary criticism not because of some dispositional tendency to give normative explanations but for the same reason that he defended modern literature, philosophical pragmatism, the best post-Hegelian Continental philosophy and Thomas Kuhn: because they all reflected critically on "the tradition" and so expanded our (moral) imagination. So the lesson I draw from Rorty's embrace of certain varieties of literary criticism might be taken as a substantive, and perhaps even counter-intuitive interpretive claim. But I think that it can be defended if we are willing to see Rorty's admiration for, say, Wilfred Sellars and Stanley Cavell, as of apiece with his sympathy for Irving Howe, Lionel Trilling, and those who once flew under the banner of neo-pragmatist literary criticism: Stanley Fish and Walter Benn Michaels. But nothing that follows hangs on securing agreement about what motivated Rorty's attitude towards literary criticism's intellectual worth and social value. For Rorty's critique of an overly philosophical literary theory, see his "The Humanistic Intellectual: Eleven Theses," in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 127-130. To get a sense of Rorty's progressive vision for a politically engaged literary criticism, see *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge,

MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) especially 111-120 and *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Rorty links Kuhn's historicist methodology with literary theory's in, among other places, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 332, *passim.*

[7] Wai Chee Dimock and Priscilla Wald, "Literature and Science: Cultural Forms, Conceptual Exchanges," special issue, *American Literature* 74, no. 4 (December 2002): 705.

[8] For an account of what a naturalized epistemology might look like and how it differs from traditional epistemology, see W.V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 69-90.

[9] I owe my knowledge of the Tomkins-Quine connection to Irvine E. Alexander, "Silvan S. Tomkins: A Biographical Sketch," in *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 251-264.

[10] This, however, isn't the answer that Dimock and Wald give. What they find most compelling, and alarming, is the "practical impact of this specialized [i.e., scientific] knowledge—from reproductive technologies to electronic archives, from bioterrorism to gene therapy…" (705). Nevertheless, their stated reasons are actually less interesting, and less predictive of their conclusions, than are the suppressed premises driving the logic of their admonitions.

[11] See Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 434-472. While I take my dissatisfactions with affect theory to be entirely compatible with Leys', there are three things that distinguish my treatment from what she says there and in her earlier work, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2007). First, my objective is to point up the implausibility of affect theory by bringing the question of explanatory sufficiency into focus. Second, I wish to make clear, not against Leys, but with her, that affect theory is but a species of the genus, naturalism, or, more precisely, of *reductive* varieties of naturalism in epistemology, philosophy of mind, and in ethics, with which philosophy has long been grappling. In my view, therefore, whatever problems beset reductive varieties of naturalism also beset, *mutatis mutandis*, reductive varieties of affect theory. Third, I intend to excavate, historically and conceptually, the vaguely theological motivations of affect theory, which have, to the best of my knowledge, gone largely unremarked in the secondary literature.

[12] Personal conversation.

[13] Dimock and Wald, 705.

[14] At this early stage, I'm going to set aside possible differences between mental states, events and episodes. Moreover, when I use locutions like, 'the terms populating a normative framework'; or, 'the linguistic items denotating putatively normative or epistemic states', I'm referring to the conscious or potentially conscious set of a given subject's reasons, beliefs, judgments, representations, intentions and deliberations, all of which are obviously normative and will be, for that reason, the leading terms in a normative explanation. But for reasons that will become clear, I'm also referring to a subject's desires and emotions. I'll omit or include—and eventually, I'll extend—the members of this normative set, depending on my argumentative and rhetorical needs.

[15] For a critical discussion both of Quine and of the replacement thesis, see Jaegwon Kim, "What is Naturalized Epistemology?" in *Philosophical Perspectives* ed. James Tomberlin vol. 2, (Asascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1988), 381-406.

[16] Wai Chee Dimock, "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," *American Literary History* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2001), 755-775.

[17] There's on-going debate, of course, about just what Intentionality is and what an Intentionalist theory of mind requires, especially one that doesn't seek to 'naturalize' Intentionality along reductionist lines. And even those working within the Intentionalist framework disagree about, among other things, how to describe and analyze the structural differences between belief and desire; about how to best theorize human and nonhuman animal cognition; and about the differences between the Intentional features of 'outer' and 'inner' experience, like, paradigmatically, pain. Therefore, I can only stipulate my preferred conception of Intentionality, knowing full well that it's hotly contested. I should also stipulate that I'm subsuming 'intention', small 'i', as that concept articulates in literary theory, and in the philosophy of language and of action, within a broader concept of Intentionality, big 'I', that has its home in the philosophy of mind. In this, and many other things, I follow John Searle, including and particularly his aspiration to advance a theory of Intentionality that gives due appreciation to the first-person ontology of perceptual consciousness, an ontology that is, he says, in no way unnatural, non-natural or supernatural. Indeed, Searle sees himself as extending, not fleeing from, our best scientific account of the mind. See his, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992). For a more recent and detailed discussion of the view of Intentionality that I endorse, see Susana Siegel, *The Contents of Visual Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[18] For a summary discussion of 'distal' and 'proximal' causes and how they play into a given theory of mental content, see Karen Neander, "Teleological Theories of Mental Content," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2012 Edition), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/content-teleological.

[19] Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005). Given my premises, I can only be in sympathy with Jonathan Kramnick's critique of what he calls "literary Darwinism," even if he doesn't focus, as I do, on the question of explanation. See his, "Against Literary Darwinism," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 315-347. Furthermore, although Mark McGurl takes no interest in what might be described as an 'interpretivist" critique of Dimock's presentation of religion in "Deep Time," much of what he says, about her, specifically, and about any theory that attempts to represent human experience and action from the perspective of a *longue duree,* can be aptly described as a concern with explanatory form. See his, "The Posthuman Comedy," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 533-553. For an excellent discussion of how an interpretivist orientation in religious studies should proceed, see, *Racial Interpretation in Religion* ed. Nancy K. Frankenberry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[20] Here, I follow Jason Bridges, who describes the doctrine of content epiphenomenalism as the view that "mentation of intentional content has no legitimate place in a causal explanation." See his, "Teleofunctionalism and Psychological Explanation," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (December 2006): 403-421, especially 403.And while Bridges' larger theory of mental content and rationality leads him to differentiate between psychological, rational and normative explanations, these are not differences that make much of a difference in our context. Moreover, in following Bridges, I'm following a familiar tradition in the philosophy of mind and language that leaves room for reasons to be causes.

[21] Jane F. Thrailkill, *Affecting Fictions: Mind, Body, and Emotion in American Literary Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). While I've engaged Thrailkill, and not, say, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, much of what I say here can, I think, be extended to the leading, theoretical lights of contemporary affect theory. But I've chosen Thrailkill, not only because I find the logic of her argumentation particularly lucid, but because her interests are, we will see, extremely comprehensive.

[22] Sometimes Thrailkill uses the word 'cognitivist' to name the theory of mind and epistemology that she endorses, above all, Daniel Dennett's. However, she also uses the term negatively, that is, to distinguish the view she's recommending from the view of intention, representation and belief associated with 'the intentionalist framework', as that has been elaborated by Walter Benn Michaels, Ruth Leys, and, increasingly, Michael Fried, in conjunction with Robert Pippin's philosophy of mind. When I use terms like 'cogntivism' or 'cognitivist', I'm using it in the latter sense and, furthermore, extending the conceptual perimeters of the intentionalist framework to hook up with an appropriately normative theory of explanation.

[23] For Thrailkill's broadest formulations of how we might go about developing a form of literary criticism that draws from the conceptual and methodological resources of the natural sciences, see *Affecting Fictions*, especially, 7-17.

[24] In fact, Thrailkill's criticisms of Wimsatt's and Beardsley's criticisms of an imaginary "affective critic," who researches the subpersonal reactions of nonhuman animals that have—the fantasy continues—learned to read poetry, suggests that her interest in the noncognitive dimensions of the reading experience knows no bounds. See *Affecting Fictions*, 3-4.

[25] As I hope my stress on "recognition" makes clear, I am not endorsing what sometimes gets described as a merely projectivist or subjectivist theory of value. That is, while I certainly ascribe to the view that all possible human values are subjective, values are not merely subjective "in the sense," as Hilary Putnam recently put it, "of being outside the spheres of rational argument and objective reality. Our values and ideals are subjective in the sense of being the values of *subjects*, of human individuals and communities." See his *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life: Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 101.

[26] Obviously, I haven't given anything remotely like a full defense of the position that I'm developing here. But I presume that it's now obvious why *I* think, were my premises accepted—and my premises comport with what I take to be a familiar sort of 'differences first' approach in the philosophy of mind—a *normative* conception of agency couldn't be applied to the things, environments, atmospheres and nonhuman animals that seem to enjoy that status in the wake of Bruno Latour's influential work. More specifically, by 'normative conception of agency', I mean to be pick out not just those things in the world that possess the capacity for thought, which, I've conceded, many nonhuman animals evidently do—even if, I'd argue, Latour's 'actants' don't. Rather, I mean to pick out things that have the capacity to take themselves, or their own mental states, as objects of criticism; things that can deliberate about, and so govern their theoretical beliefs and practical actions according to the normative authority of reasons as such. Here, only persons, I think, satisfy that description. So while the question of agency as it arises (or is evaded) in Thing theory, and in science and animal studies constitute distinct problems, and so require separate treatments, the things, networks and nonhuman animals that populate such engagements

all fall short of the normative conception of agency stipulated above, however ethically generous and theoretically fecund it may be to indulge in said extensions. My thanks to an anonymous reader at nonsite for pushing me to elaborate these points.

[27] For Thrailkill's appropriation of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, see 157, *passim*. For a more extended discussion of James, see Pericles Lewis, *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[28] See Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelley, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 85 and *passim*. I hasten to add that Dreyfus has been central to the philosophical fight against reductive varieties of naturalism. In fact, in a slightly different context, Dreyfus' early and still-authoritative critique of artificial intelligence and other computational theories of mind, both of which depend on naturalistic premises, would figure as my main theoretical ally. It's for that very reason, however, that Dreyfus' recent work is of such critical interest.

[29] Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* vol. 3 of *The Negative Affects: Anger and Fear* (New York: Springer Publishing Co, 1991), xvi.

[30] William Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). While Amy Hungerford doesn't discuss William Connolly or concentrate on theories of affective experience in her excellent study, *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion Since 1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), she does provide a comprehensive overview of several changes in the study, concept and fictionalization of religious belief and language, changes that index wide-spread doubt about the cognitive significance of cognitive significance in theories of religious experience, language and practice. But in addition to the fact that Hungerford focuses on language, not experience—and despite any substantive differences there might be between us—I'm interested in reconstructing the logical trajectory from skepticism (the negative side of the dialectic) to naturalism (the positive side), a trajectory that falls outside of her scope of concern.

[31] As my discussion will make clear, Connolly is at war with what he calls "representational discourse" as such—and at war, more specifically, with explanatory models that continue to make reference to, and find satisfaction in, our self-conscious, cognitive activities e.g., deliberation, that make "the public expression and defense of fundamental beliefs" possible. See, for example, *Why I Am Not a Secularist,* 26.

[32] Although Talal Asad's work requires a separate discussion, insofar as he shares methodological premises with Connolly, and, furthermore, because he further sophisticates Connolly's noncognitivist notion of belief, much of the following critique extends in his direction. Indeed, just as I regard Connolly's attempt to synthesize the conceptual resources of the human and natural sciences as largely incoherent, I regard Asad's enthusiasm for Paul de Man's materialist ontology and theory of interpretation to be at odds with his enthusiasm for Elizabeth Anscombe's theory of intention. For Asad's discussion of Paul de Man, see his seminal work, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (*Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 62-66. For Asad's quick but provocative citation of Anscombe, see *Formations*, 11-12.

[33] John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 48.

[34] Arguably, Rorty's own writings on religion aspired to do the same thing. See, for example, his *An Ethics For Today: Finding Common Ground Between Philosophy and Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.) And while I am in no position to give a thorough comparative evaluation of James' philosophy of religion and Dewey's, I can say that Dewey seems far more concerned with assessing the propositional contents of religious faith than does James. For that reason, I take issue with the ease with which Jane Thrailkill, and other cultural theorists writing on religion and pragmatism, tend to link the two philosophers' views.

[35] As John McDowell's own post-*Mind-and-World* work testifies, this point is very difficult to formulate satisfactorily. Moreover, every formulation of which I know, including his, comes with its share of problems. But without going into the details of those problems, I think that McDowell's thought still provides the best resources for thinking about how to conceptualize and incorporate what's distinctive about perceptual experience into a general theory of cognition and ultimately of knowledge. For example, McDowell begins his "Conceptual Capacities in Perception," by stressing the need to appreciate empiricism's best insights, most importantly, the insight that our experience, our "empirical intuitions," to use Kant's terms, make a rational, and not merely a causal contribution to knowledge. Nonetheless, McDowell emphasizes that we have perceptually based beliefs, which we may or may not endorse upon critical reflection, that are caused by a given visual experience. That is, when we open our eyes, we have what are, in some important sense, non-intentional, visual experiences. Indeed, in ordinary perceptual circumstances, I don't self-consciously deliberate about and then *decide* what the content of my experience is. I open my eyes, or ears, as it were, and have it. The world is there. However, because experience always expresses our rational capacities for conceptualization, experience is not given in the sense of 'given' that Wilfred Sellars famously called a myth, but given in a sense that is as innocuous as it is fundamental to a well-grounded epistemology. And a well-grounded epistemology stresses my capacity for having perceptual experiences

that can put me into immediate, *cognitive* contact with reality. Still, if talk of immediacy concedes something to Connolly, I think the concession is rather small. For empiricism's best insights are not at all what Connolly-and-company find most insightful. That is, whereas McDowell counts perception as among our capacities for knowledge because, even in those moments of sensory receptivity, our rational capacities, he argues, are in play, the whole reason that Connolly discusses sensory experience, putatively religious events, and the subpersonal operations of the amygdala, is to valorize a non-conceptual notion of experience; to carve out phenomenal, biological and logical space in which rational capacities are, he thinks, late, ineffective, inoperative or otherwise dissociated. For a full discussion of how rational capacities operate in *our* form of perception, and how our form of perception might differ from that of nonhuman animals, see John McDowell, "Conceptual Capacities in Perception," in *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). For a critical discussion of McDowell's, among others', philosophy of perception, see Charles Travis, "The Silence of the Senses," *Mind*, 113 (2004), 57-94. My thanks to an anonymous reader at nonsite for asking me to clarify what I'm conceding to Connolly.

[36.] William Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[37.] William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 87. The sentence in which that distinction arises reads as follows: "Moreover, we do not seek to explain *why* things persist. That question enjoins the sort of theology that we resist. We seek rather to increase knowledge of *how* things stabilize in a world of becoming."

[38.] In *Capitalism and Christianity*, Connolly reports, "Theorists in the neo-Kantian tradition are apt to charge that an immanent naturalist such as me commits 'the naturalistic fallacy' in moving 'from is to ought'. But the move is only a 'fallacy' if a set of prior assumptions is treated as incontestable" (157). Here, Connolly has conflated the is-to-ought derivation with the Naturalistic Fallacy. That conflation aside, the Naturalistic Fallacy that I think Connolly commits has less to do with issues in metaethics than it has to do with the running together of vocabularies, that is, the tendency to confuse engineering questions with normative questions. While making this point in a somewhat different context, Kenneth Warren suggested to me that the best formulation of my critique might go: "in the course of trying to avoid the intentional fallacy, my targets frequently commit the naturalistic fallacy." With a few caveats, I think that's basically correct. More on this below.

[39.] For Connolly's discussion of "immanent naturalism," see *Capitalism and Christianity*. For his appropriation of the "Deleuzian metaphysic" and the "non-Kantian transcendental," see *Why I Am Not a Secularist,* 40. For his deployment of wave science, see *Capitalism and Christianity*, 83-84. For a discussion of the human standpoint, see Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant on the Human Standpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[40.] Slavoj Zizek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[41.] John Milbank and Slavoj Zizek, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* ed. Creston Davis (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

[42.] See Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 4-5.

[43.] For Zizek's discussion of Christ's suffering on the cross, see 40, 57-59, *passim.*

[44.] For Zizek's discussion of the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis Hegel, see *The Monstrosity*, 60-61, 73, *passim.*

[45.] Hilary Putnam, *Jewish Philosophy*, 5-6.

[46.] Although Zizek doesn't say so, there are substantial differences between Brandom and McDowell. On the other hand, the differences within the Pittsburgh Hegelian's—or, for that matter, Chicago's Hegelian, Robert Pippin—philosophy of mind are, for our purposes, at least, far less significant than the differences they all have with Zizek's.

[47.] For an explication of the problems besetting intentionality, see John Haugeland, "The Intentionality All-Stars," in "Action Theory and Philosophy of Mind," special issue, *Philosophical Perspectives* 4 (1999): 383-427.

[48.] Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[49.] Dimock and Wald, 708.

[50.] Michael Warner, "The Ruse of Secular Humanism," *The Immanent Frame,* (September 22, 2008), http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/09/22/the-ruse-of-secular-humanism. The larger project out of which this paper comes, however, will offer a limited defense of what I will characterize as 'minimal secularism', a concept that I will develop while engaging philosophical and literary texts, music, and visual artifacts from 1925-2011. My thanks to Bill Brown for pushing me to clarify when my arguments should and shouldn't be taken as a critical response to Warner's evident skepticism about the usefulness of concepts like secular rationality for literary history and cultural theory.

[51] See Creston Davis' prefatory remarks to *The Monstrosity*, especially, 3-5. As an empirical claim, Davis is obviously correct. However, I don't share his confidence that 'the theological turn' in contemporary critical theory helps us to better describe, much less respond to, structural inequalities in our political economy. Furthermore, while I applaud the growing interest in things religious and theological among literary and cultural theorists, insofar that interest is narrowly focused on conceptions of religion and religious experience offered to us by postmodern theologians, such as John Millbank, John Caputo, and Emmanuel Levinas, and ignores the leading lights of analytic philosophy of religion, such as Robert Audi, Alvin Plantinga, and D.Z. Phillips, the result can only be what it always is: a narrowing of conceptual possibilities and ignorance of what are often decisive critiques.

[52] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903). For a canonical discussion of the Naturalistic Fallacy, see W. J. Fankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," *Mind* 48 (1939).

[53] Here, Connolly's description of the Deleuzian "transcendental" as a metaphysical space that "[resides] above or below appearance" bears mentioning. See *Why I Am Not*, 41.

[54] Dorothy J. Hale, "Aesthetics and the New Ethics: Theorizing the Novel in the Twenty-First Century," *PMLA* 124 (2009): (896-905).

Jason Bartulis is completing his dissertation, "A Secular Form of Life: Art and Criticism, 1925-2011," at the University of Chicago. There, he examines literary, musical and visual manifestations of secular naturalism in philosophical, religious and politico-economic contexts. More generally, his research interests include: American literature and the philosophy of art, mind, religion and science; African American intellectual history; the history and theory of photography and music, especially jazz; theories and representations of justice; and the history and theory of literary criticism.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

MIRÓ'S POLITICS

CHARLES PALERMO

Filippo Brunelleschi built a perspective device that combined a rendering of the Florence baptistery with a mirror. Its story is one of the origin myths of the art and science of perspectival projection—of what the Florentine renaissance called *costruzzione leggitima*. Brunelleschi painted a small picture of the Florentine baptistery, which is located directly opposite the entrance of the Florentine cathedral. This picture and the accompanying apparatus were to provide a demonstration of a new technique, which we now call perspective. But Brunelleschi wanted his picture not just to show this technique, but also to demonstrate its accuracy, its special ability to put objects in space and in correct relation to one another. So he provided the beholder an apparatus that would permit each beholder to demonstrate to himself the validity of Brunelleschi's technique.

Brunelleschi drilled a small hole in the painted panel, so the beholder could look through the hole at the mirror and see the perspective construction in the mirror. The apparatus, including the painting and the mirror, was small, which allowed the beholder to hold it easily, and even to hold it at the very place—a point three *braccia* inside the door of the Florentine cathedral opposite the baptistery—from which the view was projected (fig. 1).

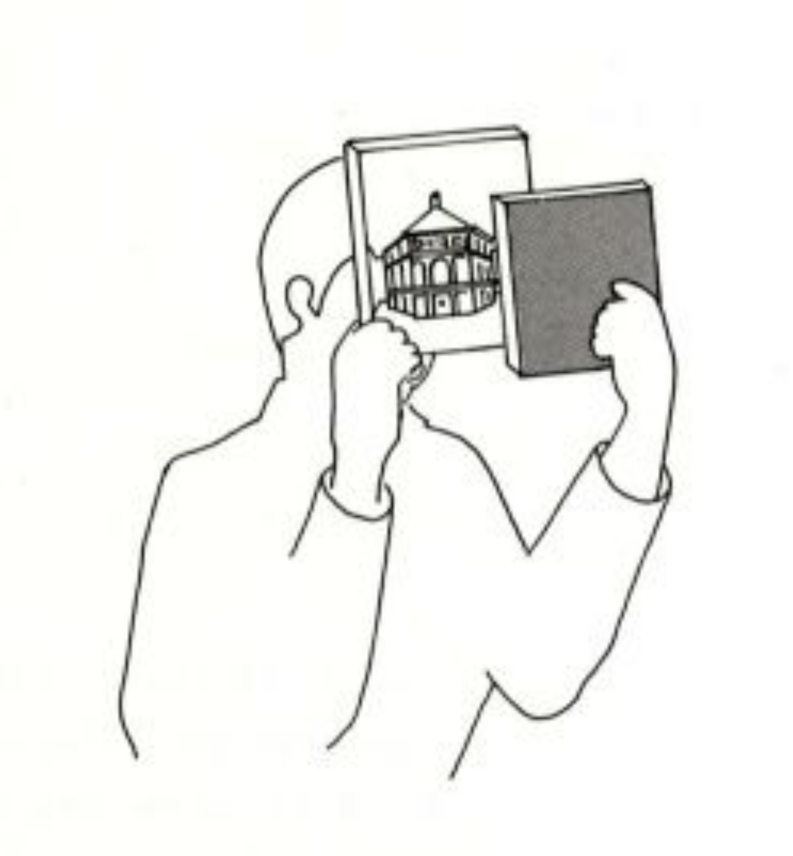


Fig. 1: Speculative recreation of Brunelleschi's perspective device

Now, regardless of where the picture was seen, it would have offered a convincing likeness of the baptistery. Furthermore, the mirror might have enhanced the beholder's experience of the panel's verisimilitude, regardless of where this device might have been used. But, used at precisely the right place, just inside the doors of the cathedral, it would have done something crucially different. Restricted to a single eye's point of view and aided by the mirror, the beholder could have judged the conformity of the image in the painting to the view of the baptistery available from that privileged point of view. The picture was an example of the new technique of perspectival projection; the apparatus was a device for proving the technique's claim.

In his discussion of this device, Hubert Damisch aligns the painting with "showing" and the mirror with "demonstrating."[1] The painting shows the baptistery and some part of the surrounding square. The mirror, on the other hand, makes nothing new visible. It only shows the painted scene in relation to the real place. Rather than offer a new prospect, it does something called demonstrating, which Damisch understands in the sense of demonstrating the truth of a theorem or the guilt or innocence of an accused person. The mirror establishes the truth of the painting's claim. But, and this is a crucial point, it can only do so for a single eye that occupies a particular point, which is determined rigorously by the perspectival projection. Perhaps it is worth noting that Brunelleschi's device is constructed in terms of the user's body, and specifically in terms of braccia—a measure derived from the length of the forearm. Thus, the panel is just over half a braccia square. The mirror is to be held at an arm's length—at one braccia—and at a point precisely three braccia inside the door of the cathedral. It is as if Brunelleschi's apparatus were a machine for extending a rationalized abstraction of the human arm throughout the modules of a grid that carried to infinity the body of the beholder.

Damisch compares the function of the mirror in Brunelleschi's apparatus with the mirror in Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini* picture (Damisch, 129-31). Referring to Erwin Panofsky's thesis that the picture fulfills the function of a legal document, Damisch points to the famous signature—"Jan van Eyck was here"—and its conjunction with the mirror as something similar to the evidentiary structure in Brunelleschi's apparatus. Both locate the subject at a precise position and do so for the more or less literally legal purpose of demonstrating their relation to a place, to a situation. Of course, in this, it is also unlike Brunelleschi's apparatus, since one needn't maintain a specified position. I think this is significant, so I will return to it presently.

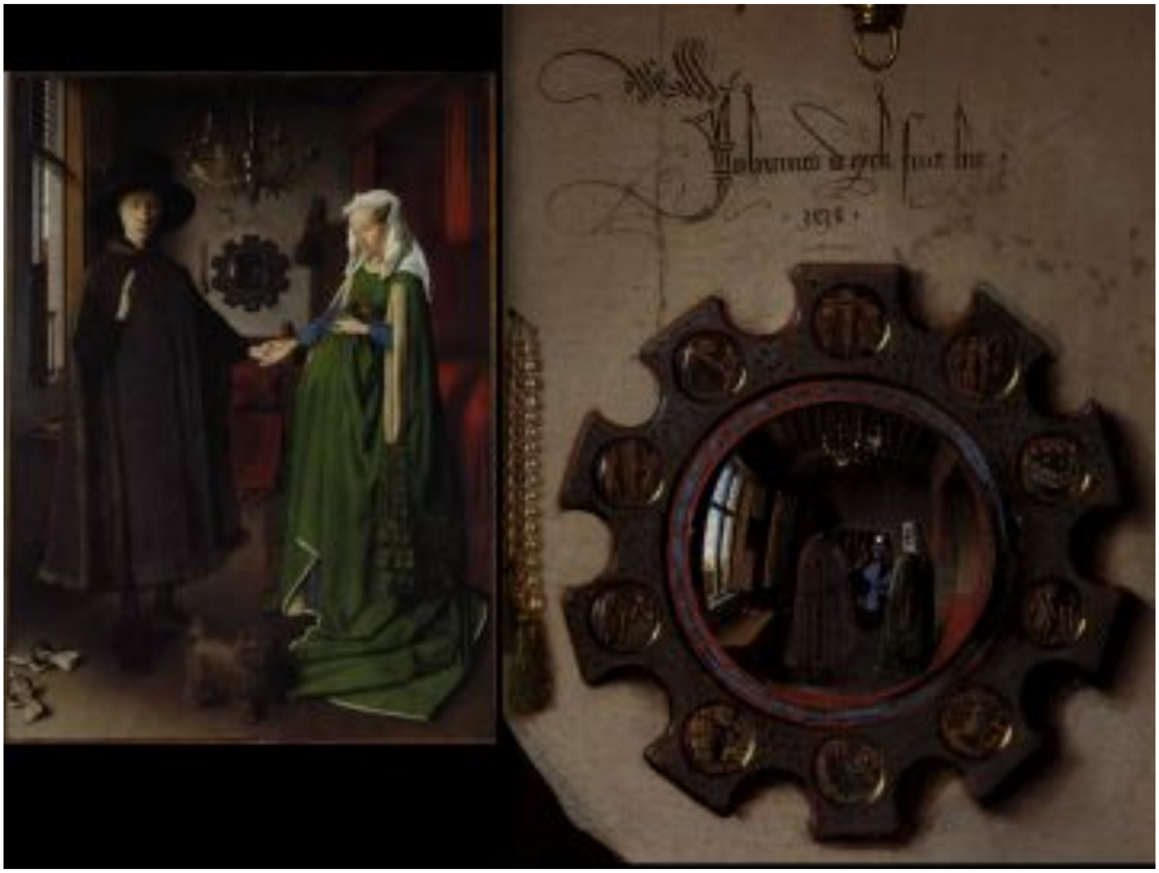


Fig. 2 (left): Jan van Eyck, The Arnolfini Portrait, 1434, National Gallery, London; with Fig. 3 (right): detail

First, let us ask: How will all of this help us understand Joan Miró's politics? He did not use *costruzzione leggitima* or anything much like it. Few modernists did. Nevertheless, Damisch heaps scorn on the idea that perspective's reign ended in modernism (Damisch, 35ff). This is part of his general rethinking of the notion of perspective's history as a trajectory from origin to demise. Rather than ask whether this age or that culture used perspective, he asks instead what perspective they had (Damisch, 12-13). Accordingly, to take one example, he recuperates the multiple viewpoints of post-Cézannian painting for an enlarged notion of perspective by invoking a collection of miniature cones of vision, each cast eccentrically like a glance or a stare from a mobile subject (Damisch, 35-37) (figs. 2 and 3). But this continuation of perspective leaves aside the question of the mirror—of the literal mirror, of Brunelleschi's mirror. The regime, as it were, of Brunelleschi's demonstration surely has a history of its own in modernism. Perhaps Juan Gris's *Le Lavabo*, with its fragment of mirror, could be seen this way. But without doubt, Brunelleschi's apparatus continues itself in minimalism.

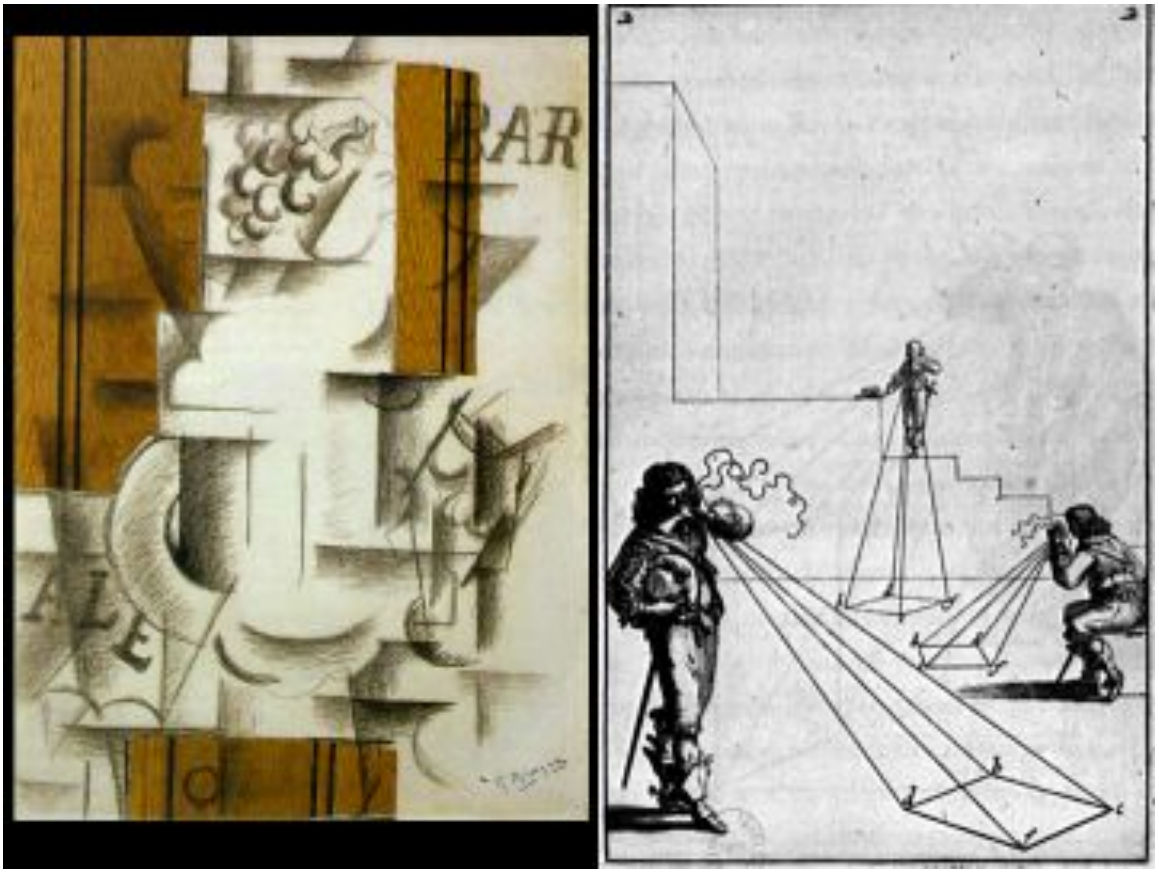


Fig. 4 (left): Georges Braque, Fruit Dish and Glass, 1912, priv. coll., and fig. 5 (right): Abraham Bosse, Les Perspecteurs, from the Manière universelle de M. Desargues pour traitor la perspective, 1648

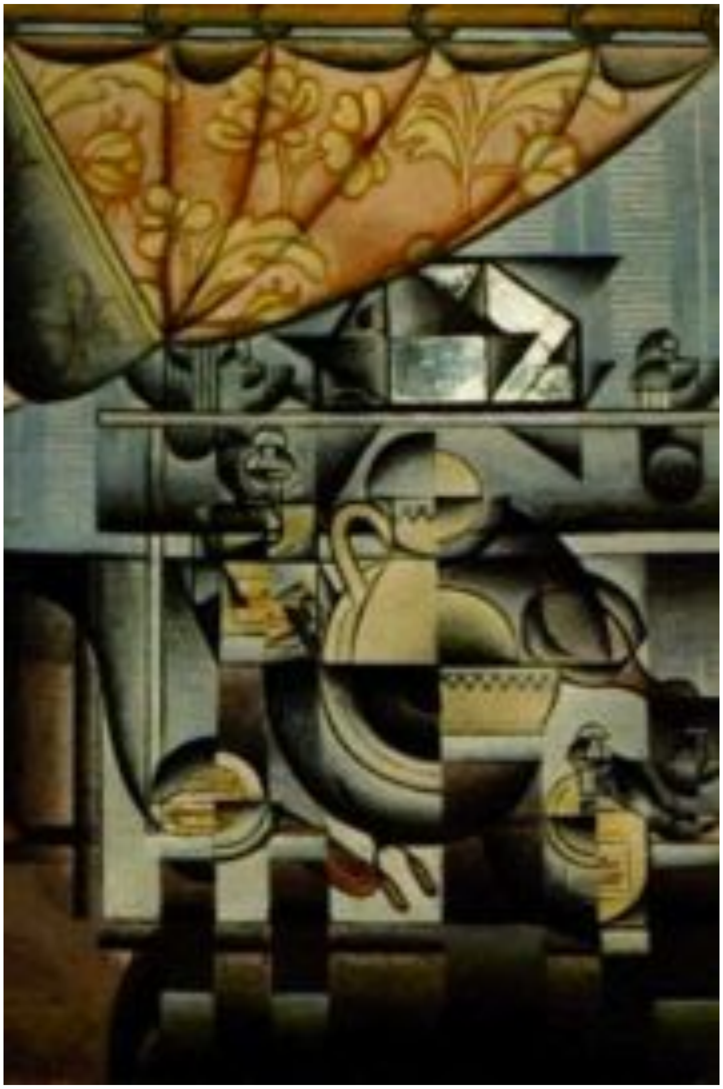


Fig. 6: Juan Gris, Le Lavabo, 1912, priv. coll.

Like the apparatus that requires the observer to place him or herself in the doorway of the cathedral, the minimalist or literalist work creates a situation, oriented toward the presence of a beholder, which is completed by the presence of the beholder. Like the mirror image, one might say, the minimalist situation does not exist until someone occupies the situation it affords.[2]

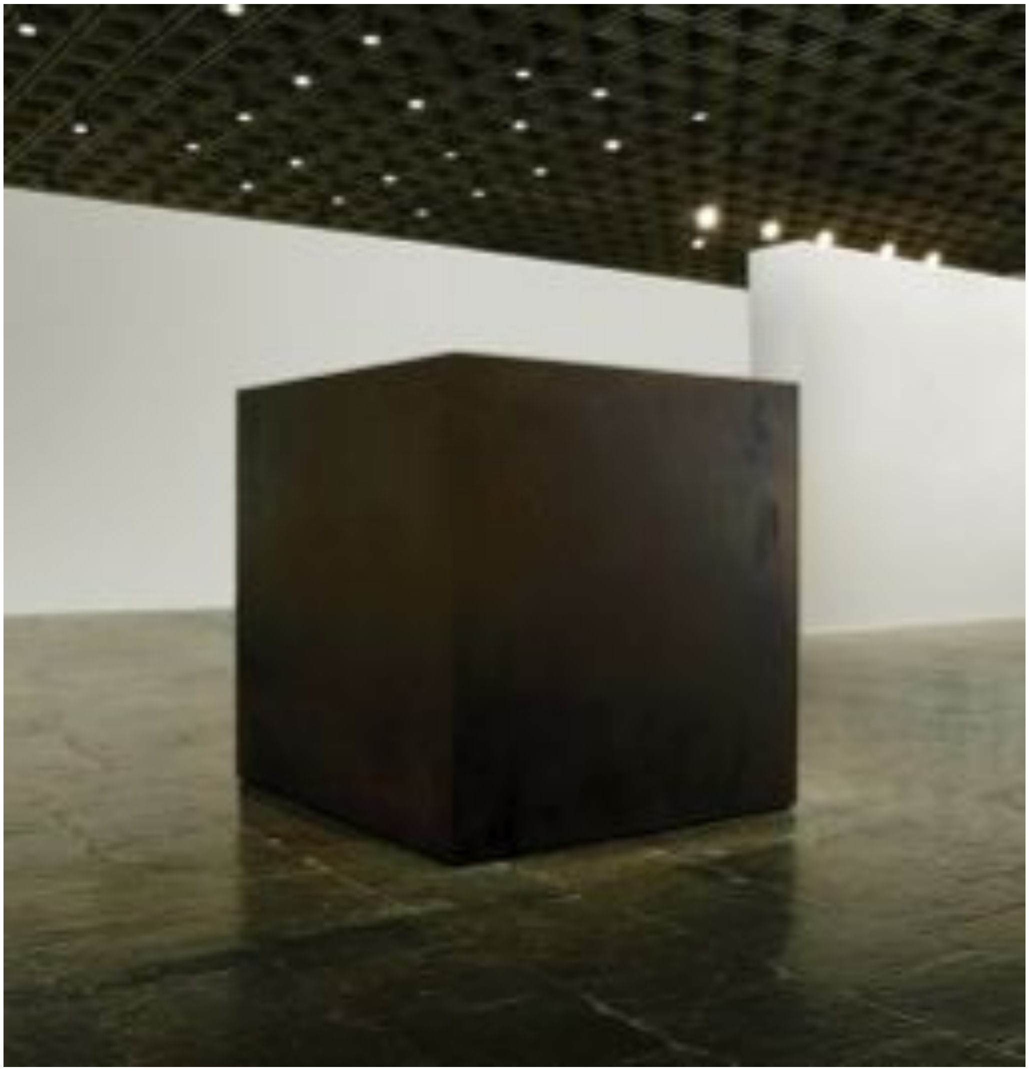


Fig. 7: Tony Smith, Die, 1962, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Further, and again like the mirror, on Damisch's Lacanian account, it breaks the beholder into a seeing eye, on one hand, and a conjunction of surfaces, on the other, which the subject cannot fully reconcile with each other. Thus the apparatus forces the subject into a dialogue of perspectives and gazes (Damisch, 46-47). This subject sees and is to be seen. The work and the politics that succeed this development, this minimalist moment, only focus more insistently on making—or affording—the beholder a place, a position, a *subject position*, to use the official term. Hence the political dimension of much post-mimimalist work. More specifically, we are speaking of the politics of visibility, of identity. Think of Adrian Piper's *Hypothesis Series* (1968-69), which combines a literal charting of the artist's position in space with accounts of the experiences and identities of those she encounters. [3]

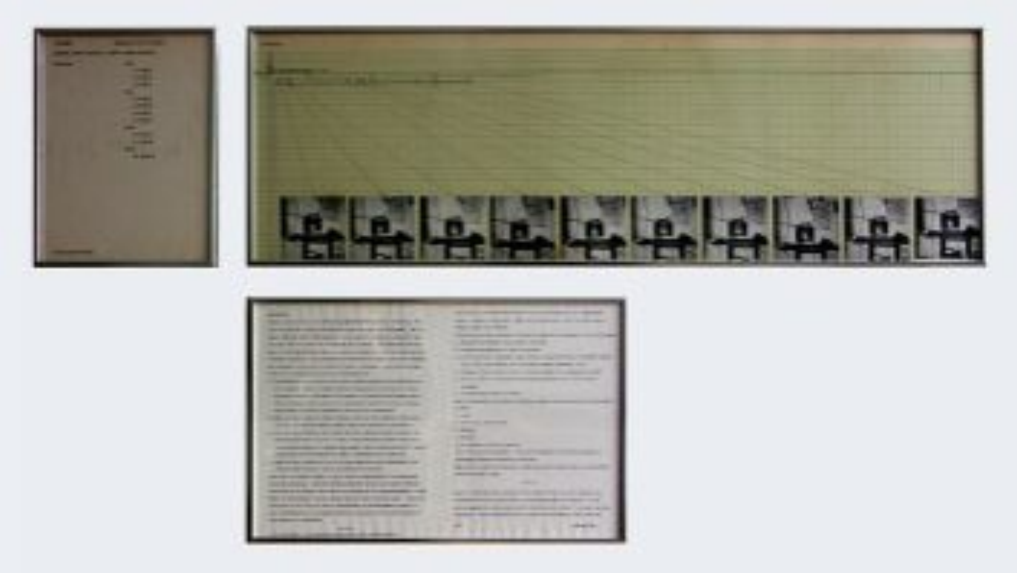


Fig. 8: Adrian Piper, Hypothesis: Situation #3 (for Sol LeWitt), 1968, Adrian Piper Research Archive

One might object that, like van Eyck's mirror, Piper's *Hypothesis Series* bore witness to her presence and did not specify a place for the beholder who reads and observes the documentation that present the work. But that would be to misunderstand the project. The *Hypothesis Series*, Piper explains, "acknowledges the perspectival character of human perception, by charting and documenting my navigation through space and time as myself a moving or stationary object with the capacity for sensory perception and the ability to self-consciously register those perspectival perceptions at fixed intervals. Thus the shift in perspective that characterizes this project implicitly introduces issues of subjectivity, personal identity, self-knowledge, self-objectification and difference." Thus the representation she makes, of, say, the single mother who is her colleague and whose struggle with her Italian-American identity intrigues Piper, is meant, like Brunelleschi's little picture of the baptistery, to give you an opportunity to match Piper's representation against your own viewpoint. The proof of the pudding, so to speak, is still in the mirror.

The political alternative will emerge—paradoxically, given the similarity Damisch sees between van Eyck's picture and Brunelleschi's apparatus—from van Eyck's picture. Its mirror is only a painted image, not a real mirror. Consequently, the mirror reflection in it is not a demonstration; rather, it makes or supports a claim, like an "affidavit," at least on the reading (Panofsky's reading) that Damisch engages. Certainly, the circumstances and subject of the painting are other than precisely as Panofsky understood them, and it is hardly my aim to support his reading. For the present purposes, it is enough that the signature be understood to attest to the presence the mirror evidences. "Jan van Eyck was here 1434" is the claim; the images in the painted mirror—presumably those of the artist and an unnamed companion—affirm its truth, rather then demonstrate it. They function like a signature, not a real mirror. And the juxtaposition and comparison to a signature are very much to the point. The image in the mirror, on this famous account, would need to show two figures because, as Damisch explains, legal protocol requires two, not one, to be present (Damisch, 130-31). And it does show two; a fact that is mirrored, so to speak, in another difference between van Eyck's picture and Brunelleschi's apparatus: the picture can bear witness to two or more beholders simultaneously. It is public. That is necessary because—as Panofsky argues—van Eyck's picture functions legally; it emerges from and participates in civic life. In fact, Panofsky specifically points out that witnesses were not required for a valid marriage ceremony in the Church's view. These witnesses were not the Church's requirement, but the law's.[4] Thus the demonstration van Eyck's mirror makes is specifically of the political realm, not the theological. And because its power derives from a claim—that Jan van Eyck and another legal subject bore witness for the Arnolfinis—and because its mirror image's testimony is the same for everyone, regardless of who looks at the picture and where, the beholder's position does not matter as it did for the user of Brunelleschi's apparatus. In fact, as is the case for any legal document, once signed and executed among its parties and its witnesses and the proper authorities, the reader's position—his subject position, her identity—does not matter at all. But, then, neither does what he or she sees. As Wlad Godzich explains, ancient Greece drew a distinction between those individuals who were qualified to bear witness, who constituted a *theoria*, and the population at large. Anyone might witness an event of political importance, but only a *theoros* had the authority to put "into socially acceptable and reliable language" what he saw.[5] Hence, we are shown what van Eyck saw. What we see does not matter, has no authority. Godzich blames the demise of this system on philosophers, who "came along and attempted to ground everything in sense perception, in aesthesis" (Godzich, xv). Of course, by now, we have come to think of this—this refusal to submit our quest for truth to external authority—as a feature of modernity, and of freedom.[6]

So we have two modes of politics. One that depends on your subject position and one that doesn't. And we have two kinds of art: one that depends on your subject position and one that doesn't. And they align themselves, one with the other, according to what they assume about representation and about truth. Which kind of art is Miró's? Or is it another kind altogether? And what kind of politics does it embody?

In the context of a recent exhibition devoted to the question of Miró's politics, Robert Lubar explained nicely the difficulties the exhibition faced:

> To chart Miró's relationship with the changing tides of political Catalanism in these early years is a difficult undertaking. Although he was notoriously reluctant to declare a partisan position, his sympathies were undoubtedly on the left of the political spectrum, as his later commitment to the cause of the Spanish Republic demonstrates. His early letters are filled with enthusiasm for the international aspirations of Catalan culture, yet he repeatedly registered disdain for the political establishment and the willful ignorance of the recalcitrant bourgeoisie in his homeland.[7]

Or, similarly: "If political events and social movements were the engine behind his art—the very fact of his Catalan national sentiment unequivocally attests to this—that relationship was highly mediated" (Lubar, 37). Lubar goes on to see the ambiguous (but indubitable) presence of this Catalan national sentiment behind Miró's *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series of 1924-25 (Lubar, 38).

Ultimately, Lubar proposes we describe the embodiment of Miró's political position in terms borrowed from Jacques Rancière. Lubar cites a short passage from Rancière's essay "Aesthetics as Politics" (which stemmed from a seminar held in Barcelona under the auspices of the Museu d'Art Contemporani) that deserves to be repeated here:

> Art is not, in the first instance, political because of the messages and sentiments it conveys concerning the state of the world. Neither is it political because of the manner in which it might choose to represent society's structures, or social groups, their conflicts or identities. It is political because of the very distance it takes with respect to these functions, because of the type of space and time that it institutes, and the manner in which it frames this time and peoples this space.[8]

Today, Rancière goes on to explain, we tend to see art fulfilling this political promise in two ways—"the two great politics of aesthetics: the politics of the becoming-life of art and the politics of the resistant form" (Rancière, 43-44). He clarifies:

> The first identifies the forms of aesthetic experience with the forms of an other life. The finality it ascribes to art is to construct new forms of life in common, and hence to eliminate itself as a separate reality. The second, by contrast, encloses the political promise of aesthetic experience in art's very separation, in the resistance of its form to every transformation into a form of life. (Rancière, 44)

So, the "politics of the becoming-life of art" finds its expression in "relational" work, in those projects that seek to shape a community for themselves or to break down the separation between art and life and transform life into something else by doing so. The latter, the "politics of the resistant form," aims to resist becoming relational, to hold itself apart from ordinary life, to declare independence from ordinary life, and thereby envision something radically otherwise (Rancière, 22-24, for instance). Lubar aligns Miró's art—with special emphasis on the early years that concern us here—with the "politics of the 'resistant form"' (Lubar, 42). And it is in this mode, then, that his art is politically active.

Lubar would seem to align Miró's work with the kind of politics the Arnolfini portrait exemplifies—in which your position doesn't matter. But that is not exactly what his appeal to Rancière leads to. Lubar explains: "For Rancière both art and politics are involved in the distribution of 'spaces and times, subjects and objects, the common and the singular"' (Lubar, 42; citing Rancière, 25). Or, as Rancière also puts it, art and politics are "linked, beneath themselves, as forms of presence of singular bodies in a specific space and time" (Rancière, 26).

This thesis, which is tangent to arguments Rancière makes elsewhere, is open to some criticism.[9] For my purposes in this argument, it is enough to say that I want to question Rancière's claim that the "aesthetic regime of art" fulfills its political potential only as an "autonomous form of experience," as a "form of sensory experience" (Rancière, 32). This claim grows out of a desire to reorient a (modernist) concern with the autonomy of the artwork *away* from the context of its making and *toward* the context of its actual or empirical place in common experience. I will claim that it is the achievement and the political importance of Miró's art of these years to reveal the limitations of the "sensory experience" of a situated beholder. In what follows, I will build on the paradigms of perspective I have introduced with the help of Damisch to test the hypothesis that a description of Miró's own mode of perspective will give us an account of his kind of politics. Ultimately, I shall try to show, Miró's work (at least in the period I consider) addresses itself to a beholder who occupies a position—which is to say that it shapes a space, as Rancière might put it—, only to show that beholder that no position is adequate to the task of seeing the work of art.

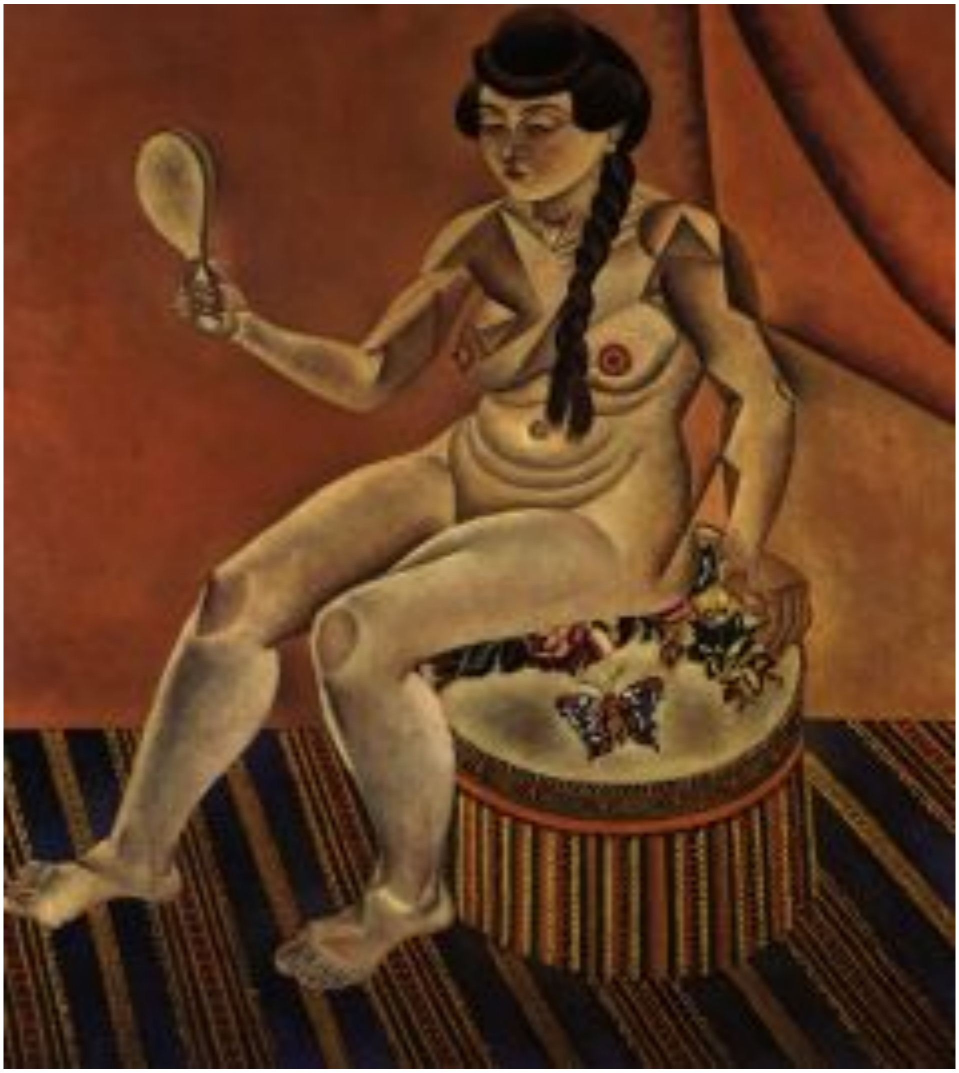


Fig. 9: Joan Miró, Nude with Mirror, 1919, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

Let's begin early in Miró's career, with his 1918 *Nude with Mirror*. I'll point out three things about the picture that I consider especially important. First, Miró has rendered the pattern in the rug and on the side of the hassock so as to undermine or negate an effect of recession into depth. The ground plane tips up, and the hassock flattens out, parallel to the picture plane. Secondly, a loop of drapery, cubified awkwardly, slightly but pointedly overlaps the figure's shoulder. This effect seems to me to qualify that of the flattening in the rug and hassock, since the overlapping creates at least the logic of depth and draws the figure into it. Thirdly, the figure turns the hand mirror, understandably enough, away from the beholder and toward herself. Given the context into which I've inserted Miró—alongside Brunelleschi and van Eyck—the mirror seems important. But, and this strikes me as another strongly marked choice of Miró's, the nude figure's face does anything but imply that she looks at the mirror.

This curious choice joins the loop of cubified curtain in causing, I want to say, the space to close up or even to turn in on itself. That's what a mirror does: turn space back to face itself. But unlike either Brunelleschi's mirror or van Eyck's, this mirror faces away from the beholder, and turns space away from that beholder. The figure's lowered eyelids then render its demonstration moot.

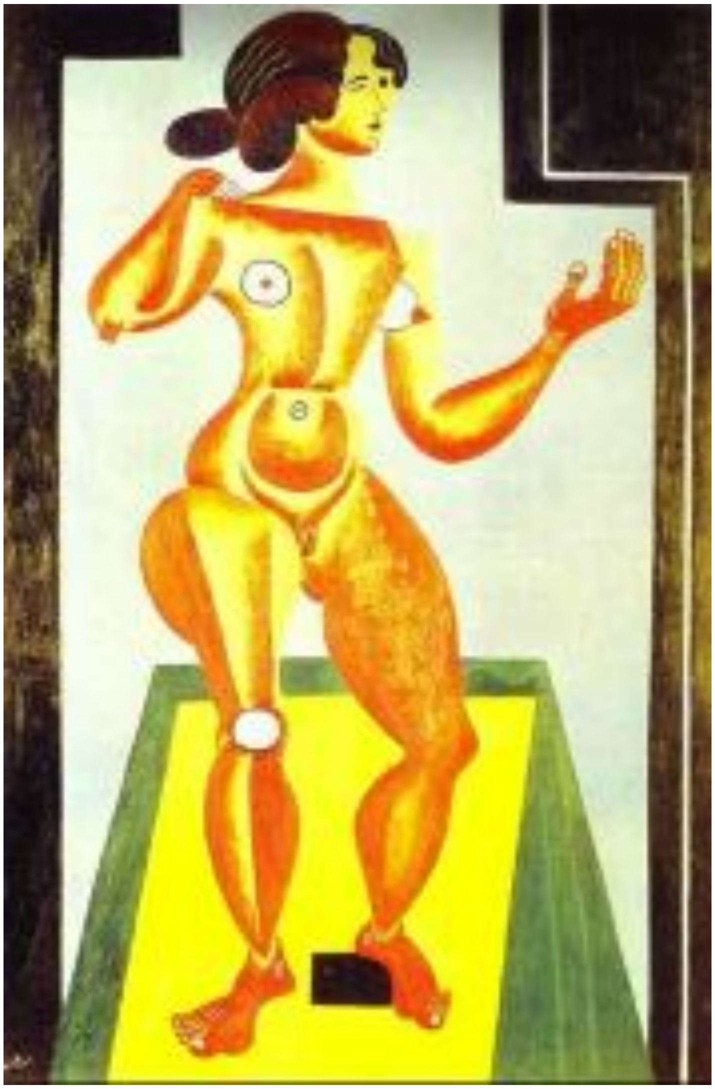


Fig. 10: Joan Miró, Standing Nude, 1921, priv. coll.

This 1921 *Standing Nude* invites parallel observations. The space is once again flattened, by the anti-perspectival rendering of the proscenium the figure stands on and by the flat black frame that encloses her. But her figure is rendered in a quirky combination of representational modes that includes effects of volume. Her right arm is clearly modelled, for instance. Further, it implies and as it were embraces a certain deep space insofar as it points outward and folds back on itself. This isn't the deep space of perspectival projection that opens up a void in which to dispose bodies, but a more intimately physical space, which is opened up by a body and which ends at the limits of that body's reach. In several ways, the figure confirms my hypothesis. For example, right where the hand should be, a set of lines like rays emerge from the figure's wrist and disappear behind her shoulder. It's as if the figure's volume were to be measured in the distance that elbow pressed forward and outward from the graphic space just behind her shoulder, the space to which her body returns where her hand vanishes. The figure's other hand is no less remarkable or important. She holds it out in front of her—again, extending the body's space outward—and turns her hand back toward herself, differently from the way the figure's right hand does, but to analogous effect; that is, turning the hand back on itself closes or encloses the space the body claims. In fact, because she holds the hand out from herself and because she ambiguously appears to look at it, I want to compare it to the hand in the earlier *Seated Nude* that holds the hand mirror.

I would also point out another feature of this hand—specifically, that it is evidently a right hand. So maybe one would say it *is* in some sense a mirror image, reversed to face the figure in the painting. Or, one might rather say that there is a sense in which the figure itself should be thought of as *both* facing outward *and* as turning around, into the picture. Fundamentally, the two possibilities aren't so different. Either way, the figure faces out of the picture and turns into the picture, too. Obviously, as an account of the picture's mode of perspectival projection, this raises more questions than it answers. Perhaps we should understand it, as we have understood the mirrors we've seen elsewhere, to register the presence of a space outside the picture (such as that in which van Eyck and his companion stood or that in which the holder of Brunelleschi's apparatus stood) to the scene pictured in it.

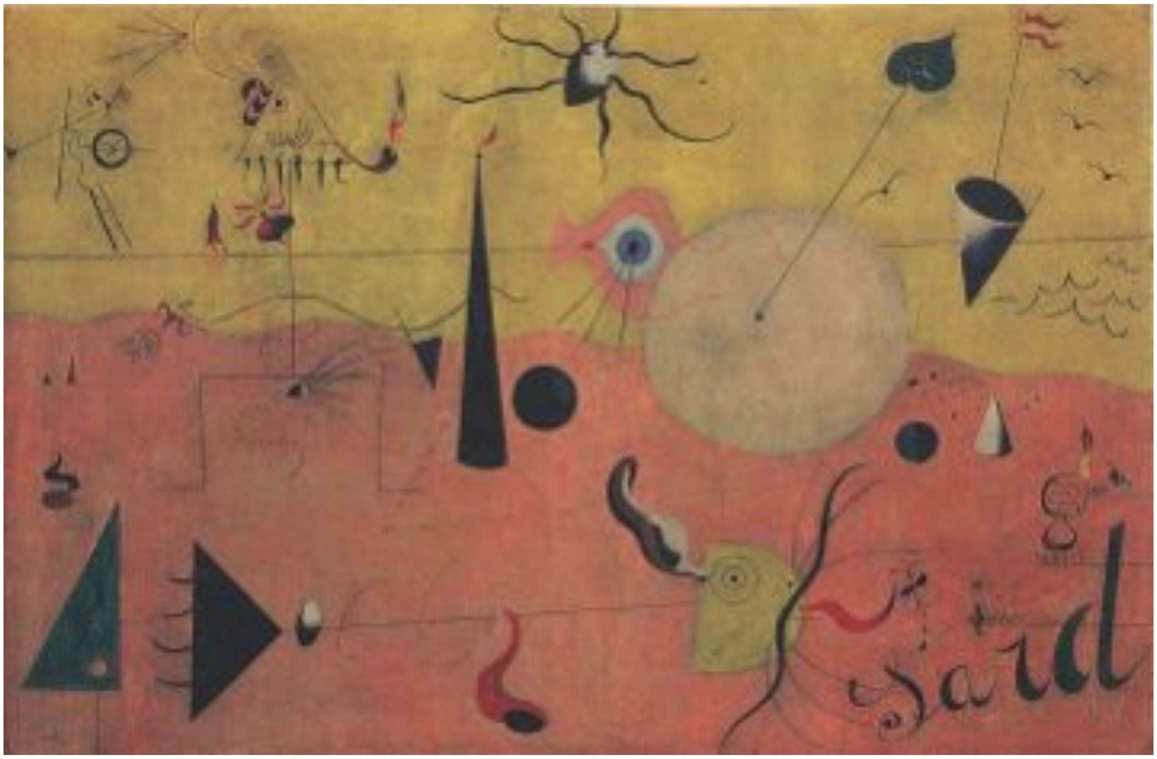


Fig. 11: Joan Miró: Catalan Landscape (The Hunter), 1923-24, Museum of Modern Art, New York

The central figure of *Catalan Landscape* of about two years later can be understood similarly. I see it as an important instance of Miró transforming an early motif—in this case, the figure that faces outward and inward simultaneously—as his larger pictorial strategies change.[10] The figure of the hunter faces out of the picture, but his hat does something I want to claim *orients* it into the picture, in something like the way the reversed hand mirror can be thought of as orienting the reflected face of the seated nude into the picture. I say that because the hat is connected to, tangent to and repeated in spectral bands, which lead in turn to a passing comet. In fact, the crown of the hunter's hat is dotted, like the bands that emanate from it to touch the comet, as if to underscore their identity against the obvious differences between a hat and atmospheric or celestial phenomena. But that very distinction—between the near and the far—is precisely what Miró seems to have been determined to elide.

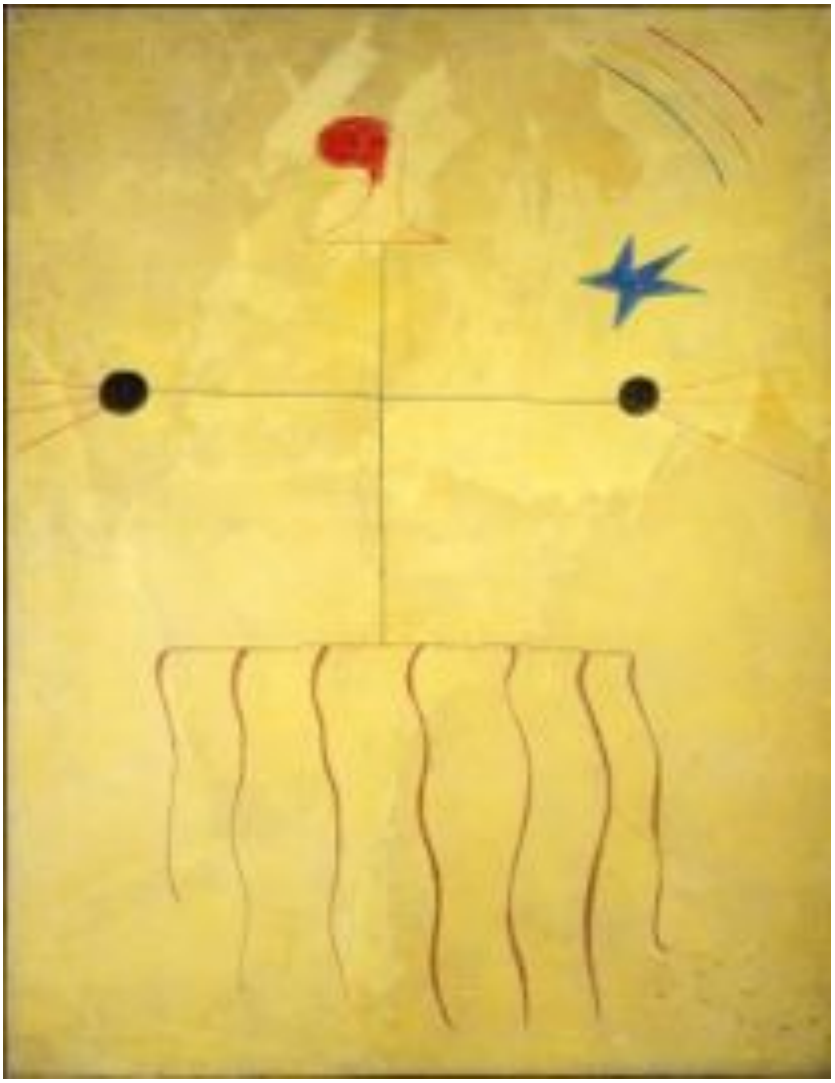


Fig. 12: Joan Miró, Head of a Catalan Peasant, 1924, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Other works of the 1920s develop this theme, too. The National Gallery of Art's own *Head of a Catalan Peasant* of 1924, for instance, centers on a figure reduced to little more than the cross-axial lines and *barretina* we saw in the hunter-figure in *Catalan Landscape*. Just beside the figure, a set of colored lines denotes a rainbow, while a star comes almost to settle on the figure's left cross-member. In 1972, Rosalind Krauss offered a reading of the lines of such schematic cross-axial figures, one component of which centrally concerns us here: her suggestion that the horizontal cross-member, which we can read as the arms of a stick figure, can also be read as the horizon that defines the limit of deep pictorial space, Miró's way of uniting the near to the far, the space of the body to the vastness of earth and sky.[11] Thus I want to point to the curving crown of the *barretina* to note that it is colored in, as if to mark, albeit in a different way from the one we saw in *Catalan Landscape*, the hat's changing status as it passes from contact with the body to a silhouette projected against the sky.

Finally, note the two constellations of dots—one in the upper left corner of the picture and one in the lower right. They are very small and difficult to see in reproduction. In fact, in reproduction it is virtually impossible to see that, in making the dots, Miró has pierced the canvas in the lower right quadrant. Perhaps it is his way of making literal or, so to speak, sculptural, the effect the picture most forcefully evokes, at least in my mind: the effect of rendering available to vision the transition from the physically immediate to a separate space, some kind of beyond.

Of course, to see those little holes it's actually necessary to get pretty close to the canvas and look carefully. The same kind of close inspection seems like the right way to approach the small dots in the upper left of the canvas, as well. And I don't think this is a trivial fact about them. As is widely noted, Miró spoke as early as 1918 to his friend J.F. Ràfols of his

> Joy [as Miró put it] at learning to understand a tiny blade of grass in a landscape. Why belittle it?—a blade of grass is as enchanting as a tree or a mountain.—Apart from the primitives and the Japanese, almost everyone overlooks this which is so divine.—Everyone looks for and paints only the huge masses of trees, of mountains, without hearing the music of blades of grass and little flowers and without paying attention to the tiny pebbles of a ravine—enchanting.[12]

This early passage does more than show Miró's awareness of the mesmerizing power a small pictorial element can wield. It also connects these small details with the scale and distances of landscape—with mountains and ravines—, rather than with still lifes and portraits. In other words, Miró puts his fascination with the small in such a way as to make it clearly part of his relation to the vastness of space in general. In fact, there are two sides to this fascination, I think. On one hand, there's the more explicit sense in which Miró expresses an attraction to small things in the vast world. On the other hand, though, there's another sense in which the small details seems to have to do with the scale of painting (painting as he practices it, which is to say, *easel* painting). The brute quality of the little marks Miró makes on the surface of this painting work, by resisting easy assimilation to the fictional world of the peasant figure, to keep both their senses—that is, both their role as tiny points in the yellow world of the Catalan peasant and their character as marks on the painted surface—aggressively in view. And as I've said, this goes double for the holes he pokes in the canvas.

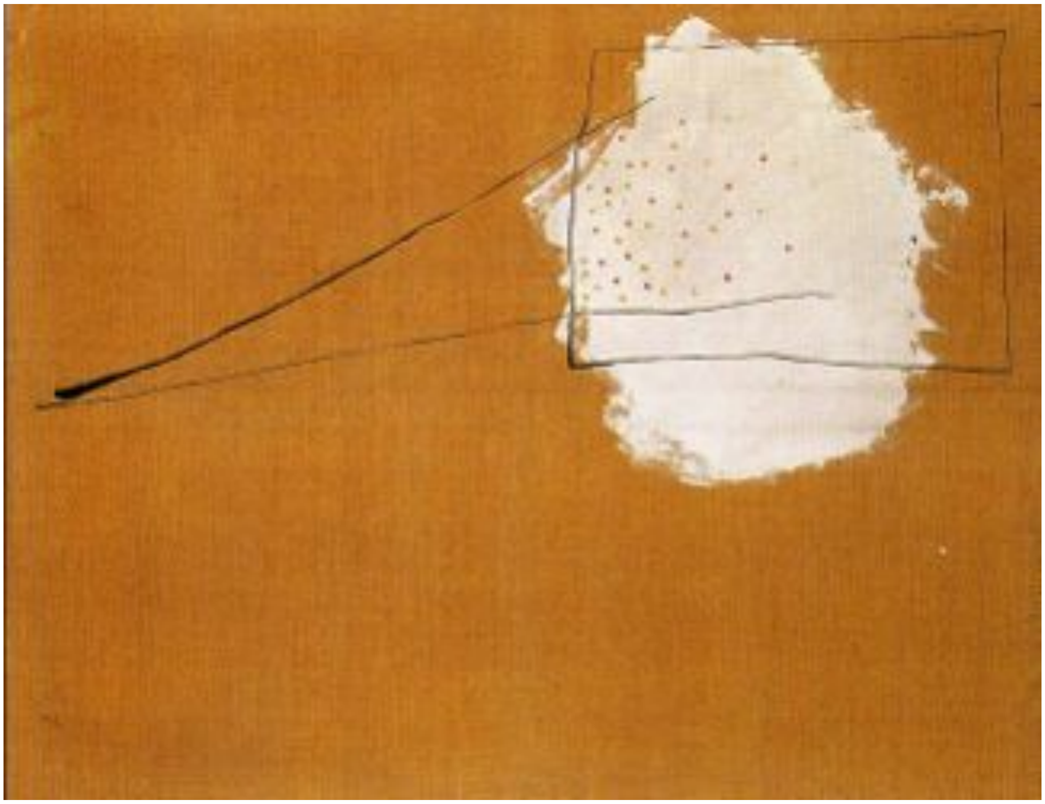


Fig. 13: Joan Miró, Painting, 1927, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

That fascination with vastness, which I'm claiming is bound up with Miró's attention to the minute, appears again later as a theme when Miró writes to Pierre Loeb, for instance, of his desire to "have *loving relations*, so to speak, with my *earth*, to lie on the sand and *lick* this beautiful sky."[13] It is also a leitmotif of later work. In the 1927 canvas titled only *Painting*, Miró shows more dots—red mixed with yellow, this time—scattered on a white patch that mostly corresponds to the area of a roughly drawn rectangle. The rectangle itself is transfixed by two rays emanating from near the left edge of the canvas. Altogether, the scene resembles nothing more closely than it does the famous pyramid of Albertian perspective, unless it is taken to resemble projection in a cinema. So again, the little points Miró renders assume their place in a model of beholding, one which we could call generically by the name "projection," and in which the subject looks into a scene that has a sort of directionality—a scene that is, as the word "projection" implies, thrown forth, away from him. One way to read the picture, then, is as a sort of illustration of the image as projection. Taken in a large sense of projection, that could be about the way an easel painting can picture vastness as a kind of recession or projection away from the beholder—as in perspectival projection. The dots, then, would once again be playing their old role as markers of vast or even celestial distance—like stars in the sky. Further, since Miró has opposed this projected scene to his characteristically tiny signature, the latter strikes me as doing double service in the picture: as the position of the beholder in the diagram of beholding, tiny before the projected vastness; but on the other hand, also keying the actual beholder in to an opposition of scale between the signature, which is, after all, understandable as a feature of the painting *rather than* of the fictional world it pictures, and the painting's size—an opposition that invites the beholder to come close, or at least to imagine doing so, and to register the relative vastness of the framed expanse of the canvas.

Now, as Félix Fanès has recently emphasized, Miró's references to popular and particularly cinematic culture toward the end of the 1920s owe much to his association with Michel Leiris and the circle around the dissident-surrealist journal *Documents*.[14] That journal was published in 1929 and 1930, but Leiris's association with Miró goes back to 1922, and Leiris's interest in motion pictures, and in projection generally, dates to around the same time.

In fact, the first reference Leiris makes to the experience of cinema in his private journal is an account of a dream, rather than a note on an actual motion picture viewing. In the dream Leiris recorded the sixteenth of March, 1923, he describes himself, dead, looking at a sky filled with dust "like," as he puts it, "a theater outside the projector's ray." He continues:

> Many luminous globes, of a milky white, were lined up in the depths of the sky; from each of them came a long metallic wire, and one of them pierced my chest through without my feeling anything but a great beatitude. I advanced toward the globes of light by sliding along the length of the wire, and I held the hands of other men who rose like me toward the sky, each following the rail that perforated his flesh. One heard no noise but the light squealing of the steel on our chests.[15]

To paraphrase Leiris a little: one might say the dream takes projection as a model of space, then turns it into a story about *being* projected into celestial space, to feel one's distance from it collapse. That image is not far at all from the experiments Miró began in 1923 with *Catalan Landscape*, and it's closer still to the story we might tell about the 1927 painting on sized canvas and its scene of projection.

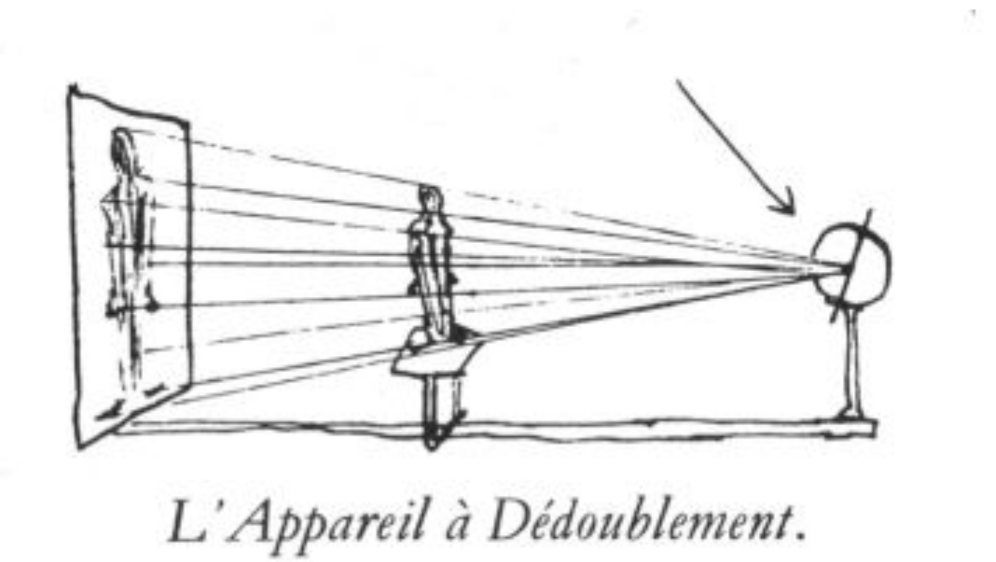

L'Appareil à Dédoublement.

Fig. 14: Michel Leiris, "L'Appareil à Dédoublement," journal entry dated Thursday, October 16, 1924

The following year, Leiris wrote a related journal entry—this one apparently inspired by a visit to the Musée des Arts et Métiers. On his visit to the museum, Leiris had seen a "device for learning the use of perspective" (Leiris, entry for October 15, 1924, 70-71). In the journal entry for the following day, Leiris turns this apparatus into a fanciful invention of his own, which he calls "The Doubling Machine" ("L'Appareil à Dédoublement"). He illustrates the machine with a diagram and an explanatory legend: "Generative sphere of medullary rays, owing to the obliqueness of the infra-cosmic mirror. The subject, projected into a frame with the weight of his matter, inscribes his double there enlarged and with independent existence" (Leiris, entry for October 16, 1924, 71).

Leiris's thought experiment underscores the intimate connection of projection to scale—and especially to the scale of the sky or the cosmos. One of the themes Leiris develops at length later, in his writings for *Documents*, is that of the relation of the individual, embodied self to the cosmos, as microcosm and macrocosm.[16] That is a much better-known story, so I will just note it and pass over it here, because I want to return to Miró, but I think it's important to note two things: first, the way Miró represents the relation of the body to the cosmos can be understood as a kind of perspective—as implying a kind of projection. And second, the way Miró represents that relation changes around this time—around 1929 and 1930. He begins to place less emphasis on metaphors or symbols, and to place greater weight on the literal correspondences between the beholder's experience of the picture and experience in general.

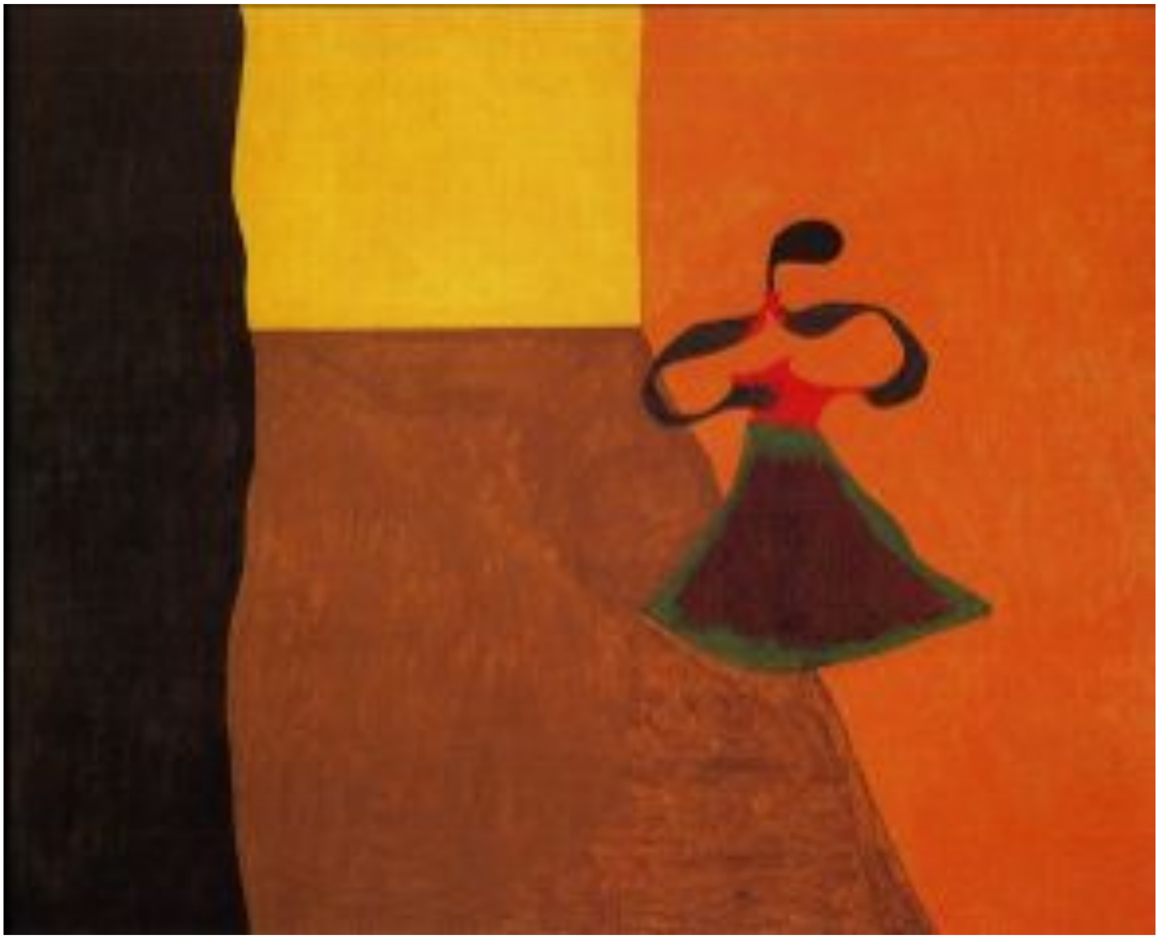
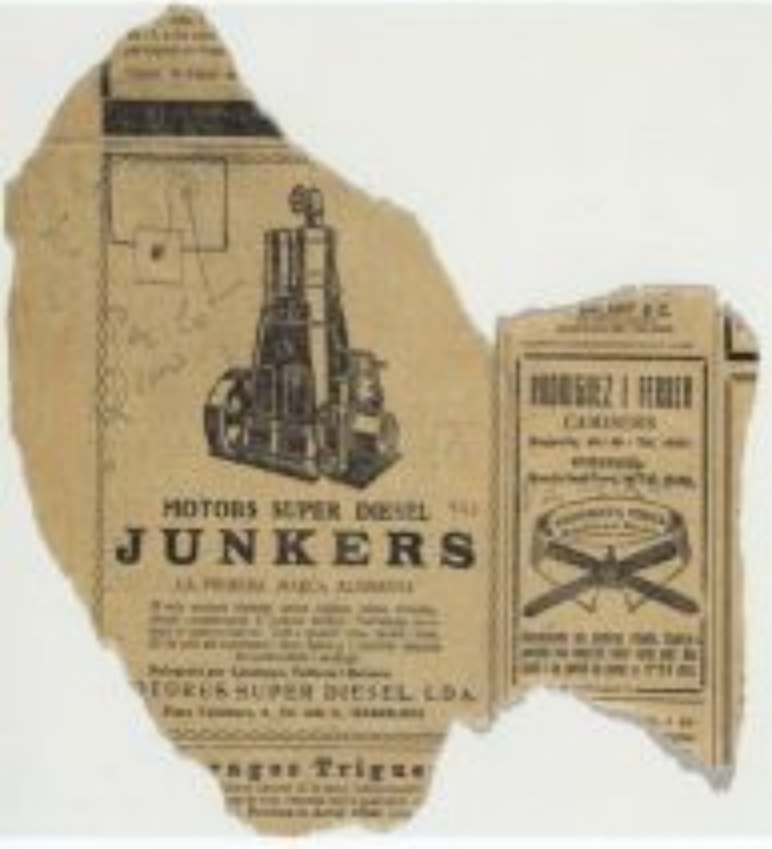


Fig. 15: Joan Miró, Portrait of Queen Louise of Prussia, 1929, Meadows Museum, Southern Methodist University, Dallas

I take this to be a crucial transition, because it relates Miró's art to a drive among certain members of the *Documents* circle toward more literal, which is to say, less metaphorical, effects.[17] In 1929 Leiris said Miró had left behind his "small equations," such as, "sun=potato, slug=small bird, gentleman=moustache, spider=sex, man=soles of the feet."[18] As an example of the new turn in Miró's art, Leiris refers to "the bedroom of the queen of Prussia," the bareness of which he says is simple to understand: "the furniture has dissolved in water, the way my table does sometimes, when I'm tired and my books and cigarettes turn out to be incapable of beguiling my boredom" (Leiris 1929, 28). That is, Leiris connects the bareness of Miró's special kind of pictorial space very directly to a certain mode of ordinary experience. He elaborates on the thought:

> It is Miró who has expressed this liquefaction, this relentless evaporation of structures—as relentless as any of the other vicious circles in which I, and all of creation, turn round and round—this soft leakage of the substance that makes all things—us, our thoughts, and the setting we live in—like jellyfish or octopi; he has been the one to express this so satisfactorily in several of his old canvases and especially in his current series of *Portraits*. (Leiris 1929, 29)

To Leiris's point about the *Queen Louise of Prussia*, I'd like to add an observation or two that will build on themes he and I have already proposed. First, I would like to note that the figure's arms are based on an advertisement for shirt collars,[19] and that Miró's attraction to the form of the shirt collar owed at least something to the fact that it turns over on itself, with a tie that crosses like folded arms.



MOTORS SUPER DIESEL

JUNKERS

SUPER DIESEL, LDA.

Fig. 16: Advertisements from the April 14, 1929, edition of La Veu de Catalunya, inscribed by Miró, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

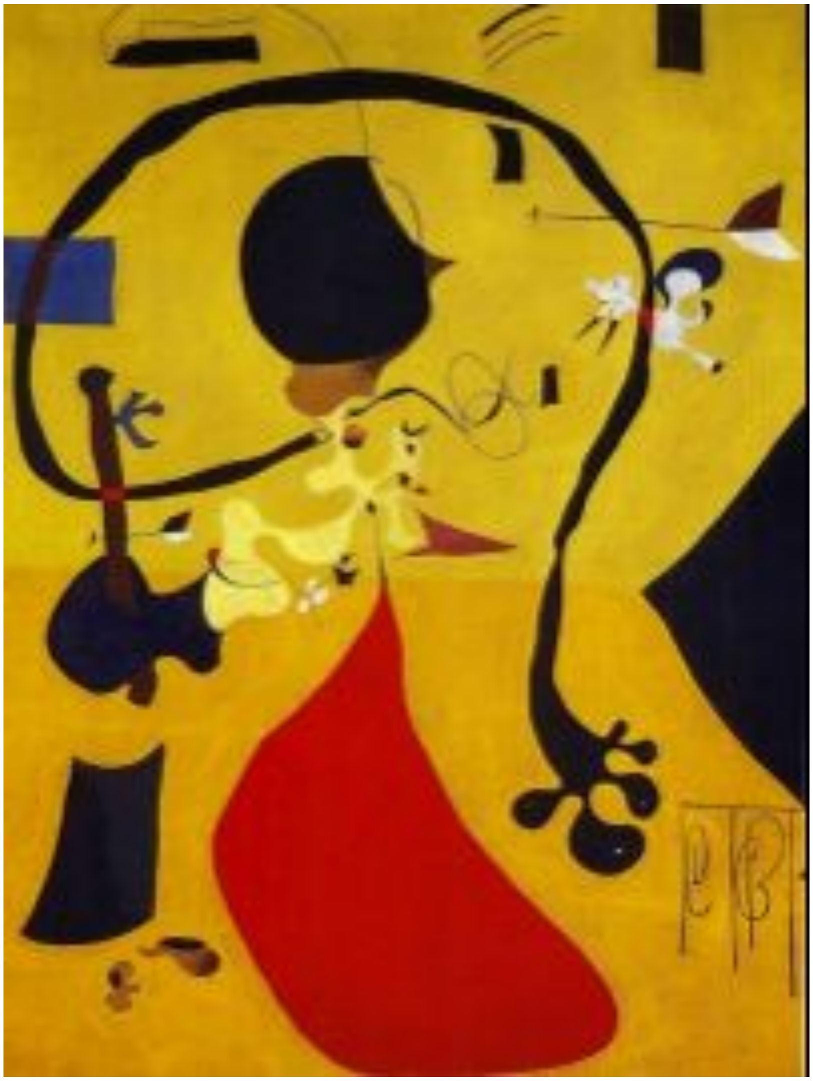


Fig. 17: Joan Miró, Dutch Interior, 1928, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

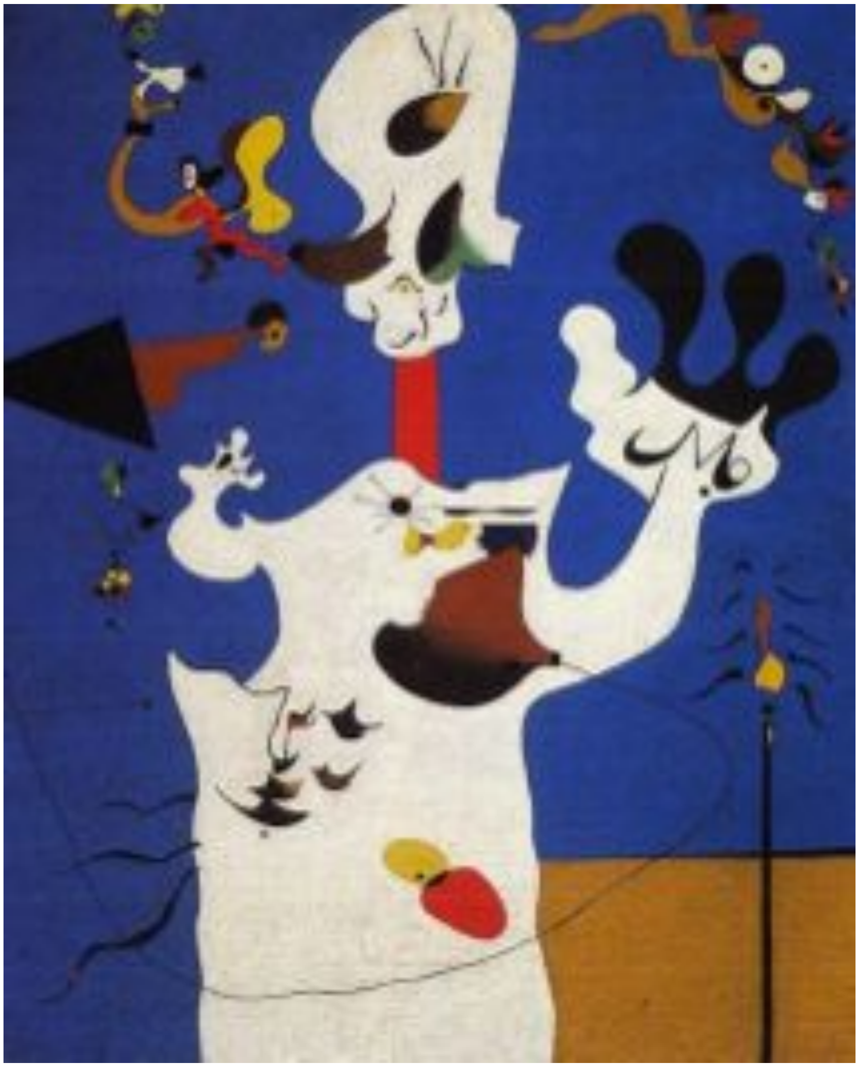


Fig. 18: Joan Miró, Potato, 1928, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Like the folded-over arm of the 1921 *Standing Nude*, I take the arms crossing each other or crossing the figure's body to be a way of letting the body define its space by embracing it. Another version of this strategy would be that of Miró's 1928 *Dutch Interior* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in which the arm, rather than cross over the body, travels around it in a giant arc, to unite an outward-facing pose to a turning figure. In *The Potato*, which shares preparatory drawings with the reaching arm of the Met's *Dutch Interior*, a drawn line replaces most of the arc of the right arm; meanwhile the figure's right hand has apparently migrated to its left arm. The hand at the end of the left arm is, evidently, a right hand, with its palm facing away from us. The migrating right hand brings us full circle, so to speak, back to the *Standing Nude*.

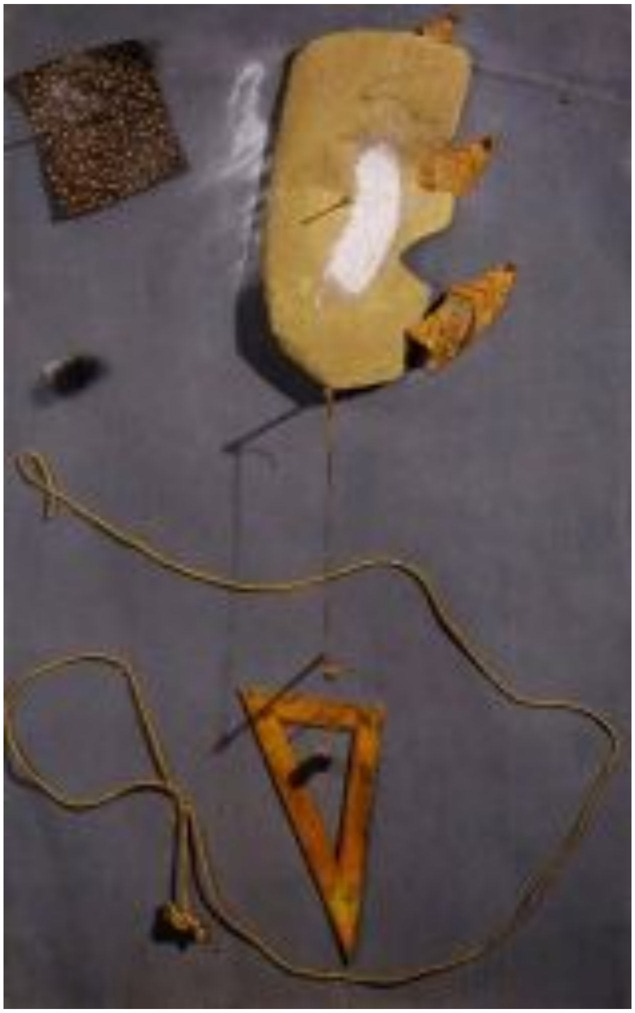


Fig. 19: Joan Miró, Spanish Dancer, 1928, priv. coll.

A 1928 collage titled *Spanish Dancer* combines several of these techniques for rendering and condensing gesture and bodily volume. As Anne Umland observed to me, the figure is organized like the cross-axial figures, which may be taken to imply, as we've seen, a double relation between the figure and its space. Similarly, Rémi Labrusse has discussed the relation of Miró's dancer theme to ecstatic identification with the not-self in a short essay on Miró's Spanish dancers.[20] In this *Spanish Dancer*, the string that hangs in the middle of the assemblage, and which originally dangled at the bottom, with the lower nail loose like a plumb bob, is something like the vertical that establishes the figure's upright posture.[21] The loose string, though, would also evoke the possibility of its rotation. That is, the possibility of the figure turning, like a dancer. I take that turning, and possibly the arms of the spinning figure, as well, to be summarized in the loop of string that circles the lower half of the figure, which renders the movement once again as a contour that contains the figure.[22] The opposition contained in the string's dual nature—the opposition between it as an object set over against the beholder, on one hand, and as a turning into and a turning-to-face-into the deep space of the fictional world—that opposition represents the impossible pair of relations I have been finding throughout Miró's works. To return that opposition to our larger question: If the contradictory relations the works project for the beholder rule out the Brunelleschian mode, so to speak, of political engagement via subject position, and the specificity of those relations rule out the universal address of what we might call the van Eyckian mode, then Miró's works must demand a different accounting. If we continue to trace this opposition, we may be able to supply that account.

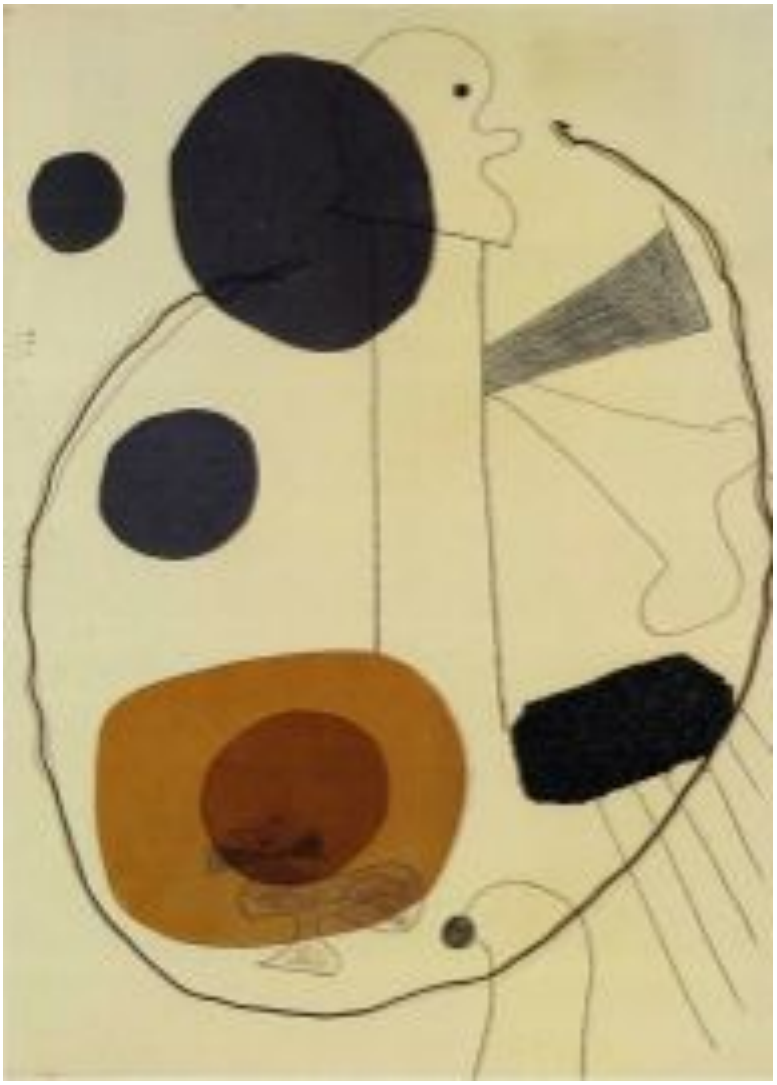


Fig. 20: Joan Miró, Collage (Composition with Wire), 1929, priv. coll.

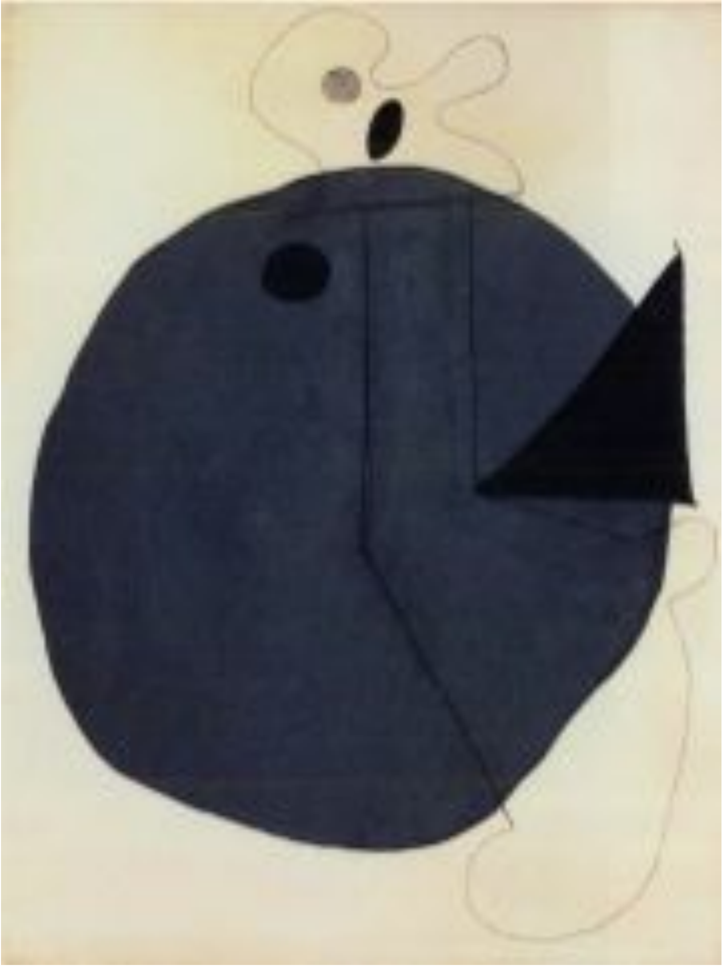


Fig. 21: Joan Miró, Collage, 1929, priv. coll.

A pair of collages from 1929 forcefully demonstrates the two senses of the loop. Each composition centers on a figure—the shape of their heads clearly connect them to the *Spanish Dancer* as well as to *The Potato*. The body of each is a vertical band, like the vertical lines of the cross-axial figures that run through the works of the 1920s. In one of the 1929 collages, though, a loop of wire circles the figure like the string that loops around the 1928 *Spanish Dancer* or the line that emerges from *The Potato*'s volcano-breast to reach around its figure. The other 1929 collage is close in composition to the first, but in place of its wire loop, a rough disk of flocked paper is collaged to the drawing, creating a translucent circular space for the figure. It's as if Miró has reinterpreted the same shape as both the gesture of the figure's arm and as the contour of a volume that defines or contains the space that gesture claims for the figure.

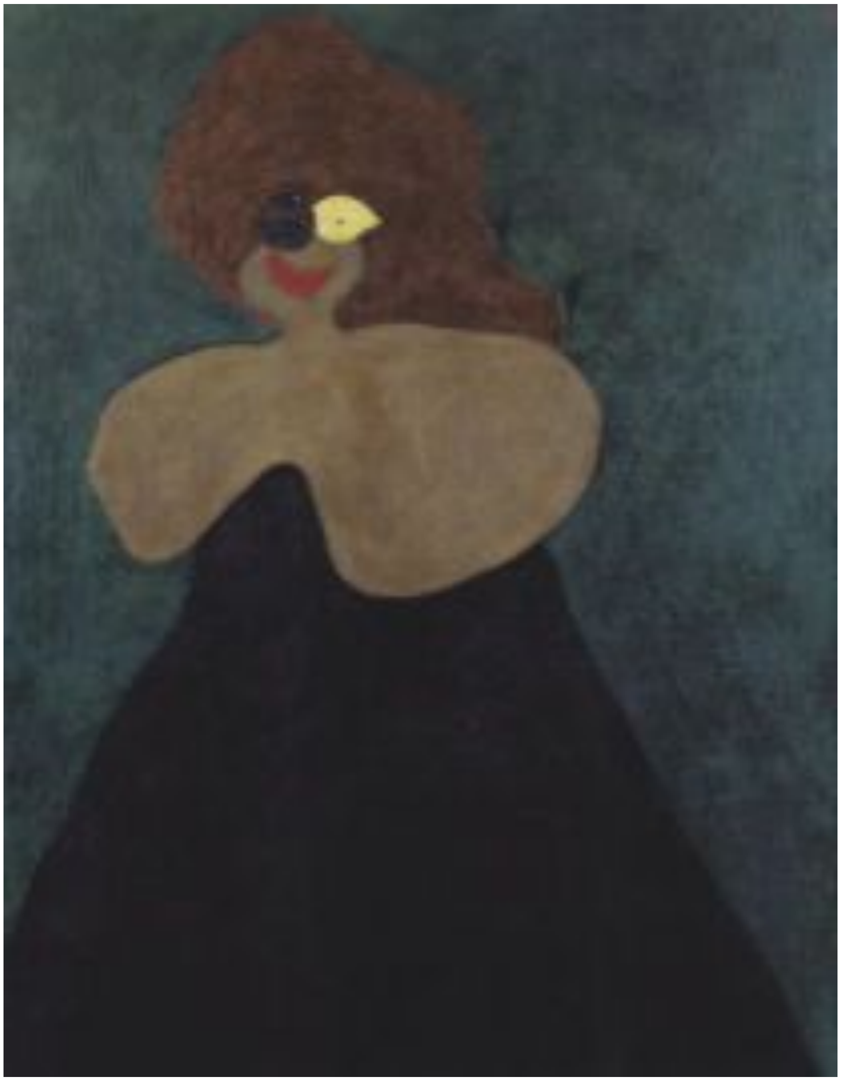


Fig. 22: Joan Miró, Portrait of La Fornarina, 1929, priv. coll.

Now consider Miró's *Portrait of La Fornarina.*[23] The upper right-hand corner of Miró's painting reveals, on close inspection, about eight red dots, which float more or less visibily between the figure and the corner of the painting. As in the examples we saw earlier, I want to align these dots with projection into the picture, with extension into deep space. Furthermore, I want to emphasize in this case more than in the others, that seeing the dots requires a close examination and an intensity of looking that is considerably greater even than the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* in Washington requires.[24] Seeing all eight dots means standing close and looking hard.[25]

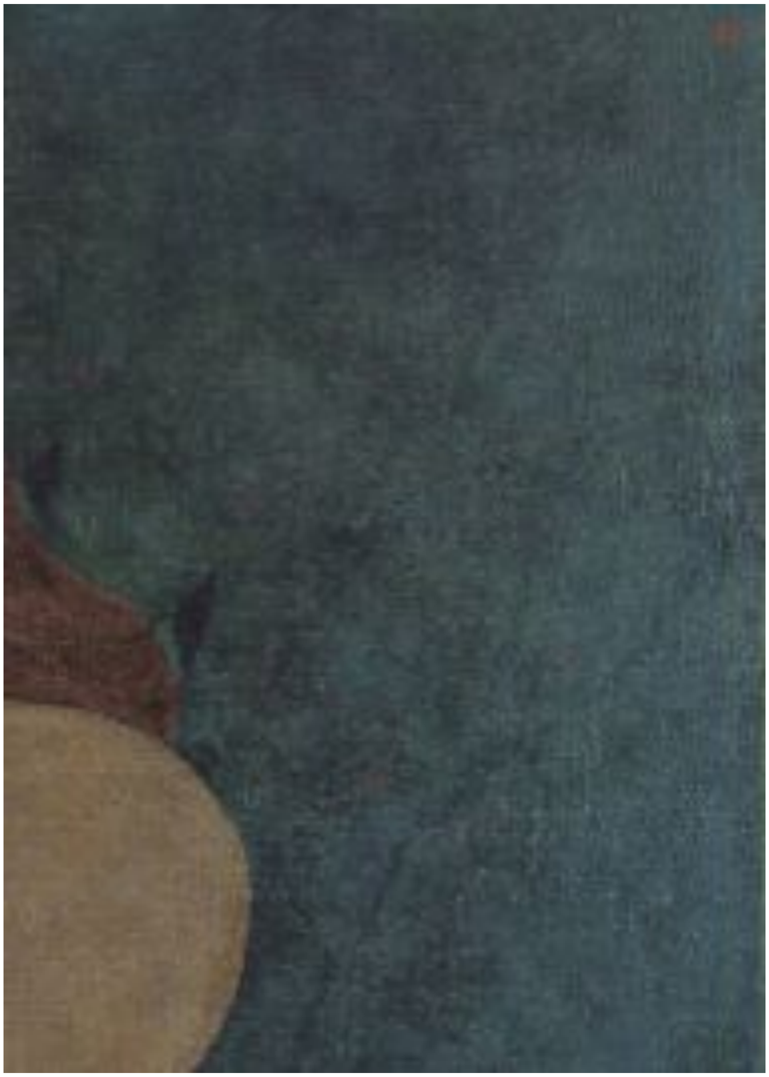


Fig. 23: detail of Portrait of La Fornarina

But doing that puts one, it seems to me, at something closer than a natural viewing distance to the roughly trapezoidal blackish shape in the lower half of the canvas. That is to say, taking that dark form in as a distinct shape while straining into the picture to see the red dots strikes me as nearly impossible. From close-to, that dark area becomes a formless void, a blind spot that withdraws the lower part of the figure and of the painting from peripheral vision. I don't feel this is an accident. Rather, I feel in this precisely an echo of Leiris's remark that the objects in the space of Queen Louise's bedroom have "dissolved in water, the way my table does sometimes" (Leiris 1929, 28). Leiris sees the ability to express this dissolution, this "liquefaction, this relentless evaporation of structure," as Miró's special achievement, particularly in the *Imaginary Portraits* (Leiris 1929, 28-29). In places like this, Miró seems to excel in converting pictorial space into an equivalent for an internal or bodily space, which has no distinct objects in the way the objective space that spreads out before us does. Of course, the boundaries of that bodily space—its horizons, one might say—are not clearly defined. *Catalan Landscape* teaches that lesson by representing as gradual rather than abrupt the transitions from the hunter's head to his *barretina* to the rainbow to the comet. The difference—or, a key difference—between *Catalan Landscape* and *Portrait of La Fornarina* is exactly that that lesson goes from being illustrated by a metaphor—recall Leiris's list of neat equations that fall out of Miró's work—to being demonstrated, in a much more literal way, by the conditions of viewing the painting itself stages. Looking at Miró's *Portrait of La Fornarina* produces and relates to each other the experiences of straining at small things and losing oneself in the painting's space.

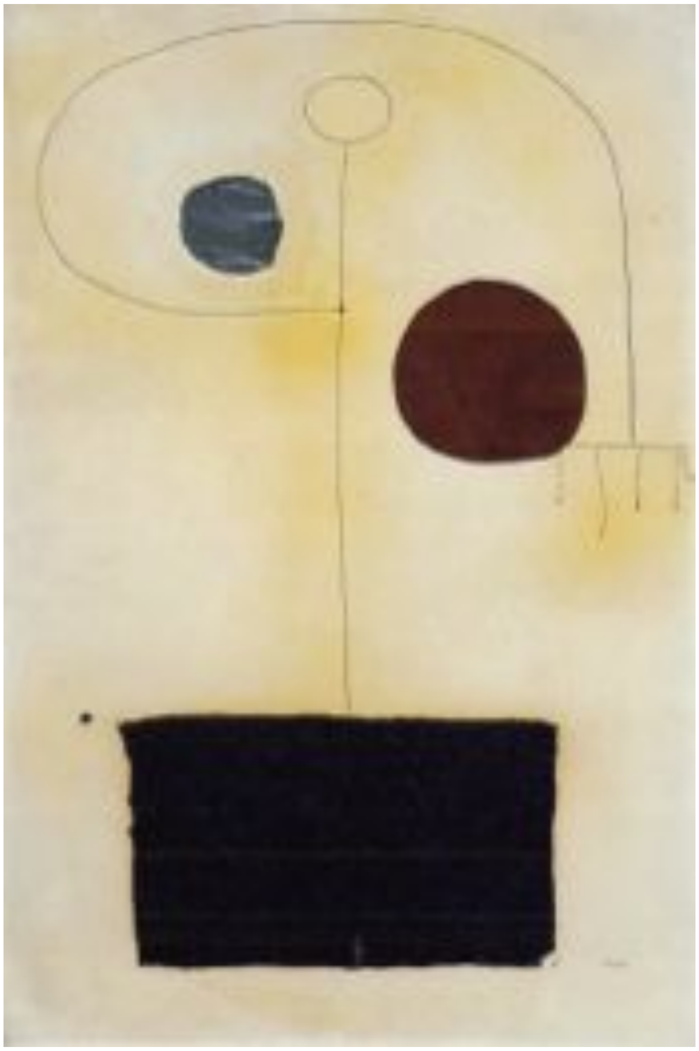


Fig. 24: Joan Miró, Collage, 1929, priv. coll.

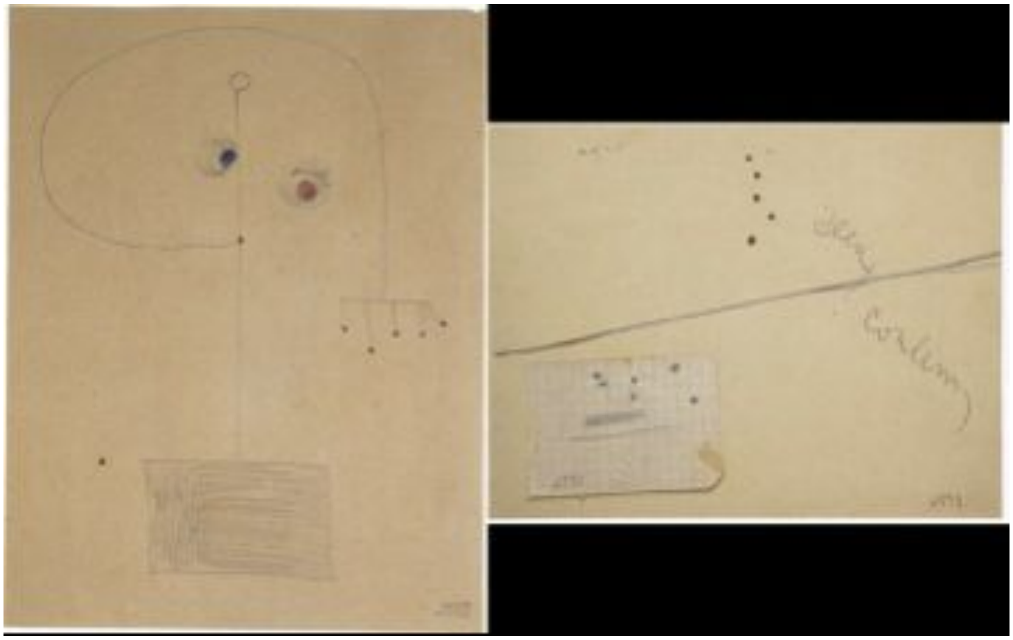


Fig. 25 (left): Joan Miró, preparatory drawing for Collage, 1929 (fig. 24); fig. 26 (right): drawing related to Collage, 1929 (fig. 24), Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

Another 1929 single-figure composition reduces, or distills, the themes I've been discussing and condenses the turning with the projection I discussed earlier (plate 32). The composition is clearly a stripped-down revision of the turning figure we saw before in the *Dutch Interior*. This one is based on a drawing, which it closely resembles in composition (F.J.M. 2588, MoMA 2008, page 73, fig. 3). Another drawing, which shows an array of five dots that correspond to the dots at the end of the first drawing's fingers, and which were apparently generated by the impressions Miró's left in drawing the figure's dotted fingertips, suspends them in the sky (I say that because they're above what I take to be a horizon line), like the projected points we saw earlier. That transformation makes explicit—perhaps literal would be a better word—the comparison between the finger-tip limit of the body that embraces its own space and the projection that throws tiny dots into the vastness of celestial distance.

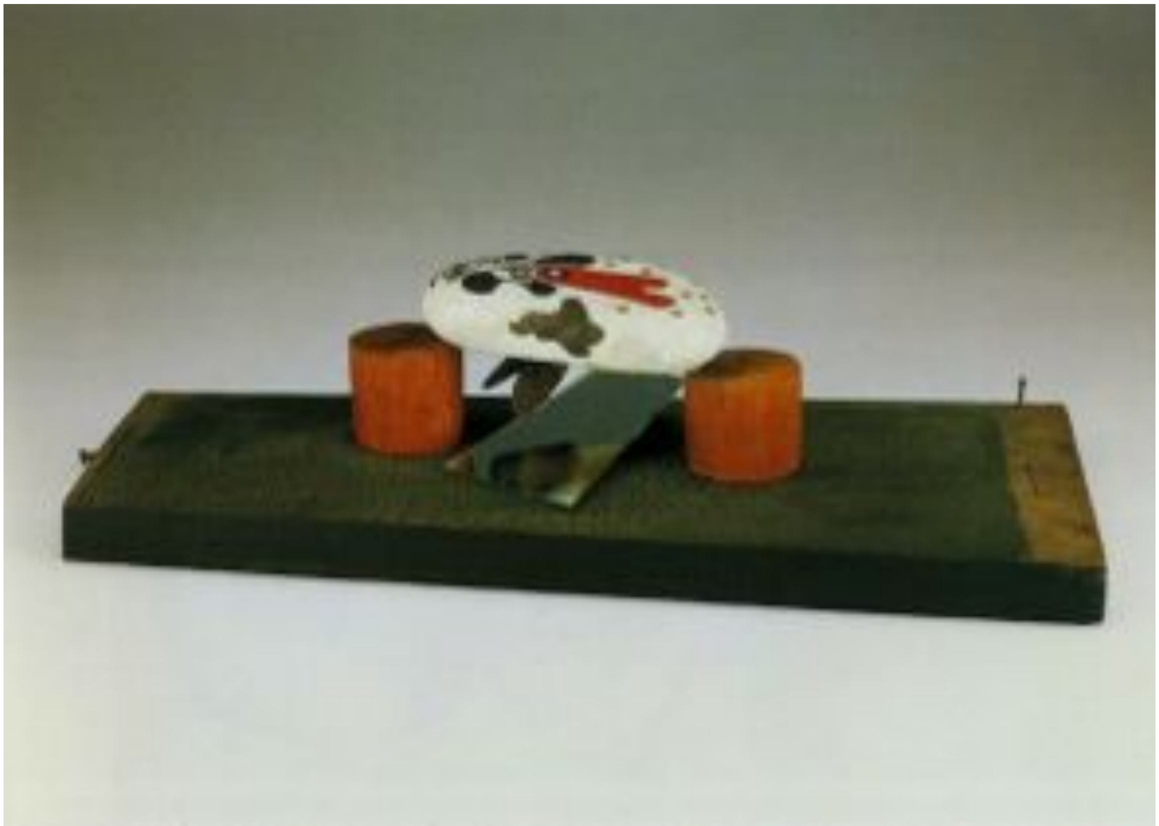


Fig. 27: Joan Miró, Object, 1932, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Let me close with one more example, taken from a couple of years later than the works we've considered so far. It's the 1932 *Object* in the A.E. Gallatin Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In his recent discussion of this work and this period in Miró's oeuvre, William Jeffett reveals an emphasis among contemporary commentators on various ways the corporeal presence or literal size of the beholder come into play. Miró's friend Ràfols referred to works of this period as "corporeal realizations"; Estratios Tériade glossed their toy-like quality in terms of "big people or . . . children who have grown up [*qui ont grandi*] in us"; George Hugnet says these objects are bereft of fetishism, but that their "symbols grow in size," and further that they work as ideograms or "correspondences," so that there "are no more comparisons and metaphors."[26] Like Jeffett, I take these acknowledgements of the role of size and of the beholder's own corporeality and the beholder's size seriously. Moreover, as I said earlier, I take Miró's disjunctions of scale to be his own way of implying projection—as if the children who have grown up in us are seeing themselves projected in us at some distance, as if by the medullary rays of Leiris's fanciful machine for doubling.

Indeed, the 1932 *Object* feels small, pointedly or emphatically small—it's less than six inches tall—, at least partly because it represents a figure against a field of sequins as the small points I've taken elsewhere to represent celestial motifs, like stars, projected into the vastness of space. To see this work properly, one must get up close, as with Miró's *Portrait of La Fornarina*. Its smallness works, like that of Miró's tiny signature in the 1927 *Picture* we saw earlier, to create "correspondences," to borrow Hugnet's word, albeit inverted ones, between the beholder's closeness and the vastness of the cosmic setting in which the figure of the ballerina appears (Jeffett, 88 and F.J.M. 1447a). Beneath the stone, the mirror, which as Miró's note on his preparatory drawing indicates, allows one to "see in all directions and in all forms [or ways (*formes*)]" (F.J.M. 1447a)—returns to the theme Miró opened in his *Nude with Mirror* almost fifteen years earlier. The difference, though, would be that, rather than represent the pictorial space as folded over or projected back over the turning figure, Miró turns the projection outward. Thus, Miró uses the mirror to displace the beholder's point of view quite literally into the work. Or, Miró displaces one point of view for the beholder into the work via the mirror. He leaves another, equally important point of view outside, close to the upper surface of the stone, straining into celestial distance. In this, I see the literal turn accomplished—the turn away from the metaphors and simple equations to which Leiris and Hugnet referred. Rather than represent a figure or a space that both faces us and turns away to continue our space into its fictional distance, the 1932 object invites us close up to face the figure and gaze into space but also to occupy a position within it, between its legs, as it were, from which to see outward.

This is unlike Brunelleschi's mirror, which determined a position for its subject, in order to perform its demonstration and establish its univocal truth. It is also unlike the witness of van Eyck's painted mirror, which affirmed van Eyck's position for anyone, anywhere to see. Miró's perspective establishes two relations for the subject to the world in the work of art—two incompatible positions. Miró offers a double perspective, a twinned relation—two positions: one within the space and one at a distance. Like the point of view of the child grown up in us, it is our own and also one from which we are distanced. This double perspective cannot be reduced to the constructed situations of Brunelleschi or of minimalism or of Piper, the art of the subject position. Nor does it offer the objective witness of Panofsky's van Eyck, left to depend, in the absence of demonstration, on what Jacques Derrida called "effects of signature" cut off from the demonstration of presence Brunelleschi's mirror affords (Derrida, 20).[27] Rather, Miró's object with its mirror demonstrates the fact of and the inadequacy of presence, the insufficiency of your—or anyone's—subject position, to the task of seeing, where seeing is taken to mean *understanding* a world, such as the fictional world Miró offers. Miro's object likewise holds out the possibility that, if we will let go of both political projects—demonstrating the presence of the subject and bearing witness to the presence of the authority—we may find we see the world together after all. Perhaps this means we would be wrong to see Miró's politics in his attachment to Catalan identity. Perhaps the right approach would be something more like acknowledging Miró's embrace of Catalan identity and his paradoxical insistence that intelligibility, such as paintings or any object of shared understanding requires, depends on transcending one's subject position. Perhaps this is what Damisch had in mind when he called surrealism's own mode of perspective *utopian* (Damisch, 264-66). Perhaps Miró's is the politics of nowhere.

NOTES

I would like to thank Todd Cronan, Catherine Levesque, James Rosenow, Mike Schreyach, Dwight Shurko and an anonymous reader for their helpful feedback on the present essay. I originally presented versions of this discussion at panels at the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Art and at the High Museum. My thanks to Anne Umland, Faya Causey, and Patricia Rodewald for those opportunities. The political turn of this essay is at least as much the delayed result of an eye-opening conversation with Jennifer Ashton and Walter Benn Michaels a couple of years ago as it is a reaction to the recent exhibition I mention in the text. Finally, I want to thank Ralph Lieberman for his generous and expert help in understanding Brunelleschi's device.

[1] Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, trans. John Goodman (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1994), 97-98.

[2] Of course, this is the classic analysis offered by Michael Fried in "Art and Objecthood" (1967) in Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-72.

[3] "[T] he *Hypothesis* series acknowledges the perspectival character of human perception, by charting and documenting my navigation through space and time as myself a moving or stationary object with the capacity for sensory perception and the ability to self-consciously register those perspectival perceptions at fixed intervals. Thus the shift in perspective that characterizes this project implicitly introduces issues of subjectivity, personal identity, self-knowledge, self-objectification and difference that I then confront directly in the later *Catalysis* and *Mythic Being* series of the early 1970s." (Adrian Piper, "The Hypothesis Series (1968-69)," Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin. http://www.adrianpiper.com/art/g_hypothesis_text.shtml. Accessed May 18, 2012.)

[4] Erwin Panofsky "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 64.372 (March 1934), 117-19, 122-27; for his discussion of the Church's criteria for marriage and their difference from legal criteria, see 123.

[5] Wlad Godzich, "Foreword: The Tiger on the Paper Mat," in Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, Theory and History of Literature, 33 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xiv-xv.

[6] For a strong statement of this position, see R.P. Wolff, "The Conflict between Authority and Autonomy," in Joseph Raz, ed., *Authority* (New York, New York University Press, 1990), 20-31.

[7] Robert Lubar, "Miró's Commitment" in Marko Daniel and Matthew Gale, eds., *Joan Miró: The Ladder of Escape* (exh. cat., Tate Modern, London, April 14-Sept. 11, 2011, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Oct. 13, 2011-March 25, 2012, and National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., May 6-Aug. 12, 2012), 33.

[8] Jacques Rancière, "Aesthetics as Politics" in his *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2009), 23; cited in Lubar, 42.

[9] See Walter Benn Michaels, "Neoliberal Aesthetics: Fried, Rancière and the Form of the Photograph," *nonsite.org* 1 (February 2012).

[10] As a preparatory drawing (FJM 654a, fig. 206, p. 78) shows, the figure of the hunter appears to be the condensation of two figures, one that faces outward and holds a rifle and another that wears a Catalan hat the figures frequently in Miró's paintings of the 1920s, a *barretina*.

[11] Rosalind Krauss, "Magnetic Fields: The Structure" in Rosalind Krauss and Margit Rowell, *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields* (exh. cat., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1972), 18-19.

[12] Letter dated August 11, 1918, in Joan Miró, *Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Margit Rowell, trans. Paul Auster and Patricia Mathews (New York: Da Capo, 1992), 57.

[13] Joan Miró, letter to Pierre Loeb dated July 6, 1927 (Paris, Archives Pierre Loeb), cited in Agnès de la Beaumelle, ed., *Joan Miró: 1917-1934* (exh. cat., Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, March 3-June 28, 2004), 70.

[14] Fèlix Fanés, "Joan Miró, 1929: High and Low Culture in Barcelona and Paris" in Susan Larson and Eva Woods, eds., *Visualizing Spanish Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 244-62, esp. 258-59; and Fèlix Fanés, *Pintura, collage, cultura de masas: Joan Miró, 1919-1934* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2007), 177-86, esp. 184-86.

[15] Michel Leiris, *Journal: 1922-1989*, édition établie, présentée et annotée par Jean Jamin (Paris: nrf/Gallimard, 1992), 32. My translation.

[16] See, for example, Leiris's "Man and His Insides" in Leiris 1992, 41-45; originally published as "L'homme et son intérieur," *Documents* 2, no. 5 (1930), 261-66.

[17] See Rosalind Krauss, "Michel, Bataille et moi," *October* 68 (spring 1994): 3-20; and Conor Joyce, *Carl Einstein in* Documents *and His Collaboration with Georges Bataille* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2003). For a summary of the events Joyce traces as they related to the tension between the "tectonic" and the anti-metaphorical "formless," see esp. 214-15.

[18] Michel Leiris, "Joan Miró," in Michel Leiris, *Brisées: Broken Branches*, trans. Lydia Davis (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989), 27; originally published in *Documents* 1, no. 5 (1929): 263-69.

[19] Jacques Dupin published, as a source for the painting, the part of the scrap of newspaper with the picture of the motor—see Jacques Dupin, *Miró: Life and Work*, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1961), 182. The Fundació Joan Miró's catalogue of the drawings, however, shows the full piece of paper, including the advertisement for collars—see *Obra de Joan Miró: Dibuixos, pintura, escultura, ceràmica, tèxtils* (Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, 1988), 118, fig. 427, catalogue number F.J.M. 943)

[20] Rémi Labrusse, "Joan Miró, *Portrait d'une danseuse*, Paris, 1928," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 98 (winter 2006-07): 81-89; see esp. 85.

[21] See Anne Umland, "Spanish Dancers and *Portrait of a Dancer*, 1928" in *Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting, 1927-1937*, with Jim Coddington, Robert S. Lubar, Jordana Mendelson, and Adele Nelson (exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, November 2, 2008-January 12, 2009), 221, n. 12.

[22] In this, I take myself to be in agreement with Fanés again—see Fanés 2007, 103. Another work, *Spanish Dancer (with Doll's Shoe)*, also dangles an object connected with the body of the title's dancer, in this case a miniature shoe, so that it could rotate in imitation of a dancer's movement. The rectangular pieces of paper transfixed by the nail that suspends the shoe have been rotated, enough anyway to produce visible marks on the surface of the support.

[23] I would suggest this painting is as indebted equally if not more to Raphael's *Donna Velata* than to the painting known as *La Fornarina*. Miró may have inferred from Vasari's remarks that the *Donna Velata* was of the same model as *La Fornarina.* Cf. Anne Umland, "Dutch Interiors and Imaginary Portraits, 1928-1929," in Umland 2008, 223, n. 26.

[24] I want to express my gratitude to Jim Coddington, Agnes Gund Chief Conservator at the Museum of Modern Art, for helping me understand the state of this picture and to confirm my sense of the relations of colors and effects Miró intended.

[25] Still more difficult to see is the array of virtually invisible points of blue in Miró's *Photo: ceci est la couleur de mes rêves* (1925; Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art), which I see as participating in the same kind of "projection" I'm talking about here.

[26] See William Jeffett, "Miró's Unhappy Consciousness: Relief-Sculptures and Objects, 1930-32," in de la Beaumelle, 88-89 and 93, nn. 59, 61, 64. [Note: I give the note numbers as they appear in the endnotes, which do not match the note numbers in the text.]

[27] Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context" in *Limited Inc.*, ed. Gerald Graff, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman and Samuel Weber (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 20.

Charles Palermo's two current research projects are an account of the importance of authority in the work of Pablo Picasso and Guillaume Apollinaire before cubism and inheritance as a metaphor for understanding in and around photography, from Peter Henry Emerson to Douglas Gordon. His *Fixed Ecstasy: Joan Miro in the 1920s* (2008) appeared in Penn State University Press' Refiguring Modernism series. He has spoken and published on Cézanne, cubism, Michel Leiris, Picasso, Apollinaire, Eugène Carrière, P.H. Emerson, Eugene and Aileen Smith, and James Agee's and Walker Evans's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

REVIEWS

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AUTONOMY?

TODD CRONAN

Review of Lisa Siraganian, ***Modernism's Other Work: The Art Object's Political Life*****. Oxford University Press, 2012.**

Special thanks to the editors of ***Radical Philosophy*** **for allowing me to reprint my review from issue 177 (Jan./Feb. 2013): 52-54.**

When Olafur Eliasson recently spoke of seeing "potential in the spectator—in the receiver, the reader, the participator, the viewer, the user," he may have thought he was seeing something new. Marcel Duchamp saw something similar in the 1950s when he thought to "attach even more importance to the spectator than to the artist." Duchamp pursued this idea as early as *The Large Glass* (1915-23), a work whose medium (glass) is defined by its transparency to the world around it. Duchamp was part of a generation of artists, one that included Man Ray, Mina Loy, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, who came to reject the frame as a conservative device that blocked the "flux of life" (as Loy put it). Duchamp's paradoxical tack was to literalize the Renaissance notion of art as a window onto the world, producing a work that was almost all frame. Producing a "picture" that was a window functioned as a critical gesture intended to undermine the frame's enforcement of the difference between art and life. Allan Kaprow, writing in 1973, got the point when he said that the "best part" of *The Large Glass* was that it was "a windowpane to look through; its actual configurations are forced into accord with the visual environment beyond them, for instance, a chocolate grinder superimposed on a kid picking his nose." But if Kaprow was still slightly cynical about the value of that "environment," artists and writers at least since Duchamp have positively reveled in the spectator's incorporation into the work. This is one half of the story Lisa Siraganian tells in her brilliant reappraisal of modernism.

The other half of her story revolves around an unexpected but persuasively defined group of writers—Gertrude Stein, Wyndham Lewis, Williams (in part), William Gaddis, and Elizabeth Bishop—who were fundamentally committed to the "irrelevance of the spectator to the meaning of the artwork." In the author's boldest formulation: "The meaning of a poem [for these writers] is entirely indifferent to the reader's emotion, the reader's context, or, for that matter, any type of judgment or perspective the reader could deliver." But it would be wrong to extrapolate from this view that these writers construed their work as indifferent to the world. There is a deep, if allegorical, sense of the political that haunts their practices. Writing against the increasingly dominant vision of politics as the expression of particularized bodies, these writers embraced a broadly universalist vision of the liberal subject. In a series of striking reversals of conventional notions of the political temper of her favored writers, Siraganian discovers the bonds between Stein's refusal of punctuation and her commitment to universal suffrage and civil liberties; between Lewis' critique of time-philosophy and his (tempered) embrace of representative democracy; between Williams' concrete poetry and his commitment to maternal progress and personal liberty; between Gaddis' vision of "disciplined nostalgia" (or forgery) and Bishop's aesthetics of bricolage and a resistance to corporate capitalism.

These authors' shared vision of meaning's autonomy was aggressively challenged by a group of artists and writers asserting the "necessary involvement of the spectator in the production of the art object's meaning." The latter group—including Duchamp, Loy, Williams (in part), Charles Olson, Amiri Baraka, as well as a range of communitarian critics of the liberal subject (discussed in a superb coda) such as Paul Gilroy, Juliana Spahr, Hayden Carruth, Leslie Marmon Silko, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, and Alain Badiou—points to the deep continuity between modernism and its postmodern critics. The latter writers also conceived a link between their formal poetics of the body and the political such that Olson's effort to "literalize the presence of the poet's syllables" was simultaneously an effort to give voice to the immigrant body while Baraka's vision of the poetic voice was "an aestheticized technology of racial community."

And if Siraganian convincingly shows how modernism anticipates the major post-1945 debates about the relationship between a work of art and the world, her central task is to retrieve a lost sense of the political dimension of autonomy. If for T. W. Adorno autonomy had to be defended and analyzed as a special (and crucial) form of politics, Siraganian asks us to see how the Critical Theory version of autonomy might "misrepresent the modernist ontology of the art object" it ostensibly defends. For Adorno, writing in the *Aesthetic Theory*, "the resoluteness of [the work's] distance [from the world]…concretizes the critique of what has been repulsed." Which is to say that for Adorno "what looks at first like indifference to the world transforms instead into total engagement." Writing against both Adorno and the New Critics (who also project a notion of critical "resistance"), Siraganian shows how a work's meaning *couldn't* be altered by its users, because it wasn't an object like other objects in the world. Any work that fails to maintain its autonomy, like any object, "is forever available to the perceptual experiences (as opposed to interpretations) of readers, spectators, or enterprising poets."

Moreover, Siraganian argues that the work's social immunity was the condition for the possibility of politics in general. Stein, Lewis, Williams, Gaddis and Bishop all understood their formal poetics, their commitment to the ontological difference between artworks and their reception, as a means to facilitate, if not produce, political results. By preserving the *reader's* autonomy, by letting their readers alone to respond (or not) to the work, these writers embraced a form of civil liberty. Stein's desire to "let each [reader] attend to their own business" was an effort to "protect the reader's particular, bodily interests and pursuits of private pleasure when faced with the author's interests." By the same token, those authors committed to the incorporation of the spectator's meaning into the work were logically committed to the "complete end to politics in any recognizable form." The latter claim emerges most forcefully in her closing chapter on Olson and Baraka, where both authors, despite their different ideological allegiances (immigrant embodiment for Olson, racial difference for Baraka), "share the same theory of and commitment to a poetic particularism as a way to safeguard, represent, and then share a perspective on the world, whether racial, ethnic, or political." When politics becomes a matter of perspectives, then the classical liberal claim to universal human justice becomes the problem to be solved rather than the ground of shared political action.

In a series of remarkable textual analyses Siraganian tracks the thematic status of frames in modernist texts between Stein and Olson. Stein's overlooked essay on "Pictures" from *Lectures in America* raises many of the central claims of the book as a whole. Pictures, on Stein's account, are airless things, each of which contains "a life of its own." A picture, Stein says, both "does and does not" belong in its frame. It does *not* belong to the *literal* frame, while it absolutely belongs to its *conceptual* frame. This is what Stein means when she describes the "problem of all modern painting" as the achievement of a work that "would remain out of its frame…even while it does not, even while it remains there." While most paintings exist within literal frames, they are not defined by that frame but rather by the artist's intent. Stein similarly sought to destroy the literal frame in her own writing by her notorious rejection of punctuation marks, nouns and proper names. These grammatical functions, like a literal frame, told the reader how to read (and to breathe). By removing superfluous grammatical functions, and removing bodily cues, her works are able to "mean what they mean regardless of her readers."

Like Stein, but in a satirical vein, Wyndham Lewis confronted the fashionable desire to bring art closer to life by eliminating the frame. In books like *The Childermass* and *Time and Western Man* Lewis derides various materialist visions of the work of art as "breathing materiality," something containing "*real* blood and tears." Lewis' dissatisfaction with this anti-representational impulse ultimately merged with a deepening commitment to representative democracy, opening up a striking reversal in his political thinking from his earlier affinity with fascism.

Siraganian's chapters on Williams and Gaddis and Bishop take up the problem of the conceptual frame through an exploration of Duchamp's readymade and Picasso's and Juan Gris' collage aesthetics. A close reading of Williams' "IV" from *Spring and All* shows how Williams sought to break the literal frames of language, those deadened conventions that emptied words of their meaning. Williams' vision of concrete poetry—"No ideas but in things"—is not an effort to escape representation, as it has usually been understood, but rather an attempt to renew its terms from within.

Like Williams, Gaddis (or his projection as the forger Wyatt in *The Recognitions*) sought to renew deadened forms through a retrograde mode of "disciplined nostalgia." Wyatt's acts of forgery are, together, a desperate attempt, in a world become commodity, to "create something new"; it is "an act of appropriation instead of plagiarism or counterfeiting." As Wyatt (and Gaddis) see it, copying an old master is a perverse act of preservation and renewal through a painstaking "act of recognizing, transforming, and placing a cultural artifact into [one's] personal memory and conceptualization." Similarly, Bishop plays the role of a forger in a series of astonishing literary and poetic reflections on kitsch. In poems like "Large Bad Picture," "In Prison," and "The Monument" Bishop acts as a "bricoleur, making a new, more valuable art object (her poem) out of a found and often kitsch object." What Williams, Gaddis and Bishop inevitably show is the historical constraints on the pursuit of autonomy. If Stein and Lewis denied the relevance of the beholder's share, then for this later generation—a generation that confronted the ubiquity of kitsch, a commodity defined by its appeal to consumers—one had no choice but to engage in a tactical warfare with the newly democratized spectator's demands. But it is this turn to the historical dynamics of anti-theatricality that stands in some tension with the more basic claim to a conceptual picture of intentionality. At times Siraganian's narrative is driven by an account of the "battling forces" between literal and conceptual frames but more often we read of the difference between frames as a difference in its "source." Before Marianne Moore "even picks up her pen" her work is constituted as poetry—the battle is won before it begins. Of course resolving the differences between anti-theatricality and *non*-theatricality would require another book in itself, one I presume less gripping than this one.

Todd Cronan is Assistant Professor of art history at Emory University. He is the author of *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2013); *Matisse* for Phaidon (2015); and articles on Brecht, Merleau-Ponty, Santayana, Simmel, Valéry and Richard Neutra. He is currently at work on two book projects. The first, *Seeing Photographically: Photographic Ontology and the Problem of Audience*, looks at photographic debates around the concept of "previsualization" from Alfred Stieglitz to Minor White including new considerations of the work of Weston, Adams, Callahan and Siskind. The second project, *Art at the End of History: Painting/Photography/Architecture/Theater/Film in the 1920s*, examines the claims and results of a vision of art after modernization had achieved its ends. At the center of the latter are the intense debates over which artistic medium was thought to best express the realities of a post-historical world.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2014 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

NONSITE.ORG IS AN ONLINE, OPEN ACCESS, PEER-REVIEWED QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF SCHOLARSHIP IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES
NONSITE.ORG IS AFFILIATED WITH EMORY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
© 2014 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
ISSN 2164-1668