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Modernist cultural critique: The visual arts and anthropology

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MODERNIST CULTURAL CRITIQUE
THE VISUAL ARTS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

by

DIANA LOUISE HILL

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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Modernist Cultural Critique
The Visual Arts and Anthropology
by Diana Louise Hill

Abstract

This thesis juxtaposes the comparable development of the written discourse surrounding three twentieth century modern art movements, Surrealism, American Abstract Expressionism and the performance art of Joseph Beuys, with that of cultural anthropology with regard to the role of each as cultural critique. This juxtaposition also examines the multiple layering suggested by the relationship between art, art history and art criticism to both, each other and to broader social and cultural arenas as comparable to that of anthropology to its 'other' as well as its own society. An anthropological analysis of the arts reveals their 'native' hermeneutic tradition and thus challenges anthropology to engage with realms of social discourse where it is not a privileged locus of interpretation. The crisis of representation faced by anthropology at present is compared to the crisis of subject matter which laid the foundation of modern art forty years ago.
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Introduction

Intellectual history is often described in terms of moments, moods and isms. In our present moment, the mood is epistemological and the ism post-modern. This epistemological mood has inspired a questioning of the foundations of every discipline: the arts, sciences and humanities. In the social sciences, for example, Marcus and Fischer argue that, "the goal of organizing disciplines by abstract generalizing frameworks that encompass and guide all efforts at empirical research is being fundamentally challenged" (1986:7). Such radical questioning, combined with a growing interest in hermeneutic approaches, opens up a space in which the frameworks of disciplines become apparent and the common supports between them exposed. Moreover, it is a playful moment where just such a metaphor of construction can be toppled and fragments can be laid side by side supported only by the self-conscious rendering of their limited possibilities.

In this essay I will take advantage of the moment to explore the discourses that surround the arts, with emphasis on Modern visual arts, and cultural anthropology. In the spirit of this playful, exploratory moment I offer this piece
as experimental—a juxtaposition of two fields which traditionally have only pointed at their specific intersections rather than the conditions of their cohabitation. I posit that the two disciplines offer interlocking accounts of modernism which are accompanied by implicit cultural critiques. In comparing the two fields I hope to have them expose themselves and each other to reveal the nature of their contemporary post-modern common ground.

The arts and cultural anthropology have often appropriated each other's innovations in both form and content. Early anthropological writings serve as examples of the historic connections between the two disciplines. Malinowski's ethnographies on the Trobriand Islanders laid the foundation and put forth the models on which anthropology was built. This new anthropology necessitated fieldwork and linguistic competency. It challenged all the claims of airmchair anthropology by setting forth the importance of functionalist guidelines for wholistic descriptions of cultures and societies. Thus rituals, myths and ceremonies could only be compared cross-culturally when taking into account the functional structure of which they were an integral part. For example, Malinowski insisted that myths were charters codifying complex rules for social relations and not the idle stories they appeared to be when divorced from their original social and cultural context. Because of his focus on new methodology Malinowski did much to place into question the anthropological findings on which works
like Sir James Frazer's, *The Golden Bough* were based. Malinowski, nonetheless, based his writing style on Frazer whose vast influence had reached the mythopoetic imagination of modern literature. Malinowski thus carried forth the literary trademark which was to become the ethnographic genre.

In the present epistemological mood however, forefathers such as Malinowski, and Frazer before him, are not safe. The debt to them is scrutinized and reevaluated, as evidenced in John Vickery's work on Frazer, *The Literary Impact of the Golden Bough* (1973). Vickery asks why, *The Golden Bough* is the preeminent work of Frazer's career and his time and suggests:

The answer lies in its genre or literary mode, for in essence it is less a compendium of facts than a gigantic romance couched in the form of objective research. It is this basically archetypal consideration that reveals *The Golden Bough*'s impact on literature to be not fortuitous but necessary and inevitable. (1973:128)

Such strong statements have precipitated what has been coined a "crisis of representation" (Marcus and Fischer 1986) in the social sciences. Because cultural anthropology is a discipline based on fieldwork experience which is represented through a writing genre, this crisis "arises from an uncertainty about adequate means of describing social
reality" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:8) and has exactly brought into question the literary roots of ethnography. The ethnographic genre recalls literary, descriptive and scientific styles. Inherent in each of these writing styles are hidden agendas and cross purposes. Marcus and Fischer, drawing on the work of Edward Said, suggest that: "rhetoric is itself an exercise in power, in effect denying subjects the right to express contrary views, by obscuring from the reader recognition that they might view things with equal validity, quite differently than the writer" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:1).

The turning of experience (inter-cultural) into objectified and reifying writing with the trappings of scientific positivism overshadows the underlying relationship of power and powerlessness between subject and object, self and other, author and interlocuter. Marcus and Fischer assert that social thinkers have grown "more suspicious of the ability of encompassing paradigms to ask the right questions, let alone provide answers", so that in this mood, "elevated, to a central concern of theoretical reflection, problems of description become problems of representation" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:9). The issues posed by these representational strategies, and recognized as a 'crisis of representation', suggests that anthropology cannot operate under the pretense that it is a science representing only an objectifiable set of behaviors and structures, nor can it legitimize itself on the basis of
liberal humanism or cultural relativity while being based in and covering over its past interests and roles in grand scale imperialism or individual exploitative power inequalities. A similar crisis of representation was fully grasped by early modern artists who found realism implicitly deceitful. A crisis of representation is, infact, the basis and foundation of modern art. The arts can therefore provide some important clues to anthropology as it struggles to get beyond the initial phases of recognition of such a crisis.

For example, Vickery in a move until recently very uncommon in anthropology, suggests that literary and aesthetic devices hold the key to Frazer's work and its success. He illuminates this work which anthropologists had long since put (however reverently) out to pasture. Vickery does this by addressing issues of new relevance brought on by a questioning of representation. He centers the work on a juxtaposition of form and content.

Vickery draws out what it is about the aesthetic techniques Frazer found to convey his material which gave the form as much impact as the content and made the work ultimately so suggestive:

And it was just this overwhelming need to render those human, fleeting assemblages of reality which time and history were rapidly bearing into the darkness that led in the twentieth century to such diverse movements as imagism, naturalism, regionalism, modernism, and
experimentalism in all their varieties and hues. To render the detail, to make the part do duty for the whole, to deny the narrative pattern and its endorsement of unidirectional time by dislocation of temporal sequences, to seek composite versions of selfhood in the fragments of the past—in a word, to live without the literal hope of immortality was the task confronting twentieth century literature. And in suggesting solutions and viable means, The Golden Bough was as fruitful as it was relentless in conveying the nature and depth of the problem. (Vickery 1973:37)

The appropriateness or fit of content to form and vice versa is recognized by Marcus and Fischer as an essential ingredient needed to revive anthropology as an expression which sparks the contemporary intellect and imagination: Anthropology is not the mindless collection of the exotic, but the use of cultural richness for self-reflection and self-growth. To accomplish this in the modern world of increased interdependence among societies and mutual awareness among cultures requires new styles of sensibility and of writing. (Marcus and Fischer 1986:X)

Vickery accords this sentiment with the inferences that the impact The Golden Bough has had on modern literature was
due in large part to Frazer's ability to capture the imagination of his time, to reflect all its major sociological, philosophical and aesthetic concerns. Frazer did so, however, under the guise of creating a study of the 'other' which became the implicit nature of anthropological studies and the base for its potential as cultural critique. It is in looking back that we recognize that The Golden Bough stands as a reflection of the needs of its own culture. Interestingly, it thus can be read today as a cultural critique differently than that the author intended. Frazer wrote a romance of the march of reason with a heavy accent on the power of that reason and of positive science. What is of interest from the perspective I am outlining is how Frazer's use of romance, the aesthetic means of coordinating information, images and evocations, culminates in a perspective which was also empowering to modernist art with all the philosophical, epistemological and ethical questions that art raises. As Vickery points out, it is clear that the creative artist interested in the fate of himself and of his age could, like the educated layman, have avoided becoming aware of The Golden Bough only with great difficulty. For whether he placed his faith in the individual, society or God, and whether he was concerned with what had been or should be, the definition and character of each had been affected by the great anthropological pattern
revealed in all its complexity and awe-inspiring strangeness by Frazer. (Vickery 1973:104)

His reference is markedly to creative artists and not anthropologists. From an anthropological perspective, by viewing it as a literary piece and as an expression of cultural criticism of his own society, Vickery has turned this classic work inside out and implicitly exposed the discipline belly side up.

The ability of anthropology to become cultural critique by creating its own cultural products (texts, ideas and institutions for example) strongly resembles equivalent capabilities of the arts. The arts, as a body of cultural critique and as cultural product/producers have been very forward in taking their place as a cultural institution and continue to actively debate their role in society. Anthropology might also become aware of itself as a cultural institution whose products have implications for its own and its host society. In its moment of self doubt, while debunking its scientific pretenses, anthropology as a cultural institution is searching for its appropriate role in society and thus its appropriation of concerns of the arts is understandable. As Marcus and Fischer suggest:

The juxtaposition of alien customs to familiar ones, or the relativizing of taken-for-granted concepts such as the family, power, and the beliefs that lend certainty to our everyday life, has the effect of disorientating the
reader and altering perception. Yet, the promise of anthropology as a compelling form of cultural critique has been largely unfulfilled. (Marcus and Fischer 1986:111)

I hope that in bringing the arts and anthropology together, they can enhance each other's critical capabilities.

Frazer's work is only one example of how at the turn of the century, art actively, in several instances, appropriated anthropological subjects and forms. Just as we live in a highly Freudianized and Picassoed society so too is it one which has been indelibly marked by now taken for granted anthropological insights. However, it seems that not since the turn of the century have we anthropologists captured our own cultural tradition in such a manner as to inspire the arts; in fact anthropology currently finds itself in the reverse tradition of appropriating from the arts.

The arts are considered cultural products par excellence. Put another way, they are in the domain of high culture from which anthropology has traditionally steered away. However, I have chosen to look at high culture because I am interested not as much in a sociology of art as in how the fine arts and the discourse that surrounds them has an analogous role to that of anthropology as cultural critique. Cultural critique is an ambiguous idea and term. I have not tried to narrow down any kind of definition of it but rather to draw from some of its structural possibilities and its spirit in an attempt to explore its possible domains.
I have tried to use the idea of cultural critique within the various contexts of art, criticism and anthropology as a heuristic. In early anthropological works such as Boas and Mead, direct engagement with the concerns of our society and culture were made very explicit. The idea that anthropology is a form of cultural critique still has great appeal and validity but because of the indirect means anthropology has used to express its critical capabilities they have been overlooked. Anthropology has had to dig through various levels of literary, scientific, and political liaisons and shared rhetorics to get back to some of its critical roots. Lest the metaphor run away with the meaning—it has not been a simple house cleaning, a sweeping down to the original baseboards. If cultural critique suggests anything, especially as we see in it interplay in the arts, is that it has a certain essential timeliness touching us by making links across specific boundaries at precise junctions. It changes tone, form, mood, impact, message and audience but has to capture some way to crossover each and all of them.

The underlying message of anthropology has been a respect for cultural relativism. In a society which has not learned to tolerate no less celebrate the pluralism and fragmentation of late capitalism and post-modernism cultural relativity expressed through anthropology as a social science has lost its effectiveness. While it still exists as a message it now has to find a new language to convey it and since the surrounding configuration of the context in which such a
message is delivered and received has changed, its changed implications have also to be taken into account.

As anthropology moves increasingly to studies of complex society and makes itself aware of native hermeneutic traditions, it is challenged with the question of how to incorporate cultural material with its own interpretive and introspective traditions. Western art history and criticism constitutes one such hermeneutic tradition. However, as in the case of art critic Clement Greenberg, the arena of interpretation, often focusing on philosophical, rhetorical or mathematical ideals for aesthetics has been very limited. Anthropology offers to lend sociological grounding to the aesthetic realm and provide the art historical endeavor with a hermeneutic self-critical accounting—through juxtaposing it to alternative accounts such alternative accounts being an object of anthropological recovery. On the other hand, I choose to look at twentieth century visual arts because they offer some clues as to how their hermeneutic tradition addresses its subject matter, art, like anthropology the other, which contains within it various readings of cultural critique—the indigenously generated and the superimposed.
* I *

The first chapter will explore the various tenets of surrealism which have spread across the visual and literary arts, philosophy and anthropology and which informed a new form of criticism of bourgeois society. Just as Frazer had captured the concerns of his time in a new literary mode that inspired several generations of anthropologists and writers alike, so surrealism based itself in aesthetic techniques which inherently inspired its critical dimensions and gained widespread cultural influence.

Marcus and Fischer (1986) outline three major movements of cultural criticism in this century: the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, American documentary criticism in the 1920's and 30's, and Surrealism centered in Paris. On the commonality between surrealism and anthropological thinking of the time, they write:

James Clifford (1981) suggests three features of a modern "ethnographic surrealist attitude" shared by the surrealist movement and anthropological ethnography. First, "to see culture and its norms—beauty, truth, reality—as artificial arrangements, susceptible to detached analysis and comparison with other possible dispositions, is crucial to an ethnographic attitude," and indeed is the
foundation of modern semiotic sense of how culture is constructed. Second, the inescapable availability of other beliefs, other social arrangements, and other cultures made the study of "the other" central to modern consciousness, and fostered an ironic attitude toward one's own culture. Thirdly both surrealism and anthropology came to view culture as a contested reality among various possible interpretations, espoused by parties with different situations of power relative to one another. (Marcus and Fischer 1986:123)

Marcus and Fischer also suggest that the 20's and 30's was a period of increased sensitivity in the social sciences as well as the arts. Major paradigms were being questioned and the critical dimensions of each field emphasized. The current period, started by the cultural and political upheaval of the 60's, has showed a renewed interest in the works of its earlier predecessors. This looking back has helped to define our situation as post-modern: that is, a modernist movement that defines itself in relation to previous modernisms (as opposed to a self-definition as an originary modernism defining itself against traditionalism).

This chapter will present three approaches to surrealism: the linguistic, the visual and the ethnographic and it will explore the appeal of surrealism to post-modern thinkers through the work of Surrealist poet and ethnographer Michel
Leiris, a critical essay on the work of surrealist painter Magritte by Michel Foucault, and the anthropological work of Michael Fischer on the use of Surrealist techniques in the Iranian cultural area.

* II *

In the realm of the arts there are several major tendencies of analysis. In the second chapter which considers the work of art critic Clement Greenberg and American Abstract Expressionism, I touch on three common approaches. The first is the internal development of the arts as proposed by art history and more recently by art criticism. Art historical approaches like formalism, fostered by Greenberg, accounted for art as an autonomous body of cultural activity never leaving the picture plane or only doing so to further mythologize the biographical input of the artist. The art historical discourse has a history of only drawing very selectively from other spheres such as psychology and history to discuss the development of art. Nonetheless the art historical discourse can be compared in measure to anthropology's internal development as, since the enlightenment, they have been part of the same wider intellectual history and cultural tradition of modernism. An example of this is perspectivism in the arts leading to Cubism and similar tendencies leading to cultural relativism in anthropology. The developments in art and anthropology
may be informed by similar historical events.

The historical is the second approach. It looks at developments outside the arts which have influenced modern art and also anthropology; such as colonial expansion and the juxtaposition of cultures. Other historical developments would include the effects of world markets and technologies for mass media communication and their impact on ideas of representation in the arts and the 'global village' in anthropology.

The third approach looks at considerations of sociological factors and shifts by such artists and critics as John Berger and Thomas McEvilley. Berger is a marxist writer, on occasion anthropologist and art critic who addresses the social conditions which inform visual aesthetics. In so doing he brings up questions of the role of art in society and art in a sociologic context. McEvilley, a widely read art historian and critique, draws from a wide range of intellectual and sociological history in his particular model of the cyclical complicity of art and society.

I look at Greenberg's work because it represents both the pinnacle and downfall of high modernism. His purist tendencies which were at first applauded because they expressed something quintessential about the modernist quest, collapsed, in part because his level of cultural critique clashed with those of the artists and art he had chosen. The multiplicity of implicit layers of cultural critique involved
looking at Greenberg's work and its relation to Abstract Expressionism form part of its appeal for this study. Through Abstract Expression Greenberg delivers a powerful message about the ideology of rationality involving in particular a transcendent search for laws, for purity and even positivism—it suggests a desire to locate the essential aesthetic experience pure and authentic. He provided us with a critical look at the reaction and manifestation of modernism in this period. I will briefly contrast Greenberg's perspective to those of art historians and critics, Irving Sandler and John Berger.

* III *

In the third chapter I will consider the work of artist Joseph Beuys who addresses the crossing over between art, science, society and politics. He engages the sociological in his work by using art as an arena for cultural critique.

Whereas Berger runs his criticism as a counter discourse to Greenberg's and formalism in general, Beuys attacks right at the center of high art. Where surrealism, at the cusp of modernism, had provided an extreme cultural critique, Greenberg, enthroning high modernism, offers a quite different kind (its absorption by the establishment did much to change its character). Beuys, at the cusp of post-modernism engages in a radical critique of art, culture, society and the configurations of modernism. He does not
offer a counter discourse but rather burroughs a hole not only in the idea of aesthetics but the entire structure in which art is produced and received.
Chapter One

Locating Surrealist Epistemes in Language, Art and Society.

Surrealism presented itself as destroying, exploding from within the deeper irrational psychic interior; and violating sedate and deadening middle class complacency. The point of this destructiveness was to recapture creativity.

M.M.J. Fischer

Born in the 1920's and spanning the concerns of aesthetics and the social sciences, Surrealism is one of the most important manifestoes of modernism. Its adherents questioned what constituted reality and the authority by and with which it could be represented. It was a prelude to a philosophical and epistemological questioning of the nature of the sign and representation currently so central to many post-modern thinkers. In a classical looking back to find the rhyme and reason for the present moment, I will, in this chapter, explore three works on surrealism. My intention is that this reconstruction of certain facets of the surrealist era and its tenets, while unavoidably recontextualized, will make clearer the connections between surrealism, modernism and post-modernism and suggest how the social and aesthetic discourses on surrealism might be able to 'talk' to each
other. I have put together three very different approaches and studies of surrealism which suggest the manner in which contemporary scholarship comes to construct itself and its past.

In this reconstructive process certain, once marginalized, scholars and artists gain notoriety for what we now conceive as the interesting facets and nuances of their work which make them, for us, 'ahead of their time'. In the first section I explore the work of one such figure, Michel Leiris, a French anthropologist and surrealist poet. In his articles, 'On Ethnographic Surrealism' (1981), and 'Power and Dialogue' (1983), James Clifford cites Leiris several times in his footnotes, hinting that he may be a marginalized ghost--in--the--anthropological--closet with hitherto unrecognized interesting qualities. Leiris deserves to be brought out of the margins and into the text. Of all those contemporary to Leiris also interested in ethnography and surrealism, he is the one who most actively pursued both. Our ignorance of Leiris' anthropological contributions is due in part to the fact that Leiris directed his major ideas to his surrealist writing and not to anthropology. I therefore extrapolate from both his anthropological work and his other literary productions and political interests. His involvements with the arts and politics were lived critiques of what he saw to be the shortcomings of anthropology and vice versa. I am aware that such a reformulation of Leiris' work moves this analysis into the shaky realm of
implied--read into--'intentions' of life and work (not only his but mine as well).

Underpinning his work is a deep concern with the implications of authority in representation. I have included him here because his surrealist tutelage gave his work a sensitivity to the fundamental issues of the fallibility of representation which went unnoticed by other anthropologists of his time and indeed is only now being taken up in earnest.

The second section of the chapter looks at Michel Foucault's *Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe*, an essay on the work of surrealist painter Magritte. Foucault tries on the cap of post-modern art critic by 'reading' Magritte's paintings--a common but still problematic expression and activity when applied to the visual arts. Continuing from this linguistic bias he goes on to celebrate the dialogic, liberated play of similitude. But he does so in a retexualization of the work he worked so hard to liberate and all without any contemplation on the nature of aesthetics. Foucault tries to give an aesthetic reading the grounding or teeth that have too often been missing in art discourse. But the course he sets does not address aesthetic theory directly nor does he head for any specific socio-historic context. His reading is of intellectual history. He makes his discoveries in uncharted waters, which may deposit us home lost and wet or find us at the steps to a wonderful new land.

Critiquing surrealist art in the context of a history of ideas, Foucault shows how it contains the premise on which
post-modern art is built: reproduction/similitude rather than representation. For Foucault the Classical Age was one of representation. The move into the Modern Age is accelerated with the work of Kant who challenges the ontological hierarchy implicit in representation. This shift is hinted at in the Velázquez painting, Las Meninas. The painting reflects the dilemma of not being able to represent the act of representing and strongly suggests the problematic that lay at the cusp of modernism. Magritte also seems to have this power to transcend his era by so totally encompassing the issues of his modern age; his work centers on the act of representing with an investigation so thorough as to imply what lies ahead.

This consideration of eras takes us into the third section in which I consider Michael Fischer's anthropological work on the use of surrealist literary and visual techniques in the short stories and films of the Iranian cultural area. In his article, "Towards a Third World Poetics" (1984), he illuminates the larger framework of modernism which surrealist necessitates in order to function as a powerful and effective means of expression. He is helpful in delimiting the socio-historic context in which aesthetic material can be adapted and borrowed cross-culturally. In so doing he brings to light the conditions of modernism which are necessitated for it to flourish. Surrealism is only translatable from France to Latin America to the Middle East when certain basic tenets of modernism are found in each
place. Post-modern techniques are not found in the Middle East because they can not be translated in a context where post-modern concerns do not yet exist.

Fischer points to differences between the relationship of modern and post-modern conditions, to the aesthetic techniques which reflect them. While I am suggesting that surrealism is especially interesting because it contains inklings of the post-modern which kindle the contemporary imagination, Fischer reminds us not to lose sight of what conditions made it so significant and effective originally. Surrealism cannot simply be translated or read as post-modern just as post-modern aesthetic techniques will not take in a modernist context. By extension of his argument on the close relationship of surrealism and modernism implied is that, as Fredric Jameson suggests in his article, 'Postmodernism or the Cultural logic of late capitalism' (1984), post-modern aesthetic techniques reflect and help to articulate a socio-economic condition such as late capitalism with its vast implications for society at large.

I have also chosen to use this article here because of the sensitive manner in which aesthetic material is analyzed on its own grounds and in a social context. He shows how art can function as cultural critique for the society in question and as valuable material in an anthropological analysis.
* I *

Leiris: 'Poet of Surrealist inclinations in search of the concrete.'

J. Clifford

Manifestos, movements, -isms and crises, like inventions, have precedents and forebearers. They do not spring like Athena from the head of Zeus, full grown and ready to do battle. The current crises in anthropology, as it is perceived by some, is predominantly a shifting of focus towards a set of problems which have always been implicit in the task and the vision of the discipline. In the short span of its history anthropology has had but a handful of generations. Each has had advocates in the diverse camps of theoretical and ethnological works the discipline has fostered. The ruling tendency has always swung from one to the other camp with the opposing camps called variously: evolutionist/diffusionist, conservative/liberal, synchronic/diachronic, monist/dualist, and symbolic/materialist. Each generation has also had its peripheral figures whose contributions have helped, wittingly or not, to swing the tide of theoretical tendency over to the 'other side'.

The work of these figures has often crossed into other disciplines. The work of Gregory Bateson is one such noted example, Michel Leiris, another less noted. Leiris, born 1901, has had a long and varied career. His work has spanned the Surrealist moment of 1920's Paris, ethnological training and the Dakar-Djibouti Mission in the 30's, military service
and the resistance during World War II, anti-colonial and anti-racist tracts in the 50's, fieldwork in Haiti, and three decades of service to the Musée de l'Homme. Throughout he has been poet, ethnographer, writer and art critic.

As an early writer, activist and member of a surrealist cohort, Leiris was involved with such projects as the publication "Documents". "Documents" combined and juxtaposed images as well as texts from the mundane mass produced to those exotic images that were coveted as the trophies of ethnography and colonialism. "Documents" was the perfect surrealist vehicle; it called into question the privileged reality of bourgeois consciousness by revealing other possible realities which existed simultaneously: dream worlds, exotic, erotic and subconscious worlds. Through these collages, juxtapositions and the highlighting of the subconscious surrealism called into question the authority and the authenticity of the represented world. This surrealist tenor and theme was to be threaded throughout the work of Leiris.

Working on "Documents", Leiris was introduced to the ethnographer/adventurer Marcel Griaule with whom he would later embark on the famous Dakar-Djibouti Mission. It was after this mission and his ethnological training that Leiris' increased interest in social and cultural phenomena led him to join a small group called "College De Sociologie". It was a "loose collection of avant-garde intellectuals" who had turned to sociology signalling "a rejection of what they saw
as surrealism's over identification with literature and art, its excessive subjectivism and concern with automatic writing, individual dream experience, and depth psychology" (Clifford 1981:560). Their goal was "an attempt to reintegrate scientific rigor with personal experience in the study of cultural processes" (Clifford 1981:560).

While the "College de Sociologie" represented a break with the Surrealists and their demands for the art's transcendent role in society, surrealist themes had nonetheless already indelibly marked Leiris' work. Some of the members concerned themselves with the power of sacrifice and advocated the "regenerative processes of disorder and the necessary interruptions of the sacred in everyday life" (Clifford 1981:560). Leiris himself was preoccupied with "those autobiographical moments in which the articulation of self and society are brought into consciousness" (Clifford 1981:560). While Bataille plotted communal ritual sacrifices for the Place De La Concorde, Leiris' subversive act was more subtle but ultimately of considerable impact. Convinced neither of the supremacy of art nor the cold abstractions of the social sciences, Leiris' work is tinged with a healthy dose of doubt. Doubt which left him open to envision projects more sensitive than those of his avant-garde or social science colleagues. For instance, through one of Leiris' most important projects, his exploration in autobiography, he intimated questions of representation, power and of the political implications of
their relationship, which are being asked again today.

The body of Leiris' contribution to the genre of autobiography is considered by some to be his most ground breaking and transcendent work. Lejeune describes the sequence of Leiris' work on autobiography as moving from a modern solution to a traditional problem to the posing of an entirely new problem. In his early work, "childhood memories are treated; the classical problem of thematic composition is given an appropriately modern (surrealist) solution--the montage of a constellation of images; it is a literature of sexual confession re-viewed and corrected in the light of Freud, but essentially this early work is not far removed from the tradition inaugurated by Rousseau and revived several years earlier in Gide" (Lejeune 1975:8, all translations mine). With Biffures and the works that follow sexual history disappears behind the history of the individual as "etre de langage". But with the later work it became clear that Leiris has had in mind all along a project to explore individual language itself as the fundamental arena of intimate research. This is fully evident in Glossaire, his work most inspired by surrealism. It was a series of play on and with words combined with a narrative of dreams. He writes in the preface:

En dissequant les mots que nous aimons, sans nous soucier de suivre ni l'etymologie, ni la signification admise, nous decouvrons leurs vertus les plus cachees et les ramifications
secretes qui se propagaent a travers tout le
language, canalisees par les associations de
sons, de formes et d'idees. Alors le langage
se transforme en oracle et nous avons la (si
tenu qu'il soit) un fils pour nous guider, dans
le Babel de notre esprit.
(In dissecting the words that we love without
having to follow either their etymological or
common meaning, we discover their most hidden
virtues and their secret ramifications which
permeate all of language and which are mediated
by the associations of sounds, forms, and
ideas. Thus language becomes the oracle and
provides us, however tenuously, with a thread
to guide us in the Babel of our spirit.)

As language is to serve as the guide to the Babel of our
spirits so Leiris is to lead us from the simple confessional
style of _L'Afrique Fantome_ to this more sophisticated ideal
of autobiography that is constructed though and in language
itself. For Leiris language takes on a unique associational
life in the individual which is shaped by, but also helps to
shape, his interior and exterior reality. Working as he did
with this idea, Leiris is led to ask the ultimate question of
ethnography and representation: if the self cannot be
represented with authority or in a privileged systematic
manner (because the self is only self constructed through its
own understanding and subsequent use of language), how then
is it even possible to conceive of representing the other? In an interview Leiris even states that he found it impossible to write novels because he could not invent other characters.

Leiris saw the ethnographic and autobiographical work on the self as indispensible to each other, as Lejeune notes, "in the measure where autobiography is fundamentally an endeavor of anthropological description, a renovating of the autobiographical genre is only conceivable if it elaborates on the uses of this new model for the comprehension of man" (1975:9). For Leiris the comprehension of man necessitated not only anthropology but psychology and the language of poetics.

Leiris was eventually to privilege the use of the language of poetics as the most potentially expressive and authentic mode of expression—especially for autobiography, but first he had to work through L'Afrique Fantôme. This work marks more than a detour, it forged a path parallel to his autobiographical work, one which led to his later ethnographic works as well as his anti-colonial, anti-racist and anti-scientistic writings. For Leiris the problems of representing and understanding the self were translated into the parallel problems for the other. L'Afrique Fantôme, in its more personal and humane nature, reveals his candor in extrapolating from experience the potential fault lines of the social sciences.

Reflecting on L'Afrique Fantôme Leiris writes about
himself (in the third person):

Weary of the life he was leading in Paris, looking toward the voyage as a poetic adventure, a metaphoric for knowing concretely, an experiment, a symbolic means of stopping aging by travelling through space to negate time, the author who was interested in ethnography because of the significance he attributed to this science with regards to the clarification of human reflections and communication, took part in a scientific mission which crossed Africa. (1964:54)

Throughout the entries (the work is written in journal travelogue style), Leiris alludes to his desire to escape his isolation and hopes that the trip would help him get past his personal isolation which he sees as congruent to the problems of cultural isolation. Though such a reconciliation eludes him he strives to achieve the authentic and to experience or engage in the most basic and fundamental of levels. He continues from the above passage:

his attempt at evasion was but a defeat and moreover he doesn't any longer believe in the value of evasion: in spite of capitalism which more and more renders all real human rapport impossible, isn't there anywhere but the bosom of one's civilization that the occidental might have the chance to realize himself "sur le plan
passionel'?

He will learn, one more time, all told, that here like everywhere else man can not escape his isolation; so he'll go off again, one day or another, snatched up by some new fantome--although, this time, without illusions. (Leiris 1964:54)

Leiris' radical politics are only enhanced by this voyage where he identifies his own human vulnerability with those of the colonials he sees being beaten and wronged continuously. Leiris found the direct power conflicts between the Africans and whites abhorrent. In several entries he vents his disgust toward whites who maim and kill Africans as examples to others. This direct violence is exaggerated for him because he couples it with his own feeling of ineptitude in reaching Africans for mutual emotional bonds and more fundamentally this violence becomes a kind of projection of his feelings toward himself: his inability to find a resting place between his detachment, isolation, loneliness and guilt. Leiris' brand of empathy is not naive or 'well intentioned'; it is inspired by both a personal and critical sense of doubt. His struggle for self and a heightened awareness of individual and cultural isolation make him sincere toward his fellows.

He extends his struggle to a political vision which would have anthropologists be advocates for native rights and
interests safeguarded against those of the colonialists. He also advocates bilingual and bicultural education to be offered but not forced (Leiris 1964: 123-145). Leiris was the first to write on the political implications and relations of ethnography and colonialism. He argued that anthropologists must study culture as a living, changing thing. Culture must not be preserved or romanticized or turned into folklore. Any cultural essence was to be found in change and adaptation. Of all anthropologists of his time, Leiris wrote the definitive UNESCO report on the misnomer, Race. If I am right in assuming the connection between Leiris' struggle for 'self' which leads him to his model of the 'other' then it seems that this UNESCO report and his short but compelling "L'ethnographie devant le colonialism" (Leiris 1969) is a culminating inventory of issues important to Leiris; he combines his politics (pluralistic—stemming from his more radical surrealist days) with his ethnography (sensitive to issues of power in the field and through representation). His interest in doing both pieces reflects his appreciation for the negritude movement, for African art (on which he wrote several books and essays) and for the friendships, such as he had with 'evolvée' and author Aimé Césaire.

In the Unesco and colonial pieces Leiris clearly states his aversion to the scientism which anthropology and the social sciences had adopted. It is a critique which began and was most clearly stated in both the form and content of
L'Afrique Fantome. The Dakar-Djibouti Mission represented Leiris' first brush with ethnography and already he found that the abstractions of social science constrained him in writing what he wanted to be the most true, most objective (about being subjective) and sincere document he could write. He writes (while looking at possession cults) "I'd rather be possessed than study the possessed. I'd rather have cardinal than scientific knowledge of a Zarine." This sentiment is, however, conspicuously missing from his other ethnographic work.

Some fifteen and twenty-five years after the Dakar-Djibouti mission Leiris wrote a long piece on the secret language of the Dogon and another on the theatrical aspects of the possession cults of the Gondar. While their subject matter is suited to Leiris, surprising is the apparent conventionality of form. While Leiris was fascinated by secret languages and the language of secrets, he complains often in L'Afrique Fantome about the work involved in collecting and transcribing them. What appears, however, in the work on the Dogon is an introductory ethnography on the use of these languages and two hundred pages of collected songs, poems, and texts all transcribed and translated each in a literal manner and an edited more fluid rendition. The work is a chronicle, it is encyclopedic, a description of the collected material seemingly in its most bare form. There are no subjective hedges but also only a minimum of paradigms and no pretense
at a comprehensive overview. Also in giving the two translations he pointed to the subtleties of representation inherent in all levels of language and meaning. Why did he publish it? Perhaps his job at the Musée de l'Homme dictate it?

The second work goes back to *L'Afrique Fantome* and extrapolates from the various entries dealing with possession cults. Through this reconstruction he goes back and questions the "theatrical" aspects of possession cults—though it seems that he might be questioning the authenticity of the whole activity. He asks: Do the theatrical aspects of possession point to a possible sociological maneuvering on the part of the possessed? This question would have made him very uncomfortable if posed in *L'Afrique Fantome*. Here, twenty-five years later, he is willing to let down his guard—authenticity could be tampered with. It's almost a humorous piece. It is not full of the seriousness which pervades his earlier work. He has made room for playfulness in life and ritual.

The only other fieldwork that Leiris did was in Haiti and the French Caribbean. It also dealt with possession and sacrifice. It included a study, "Note sur l’usage de chromolithographie catholique par les voudouisantes d’Haiti" (1964:157-168). The study explored the mixing of catholic saints and Voodoo symbols in visual representations. He claimed that the synthetic move could be understood as a system of correspondence or as the two religions talking to
each other. This and his other Caribbean studies are very much in keeping with his interests in living culture and change. Pristine cultures never had interested him as he claimed they did not and never had existed. Both he and Griaule had been adamant on this point earlier in relation to African art. Pieces which included modern iconography such as rifles and modern trinkets were not devalued in aesthetic quality. Leiris later critiqued Tristes Tropiques for the mythical time frame (not a living one) in which Levi-Strauss suspended the Indians (Leiris 1964: 199).

Secret language, possession cults, and living cultures are the themes of Leiris' ethnographic work. Simultaneously for a different audience (literary rather than anthropological) he toils, as a writer, with the problems of self, language, and authenticity. While his autobiographical work goes beyond his self to a general notion of self—it is a discourse that runs the danger of closing in on itself. The parallel ethnographic discourse provides an affirmative, legitimizing arena. The almost obsessive and sanctified self is taken into the social world. Leiris does not theorize on the self and apply it to society or vice versa as G.H. Mead or Durkheim did. However his deep felt sensitivity to the self in language and to its constructed nature as well as to issues of representation, are evident in his reflection and critical thinking on colonialism, ethnography, capitalism, and power.

I would like briefly to compare Leiris to one of his
teachers and the major French anthropologist of Leiris' time--Marcel Mauss. With few exceptions French anthropologists before 1950 received their training from Mauss or those who had been his colleagues and/or students (Lukes 1985). Mauss was Griaule's teacher and academic sponsor for the Dakar-Djibouti mission. He also greatly influenced Lienhardt, another of Leiris' teachers. Although Mauss and Leiris came out of the same Paris of 1925, their contributions are worlds apart; it is the difference between them which makes their comparison interesting.

Leiris and Mauss were both socialists and in the broadest of frameworks they had similar concerns and overlapping intellectual social spheres (the Paris intellectual/art"scene" (Clifford 1981)). Mauss however came from a background in social theory and social science largely influenced by his long apprenticeship and collaboration with Durkheim. The Publication of L'Annee Sociologique was quite the collaborative endeavor for which, especially in later years, Mauss took considerable editorial and administrative responsibility. This effort was not only aimed at intellectual collaboration, it was almost an experiment in living. It was modelled after their social goals.

The work Mauss did under and with Durkheim centered on religion, sacrifice, and collective representations and consciousness. He was interested in looking at the relations of groups and individuals and the mechanisms--total social facts--which would cross-cut society and which created
cultures within cultures all loosely but importantly connected.

Leiris came from a different vantage point—his background was an artistically inspired rebellious individualism. He was younger than Mauss and nurtured not on apprenticeship, collaboration, and years of academia (philosophy, religion, anthropology), but on the surrealist movement with its manifestos and schisms and its petty and grand scale unorthodox politics. The surrealist avant-garde moment was Leiris' personal and intellectual youth—formative years, which left a trace. Mauss was not oblivious to this surrealist tenor—his approach, his use of paradox and antithesis, especially in teaching, was quite surrealist in spirit. The fact that, as Clifford's remarks, for Mauss "ethnographic truth, was restlessly subversive of surface realities" (1981:148) could not have been missed by Leiris and his colleagues.

Mauss' foundations in spite of his surrealist presentations were sociological and grounded. Total social facts was a device which allowed him to do comparative ethnography without violating the integrity of a culture. From this comparative ethnography came Mauss' elegant social critique, as for example, his concluding remarks of The Gift. Mauss never went as far as to abandon the idea of cultural unity as surrealism might have demanded—instead he created a pluralistic (and often cooperative) view of interacting cultural wholes.
The content of Mauss' cultural critique was not far removed from Leiris'—only it was couched in a more conservative form. Leiris was not Jewish as was Mauss and though Mauss had given up his Jewish orthodoxy he still operated in academically and socially directed spheres which struggled with such things as the Dreyfus case in French academia. After Durkheim and other close colleagues died Mauss was almost selfless in his devotion to carrying on the work of the Année and other editorships. Durkheim had instilled in Mauss' work a somewhat old fashioned form of the morals he had feared were so lacking in society.

Leiris could have been a cliché of avant-garde self-conscious alienation and chic doubt bordering on nihilism, but because his self-conscious doubts were based in a deep interest in language as mediation and medium of representation, of self, of others, of secrets of possession as both retold and related, he did not succumb to the solipsistic and effete. He was not brought up with the household Jewish guilt and implied responsibilities of Mauss, but he did survive the wars and his guilt was French, Modern, and Colonial. His comparative sociology was not ethnographic but epistemological. It is the modern/post-modern air of Leiris' work — theoretically poor but epistemologically and hermeneutically rich along with his elan and literary style which catch the contemporary imagination.

Early in the Dakar-Djibouti mission Leiris feels himself adrift; he is unsure of his role and his job with the
mission. The others are busy collecting artifacts and data or making maps. He has only to watch them watching, reflect on their reflecting, and document their documenting. It is in his ambiguity and reflexivity that his work is intriguing and engaging, for as Clifford notes, "He is a poet of surrealist inclination in search of the concrete" (1981:157). In this irony lies perhaps the key to Leiris' work.

* II *

M. Foucault: Ceci n'est pas une pipe; Magritte and Non-Affirmative Painting.

Magritte, long considered a surrealist,...a surrealist who applied to the connections between language and experience in a variety of ways that anticipate realization of the semiotic dimension of radical art by postmodernists.

T. Dumm

Magritte, as we shall see, is a painter whose inclinations, as analyzed by Foucault, began with many of the same surrealist issues but takes us beyond the concrete and the parameters of the representational concerns of surrealism.

Foucault is interested in systems of thought and knowledge, in mentalities and how they manifest themselves through time and across experience. He is also interested in discontinuities of thought which are smoothed over and hidden so as to maintain, within our chaos, the resemblance of
order. The art of Magritte as analyzed by Foucault is not only an explicit manifestation of a system of knowledge it also points out and makes glaring the discontinuities of its own foundation.

-Las Meninas-

Unlike Fischer in our next section, Foucault does not concentrate on any sociological factors in looking at the representational techniques of a given era. He focuses instead on changes in systems of knowledge which can be uncovered in a careful reading of a painting. In The Order of Things (1973), he uses Velaquez's painting, Las Meninas, as a tableau from which to explore the Classical Age. Foucault then catapults into the modern age with the work of Kant. In Ceci n'est pas une pipe, the work of Magritte is explored as suggestive grounds for a new system of knowledge—for a move beyond the modern.

One of the problems anthropologists have in dealing with art and art historical discourse is that the works are so often removed from their social contexts and are attributed to individual creation, artist or genius. The New Criticism which reigned until recently removed any context beyond the 'text' of the piece. (Anthropology has, however, perhaps carried out its own misreadings of art. It could instead lend not only a sociological but hermeneutic interpretation
of art historical discourse which has only superficially recognized a need for it.) Semiotics contributes a more systematic and structuralist approach to the text or piece but still falls short of incorporating any wider context within the analysis that anthropology might be satisfied with. Foucault wanted to downplay "his interest in social institutions, and concentrated almost exclusively on discourse, its autonomy and discontinuous transformations." He attempts "to divorce discourse as far as possible from its social setting and to discover the rules of its self-regulation" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:17). This perspective while also somewhat unsettling to the anthropologist can be synthesized and cross-referenced with other social material as evidenced by Fischer. 'Autonomous discourse' can also be given new context by placing it within the radical social, historical and political framework required in Critical Theory--producing social context writ large.

Although Foucault's analysis of art may not be sociologically grounded and is thin in traditional art concerns by the standards of an art critic, he ultimately discovers a very rich historical and intellectual mapping of states of knowledge as they function in visual representation. He does this most overtly with reference to Las Meninas; "What Las Meninas represents is the world of representations laid out in an orderly fashion on a table, in this instance in the painting itself." (Dreyfus and Rabinow
1982:25). For Foucault the painting represents clearly the major existential problems of the Classical Age:

the Classical Age set itself the project of constructing a universal method of analysis which would yield perfect certainty by perfectly ordering representations and signs to mirror the ordering of the world, the order of being—for being in the Classical Age had a universal order. The place in which this ordering could be displayed was the table. There the universal order could lay forth in a clear and progressive fashion the representations which would give us the picture of the true order of the world. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:19)

Foucault uses an analysis of the painting not only as a catchy device to enhance his argument but also as a neat encapsulation of his ideas on the Classical Age. The painting is a cultural product from which to extrapolate, first on a visual level leading to more abstracted principles. In the Classical Age:

the key was that the medium of representation was reliable and transparent. The role of the thinker was to give an artificial description of the order which was already there... He constructed an artificial language, a conventional ordering of signs... man clarified
but did not create; he was not a transcendental source of signification:...the activity of human beings in constructing the table could not itself be represented:... there was a place for the human-knower, as a rational animal, high in God's hierarchy, but Not for the representer per se;... (in the Classical Age) Man cannot enter the Classical picture without the whole scheme undergoing a radical transformation. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 20)

Foucault finds the key to the painting to be the paradox by which it "turns on the impossibility of representing the act of representing". Thus "the painting is perfectly successful; it shows all the functions required for representation and the impossibility of bringing them together into a unified representation of their activity". And he continues, "Everything is referred to a single point where, by the internal logical of the painting and of the age, the artist, model and spectator should all be" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:25,26). I.e.:

What is represented are the functions of representation. What is not represented is a unified and unifying subject who posits these representations and who makes them objects for himself. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:25)

With this Foucault switches modes and eras to consider the written work of Kant. In Kant he finds the emergence of
the subject, of man. Foucault does not seem to have much place in his project for the arts thereafter. The only other analysis of a painter's work is again as a guide to the crossing of eras with Magritte. Before we turn to Magritte let us focus in on Foucault's concept of the modern hinged on his reading of Kant: "The analysis of man's mode of being as it has developed since the 19th century does not reside within a theory of representation, its task, on the contrary, is to show how things in general can be given to representation, in which conditions, upon what grounds" (Foucault 1973:337). The analysis of representation becomes Kant's 'analytic.' It introduces a new level of representation and reflexivity but also implies a distancing, a deepening of theory reminiscent of the Platonic move from discourse to dialectic. We will consider later whether Foucault's analysis of Magritte transcends this concern with the conditions of representation.

It is in the analytic of Kant, which Foucault calls the "analytic of finitude", that he finds the key to understanding modernism. Foucault proposes that the world and the knowledge which seem to limit man in the Classical Age are seen in the Modern Age as not imposed on man but as decreed by man; "Thus in a startling inversion man claims total knowledge by virtue of his limitations" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1984: 29).

Modernity begins with the credible and ultimately unworkable idea of a being who is
sovereign precisely by virtue of being enslaved, a being whose very finitude allows him to take the place of God. This startling idea which breaks forth full blown in Kant, that "the limits of knowledge provide a positive foundation for the possibility of knowing" (OT 317), Foucault calls the analytic of finitude. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 30).

This analytic moves us away from representation:
The connection of the positivities with finitude, the reduplication of the empirical and the transcendental, the perpetual relation of the cognito to the unthought, the retreat and return of the origin, define for us man's mode of being, and not longer in the analysis of representation that reflection since the 19th century has sought a philosophical foundation for the possibility of knowledge. (Foucault 1982: 335)

With Magritte, Foucault takes up representation once again, though this time he show us a different configuration of representational concerns. He searches Magritte's work for shifts in the 'possibility of knowledge' and while he does not use the same explicit terminology as found in The Order of Things, Magritte evidently signals a similar shift of eras. His closing reference in, Ceci n'est pas une pipe is to suggest an affinity between Magritte's work and Andy
Warhol's, considered by many the spearhead of post-modernism in art.

-Magritte-

Magritte's was an art more committed than any other to careful and cruel separation of graphic and plastic elements. M. Foucault.

Foucault looks for discontinuity—for the gaps in thinking which are nervously covered over. These breaks, like Derrida's gaps/spaces, can be most telling. Foucault shows up our most sacred social institutions and mentalities: prison systems, sexuality, psychiatry. These institutions do not have the 'natural' foundings they claim. They are in fact mitigated by power and history. Foucault finds one such discontinuity in Magritte who does not hide it but celebrates it, widens it, probes it. Magritte breaks with modernist thinking by confronting the relationship of graphic and plastic elements in art. He does so literally (graphically) in pieces like, Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe, and more abstractly in his visual pieces which play at similitude while mocking both representation and resemblance and thus propose the non-affirmative painting.

Foucault compares Magritte's paintings to calligrams—each painting both forms a calligram and unravels it. The calligram traditionally has three roles: to augment the alphabet, to repeat something without the aid of rhetoric
and to trap things in a double cipher. The calligram is tautological but in opposition to rhetoric (Foucault 1982:21). This new form of calligram is Foucault's first lead-in to the profound (but playful) nature of Magritte's work: "the calligram aspires playfully to efface the oldest opposition of our alphabetized civilization: to show and to name; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read (Foucault 1982:21). Magritte takes the calligram a step further--he perverts it, "thereby disturbing all traditional bonds of language and image" (Foucault 1982: 22).

Foucault starts the essay with a look at the two painted versions of This is Not a Pipe. He goes through all the possible inversions, reversions and references and their meanings: Is the pipe not a pipe or the sentence not the pipe or the foreground pipe not the pipe as opposed to the free floating pipe that hovers above like a Platonic ideal but that again is not a pipe etc.... The analysis itself is a hall of mirrors showing the infinite inversions of an unanswerable, Which is, is not the pipe? Foucault finally conjures the image of the pipe breaking into pieces. Foucault's analysis mimics Magritte who has set up the hall of mirrors and then shattered it, leaving not a trace of the 'original'. Magritte has constructed a calligram and negated it. The 'unraveled calligram' by its failure leaves its 'ironic remains' (Foucault 1982:24). Calligrams name things twice--Magritte then unnames them. Foucault introduces the
calligram as a device by which to explore the differences between resemblance and similitude that Magritte has placed in a unique relationship.

Looking at the work of Klee, Kandinsky and Magritte, Foucault outlines several principal rules which have governed painting since the 15th century: 1), painting has posited an equivalence between the 'fact of resemblance and the affirmation of the representative bond' (Foucault 1982:32), where 2), resemblance to an object affirms the representation of the object. Kandinsky on the other hand, disassociates resemblance and affirmation; while Klee does away with painting conventions which separate and hierarchize verbal signs and visual representations. Traditionally there was an assertion of the 'separation between plastic and representation (which implies resemblance) and linguistic reference (which excludes it)' (Foucault 1982:32). Foucault shows these two principles to be the tension of classical painting. Separations between linguistic signs and plastic elements and the equivalence of resemblance and affirmation are challenged overtly by Klee and Kandinsky and implicitly in the project of Magritte. Magritte's is an art of the 'same' liberated from the 'as if'. It pursues "as closely as possible the indefinite continuation of the similar, but excising from it any affirmation that would say what it resembled" (Foucault 1982:45). Foucault seems to be suggesting that in his use of similitude Magritte constructs an art made of reference (which is circular, indefinite and
given to reproduction) rather than of representation. This art then functions similarly to language which Foucault seems very disposed to privilege.

In classical painting there was a relationship between paintings and their titles, paintings and narrative, and paintings and their objects (those represented) which maintained an order Magritte could not:

Classical painting spoke and spoke constantly—while constituting itself entirely outside language; hence the fact that it rested silently in a discursive space; hence the fact that it provided, beneath itself, a kind of common ground where it could restore the bounds of signs and the image. (Foucault 1982:53)

In Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe, on the other hand, Magritte, "brings pure similitude and nonaffirmative verbal statements into play within the instability of a disoriented volume and an unmapped space" (Foucault 1982:54), and further in other works: "Magritte secretly mines a space he seems to maintain in the old arrangement. But he excavates it with words: and the old pyramid of perspective is no more than a molehill about to cave in" (Foucault 1982:37).

Foucault lets Magritte lead him to the formulation that resemblance does not equal affirmation. Magritte brings similitude into play against resemblance which has a 'model', an original, while similitude does not. What Foucault describes without using the terminology, is a move
away from platonic forms and ideals towards a more liberated and dialogic (and in orientation Post-modern) endeavor:

Resemblance presupposes a primary reference that prescribes and classes. The similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences to small differences. Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it; similitude serves repetition, which ranges across it... similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar. (Foucault 1982:44)

and resemblance reveals the clearly visible; similitude reveals what recognizable objects, familiar silhouettes hide, prevent from being seen, render invisible... similitude multiplies different affirmations, which dance together, tilting and tumbling over one another. (Foucault 1982:46)

In Las Meninas we saw how the artist cannot represent the act of representing—representation was a God given act—which left no room to question its foundations by daring the hubris of representing it. Kant grants Man the power to
supersede these God-given hierarchies. Man replaces God and Man becomes a subject among objects not an object among objects. With Magritte we go beyond representing the act of representing, we challenge representation as a second order sign system which has referents and roles of its own. It is a system like a language, de Saussure proposed, built on metaphor, arbitrary and not intrinsic. This language of similitude is a language of circular reference and reproduction without an original. It is a process completely removed from representation in a sense more radical than abstract art which only relies on new forms of narrative (Greenberg as we will see in the following chapter would strongly protest). Its play on narrative's context and reproduction leads Magritte's work beyond the traditional concerns of surrealism and even modernism. In Foucault's reading the work does not rely on juxtaposition and contradiction. The work is sceptical-- ironic-- like the work of Leiris, it has the impact to start the crossing over (it is not as clear cut as with anthroplogy, the swings in art are more complex and subtle. It is worth noting that there has been a resurgence of surrealist or rather neo-surrealist art of recent.)

Art critics Leo Steinberg (1975) and Rosalind Krauss (1985) have also addressed the work of artists--even early artists like Rodin, who tried to move away from representation and a fixation on the original. They were only to be pushed back into the cult of the original by the
structure of the art marketplace and society's reluctance to
give up its notions of unique genius. The message of
Magritte's work--its defiance towards the original (as we are
reading it here) has perhaps only enhanced the economic value
of his originals despite mass reproductions. Indeed, as noted
earlier, Foucault closes the piece with a reference to Warhol
which clearly places Magritte as his forerunner. "A Day will
come when, by means of similitude relayed indefinitely along
the length of a series, the image itself, along with the name
it bears will lose its identity. Campbell, Campbell,
Campbell, Campbell." (Foucault 1982:54)

-Aesthetics and Semiotics-

Foucault's analysis of Magritte's paintings rests largely
on the distinction he makes between the categories of verbal
sign and visual representation. Magritte's work excites him
perhaps because Magritte challenges the boundaries and
distinctiveness of the categories; he seems to merge them.
The aspects of similitude Foucault praises suggests that
Magritte has taken the metaphoric (non-referential),
linguistic, dialogic base of the verbal sign and combined it
with the visual, negating its representational aspect and so
creating the visual sign.

The notion of sign, according to Pierce in his early
formulations on semiotics, can be very useful in
"epistemology: the analysis of the process of 'knowing'
itself; of how knowledge is possible" (Hawkes 1977:128). Foucault is very epistemological in his approach but he markedly steers away from the language of semiotics and structuralism. A semiotic model may have passed over the distinction in the categories of the visual sign and visual representation or the 'plastic and graphic elements' more casually than Foucault and thus have glossed over the implications of their coming together, the way they do in Magritte's work. A semiotic analysis may have turned more in on itself, and concentrated on its own method, missing the implications of a breakdown in a system of thought and interpretation as Foucault suggests occurs. As Krauss who heralds the semiotic and structuralism in her art criticism suggests: "Criticism is understood through the forms of its arguments, through the way that its method, in the process of constituting the object of criticism, exposes to view those choices that precede and predetermine any act of judgment". Critical writings interest, then, is in its own method—not the content of any evaluative statements, "this is good, this is bad, etc." (Krauss 1985:1).

Semiotics in its continual flattening out of works and texts produces flat, methodological analysis which renders aesthetics static. Since in the semiotic analysis, signs are only symbolic or are textualizations of other sign systems, the work under analysis can become so contextual as to become decontextualized from itself--it can only get caught in an ever pulling back referential web of texts. To the whole
aesthetic process there is a prescription: that it break the rules of signification by signifying itself (Jakobson). The inherent dynamics of aesthetics is then codified.

Jakobson and Eco proposed that the aesthetic function of the sign system (at least in the use of language) not only broke the rules of signification by signifying itself but had a high degree of plurality and ambiguity. Of this ambiguity Eco states, "semiotically speaking, ambiguity must be defined as a mode of violating the rules of the code" (Hawkes 1977:141). Hawkes continues:

Art seen thus appears as a way of connecting 'messages' together, in order to produce 'texts' in which the 'rule-breaking' roles of ambiguity and self-reference are fostered and 'organized' so that, as Umberto Eco sees it,

A. Many messages on different levels are ambiguously organized
B. The ambiguity follows a precise design
C. Both the normal and ambiguous devices in any one message exert a contextual pressure on the normal and ambiguous devices in all the others
D. The way in which the 'rules' of the one system are violated by one message is the same as that in which the rules of other systems are violated by their messages. (Hawkes 1977:141)

The codification of aesthetics in this manner leaves room for none of the spaces-gaps-discontinuities which Foucault
(and Derrida) seeks to exploit. What Foucault wants to celebrate in Magritte's work in semiotic analysis is the mundane functioning of aesthetics—similitude is aesthetic function. We might recognize that Foucault in fact pushes himself into this corner with the visual sign he seems to be proposing. Magritte's work, then, is only unique for its direct self-conscious address to the language of art. Hawkes continues from the above that ambiguity:

generates an aesthetic 'idiolect', a 'special language' peculiar to the work of art, which induces in its audience a sense of 'cosmicity'—that is, of endlessly beyond each established level of meaning the moment it is established—of continuously transforming 'its denotations into new connotations'...Eco seems to be suggesting that the aesthetic message operates as a continuing 'multi-order' system of signification which moves from level to level, its denotations becoming connotations in an infinite progression. As a result we never arrive at a final 'decoding' or 'reading' of the aesthetic message..."common artistic experience also teaches us that art not only elicits feelings but also produces further knowledge. The moment that the game of intertwined interpretations gets under way, the text compels one to reconsider the usual codes
and their possibilities (Eco 274)". (Hawkes 1977:141-2)

In a sense semiotics assigns to the aesthetic function of the sign the power (almost magically) to bring to the forefront those leaps of faith and sites of irony in our systems of knowledge that Foucault takes such pains to uncover in Magritte. Foucault discovers them through the subject matter and the wider context of the work and lets them speak exactly to—but also beyond—the aesthetic function of signs.

In analyzing Magritte's work, Foucault has not hesitated to cross whatever shadowy boundaries there are between modernism and post-modernism. Similarly, for another artist domain, Fischer suggests, that post-modernism reflects the over bombardment of advertising and communication which makes available detailed information in which writers therefore seek their fiction to represent the dilemmas of constructing humane interaction or even a mere sense of plot or rationale amid total, random, or absurd access to information; and the attitude toward writing is one of intellectual play. (1984:183)

Foucault takes up the challenge of unravelling the layers, the inversions and subversions which make up the 'access to information' in Magritte's painted world and he has done so with the full flair and spirit of serious post-modern play.
In so doing Foucault has suggested that surrealism at least lends itself well to the tendencies of post-modernism. Fischer reminds us not to lose sight of its roots in modernism lest we render aesthetic material beyond the realm of history and social analysis.

* III *

'Towards a Third World Poetics: Seeing Through Short Stories and Film in the Iranian Cultural Area'.

M.M.J. Fischer

Fischer considers how surrealism is used in the Iranian cultural area as a form of modernist discourse which is particularly effective as a parallel and challenging mode to those of traditional theology, parable and epic. Fischer's 'close reading' of these surrealist productions points out that neither culture nor cultural products are transparent—they are mediated, 'by conventions, by borrowed techniques, by multileveled systems of communication' (1984:172). Cultural products are not only mediated by such things as surrealist techniques, they also exist in specific social contexts. Any cultural theory which proposes to use this type of cultural material must unravel both aesthetic concerns and social context but should not limit itself, as it has traditionally, to an arbitrarily bounded idea of unified symbolic systems with unchanging lexicon confined by national boundaries (i.e., the Iranian cultural area is not
confined to the Iranian national border). Fischer moves towards a view of culture which takes into account the dynamic nature of symbolic discourse as well as the multiple and often competing, mutually antagonistic discourses which co-exist simultaneously (1984:172).

Culture, for the modern anthropologist, is a kind of novel: a compendious mode containing a variety of styles. But the anthropologist is always insistent in searching out "elective affinities" between discourses, styles or rhetorics and social groups, situations and positions. Competition between rhetorics often provide powerful indexes of social and class competition. (Fischer 1984:175)

Fischer opens up new modes of cultural analysis useful to anthropology as it moves into the study of complex society. A cultural analysis of complex society must be able to deal with the self-consciously cultural products of 'high' and 'low' culture:

The present essay forms part of a larger project to map out in some detail the competing rhetorics in Iran and by so doing to contribute to a theory that is dynamic, illuminating of historical and political economic reality, as well as sensitive to the hermeneutics of the cultural rhetorics as seen from the inside. (Fischer 1984:175)

and,
All these techniques, metaphors and stories are a way of revisioning the world upon the reader....for the anthropologist they provide a rich challenge to construct cultural interpretations sensitive to class differences, to "intertextuality" among cultures and across historical horizons, and to "tacit" understandings acted out or narrated but not fully conscious. Cultural interpretation must rely upon a richness of procedure---of reading and engagement---equal to the subtlety and intelligence of the producers of the culture.

(Fischer 1984:232)

Another point of interest is Fischer's exploration of the conditions of modernism perceived as suited to surrealist techniques. Surrealism has had a recent renewed popularity in Latin America (where it showed up as a luxuriating in the fantastic) as well as in the Middle East. Fischer points out how each culture has drawn on and defined surrealism formulating their surrealist techniques differently---their different styles reflecting their particular conditions of modernism. Starting originally in France, Surrealism had a political programmatic edge. It worked on the assumption that modernism had rendered the world dehumanizing and overly technological. In Iran, however, surrealist authors were 'reacting against a rigidified, fundamental and patriarchal universe' (Fischer 1984:174). It was a more traditionalist
enemy than European modernism had been. Those using surrealistic techniques adapted them to generate, an emotional tone which can provide access to a pervasive philosophical structuring of Iranian culture. One that plays upon a tragic sense of the universe parallel to, but in a quite different idiom than, the tragic sense elaborated in Iranian Shi'ism. (Fischer 1984:174)

Surrealism becomes a new mode of philosophic discourse on par with important traditional ones making these films and stories an arena for a discourse of Iranian existential problems. The modernist styles were even receptive to and paralleled drastic changes in the Iranian political mood. In the beginning of the century much writing was done by upper, aristocratic classes who optimistically believed that they could change the world. By mid-century, the writing predominantly done by middle class authors is moodier, more pessimistic, yet 'more artistic and thought-provoking'. This middle-class saw the world more complexly. Not being empowered like the aristocracy they did not see a world changeable through direct routes. Writers who once probed the glories of pre-Islamic times turned to issues and styles of presentation (choice of environment and class of main characters being key) more in keeping with changing political moods. They did so without abandoning their surrealist tenets and goals: they only modified the style so as to be in
step and relevant to current issues; the general subversive consciousness-raising of surrealist techniques continued. Fischer asks if there isn't a discourse or systematic rhetoric here, one which responds to the condition of bourgeois liminality and modern social transformation?

Fischer then analyses the films and stories, going into some ethnographic detail and using the techniques both of anthropology and literary criticism. He is careful to point out the pitfalls of looking for ethnographic content in these works as if they were documentaries not subject to artistic manipulations and intentions. The realist settings can be:

used as projective screens upon which problems can be defamiliarized and explored in powerful fictive surrealisms, this device is often a double play: while there is an intellectual casting of strange, nightmarish puzzles, realistic settings within these puzzles generate a sense of familiarity with locality and tradition. (Fischer 1984:186)

These works are carefully constructed to go beyond ethnographic limitations so as to illuminate characters, sadness, honour, grief, and other cross-class concepts important to all Iranians.

In the 'seeing through' films and short stories as idioms of Iranian culture, Fischer points out three areas of analysis and techniques to consider and explore (but not trip over). The first we have just mentioned: seeing the texts as
displays of Iranian society both ethnographically and indexically for tacit clues. Second, seeing the artistic structure of the films as mediated portraits to be sorted out with the help of literary and artistic critique techniques and, third, seeing the class-linked nature of these media and the possible varieties of readings of these works by different strata of society.

Framing these concerns Fischer draws out the relationship of modernism and surrealism as appropriate for the Iranian cultural area in a specific ethnographic time frame as opposed to the equally available but not adopted post-modernist tendencies current in circles of western intelligentsia. He succinctly captures the spiritual relationship of modernism and surrealism here:

The juxtaposition and collage techniques--decoupage, montage, dissemination--of surrealism, model the modern juxtaposition of social experiences that once could never meet; they present the contradictory yet emotionally powerful ties among which modern individuals must select groupings for self-identity and action; and they provide brief considerations of alternative combinations. Surrealist techniques would seem ideally suited to exploring modern dilemmas of parts of the middle eastern world. (Fischer 1984:174)
And:
I have suggested as well that modernist techniques had an elective affinity with the socio-cultural position of the secular intelligentsia, in contrast to post-modernist techniques which seem to be the experimental idiom of the contemporary American intelligentsia. This has something to do with the nature of the traditionalist social environment against which the intelligentsia defined itself, as well as the third world position of Iran in relation to the West.
(Fischer 1984:229)
Surrealism portrayed within modernism moves to express subjective experience through its various techniques: automatic writing, dreamscapes, collage etc. It hoped to make accessible 'unrepressed humanity'.

These juxtapositions and fragments posed themselves against a framework--modern society--which it sought to critique. Post-modernist techniques exist exactly to show that they have lost sight of that framework and therefore make surrealism obsolete. Within the delimitations of the surrealist techniques that Fischer marks out, his assertions about its relationship to modernism seem well grounded but it can still be asked if Surrealism might not push at the boundaries of modernism or even beyond them.

I chose to make this foray into surrealism because
studies such as the three I have drawn on here have surfaced as part of the debate on the changing nature of our current aesthetic, intellectual, social and political dilemmas. The work of Leiris, even since I began this project, has received unprecedented reconsideration in anthropology (his work has been more widely read and critiqued in the literary fields). In exploring our current mood, Leiris and surrealism in general, provides an epistemological forebear. Foucault's analysis of Magritte pushes Surrealism beyond its modernist boundaries and transposes him into a post-modern discourse. Fischer's approach reminds us that Foucault's post-modernism foregrounds itself by watering the most precious seeds of its modernist background.

The conditions of modernism and post-modernism as well as its socio-cultural constraints effect aesthetic production and especially its reception in a fundamental manner unfortunately ignored too often. Applying the precepts of Fischer's analysis to both Foucault's facile adoption of Magritte into post-modern discourse and the reappearance of Leiris in anthropology suggests much about this present moment which allows us to pick from the nuggets of our past and in a very self-contradictory move use them to reuniversalize the present. The absolute fragment of post-modern discourse has a universalizing and homogenizing character as strong as modernism's pull for the unification of knowledge which along with the conditions of late capitalism has led us to so much fragmentation.
Surrealism, at the cusp of modernism was quite radical. If Leiris and Magritte are an indication, Surrealism contained the ingredients for tunneling beyond the parameters of modernism. The parameters of modernism were ironically solidified by the kinds of constraints which the art criticism of Clement Greenberg dictated. Greenberg and Beuys almost seem to back pedal to catch the nuances of their forebear's concerns. Greenberg's analysis of American Abstract Expressionism represents the reification of high modernism. After Greenberg's swing towards the objectification of art, Beuys demonstrates a return to the valuation of the subjective within the collective with the nuances of the post-modern fragment replacing those of the surrealist juxtaposition. But perhaps before Beuys could move in that direction Greenberg had to be allowed to attempt to excise surrealist tendencies from the spirit of modern artists and audiences. In so doing he hoped to make way for Cubism and later Abstract Expressionism.
Chapter Two

Can Anthropology Relocate Art Criticism? Formalism and Hermeneutics.

Abstract Expressionism had its heyday in the late 40s to mid 50s and remained a powerful influence into the 60s. I have not picked it arbitrarily as a starting point for discussing modern art; I have done so rather because Abstract Expressionism represents the turning point of American modern art history (previously Paris dominated the art world) and the convergence internationally, of previous artistic tendencies and movements. Typical of art history and most emphatically stated in the work of art critic Clement Greenberg, is the presupposition of an art historical universal determinancy which culminated in American Abstract Expressionism as it had earlier in Synthetic and Analytic Cubism. Following this logic, Abstract Expressionism is still the relevant point of reference because prior movements, Impressionism, Constructivism, Cubism, Surrealism, Fauvism, deStijl and even Bauhaus lead to and found their culmination in it. Movements following it, Minimalism, Performance Art, Conceptual Art, Pop Art and contemporary Post-Modern tendencies are all read as extensions of or reactions to it.

The memory of Abstract Expressionism also lingers because
it was perhaps the last unified shocking splash of that
romantic tradition of modern art. It maintained aspects
which were painterly, aesthetically tactile and warmer than the
opposing trends such as cold Post-Painterly Abstraction, Pop
Art and Conceptualism. It fostered not only the first
influential American school along with a handful of well
known critics and artists but also a boom in modern art
museums, galleries, collections and patrons across the
country. Its competition was the stale cubist 'hanger oners'
of the American Association of Abstraction (the AAA) and the
European Surrealist refugees fleeing occupied Paris who,
while their presence inspired American confidence, were well
never integrated or received in the American (New York) art
scene. It is ironic since the Americans had so long looked
to Paris for guidance.

American Abstract Expressionism would not be perceived as
the commemorable phenomenon of modern art had it not been for
the prolific essays and enthusiastic support of Greenberg.
He called the artistic vision, ideas and surrounding
criticism of the Abstract Expressionist movement Modernism.
He interpreted its history as the progression from literary,
impure, interested, expressionist and romantic tendencies to
abstract, pure, disinterested, formal, classical and
ultimately sublime ones. He would expunge the overly
expressive, 'Modern Baroque' elements of Abstract
Expressionism for the formal purity of Abstraction
culminating in the work of post-painterly artists (K. Noland,
M.Louis, F. Stella, J.Albers, E. Kelly). He would like to do so, much in the same way Frazer would have rid civilization of irrational superstitions. Both were empiricists and upheld positivism as the foremost method for critique.

Not only was Greenberg the cultured cheerleader to the fledgling art of this small group of artists, he also inspired a whole new generation of criticism. His criticism was successful in and of itself for having brought together all the interesting mainstream aesthetic theory of his day. In addition, Greenberg was responsive to the popular and seductive powers of positivism and the rhetoric of progress. He wanted to pursue criticism as an analytic, philosophical pursuit, based on empirical and rational reasoning. He wanted to raise critique beyond an accompanying commentary on sensibility and taste; critique was not to be a parasitic art form, i.e., a kind of poetry which was both translator and pimp to the art work. His essays are sprinkled with comparisons between aesthetic and scientific process which had its aim sighted for truth, reason and universality.

Greenberg fancied and indeed worked to secure the place of criticism as quasi-science which fundamentally reduced the reception of art work to 'effects' and the 'quality of effects' inspired by purity and the self-conscious rendering of material.

Greenberg's work, as is inevitable for any of importance, has come under much criticism. Some has come in the form of offering to enlarge and enhance the historical
record of the Abstract Expressionist moment with artists accountings of it. For example, Irving Sandler's *The Triumph of American Painting* (1970). Sandler points to the diversity of interests and voices present in American Abstract Expressionism which collapsed the gesture/action (expressionist) painters and the colorfield painters (abstractionist).

The gesture/action painters were inspired by nature, myths, the Jungian symbology of a universal unconscious. The colorfield painters aspired to a mystic, unitary, transcendental and sublime art. Some artists like Clyfford Still, an outspoken colorfield painter, professed an explicit concern with formal purity via aesthetic formalism while others expressed no such concern. Some of the artists' work evolved from gesture to colorfield. There were Abstract Expressionists who did not fit easily into either of these tendencies and others who over their careers moved through and beyond these categorizations. Nonetheless the term was used to cover the work of a group of artists to make up an 'American School,' easily identifiable as non-European and especially non-Surrealist. Most of the artists resisted the label, like Rothko who, fearing the implications of acquiring a name, notes "To classify is to embalm. Real identity is incompatible with schools and categories except by mutilation" (Sandler 1970:2). Greenberg however, evidently found that there existed an exchange of ideas and an attitude toward abstraction, painterliness and color congruent enough
to award them a label. Ironically, while it was Greenberg who was largely responsible for coining "American Abstract Expressionism", he, nonetheless, never reconciled its expressionist and formal tendencies.

The kind of record Sandler provides in his seminal history of American Abstract Expressionism typically falls into the school of art history. Art history and art criticism exist in separate domains until American Abstract Expressionism. Art criticism was peripheral to the academy, it was largely carried out in art and literary avant-garde journals. Meanwhile, art history remained in the universities and concerned itself with the art of ancient civilizations and early Europe. Though this has changed somewhat and art history has come to include contemporary art, it is still differentiated from art criticism. This trend is somewhat unfortunate because it alienates art criticism from a socio-historic grounding and art history from innovative critical approaches. In addition to the enhanced historical record Sandler provides which attempts to include the voice of the artist in its accounts, other contrasting approaches such as that of marxist art critic John Berger, address the implicit ideological component which informed both Greenberg's aesthetic theory and his separation between art and society. While Greenberg holds society and art apart he muddles art with criticism thus undermining the place of art by conflating its objectives with his own.

In that Greenberg represents a highly philosophical
aesthetic approach to the interpretation of art, Berger chooses a sociological and political one. Where Greenberg focuses on the formalist ascendancy of art history, Berger sees the reflected implications of content in terms of the relations of production inherent in social context. In their emphasis, Greenberg and Berger are split, aesthetic/politics, form/content. It is also interesting to note that they concentrated on different bodies of work. Greenberg focused on modern art and Berger, while he wrote extensively on Cubism, Picasso and Matisse, looked mostly at premodern figurative work from the renaissance on. He then moves through a critique of museums and consumer patterns and turns his eye to photography. In works like, About Looking (1980), Ways of Seeing (1972) and The Sense of Sight (1985), Berger extends his relational paradigm to the relations of sight--the seen and seer. His examples range from the capitalist imperialist impulses encapsulated in looking at animals in zoos and photographs, to the complex of consumerism which involves women as objects subjected to the sight of others. Berger's approach in looking and thinking about art attempts to uncover meaning through its widest possible reaches while Greenberg's model suppresses it. Berger then is a contextual marker of where Greenberg's criticism fits in the available range.
Greenberg argued that the only legitimate concern of modernist art was art itself; furthermore, the only rightful focus for an artist in any given form or genre was the nature and limits of that genre; the medium is the message. Thus, for instance, the only permissible subject for a modernist painter was the flatness of the surface (canvas, etc.) on which the painting takes place, because "flatness alone is unique and exclusive to the art." Modernism, then, was the quest for the pure, self-referential art object. And that was all it was: the proper relationship of modern art to modern social life was no relationship at all. M. Berman

This quote is a vulgarized but common summation of Greenberg's work seen as proposing all of art history as a unilineal assent to purity and flatness. Berman here has condensed the evolution of Greenbergs thinking and infers several criticisms of Greenberg which I will here unpack and expound on by outlining the major tenets of Greenberg's work and then exploring the larger implications.

Let us begin with Greenberg's construction of European art history's major conflicts and accomplishments. In his article, "Toward a Newer Laocoon" (1940), Greenberg art-historically diagrams the arts' move towards abstraction and purity of medium. To summerize his perspective: the visual arts have been distorting themselves since the seventeenth century under the domination of the long reigning literary form. Painting and sculpture, already masters at illusion, were unfittingly strained by their attempts to reproduce the effects and thus compete with literature. In order to imitate and emulate literature, Greenberg argues, painting and sculpture suppressed its medium. Subject matter
replaced the emphasis on medium not only in terms of realism but like literature, painting attempted to render interpretations of 'subject matter for poetic effects'. This general confusion in the arts was only further enhanced by Romanticism in which music and poetry found the supreme forms. In this period the artist was to pass on his feelings rather than simulate them. This again involved an art of imitation rather than communication and again the medium was repressed. Art becomes at best the powers of personality. Greenberg professes that painting suffered much at the hands of the Romantics, though while over by 1848, and bringing new content to art, with such greats as Delacroix, Gericault and Ingres, it also saw painting become academicism.

Reiterating his point Greenberg declares: western "rationalist and scientific-minded city culture,...has always had the bias toward a realism that tries to achieve illusion by overpowering the medium, and is more interested in exploiting the practical meanings of objects than savoring their appearance" (1940:38). Through the primacy of intuitive, perceptual grasp of aesthetic effect Greenberg intends to restore to art criticism a basis for the savoring of medium/appearance.

Romanticism, Greenberg contends, was the last art movement to be under the direct influence of the bourgeoisie. Future movements, 'the avant-garde', took refuge from capitalism in a blossoming Bohemia. The social break with the bourgeoisie is paralleled by art's internal development.
Greenberg's argument rests heavily on the following types of transitions: "The avant-garde, both child and negation of Romanticism, becomes the embodiment of the art's instinct of self-preservation. It is interested in, and feels itself responsible to, only the values of art; and given society as it is, has an organic sense of what is good and bad for art" (Greenberg1940:39). Exactly how art achieved this self-awareness and self-critical attitude in breaking away from, 1), literature and 2), the bourgeois, he does not make clear. The scenario he describes, in which art struggles to distinguish itself from literature, echoes similar movements in all academic disciplines as they pulled away from each other to claim an autonomous place in the academy. Anthropology went through a similar process differentiating itself most ardently from psychology in its earliest days. This kind of purist pursuit therefore does not seem to be generated solely from a unique 'logical' programmatic of the arts.

Joining Greenberg's directives with Sandler's historical account, Abstract Expressionism appears to have evolved from the early post-Romantic avant-garde desire to pull the arts away from society's ideological struggles to the 'crisis of subject' faced by the post WWII Abstract Expressionists. The 'crisis of subject matter' came about as post war artists became politically discouraged. They turned away from the Regionalism (american social realism) that they had engaged in before the war. They also became disenfranchized from the
idealistic WARP projects started during the depression. In Greenberg's formulation, ideological struggles came via ideas, which in the arts were analogous to subject matter as a whole (social realism was a fitting example—its ideological component being expressed in narrative and thus literary form). Therefore, in order to rid itself of ideological struggles the arts had to place their emphasis on form over content. Art's autonomy was to be gained through its complete revolt against literature whose emphasis was on content and literary techniques. Greenberg dismissed all other movements such as Dada, Futurism, Surrealism, which were directly ideological, attached to literature and even politics, as a confusion, simply a reversion to the domination of literature, and tantamount thus to 'bad' art.

Greenberg elects Courbet as his example of the correct path for art. Courbet was the first avant-garde painter. He "tried to reduce his art to immediate sense data by painting only what the eye could see as a machine unaided by the mind" (Greenberg 1940:39). The flattening of the pictorial plane became evident. For Greenberg this flattening is a barometer reading of the growing purity in painting as it reaches to meet its proper limitations. The ultimate destruction of the pictorial space, 'the birth and death of three dimensional space', awaited the Cubists. The Impressionists, as they tried to emulate the detachment of the sciences, turned the essence of painting into the visual experience and thus the problematic of painting became first and foremost problems of
medium. (Anthropology's current reflection on rhetoric is scratching at the surface of the same dilemma). Greenberg advances the premise that because for the visual arts the medium is physical, to be pure they must seek to affect the spectator physically. This becomes his later insistence on the paramount importance of 'effect' as the cornerstone of aesthetic experience.

Greenberg puts as much stock in Purity as Frazer did in Truth and Reason, and social critic Marshal Berman does (see Chapter four) in the Dialectics of modernism. He meticulously traces its development through the history of modern art. Greenberg notes that the next major advances toward purity took place in avant-garde music. Music, the most non-representational, thus the most pure of art forms, discovered that it was method rather than the end-product that was important. The method was pure form and pure sense material, therefore not communication in a narrative sense. It could only be understood as sense material generated and generatable only from music. Likewise in the arts, "painting and statues are machines to produce the emotions of 'plastic sight'. The purely plastic or abstract qualities of the work of art are the only ones that count." While it appears that Greenberg has separated form and content so completely that he can hierarchize one respectively over the other, it also seems apparent that, without articulating it here, he has conflated the two. A common sense notion (or a complicated deconstructionist notion of interreferentiality
and intertextuality) tells us that any disparity between form and content is dubious because of the physiological and cultural tendency to translate or imbue any sense material with content and meaning.

Continuing his chronology Greenberg suggests that, taking their cue from music, the avant-garde worked at developing painterly purity; "the arts lie safe now, each within its 'legitimate' boundaries, and free trade has been replaced by autarchy" (Greenberg 1940:42). Berger's accounting of the history of art is in sharp contrast to Greenberg's. That such vastly different interpretations are possible and both plausible suggests how fertile a domain the arts can be. They serve as reflections of the concerns of their viewers the way the 'other' has served anthropology as a reflection of itself.

Over the years Greenberg's work has been much criticized for what has been interpreted as rigid formalism and the constraints which that implies to the reception and production of art and its possible meanings. In his own defense he wrote "Complaints Of An Art Critic" (1967), wherein he tries to make clear his appeal to form over content (thus the label Formalism).

In this later article Greenberg's criticism has matured and come together under the postulates that 1), modern art has a self-critical and self-defining tendency in its forms, 2), this tendency is inexorable, and 3), judgments of quality of art are disinterested and involuntary whether by artists
or critics (Harrison and Orton 1984:3). Greenberg defended his position, saying that there are aspects of art "impervious to discursive thinking: "Because aesthetic judgements are immediate, intuitive, undeliberate and involuntary, they leave no room for the conscious application of standards, criteria, rules or percepts." (Harrison and Orton 1984:4)

Art, he argues, is recognized in terms of its "effects". Effect is in the intuitive range of cognition and beyond rational specification. Formalism concentrates on the effects which are manifest in a work's form. Content thus cannot be praised apart from form. Content, Greenberg continues, is in and of itself nothing and useless for criticism. However, in defense against those who accuse him of being too preoccupied with form at the expense of content, here he explains his position by conflating the two:

the quality of a work of art inheres in its 'content', and vice versa. Quality is 'content'. You know that a work of art has content because of its effect. The more direct denotation of effect is 'quality' ... You cannot say anything truly relevant about the content of either picture, but you can be specific and relevant about the differences in their effect on you. 'Effect' like 'quality', is 'content' and the closer reference to actual experience of the first two terms makes
'content' virtually useless for criticism.

(Greenberg in Harrison and Orton 1984:7)

He contends to settle qualitative, this is 'good' or 'bad' art judgements, in terms of the quality of effect of a piece and not depending on the completely irrefutable subjective claims which belie matters of taste (Berger would congratulate his aim but not his method here). However, Greenberg has contradicted his opening statements by admitting that effect is also completely subjective (within the boundaries of certain collective norms). In fact, he rests heavily on these 'norms' which he mentions only in passing:

That qualitative principles or norms are there somewhere, in subliminal operation, is certain; otherwise aesthetic judgements would be purely subjective, and that they are not is shown by the fact that the verdicts of those who care most about art and pay most attention converge over the course of time to form a consensus.

(Harrison and Orton 1984:4)

These norms, which he suggests would provide the mechanics for grinding out the logic leading to the purity of art, instead resemble strongly the workings of a shared culture. Greenberg, however, has emphatically declared that aesthetic judgements are disinterested--removed from any cultural and social context, this claim even now, twenty-five years later, is the subject of the most recent rash of
harsh criticism against Greenberg (see Franscina, Orton, Berger, McEveilly).

Greenberg's position, and much of modern art criticism since, has derived from conflating, "identification of subjective impressions with the effects of "forms and relations of forms", (Harrison and Orton 1984:25) this being the central ideas of two early twentieth century thinkers, Benedetto Croce and Clive Bell.

Orton and Harrison credit Croce with being "responsible for formulating the view that the essential identity of the work of art lies not in its specific physical character but in the intuitive experience of the sensitive observer." (1984:34) For Croce what is important is "the role of imagination in creating and appreciating works of art" (1984:34). Croce declares that "Art is Intuition," something mentally created rather than painted, sculpted or written. (The anthropology of art is faced with the question of how universal or culturally determined is this 'intuition').

In complement with Croce's aims, Clive Bell sought the "quality peculiar to all objects that provoke...'aesthetic emotion" (Harrison and Orton 1984:25). He assigns to art an unspecified formula or "significant form" which will inspire this aesthetic emotion. Bell was impressed with such artists as Cézanne and "by the value of formal relationships of line and color" which Cézanne emphasized in his work. It led Bell to proclaim that 'Art is significant form.' (Harrison and Orton 1984:34) Greenberg's aesthetic theory is a combination
of attention to aesthetic experience interpreted as effect and an evolutionary cumulative notion of progress of aesthetic form toward purity.

One of the major critics of Croce and Bell, Beryl Lake, in his "A Study of the Irrefutability of Two Aesthetic Theories" (1960), unlike his marxist counterpoints, explores the philosophical nature and the logical episteme of existent aesthetic theories. His main concern is only with the fact that Croce's theory is irrefutable because it is built on a priori categorizations. "Art is intuition" is a self selecting definition and thus not based on empirical fact. Bell's theory is also irrefutable because it restricts the category 'art' to an a priori significant form. Narrative or descriptive painting is simply not art in Bell's formulation.

Lake's criticism is itself completely hermetic and we can understand how it would have failed to dissuade Greenberg from engaging the major ideas of Croce and Bell. Though Lake's critique challenged the fundamental logical postulates of Bell and Croce, it did not push the boundaries of aesthetics and its surrounding discourse. Much in the vein of Greenberg's thinking, Lake places Bell and Croce squarely in the realm of philosophy in the most removed posture towards sociohistoric and political concerns. Greenberg had only to sharpen on the positivistic claims art criticism could make vis-a-vis art to redeem Bell and Croce. This he did as we have seen in the neat and logically coherent
progression of purification of form from intuitive perception to aesthetic experience and medium.

Donald Kuspit, in his critique, Clement Greenberg (1979) helps to explicate the evolution of Greenberg's criticism, a process which took Greenberg through heralding Cubism to condemning it as he did Abstract Expressionism twenty years later. Kuspit asserts a strong dialectical tone underlying Greenberg's work. I suggest instead that while Greenberg may point to dialectical tendencies in modern art and criticism, it is only as a consequence of larger forces and not the main thrust of his insight. Viewed ahistorically, Greenberg's work may appear dialectical however if one listens for the repeated motifs as his work moved along through time and responded to important events in its path, one is sure to hear an evolutionary rhythm (a 'natural', 'rational' evolutionary path of art toward purity of form and medium).

Dialectics and evolutionary principles need not be antithetical. My idea is that combined, the two principals are reminiscent of negative dialectics such as Robert Murphy (drawing on Hegel) applies to social life: "Out of the clash of antagonistic tendencies, new forms arise to incorporate the opposing elements, albeit in altered form" (1971:95). This tango of contradictions which fall back upon themselves creating in their wake germs of new ideas and byproducts is also suggested by Marcus and Fischer as the spiralling (rather than circular or linear) history of ideas which as they come back around never settle in their previous niche.
In Greenberg's record the Classical, though cyclically forced
to submerge by expressionist trends, rises each time anew,
stronger, clearer, purer--thus its evolutionary and
dialectical struggle with the Romantic.

Greenberg's concern with purity comes out of his view of
the contrasting tendencies of Classical and Romantic
art--classical representing all that is good and Romantic all
that is bad in/for art. In defining his critical stance he
draws from Kant's distinction of interested and disinterested
art. Interested art is judged by criteria subsumed under
'charming' while disinterested art can be judged in terms of
purity. However, Kuspit points out that Kant goes a step
further than Greenberg; for Kant the distinctions collapse in
civilization's crisis of insecurity forcing all art to be
interested, responsible and responsive (Kuspit 1979:105).
Greenberg does not recognize this.

In correlation to Kant calling the criteria for aesthetic
judging of interested art a species of 'charm', Greenberg
points out the often arbitrary method, the absurdity of
feeling and manic Romanticism that pervades both the critical
method and the 'interested' work itself. Following this, I
envision the lines separating Romantic and Classical
criticism as follows:

**Classical**

a. locate and evaluate art

**Romantic**

a. celebrate art and artist
   as mysterious forces of
   nature or rare natural
   curiosities
b. art as human intervention

c. judged by human standards

d. accepts constant reassessment of art inherent in critical enterprise.

b. art as natural expression

c. measureless or cosmic in significance as it is a miraculous mutation of nature. Art worshipped and wondered at rather than critiqued.

d. cannot tolerate insecurity or lack of finality.

Romanticism seems to offend Greenberg's positivistic, empiricistic inclinations; he characterizes classicism as speaking for fact and finite form and thus from 'a reality principle' and Romanticism as speaking "for feeling and its seeming infinite power of transformation of fact and form," (Kuspit 1979:100) thus a 'pleasure principle.' He admires the drive of romanticism and begrudgingly admits its necessity to propel even the purest most abstract works. Though he polarizes the terms and leans heavily toward a pure art that "truly realizes the nature of art, expresses its essence free of accidents of personal and cultural existence" --an 'art of art's sake', he also realizes he cannot completely dismiss the Romantic. Kuspit locates the heart of Greenberg's dialectics here. Greenberg is not celebratory or self-exclaiming of this dialectics though it does create an obvious strain in his work.

Greenberg critiques Romanticism with a personal vehemence suggestive of a vendetta. He does so craftily, in objective terms which assume that all art is evolving towards
the aim he has laid out for it. Kuspit summarizes Greenberg's critique of Romanticism as such:

Romantic methods tend to become arbitrarily innovative rather than a means of mediating true feeling... Romanticism does not know how to work through the medium without violating it, and in fact seems to disapprove of any limiting conventions, any fixed roles of procedure. (Kuspit 1979:100)

For the Romantics (operating under the myth of free expression) medium inhibits rather than exhibits the emotion. Greenberg warns that this leads to a kind of visual adventurism.

This visual adventurism is what Greenberg faults the demise of the Cubists and Expressionists to. However, the classifications of art and criticism as classical or romantic, interested or disinterested, abstract or literary, pure or impure, formal or expressive, lead Greenberg in his own experience as a critic to move from being an advocate for cubism to an adversary of it. Each new movement or school of art is fitted into a set of oppositions which hark back to the original distinction: romantic, classical. What allows or forces Greenberg to abandon cubism for newer, fresher tendencies (which subsequently get old and left behind) is a field that lies between the two and here art's evolution becomes a spiral which moves forward only by rotating around itself. This third element is Alexandrian, it turns the
classical into the academic, the romantic and finally into kitsch. Alexandrianism is what eventually turns the sincere in cubism into the "modern Baroque" (a great insult in Greenberg's vocabulary). Cubism which Greenberg heralded as the only true art of its day (especially in light of American provincialism) becomes 'luxury art' and is in the end only redeemed by its feeling for art, its artistic narcissism. As Kuspit recounts: Cubism after the 20's was

the final blossom of an earlier optimism no longer accurately reflecting the felt facts of life. Luxury painting, in other words, no longer accomplishes art's distillation of true feeling, but manufactures false feeling in the name of a lost ideal, a golden age. (1979:94)

In a curious mixing of fact and feeling, art and culture, Cubism is dismissed. What was once taut and fresh in feeling is now stale and false. History and the history of art apparently have crucial effects on the perception of works of art. Once work becomes traditional, academicized, Alexandrian, it loses some of its inherent purity. This contradiction, the conditional nature of 'inherent purity' in Greenberg's work provides an interesting glimpse of the blinders of art history and opens a critical window to its own foundations in social history.

The modern baroque, the Alexandrian nature that cubism takes on becomes an evolutionary stepping stone which opens the way to Abstract Expressionism.
*AMERICAN ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM*

For Greenberg, Abstract Expressionism, straddles an uncomfortable fence—on one side lies feeling, expressionism and thus a dangerous tendency toward romanticism which might go so far as to include content in its perview, (mostly represented by the gesture, action painters); on the other side lies fact, medium, abstraction, formalism (led by the colorfield painters, Jackson Pollock being importantly but ambiguously suspended between.) The birth of Abstract Expressionism was presided by "the good angel of cubist-inspired abstraction" and "the bad angel of surrealism and neo-romanticism" (Kuspit 1979:95). Even though cubism has been polluted by decadence, it remains a more fitting influence than the expressionist romantic tentacles of surrealism which Greenberg always opposed and whose tendencies he continued to oppose as they surfaced in American Abstract Expressionism.

Cubism could not be dropped, in fact, all modern art and artists had to have their grounding or move through cubism. It was the first movement to make the principle of limitation of means explicit. American Abstract Expressionism added its own dimension to Cubism, one being that it provided a historical presentiment in its ability to "articulate the pessimistic materialism that the School of Paris Luxury painting repressed with its aesthetic optimism" (Kuspit
1979:95). American Abstract Expressionism provided in a rare reconciliation of fact and feeling, the limitations of means which secure the "unity and coherence" necessary to express the "realization of urgent vision" in its time. This notion of history begs the question: could cubism and Abstract Expressionism have competed contemporaneously? Is one inherently more pure than the other? Or does Greenberg look toward sociological and historical conditions of the 'new' period which Abstract Expressionism expressed? Is the honesty of Abstract Expressionism and its open pessimism artistically more pure than cubism and can that be expressed through the effects of medium or is it inherently expressed by the work's situation in history? Was Greenberg caught up in an evolutionary historical model of modernity whose modus operandus was 'the new'? In this regard his approach to art and criticism unmistakably provides us with an accounting of modernism as revealing as both Frazer's and Berman's.

Greenberg's criticism inherently expresses the significant conflicts of 20th century art (and perhaps their corollaries in society). Cubist inspired modernist abstraction versus the romantic derivates of neo-representational literary trends, i.e. surrealism and expressionism. Greenberg's polarization and the evolutionary hierarchy he places the two tendencies in, finds him picking one over the other. As he heralded cubism while it was fresh, so he did Abstract Expressionism and then one branch of it over the other. His criticism becomes more rigid as Abstract
Expressionism solidified. He denounced the vitality Expressionism had lent abstraction and opted for the cold, impersonal, post-painterly abstractionists. He congratulated their purity while Kuspit and other younger critics asked if these artists had not become like Greenberg's criticism, academic, Alexandrian, the ultimately empty formula of luxury art.

While Greenberg's scheme is evolutionary, the vengeance with which he carries out his search for purity, belies the emotional and not rational undercurrents of his criticism and comes across as a moral imperative. While he aims to demystify the romantic extremes in art and criticism by unmasking their masking of the truth, (he claims to grasp what is honest in art) not being able to help himself, he raises it high and sets it afloat in the realm of the transcendent, ahistorical, universal sublime.

Greenberg's criticism itself is not motivated by the same purity of medium and inherent logic that he hopes the arts to be. This criticism, because it has responded to what was fresh and new in the arts and has been dependent on the arts for its progress has had to change and evolve with them. The set of opposites and contradictory trends we have just touched on come about in his work as a response to the actual trends/works being produced (or considered by Greenberg). In addition to which Greenberg has also had direct effect on the developments in several key artists' works and even inspired whole factions--for example post-painterly
abstraction.

Although Greenberg's criticism is, of course, dependent on works being produced and changed in response to them, he never incorporated that which might have proved too contradictory -- that which might have split his work asunder. For instance, Greenberg largely skirted the issue of what in current anthropological critique would be called the artist's 'voice' no less intentions. The artist was denied any personal 'expression' and, moreover, content itself was to be denied altogether. For Greenberg, whatever they had to say, they could say only through the purest of art concerns and in the language of art that he has decreed relevant. Their art was supposed to be self-sustained and self-sufficient, ironically he did not recognize the perilous position that put his surrounding -- superfluous -- discourse in.

Greenberg also suppressed the artist's actual voice, the writings, interviews and musings that surround works of art, that fill journals and comprise the oral history circulated through art schools and informal contact. Greenberg addresses only the writing of the most erudite artists who profess the virtues of sublimity (Clyfford Still, for example). What he praises of the gesture/action painters, he is only able to do by ignoring the will, intent and the words of the artists themselves. He takes as important only that which he can abstract from their works and begrudges them the slightest expressionist slip which would leave them in peril of tumbling head-long into romanticism.
Greenberg's work, despite its shortcomings, offers a very interesting account of the complex configuration of often contrary ideas that were to make up his, as it turns out, very prevalent vision of modernism. His work is markedly modern in its concern with positivism and the individual. The two were, however, often at odds in his work. He posited the individual as the aesthetic receptacle for art. Aesthetic effect could only be grasped by the individual in an almost mechanistic sense. The mechanism for producing art, the artist, had, however, to be an individual only in essence not in content or expression. This class of individuals, artists, was to follow rational abstracted principles of purity and logic to derive and produce something (aesthetic effect) which could trigger an intuitive inspiration in the viewer.

The tensions implicit in this construction are an interesting note in the history of ideas he leaves for us and can be interpreted on several levels. Greenberg traces out a history of ideas centering around a purity value and places it within the history of art around which we can construe another surrounding layer of general historical critique. We can also derive a context from which to envision his critique based on some of his explicit Cultural (with a capital C) critiques such as his plea for the ideals of high art sharply distinguished from the domain of Kitsch.

Irving Sandler offers a different kind of critique than either Greenberg or Berger. His is a subjective, voiced
approach which draws heavily on the discourse of the artists, largely with the aim of correcting Greenberg's accounting. Counteracting Greenberg, Sandler works to make explicit the romantic underpinning of Abstract Expressionists and their non-formal considerations. In critique of formalist critics, Sandler notes that they imply that the artist vanguard being motivated primarily by formalist considerations advances by throwing off old styles rather than moving through them. This misses the fact that "their [the artists'] preoccupation was with investing forms with meanings that relate to the whole of human experience, and any critical approach that does not consider these meanings is misleading" (Sandler 1970:1). Sandler, in the spirit of being 'politically correct', non-Greenbergian, is willing to admit the constructing-itself-subjective-nature of the reality which confronted the artist and his reconstructive history. He hoped to "deal with artist's intentions precisely in order to capture the embryonic period in the development of their styles--before they are assimilated into art history" (Sandler 1970:1). Rothko, resounding Sandler's critique of the formalists asserts, "I would sooner center anthropomorphic attributes upon a stone than dehumanize the slightest possibility of consciousness." In the current anthropological debate this position is posited by such dilemmas as Val Daniel articulates in not wanting to reify the volatile situation of upheaval and fragmentation incarnate that he experienced in Sri Lanka by trying to make
a wholistic accounting of it or of naming it or pinning it down in any way.

Motherwell, himself an abstract expressionist and one of its most vocal advocates, summarizes the Abstract Expressionists' response to modern life as, rebellious, individualistic, unconventional, sensitive, irritable... This attitude arose from a feeling of being ill at ease in the universe... Nothing as drastic an innovation as [their] abstract art could have come into existence, save as the consequence of a most profound, relentless, unquenchable need. The need is for felt experience--intense, immediate, direct, subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic. (Motherwell in Sandler 1970:30)

Implicit in the tone of these artists and Sandler's contentions vis-à-vis formalism, is an implicit questioning of the role of art history. Is art history's role to explain cultural meanings relevant to ideas about and the expression of the nature of humanity and the conditions of society or to explain the meaning of art as an exotic, highly specialized self-referential language? Berger goes one step further than Sandler's subjective history to do a meta history which looks not so much at the expression of individual artists as with the collective representations they point to. He also considers the role of art as a reflection of the history of
one cultural sphere's mode of production in relation to wider social structures.

Motherwell expresses his concerns with such issues in criticizing an artist from another 'school', most notably Mondrian, for not only his formalist tendencies, (diagonal lines were considered too expressionistic) but the 'classicistic' or 'geometric' attitude, tagged as stability within known limits. Modrian, Motherwell asserts, failed because of his "loss of contact with historical reality; or more concretely, loss of sense of the most insistent needs of a given time". He failed as did Bauhaus and Russian constructionism because of their "dreams of men as smoothly functioning cogs in a social machine" (Sandler 1970:30). Their impersonal, polished surfaces were rejected by the Abstract Expressionists because they lacked feeling, expressiveness and failed to express the creative action of the artists--their voice as it were. Abstract Expressionists instead, "experimented with unstable, indeterminate, dynamic, open and 'unfinished' forms".

Although lost utopianism had given way to widespread cynicism and pessimism in the post WWII era, the Abstract Expressionists maintained humanist and aesthetic aspirations and projected highly individualistic free judgement. As Sandler notes, the Abstract Expressionists were not romantics in the 19th century tradition--responding to nature but they had "seized upon the fundamental Romantic impulse" (1970:31). It was expressed as a direct response and exposure to
painting itself, the process and "changeable facts of the creative experience" (Sandler 1970:31). While the impulse of advocating art in and of itself may be the same premise critics interpret as art for art's sake, it represents only half of the scenario.

Artists like Gorky, Gottlieb, Rochko, Pollock, Motherwell and Baziotes, some of who later became the more pure colorfield painters, employed the automatism they borrowed from surrealism "to reveal what they believed to be universal symbols that inhabited the inner mind" (Sandler 1970:62). Gottlieb and Rothko especially were noticed in the early forties for their myth-inspired works. The works were, they wrote, "concerned with primitive myths and symbols that continue to have meaning today ... only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless. That is why we profess kinship with primitive and archaic art" (Sandler 1970:62). The American myth and gesture painters drew from Jung's idea of collective unconscious which further differentiated them from the Freudian inspired European Surrealists.

The universalization of the primitive came about here in reaction to WWII as Gottlieb wrote:

If we profess kinship to the art of primitive man, it is because the feelings they expressed have a particular pertinence today. In times of violence, personal predilections for niceties of color and form seem irrelevant. All primitive expression reveals the constant
awareness of powerful forces, the immediate presence of terror and fear, a recognition of the brutality of the natural world as well as the eternal insecurities of life. That these feelings are being experienced by many people throughout the world today is an unfortunate fact and to us an art that glosses over or evades these feelings is superficial and meaningless. That is why we insist on subject matter, a subject matter that embraces these feelings and permits them to be expressed.

(Gottlieb in Sandler 1970:64)

Contrary to Greenberg’s formulations, their art professed their strong intention and will and their insistence on content in reacting to the life world. These same artists came later to represent the formalism Greenberg admired. Sandler contends that in fact their formal changes came about through concerns with expression, individualism and content and not solely formal concerns: "They extended their ideas concerning content until they arrived at new and original images." (1970:69)

Gottlieb, Rothko and Newman wrote "we are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal, we wish to re-assert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth." Truth for them was not simply the purity of medium, it was an absolute truth which was human, universal, timeless. In an implicit critique
of western civilization, they sought to create an art beyond or "without benefit of European history".

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Art history and criticism has not been very self-conscious of its own process or hermeneutics. It has considered itself an interpreter or hermeneutic of art the way anthropology has considered itself the interpreter of 'the other'. But art history like anthropology has its own interests at heart, the 'other' becomes malleable and the whole is open to a hermeneutic analysis of the conditions of its interpretive base.

In art history there has been a post-structuralist (Rosalind Krauss par excellence) reinterpretation of the art historical task but there has not been much discussion of the kinds of questions which arise from juxtaposing historical, subjective or voiced accounts of a given moment such as Sandler tries to provide and critical, objective, imposed accountings such as Greenberg's. In one type of account, an attempt is made to get at the meaning of a work by considering the voice and self-professed ideology of the artist. The other draws from a realm of aesthetic concern concentrated amongst an elite group of connoisseurs to create an abstracted, objectified theory of aesthetics which can be applied to the arts. These models coincide with the wider models of social thought that also came to affect
anthropology. They point to opposing models: a split Greenberg calls the Classical/Romantic and anthropologist Murray Leaf called Monist/Dualist and others have called Subjective/Objective or Hegemonic/Dialogical. Neither tendency in art or anthropology bridges the gap between subject and object, however, they do point, intentionally or not to their multifaceted relationship.
Chapter Three

Beyond The Visual And Textual: Performative Critique.

Provocation, controversy, irritation—even the use of means which could seem preposterous to minds nurtured on a rationalist tradition that stretches back to Aristotle—all these are part of a cultural arsenal which many twentieth-century artists have used to challenge the status quo. Beuys' attempt has been to extend this cultural licence undiluted into the worlds of politics and economics where no such licence is given.

C. Tisdall

In an article called, "The Muse Post-Modern and Homeless" (1987), Cynthia Ozick recalls that Henry James had unknowingly predicted that one of the major tenets of modernism was going to be about "the artist as a sovereign and unbetrayable focus of authenticity"; and although, as Yeats had also predicted, "Things fall apart, The center can not hold", the artists pledge to the self did. Throughout modernism the artist is portrayed and portrays herself and the self in general as whole and consummate. Indeed modernism saw the birth of the novel which was to focus on the quest of the individual for self, for knowledge and for the means for constructing a moral framework from the vestiges of an uncertain world. These concerns are also reflected in the visual arts.

Artist Joseph Beuys, like critic Greenberg, inherited this tradition; it is witnessed in their work as an unshaken
reliance on the essential kernel of self with infallible intuitive capacities. The artist, critic and art audience (those influenced by art) in Beuys' and Greenberg's vision communicate through a fundamental intuitive sense/experience. For Greenberg, the formalist aspect of art appeals to an intuitive experiential which in turn fosters the purity of a rationalist critique. Greenberg's "purity of medium" restricts him to the tautological—an aesthetic philosophical realm which circles back on itself. Beuys, on the other hand, stretches aesthetics into the dialogical realm—a philosophical political arena. As he stated, "art and experience gained from art can form an element which flows back into life" (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:265).

For Beuys the intuitive is that which allows the true, real self to emerge. Free of false consciousness and social convention this true self can bring the individual to social consciousness, to an awareness of the need of a replenishing life balance—the true self will be the individual and social liberator. In this way Beuys' work acts as both subtle (intuitive) and strong-arm (provocative/political) cultural critique.

For both Beuys and Greenberg art is to touch the unquestioned authentic and pristine self. In this regard their work borders on the romantic. Beuys, who is often heralded as one of the post-moderns of the art world, goes only so far in that direction. Beuys' work and performances, because of his choice and use of materials as well as his
relationship with his audience addresses some of the concerns of a pluralistic post-modern society. However, his overarching project and its goals do not do away with the terms of modernism but rather redefine them, readdress them and align them into a "proper balance". The end product of his project is totalizing calling for a universal political solution—direct democracy. Unification by means of accepting, once certain ajustments have been made, 'flow' and 'flux', (as in the ebb of natural life processes encompassing amoeba, man, society and thought, feeling and will), is a fundamental component of his work.

In these ways and others his project is Modern. Beuys however, combines modern and post-modern tendencies in his work; for example he does away with the question of product/production by replacing it with, and here lies the contradiction, a transcendental of process. Transcendental and the language of the sublime do not usually fit with 'process', a buzz word for post-modern concerns (rather than product).

Unlike Greenberg's, Beuys' work culminates as a critique of rationality and the ills its rampant use has wreaked upon an over materialistic, over intellectualized society. It is Beuys' strident critique of Rationality which pushes him out beyond modernism. It is a critique which has more than superficial ramifications for the discourse of modernity. In the integration of rationality with intuition and even spirituality which Beuys hopes to achieve through his work,
he invokes post-modernism's concern with the dialogic and communicative relationships shut out of modern discourse by hegemonic ideologies, especially that of rigid positivism and rationality.

In bringing to the fore these dialogic possibilities he also suggests the ethical imperatives of implementing them. Liberating, in my reading of his work, is that Beuys, while posing that rationality is an element among other important ones which must be integrated into a dialogic, open system, reminds us of the intuitive leap inherent in the inspiration which founded and continually reinvents rationality as an exciting principle of thought.

* I *

In what follows I will chronicle some of the interesting themes and tenets of Joseph Beuys' work. I start with the theme of evolution because it threads through the major issues I will touch on in his work: the self and biography, revolution, the nature of materialism, a cultural critique of rationality; the theme of evolution also connects his work to the modernist projects of Frazer and Greenberg.

In the unusual juxtaposition of Beuys and Greenberg it becomes apparent that, in fact, they embarked on very similar paths but ended up by moving in opposite directions. Both are propelled by a belief in the absolute good inherent in the principle of evolution. For Beuys evolution inspired his interpretation of the nature of man and society. For
Greeenberg it affirmed the rational progression of Culture, i.e., the natural progression of the arts toward purity.

Despite the disparities of specific usage, in reading across Frazer (see chapter four), Greeenberg and Beuys, evolution appears to function as a fundamental component of modernist ideology called on to change the world, as well as aid in understanding the details of everyday life. It replaces the religious notions of faith and preordained destiny and comes into being as rigid morality no longer can make sense of a pluralistic world. Regarding evolution in the language of art, as Georg Jappe writes of Beuys' work: "There is still the possibility of grasping things in visible form. Art is a method by which a comprehensive exploration of human evolution and inner anatomy can be made concrete" (Tisdall 1979:162).

In Beuys' work evolution is that which should lead us to greater creativity, rationality, intuition and ultimately social, economic and cultural freedom. He used the term evolution as an essential, wholistic, development flowing in an open integrated system. He does not use it to connote a vulgarized interpretation of a Darwinian unilineal progression.

Beuys' idea of evolution is used in his work as a principle and a process, one which approaches what we might call an absolute--like good or truth. In Beuys' aesthetic, process and not the object of production, beauty for example, is transcendental and absolute. This evolutionary--
developmental process, achieves, on a personal biographical and societal level, a balance of human and natural processes. According to Beuys, as we have noted, the pressing 'balance' contemporary society, the individual and art should be striving for on all levels, is that between intuition and spirituality on the one side and rationality on the other.

Beuys does not completely escape the unilineal (progress) aspect evolution implies. In his ideal, following natural evolution will 'lead' to a society and individuals which are healthy, balanced, and secure in the ability to accept and provide an equalitarian, liberating creative freedom. His art is his medium of evocation aiming for such a better understood, felt, lived freedom. In this sense he is goal oriented. He does, with a very Modernist connotation believe in seeking the proper paths that society must travel in order to reach its desired ends. The notion of evolution I have extrapolated here is most clearly expressed first in his "Theory of Sculpture", and later in his "Energy Plan For Western Man".

The Theory of Sculpture is both a drawing and an idea which serves us here as entree into Beuys' work and thought. The idea for the Theory of Sculpture actually followed much of his early works; Beuys then used it to articulate his work and projected the 'Theory' in hindsight as an overview of his oeuvre. The Theory of Sculpture, "describes the passage of everything in the world, physical, or psychological, from a chaotic, undetermined state to a
determined or ordered state" (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:72). This passage plays itself out in movement, here 'sculptural movement'. He continues, "CHAOTIC is the state of raw material and unchanneled will power, characterized as Warm. ORDERED is the state of material that has been processed and formed." In its ordered state it often appears crystalline and is characterized as Cold and intellectual. Beuys projects that "if the process goes too far the crystal becomes a burnt-up over-intellectualized 'clinker' and falls out of the system" (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:72).

Following his own "Theory of Sculpture" Beuys' work "evolves" through a series of drawings from the wispy, hardly distinguishable undulations of organic markings which recall swans and roof tops of biographic and mythological significance, to the bold organization of the Free International University. The Free International University was part of the action "Honey Pump" at the Museum Fridericianum, Kassel West Germany. It later functioned independently and in other contexts. The first 100 days of meetings were punctuated by a "Honey Pump" which circulated two tons of honey in clear plastic tubing around the various meeting rooms and connected the participants through the "bloodstream" of society. Beuys' words and works, as suggested by this minimal compilation, are quite literal while being highly metaphoric, symbolic and evocative—he hopes most that they be provocative.
* II *

By merging life and work Beuys adds his own autobiography to the flux of history and phenomena, symbolic behavior establishing continuity with times past and energies forgotten.  

C.Tisdall

Certain schools of art history and criticism have a long tradition of exploring an artist's biography and psychology as if it were to provide a map of their work. This approach was criticized by the proponents of New Criticism which relied instead only on the work as text which would provide all its own answers and questions. Avoiding the pitfalls of either pole, I explore Beuys' biography not as suggestive autobiography (which nonetheless it can't help being) but because his interest in biography is inexorably linked to his notion of self and it is the self and its evolution which Beuys hoped to reach with his work.

Beuys did not hesitate to articulate on numerous occasions what the development of his work involved, how it evolved or where it was heading. As his "Theory of Sculpture" and notion of "Social Sculpture" came into fruition, speech and thought became legitimate sculptural modes and media. "Social Sculpture" being, the extension of the definition of art beyond the specialist activity carried out by artists to the mobilization of every individual's latent creativity, then and only then, following from that, the moulding of the society of the future based on the total energy
of this individual creativity. In other words: from the people, by the people for the people.

(Beuys in Tisdall 1979:207)

With this focus on the individual he realized that his biography and indeed his self were not only legitimate but necessary sculptural means and we might add also that they were so because of their place as an undeniable cultural means.

The self came into play as an important part in Beuys' work, especially in the development of his revolutionary aspirations, with which he sought to provoke a social, political and economic revolution. He strived to make art which would challenge the creative potential of every citizen and provoke the necessary ideas and actions to bring about such a revolution. Personal evolution was the prerequisite for social revolution—for change itself. He found the evolution of the individual to be accessible via personal biographies.

The creation, in his art, of a biography-autobiography, i.e., of "a self", is the vehicle Beuys uses to enter into a dialogue with his audience. Caroline Tisdall who has put together the most salient English language catalogue of Beuys' show at the Guggenheim Museum and of his work comprehensively through 1974, noted that, "With increasing fame and successive controversies, Beuys' own life has taken on a curiously emblematic and theatrical character" (Tisdall 1979:30). The self in Beuys' art/language can communicate
with the 'other', not only of audience, of animal species, of material, of thought (finding the intuitive Other in rationality), but also of the multi-dimensional self. Here the self is a unifying universal (thus the use of 'biography' instead of autobiography).

biography means more than just a personal thing. It means the interrelationship of all processes and not the splitting of life into separate compartments: a wholeness. By biography I understand the development of everything. My personal history is of interest only in so far as I have attempted to use my life and person as a tool. (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:10)

Finding ways of using the self as a medium Beuys hoped to tap into the vast resources of the self, inspiring social and personal changes (evolution) which would unleash creativity and lead to seeking greater freedom (revolution).

One of the ways Beuys transposed the self into sculptural means was by using objects and substances which had both personal references and symbolic properties such as "flux", "transformation" and "flow" which are suggestive of meaningful life processes. His very understanding of material/substance invokes the evolutionary and potentially revolutionary characteristics of biography/self, and even of thought.

As a sculptor Beuys' vehicle for meaning was a
vocabulary of form though not in any sense that Greenberg would recognize. Of one of his stations called The Bathtub (he called his works stations as in stations on a journey), he comments:

It acts as a kind of autobiographical key: an object from the outer world, a solid material thing invested with energy of a spiritual nature. You could call this substance, and it is the transformation of substance which is my concern in art, rather than the traditional aesthetic understanding of beautiful appearances. (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:10)

Beuys questions the conventional materialist notion of reality. He harks back to an epistemological reading of 'material' finding its roots in mater--mother, as in Mother Earth. This evolutionary (he uses the term in a very broad sense) power of material derived from this idea of mater, is also, he states, at the root of 'substance' (Tisdall 1979:105). Material/substance can therefore be given, or evoke evolutionary or spiritual properties and be freed from its conventional bourgeois configurations. With this move Beuys has entered biography in its abstract and material representations, into the artistic process as a fundamental communicative tool. Most of the discourse surrounding his work seeks to explain or describe this process.

Some very central biographical events of Beuys' life are evident as themes that are translated into substances; felt
and fat being the most noted. (Beuys' use of fat and felt caught the attention of the media and many critiques because they were the substances used to save his life when downed as a WWII pilot). The biographical also circulates through his work on a more abstract level which in looking at, reading and thinking about Beuys' work I distilled out as several salient directive principles. They are: 1), a search for energy sources; 2), an attempt to synthesize science (rational thinking), intuition and spirituality; 3), shamanistic attempts to heal social wounds such as WWII; and, 4), the imbuing of material substances with meaning in such a manner as to subvert conventional materialism in order to return instead to its evolutionary/mater (thus generative) nature. The biographical elements of Beuys' art do various kinds of work and exist on several levels. I do not mean to overemphasize the biographical above all else because its perspective is too limited for looking at something which is also a social, cultural phenomena. However, I would argue by viewing his work through an centralized notion of biography, it opens up the possibility of probing underlying and compelling themes through a Freudian heuristic questioning as well as proposing a rhetorical device around which to organize a journey through his 'stations'. (The work of Crapanzano (1980) and Obesekere (1981) are suggestive here on the usefulness of a Freudian heuristic.)
"The essence of Beuys' work in all its different forms is the articulation of the energies that flow through history, human endeavor, natural form, material and language" (Tisdall 1979:228). The search for and exploration of energy sources ranges from allusions to alchemy and illusions to science, to demonstrations of transformative material critiques of rationality.

Beuys' fascination with energy sources and their transformative powers are, I find, markedly reminiscent of the search Freud proposed for the evolutionary and subconscious drive i.e., motivations, for a person's works and actions. Beuys explores the forces, not only behind the physical and social processes, but also behind his very actions as an artist and human being. In the formulation of the 'Theory of Sculpture', the ideas of 'flow' and 'warmth process' evoke the flux of energy necessary for spirituality, intuition, even chaos. They are counterbalanced by 'cold', order, rationality, structure. The two sets of oppositions are united to create well springs of transcendent powerful creativity—a creativity that transforms and generates. The search for energy sources (motivations, subconscious) parallels the analytic therapeutic process where the patient seeks to come to terms with the sources of their neurosis. Beuys' idea of creativity is close to Freud's idea of health: it requires balancing the powers of ego, superego, and id, it requires finding the combinations necessary to be an integral
individual. The search for energy sources moves through the individual biographical process to the social as do most of the concepts involved in Beuys' work.

Beuys saw his strength as an ability to combine his disparate interests. He was fascinated with the natural sciences but found that they were too confining for his integrative 'talent'. The specialization and narrow scope of science that he perceived dissuaded him from turning to it as a profession. He found the same to be true for the art academy. This specific biographic life experience is another of Beuys' springboards. In making such a statement there is a need to acknowledge the 'graphic' aspect of bio-'graphy'. Beuys intonated that the experience of rejecting and the combining fields had certain specific, real felt consequences--there is however, a difference in the experiential component and its 'graphic' convenience and discursive potential. The encoding of biography helps to move his story and his work along, it also connects him to his audience as a general shared phenomena--the self being universal.

He expands the significance of his early experiences beyond the realm of personal experiential to apply it to a Theory of Sculpture and a cultural critique. Beuys' ability to synthesize science/rationality and art/intuition in his life and work are projected as goals for individual and social health, the end product of which would be greater human freedom. Creativity would be the salve to heal the
wounds of a society overly rational and thus out of balance. Rationality was not to be discarded but enhanced and liberated. This integrative impulse in the history of art, philosophy and science is not unique to Beuys but his configuration for how it was to happen, the tenor of his wholistic approach, puts him at his unique point on the spiral history of theoretical trends swinging from either highly subjective or objective orientations.

Beuys was not only interested in promoting social health through the long term and broad reaching effects of creativity and revolution, but also in directly attempting to cure society's wounds. He believed that in selecting sore or wounded sites or events, he could through his art, help to 'process' them and thus cause their disappearance. For Beuys, "Individual and collective sickness is taken as symptomatic of the profound alienation of the contemporary human condition, a kind of death, inflicted in turn by man on the entire natural universe." (Tisdall 1979:214). Beuys selected wounds but transformed them from their negative state. He assumed a dialectical opposition between trauma on the one hand and joy or enlightenmnt on the other. Indeed he symbolically demonstrates this 'flow' in the relationship of the various elements in his work. An example is his performance of 'Coyote', wherein he interacted with a coyote inside a room at MOMA which the audience could watch from behind a caged partition.

When Beuys arrived in New York in 1974 for his
week-long co-existence and 'dialogue' with a coyote, the stretcher on which he was carried suggested a trauma in mankind's state of being, in stark contrast to the calm serenity of the attempt to communicate with the other species that followed. Similarly, in the environment 'Show Your Wound' of 1976, which followed a severe illness, mortuary equipment is given a double function through hints of healing and regeneration which make their appearance through the artist's own vocabulary of fat, batteries and filters. (Tisdall 1979:24)

Other examples of stations dealing with wounds touch on concentration camps, the scars of urban landscapes and as in 'Coyote' the plight of the American Indian. In an interview with Tisdall, Beuys stated of 'Coyote', "I believe I made contact with the pysical trauma point of the United States energy constellation; the whole american trauma with the Indian, the Red Man." Tisdall elaborates:

This is where the figure of the coyote appears, respected and venerated by the Red Man, despised and persecuted by the White Man; a polarity and a gulf. Somehow the trauma has to be reversed and amends made; 'You could say that a reckoning has to be made with the coyote, and only then can this trauma be lifted.' (Tisdall 1979:228)
Beuys' work also invokes shamanistic tendencies. The references he makes to shamanism are not meant to be escapist and nostalgic but rather as Beuys notes, "to stress the idea of transformation and of substance" and furthermore, the shaman does so "in order to bring about change and development: his nature is therapeutical" (Tisdall 1979:23). The important aspect of his shamanistic appeal is to suggest a different relationship to matter--one which breaks with the hegemony of science and its materialistic notions:

When we consider our own stage of materialism and all the things we experience as negative in our current crisis, we have to admit too that this stage is also an historical necessity. I experienced it in the war and I feel it now every day: this state of decay that comes with a one-sided understanding of the idea of materialism. When people say that shamanistic practice is atavistic and irrational, one might answer that the attitude of contemporary scientists is equally old-fashioned and atavistic, because we should by now be at another stage of development in our relationship to material.

So, when I appear as a kind of shamanistic figure, or allude to it, I do so to stress my belief in other priorities and a need to come up with a completely different plan for working
with substances. For instance, in places like universities, where everyone speaks so rationally, it is necessary for a kind of enchanter to appear. (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:23)

To punctuate his emphasis on the importance of transformative powers and processes, he draws on shamanism as well as materials which metamorphose, (cause reactions when mixed with other substances). They are symbolically laden either through their scientific properties or rich historical mythological content, and usually both. He looks for substances such as honey, wax, fat, felt, bone, blood, morgue tables, dead hares, iron plates, copper sheets, test tubes and beakers, all of which have combinations of mythic or scientific structures and often invoke biographic references. In so doing he points to and celebrates human creative (generative) potential and suggests its imperative, implicit nature. (For interesting parallels with structuralism see the work of Detienne, Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes).

Beyond the meaning of specific elements in a given piece, and their combinations as fields of associations, Beuys works to subvert the authority (substantiality) that we usually ascribe to material. He does so by underscoring the movement, transformation, evolution, transitional, living force, the symbolic nature inherent in material. The above terms are of course his preferred vocabulary—he has taken dead matter and breathed new life into it by reminding us of it in other
realms—those of meaning and biography. Through creativity he renders the substances in his life and ours meaningful, and hopes to have promoted a freedom from the tyranny of binding ideas and relationships. He hopes to have touched our humanity in this realm rather than promoting a knee jerk recognition of marxist doctrines in action (much early criticism of his work concentrated on pulling out appropriate didactic marxist rhetoric). Beuys, true to his Theory of Sculpture works to synthesize Marx, Freud, Jung and Direct Democracy (Beuys' preferred political form).

As we have seen, the four 'principles' or constants of Beuys work, the search for energy sources; the synthesis of rationality and intuition; and the therapeutic nature of shamanism; and awarding of a transformative nature to material, can be understood as addressing the broad questions of biography (ours and his). The four are suggestive of the role of art for the individual and society and also about interpreting and creating meaning on both levels. These central issues and their corollaries are fundamental issues to his life and work and he hopes by extension to the individual and society. Art is the discourse with which he connects them.

I have opened up some of what I have called the principles of Beuys' work, those which I find pervasive and underlying. I have argued that his oeuvre could in fact be read through his fundamental and revealing concern with the biographical and that the biographical like the
evolutionary metaphor is a convenient rhetorical device (calling his pieces and performances 'stations' is surely a hint of this). I have pulled out some of the specifics of his life as illustrative of some of the above generalities.

Beuys claims to have been very influenced by his birthplace of Cleves on the marshy German-Dutch border. As a youth, he was an avid naturalist and he had his own science laboratory. By fourteen he was immersed in the study of the sciences. In the midst of these studies he was drafted into the German army, where he served as a pilot while being allowed to continue his studies. He was seriously injured five times. On one occasion his plane crashed in Crimea where he was taken in by nomadic Tartars who saved his life by insulating his frozen body with fat and wrapping him in felt.

After the war he returned to Cleves. Having forsaken science because of its narrow specialization he started at the art academy. He grew restless with the rigid life drawing format for instruction, and sought other more independent instruction. During this time (1949) he also suffered a deep depression and breakdown brought on by his war experience. He writes:

The positive aspect of this is the start of a new life. The whole thing is a therapeutic process. For me it was a time when I realized the part the artist can play in indicating the traumas of a time and initiating a healing
process. That relates to medicine, or what people call alchemy or shamanism, though that should not be overstressed. For me it meant the continuation of the threads of my biography that had led me to scientific and biological experiments at Rindern. Now through art this was brought to a higher level of application. Out of it came the Theory of Sculpture. By that I mean I saw the relationship between the chaos I had experienced and a sculptural analogy. Chaos can have a healing character, coupled with the idea of open movement which channels the warmth of chaotic energy into order of form. Objects like 'Crystal' came before the theory, but now I began to see how structures can be created which relate to every kind of life and work. (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:21)

Art thus becomes a means of personal recovery and collective therapy.

Beyond this time period his art and life are no longer referred to separately. He became a controversial art professor and was dismissed for his radical views and teaching methods, as well as his refusal to heed bureaucratic credos. All during this time he continued to produce work which was guided by his vocabulary of creativity, freedom, transformation, and evolution, and saw
the introduction of political directives. In that Beuys sought to create a lived art and a place for art in life it is not surprising that he does not dwell on their separation.

* III *

I have so far discussed the discourse surrounding Beuys' work. What of the work itself? Beuys made art because he believed that words alone written or spoken could not convey his meaning or ideas nor could they be as fundamentally provocative as could his art. Repeated here is the suggestion that art does a specific kind of cultural work that no other activity performs. I find it a useful way to think about art because it gets beyond the definitional trap of aesthetics and beauty frequent in cross-cultural and pan-historic as well as modern/post-modern discussions about art. In the idea of cultural work that I am proposing art incorporates aesthetics as well as meaning, and includes an inherent medium of cultural critique.

I will draw from Geertz's article, "Art as a Cultural System" (1983) to flesh out what I mean by cultural work and point out some of the short-comings of referential rather than critical approaches to art. Geertz proposes that art materializes a way of experiencing social reality, that the universality of art is that it demonstrates that ideas can be made visual, audible, "tactible" (Geertz's word)--that art
takes 'forms' "where sense and emotions can reflectively address them". He goes a step further to suggest that in looking at art and aesthetics, we "locate in the tenor of their setting the sources of their spell". The thrust of his argument is that art is always 'about' something which already exists in given society and not simply a reductionist illustration 'of' something. He seems to suggest that ideas are not or cannot be visual, audible, tactile without art or in another context. He also separates "thought" from "sense and emotion" and from "form". In so doing he denies art the ability to create meaning.

Geertz has not reached far enough in his conception of art because he does not allow for the possibility that in generating meaning, art is not always something synthetic; rather it creates gaps and reflexivity (a function of the critical enterprise) which exceed a limited referentiality. His supposition is that art promotes the recognition that ideas about culture can be manifest as art objects. In Geertz's scenario reflexivity is caught in its own continuous loop--art is about social, cultural or even aesthetic ideas, as art.

I find it useful to introduce the notion that art has a more generative potential, namely, that it does cultural work. Lest I fall into an overly projective or directional notion of art being singularly functional as suggested by the term cultural 'work' rather than cultural 'play' I hold up Freuds notion of 'dream work' as a provocative model. I
propose that, in this usage, 'cultural work', can put forth art as the waking dream work of society, providing the means of "examing and tracing the relations between the latent dream-thoughts and manifest dream-content, and the process by which the latter has grown out of the former" (Freud 1938:319; also see Fischer (1986) for a cultural analogy of dream work in literary constructions of ethnic identity). This also suggests that the relation of art and society can be the kind of critical and hermeneutic endeavor such as that which dream interpretation serves for the individual. Freud's ideas on condensation, displacement, means of representation and representability in dream work (1938:316-419) all could be translated into relevant terms of the relationship of art to society, to culture and cultural critique. I return to Beuys' work because it is highly suggestive of why and how art does the kind of cultural work he envisions.

-Why Art?-

In choosing art as his medium Beuys tells us something about what he expects its nature to be. The direct link Beuys draws between the communicative impact of art and its evocative and provocative essences stands out prominently and empowers his artistic vision.

*Evocation/Provocation*

Beuys chose art as his expressive medium because he believed that certain materials, configurations and the
actions done to/on them evoke or elicit special responses, reflection and even action. To do so art has to reach deep into the structure of human life existent in every individual. Beuys depends on creativity and the power of realization inherent in intuitive thinking to make it possible to "shape the desired foreseen reality" (Tisdall 1979:110). The most powerful way to access that potential is through engaging the audience simultaneously on multiple levels—heart, mind and body, rationality and intuition, thinking, feeling and will. In so doing Beuys felt he would reach into the sub and unconscious so as to expose what lay dormant beneath our socio-political false consciousness.

Beuys relied on his choice of materials to act as "metaphors of natural and social behavior, analogies for physical and spiritual production" (Tisdall 1979:44). His pieces are anthropomorphic while engaging products of scientific and industrial technology, often speak in eery human metaphors of nature, emotion and existence and speak to living with the representations of seeing outside one's self—living with art.

One of Beuys' simplest pieces provides an abundantly compelling example. This humorous piece is called the "Fat Chair": a simple wooden chair with a wedge of solidified fat (lard) filling its seat. In retrospect Beuys recognized in the Fat Chair and the "Fat Corners" series (fat wedges in the corner of various spaces and rooms) a pivotal moment in his work. The pieces are an important bridge making use of
metaphoric possibilities to manifest the communicable.

comments:

My initial intention in using fat was to stimulate discussion. The flexibility of the material appealed to me particularly in its reactions to temperature changes. This flexibility is psychologically effective--people feel instinctively it relates to inner processes and feelings. The discussion I wanted was about the potential of sculpture and culture, what they mean, what language is about, what human production and creativity are about. So I took an extreme position in sculpture, and a material that was very basic to life and not associated with life....

The fat on the Fat Chair is not geometric, as in the Fat Corners, but keeps something of its chaotic character. The ends of the wedges read like a cross-section cut through the nature of fat. I placed it on the chair to emphasize this, here the chair represents a kind of human anatomy, the area of digestive and excretive warmth processes, sexual organs and interesting chemical change, relating psychologically to will power. In German the joke is compounded in a pun since Stuhl (chair) is also the polite way of saying shit (stool), and that too it is
used and mineralized material with chaotic character, reflected in the texture of the cross-section of fat....It started an almost chemical process among people that would have been impossible if I had only spoken theoretically. (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:72)

This almost chemical process is at the 'seat' of Beuys' work. He relies on our most basic associations (he would claim them inherent, natural and intuitive)—associations which are engaging and compelling on a physiological as well as emotional and intellectual level. If the piece functions on only one of these levels it is unsuccessful especially if it only reaches the intellect. Beuys indicates that art is not to be completely understood (conceptual), "it is more the sense of an indication or suggestion".

In Greenberg's critique of Minimalist Conceptual art, he finds fault with the work because of its lack of "aesthetic surprise". Aesthetic surprise, was for Greenberg, similar to Beuys' "almost chemical process",--each an elegance of solution only art could sustain. For Greenberg however aesthetic surprise should lead only to furthering the goals of aesthetics, for Beuys, on the other hand, it should lead to heightened creativity in the individual and to the provocation of action be it speech, thought or direct involvement (political or other): "art and experience gained from art can form an element that flows back into life" (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:265).
*Communication*

In coupling communicative capabilities with his evocative mood Beuys thrust art forward in an attempt to awaken and connect individuals. In choosing sound elements for his acoustic pieces Beuys took the same care as he did with other types of materials (felt, fat, honey, cooper etc.). For example, he chose sounds like that which he calls, "the open öö of the stag" because it worked on several levels: as audible sound it was suggestive of communication, as well as of the possibility of extending contact to other species. The öö also represented a completely open sound invoking the opening which creativity inspires in the liberation of the individual and society. Ironically one of the complaints against Beuys voiced during the trial over his dismissal as a professor was his commensurate address of a twenty-minute performance of the öö stag sound.

From early on sound was an important element in Beuys' work. His first performances with the Flexus Group of alternative musical composers actually was the catalyst which led him to create actions or happenings rather than purely static drawings or sculptures. This new medium also allowed him to combine the various epistemological aspects of his work as well as his 'self' as artist, teacher, activist and performer (see Ulmer 1986 and Goldberg 1979).

Acoustically in his performances voice, rather than words, and mechanically produced noises or sound
predominated. Voice became a sculptural element, a means for the "moulding of thought into words". It transmitted energy and acted as a direct means in the sculpting of thinking forms. For Beuys it is speech which allows people to work together in the conceptual field. Language, including the moulding power of sound, voice and word, is then is the great transformer and giver of form. But as with creativity and politics, language must be free, free to fulfill its revolutionary potential, i.e., become an instrument of freedom. For this purpose, "it is the WORD that produces all images. It is the key sign for all processes of moulding and organizing. When I use language, I try to induce the impulses of this power...the power of evolution" (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:210).

Another communicative, often acoustic component of Beuys' work is the discourse which literally and figuratively surrounds it. He discussed his work widely in interviews, books, and catalogues; he considered discussion after a performance to be an integral part of the action. Posthumous exhibits of his work are usually accompanied by more than the usual cryptic labels, instead lengthy panels explicating his life and oeuvre are provided. As a result however, the works appear completely obtuse and unapproachable, leading me to believe he would have been dissatisfied with their display. While he often showed remnants of his actions as stations in their static condition he always found a way to make them approachable often
fueling them with his presence, either through editorial decisions or by reactivating the piece for its new context.

In the current travelling exhibit, "Beuys, Polke, Warhol", the Beuys component is comprised of fragments of larger pieces which are under-contextualized or over-contextualized by providing overwhelming 'explanation'. The effect of the clumsy display is to render, either through excess or neglect, the works mute and unable to function as comprehensive pieces. It is exactly this type of mystification of art which Beuys sought to avoid.

Exhibited are objects as a blackboard with an elaborately illustrated diagram (a fragment from a very involved performance). It is in German and left untranslated. When Beuys used words it was for their meaning and symbolism not as mere aesthetic markings which is what this exhibit leaves them as. On the other hand his 'Felt Suit' is accompanied by a six foot anonymous biography focusing on the wartime events which 'led to' his use of felt and fat. In a long video taped interview (not shown with the exhibit) Beuys complains that such one on one correspondences overemphasize the details of biography to the effect of diminishing the impact of the implicit nature of the materials. While it would in fact be quite feasible to interpret Beuys' entire oeuvre as a response to his involvement in the war, I feel strongly that while this analysis may hold true on a personal level, it provides little understanding of how art also engages us at the
social level at which it is received.

In this vein of always looking toward the coupling of 'suggestive implication' and 'process' with 'content' and 'the objective' Beuys did not intend for the words to supersede his work and particularly guarded against over-intellectualization, nonetheless, he realized their potential. For example when Beuys spent several hours sewing a grand piano into an 'insulating felt filter' and adorning it with emergency red cross symbols, ("Infiltration--Homogen For Grand Piano"), he did so to warn us about silence and to generate discussion. While the piano's aesthetic status is arguable, (he insists that it does not function as an aesthetic object but conceivably it does), it is clear that Beuys intends instead to subvert our traditional rhetorical categories by switching the rhetoric of aesthetics for that of provocation. Beuys believed that art and the discourse surrounding it changes people's perceptions and forces them to speak. The cultural act (piece or performance) provokes a kind of social action (speech) which will in turn lead to other types of social action. His conception is, as Tisdall notes, "dependent on the assumption that intuitive thinking, with its power of realization, makes it possible to shape the desired foreseen reality" (1979:110).

Art was then to have the effects traditionally reserved for politics--i.e., a rhetoric of provocation leading to action. As a rhetoric of provocation Beuys uses art to bridge philosophy and politics on both the individual and
social level: "The moulding processes of art are taken as metaphors for the moulding of society: hence, SOCIAL SCULPTURE" (Tisdall 1979:72), while also overlapping a philosophical and aesthetic expression of wo/man's place in the world and the relationship of wo/man and society, a relationship he envisions as a democratic equation: cultural life (freedom)--Law (equality)--economics (fraternity).

I am proposing that Beuys has upsets a traditional Aristotelian rhetorical structure which relegates aesthetics to the rhetoric of poetics and emotional consciousness not political provocation. He creates instead an epistemology of art (also see Ulmer's analysis of Beuys as a Grammatology (1986)) which, in drawing on evolutionary and shamanistic motifs as well as biography and the language of psychology, propels itself towards 'health'--in this case health being greater freedom in the broadest individual and social sense. Moving through these motifs Beuys work becomes directly political through indirect means. Beuys is insistent that his work is art but that it is not restricted by conventional aesthetics. The epistemological groundings of the Theory of Sculpture allow Beuys to easily connect up evolution, art, process, society and politics. Having founded such groups as the Student Democratic Party and the Free International University, it is interesting to note that in his last works Beuys moved away from pragmatic organized politics. He reemphasized instead decentralized creativity and intuition
which might find their way into the realm of politics. In so doing he also emphasized the power of art in a society where political programs had lost their provocative powers to alienating dogma and stale platforms. He seems to have held on to his early premonition that to change society one had to reach the individual and that art through its creative structures was the most assured way of doing so.

Notes Toward A Conclusion:

—Why Beuys?—

What matters most about this artist, who ranks today among the most persuasive formulators of contemporary ideals and aspirations, is his capacity to identify central issues and to take positions that simultaneously assume creative, plastic form. The issues so perceived tend to elude conventional rationalization.

T. Messer
Director of The Guggenheim Museum

Like all remembered artists, innovators and scholars Beuys had the particular knack for both shaping and being in step with his time and the needs and capabilities of his audience. I have chosen to look at Beuys because his timeliness, his integrity, his politics, his integration of various provocative roles which challenge the system while working within it also come together as an art which holds our attention (already an accomplishment where modern and post-modern art has become either vapidly conventionalized and thus seen instantly or obtrusively alienating—-not seen
at all) and inspires reflection. This reflection is the pilot light to consciousness raising and cultural critique.

Beuys uses cultural arenas of discourse and legitimate social roles to stimulate thought and to extend his artistic licence into realms such as politics and economics where none is given. He does so by creating parallel roles for himself—artist, pedagogue, shaman, activist, clown, provocateur which he uses to then express the formative nature of his art. Especially prevalent on the social level of critical reflection, is his insistence on pedagogic and shamanistic discourse which creates (at least) the effect of social therapy. For example, Beuys comments,

on the one hand, I was a kind of modern scientific analyst, on the other hand, in the actions, I had a synthetic existence as a shaman. This strategy aimed at creating in people an agitation for instigating questions rather than for conveying a complete and perfect structure. It was a kind of psychoanalysis with all the problems of energy and culture. (In Vadel; quoted Ulmer 1986:238)

With performance as his modus, consciousness raising becomes the bridge which allows Beuys to straddle his roles as artist and teacher. The pedagogic approach facilitates the notion of stimulating in his audience (audience being analogous to 'student'), thought, action, and broad level
cultural critique.

In order to be both playful and engaging while also serious and legitimate Beuys assumes several postures. One involves the personal integrity he is purported to have maintained in every domain throughout his life and career. His flight vest and felt hat (which he always wore) were emblematic of a consistency and decorum and of a ritualization and ceremoniousness which accompanied him in all his performances in public life—artistic and banal. In a combination which won him many audiences, enchanting the most skeptical, Beuys was renowned as a performer who maintained a sense of sincerity and intensity and also a sense of humor. Beuys seems to have realized that provocation at the risk of alienation was not a fortuitous accomplishment. He therefore carried out highly symbolic and challenging scenarios within legitimate social institutions in the eye of the public and media. For instance, he was directly involved in political organizations, he was a professor and founder of a university. He was also of course an artist which carries a specific, however mystified, place in culture and society. He was also involved in several highly publicized court battles, one involving his dismissal as a professor of art from the art academy of Dusseldorf, the other over an incident in which his piece "Bathtub" was used without consent as a beer cooler at a university function. He used his university/pedagogic connection as well as the legal
system and political situation very consciously, on the one hand appearing to condone them while also pointing to their limitations and his own as well.

In Germany and much of Europe (similar to Warhol in this country), although Beuys worked to blur the distinctions between high and popular art and between artist and layman, he was considered avant garde and thus somewhat inaccessible to the general public. However, his inadvertently becoming a media figure with striking presence made him familiar.

By his very dedication and longevity Beuys demonstrated his vulnerability and his strength. His willingness to work within the system and to transcend it when necessary translated into an engaging and ostensibly dialogic relationship with his audience, with art, with society. He does not advocate an aestheticism which is so far beyond our reach so as to be predominately alienating. His presence in his work on every level from biological referents to physical performances to surrounding documentation, discourse, interviews bridge the gap between various social and cultural realms and contribute enormously to making his work both accessible and challenging. What makes Beuys all the more notable is that he manages to create an innovative political seat for art while maintaining sophisticated artistic integrity. The personal integrity I have just mentioned is one of the mechanisms for doing this—a personal politics which is projected onto the larger arena.

Many current popular attempts to mix art and politics
have been just that and do justice to neither. Beuys' solution is a most effective form of cultural critique because it avoids alienating political and aesthetic conventions and attempts a hermeneutic or at least structuralist approach to the relation of individual and society without violating the processes of either. As he writes: "only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the death line: to dismantle in order to build À SOCIAL ORGANIZATION as a work of art" (Beuys in Tisdall 1979:268).

Beuys' art functions as cultural critique on several levels. It is a critique of the conventions of art, a critique of rationality, of capitalism and materialism, and of a hierarchy of ideologies in the social order. His work makes an interesting model for anthropology because he engages the intellectual, rhetorical cultural medium (art, anthropology) to challenge, enhance, provoke, stimulate both itself as a medium and its audience (society, social life). It is both self and other critical. On a further level he is also suggestive of how to engage an audience in considering itself. He is dialogic not so much on a one to one basis but through a hermeneutic cultural synthesizing which moves all the way through the biographic to mass culture to the social and back to demanding the integrity of the individual.

In the infinite curve of the hermeneutic circle Beuys has
both engaged and left a record of a 'native hermeneutic tradition' (see Fischer (1984)). His work, which touched not only art but thought, politics and the contemporary configurations of culture, was and is a forum for working out the ideas and contradictions of society, culture and the times which it also helped to shape.
Conclusion

Modernism From Frazer to Berman—Anticipation to Nostalgia.

Modernism provides the shared ideological configuration, intellectual and socio-political context of Modern art and anthropology. While the arts have so often been called up to represent modernism, anthropology traditionally has taken its place in the shadows as part of a massive wave of modern thought whose tide was cast by the unconscious beast called modern society as if it were only an unconditioned reflex and not the 'stuff' of which fine arts (calling themselves Modernism) were made. Modernism is now in the process of being described against the foreground of post-modernism and vice-versa. In the spirit of such a process I include this revision of certain of anthropology's contributions to modernism and modern aesthetic sensibilities. Frazer provides a very early example of anthropological sensibilities being appropriated by the arts, primitivism, as most celebrated by Picasso, is another and Beuys' use of performance, shamanism and ritualized objects is a third of many.

Anthropology like modern art is both a cultural product and an active cultural producer. Works such as Vickery's revision of Frazer help to put the myth that the
self-conscious, stylistic rendering of modernism belongs solely in the domain of the arts, to task. Modernism has touched all aspects of life and has been reflected in the study and thought of every discipline, as for example seen in the work of Marshall Berman, a social critic who address a wide span of modernist interests enabling him to envision a context for the various competing versions of modernism. He does so primarily through such idioms as space (urban and architectural) and time. He constructs a sociological framework from a physical and ideological archeology of modernism. The social sciences (and anthropology more specifically) have touched on various aspects of modern life from power and politics, social relations and modes of production to psychology and communication. These studies have contributed much to what we understand modernism and modern thought to be and help to shape what a post-colonial, post-industrial society may come to mean.

Frazer's Modernism: Form and Content.

The Golden Bough offers a glimpse of how ethnography, literature and modernism grew up together and then apart. I draw on Vickery to point to Frazer's modernist techniques which were aesthetic while reflecting Frazer's critique of and place in modern society. Frazer's gift (similar to Beuys in his era) was his ability to capture the elusive changing essences of his time and transform these into innovative aesthetic and critical techniques which congealed
into something, looking back, we have come to call Modernism. What were then some of the innovations which made Frazer's work so influential to both modern anthropology and literature? I will divide them into two categories: form and content.

From Vickery's rendering of The Golden Bough and its impact on literature I have extracted out an idea of modernism as played out/read as, a set of aesthetic techniques, especially in patterns of narrative and a reorganization of the text, new structuring principles including the use of thematization and Reason. Reading back, it seems evident that in his choice of subject matter, Frazer clearly offered to Britain and the west a social critique. He also fed a growing hunger for both myth and exotica, science and Reason. Most significantly, I have found that Frazer's work offers important clues as to the mechanisms through which the arts and sciences grew apart despite their shared interests.

Vickery does not find Frazer as a cited precedent for each of the modern authors he discusses (Joyce, Eliot, Lawrence, Zola and others), and so to avoid oversimplifying and overstating his case he offers this:

The musical and pictoral similarities between Frazer's study and modern poetry and fiction, through striking and suggestive, may be essentially analogies, lines of parallel development. What they indicate most sharply is
the extent to which Frazer's structural techniques foreshadow those of some of the major critics of the twentieth century.

(Vickery 1973:119)

I would also add that while I imply and use the term strategies what follows here is not a point by point description of Frazer's intentions, but rather an analysis made possible by the perspective of my particularly guided hindsight.

The Golden Bough's attraction for modern writers was to a 'non-chronological method of narration' (Vickery 1973:119); the technique of rapidly shifting topics and focus (which became a cornerstone of modern poetry); a narrative pattern fused with a 'strongly visual and pictoral use of image' (Vickery 1973:32); and Frazer's reference to his own text in pictoral terms: certain events 'forefront', and a crowd of priest Kings 'background'. In particular this last technique of pictoral imaging exemplified a 'recurring emphasis of the period, the passion for the resonant concreteness of the observed object' (Vickery 1973:36). Visual clarity was linked with intellectual clarity; there was an implied concreteness in 'presenting the external world in all the sensuous immediacy as a visual presence'. It resounded as intellectual objectivity, truth and reason. In the visual arts, this concern with the visual coincides with the early widespread use of photography and is echoed in such movements as Impressionism.
Impressionists experimented with the idea of a realism truer than that classically portrayed in the realist tradition. They advocated a new realism captured in the physical objectivity of a split second of vision thereby creating an effect which acted to undermine conventional reality. By holding and magnifying what they believed to be true sight/impression, the Impressionists made what appeared to be gross distortions of color and texture, and led to the scandalous naturalism of their subject matter (bourgeois and working class scenes, naked women without the protection of cherubs, courtiers or religious and historic allegory).

Like Impressionism, Frazer abandons a chronological narrative. Instead he adopts strategies to order his vast subject thematically, a strategy which, "juxtaposes conflicting evidence and scenes for dramatic purposes; which presents its points of view by indirect and oblique means; which sees human existence as a flow of recurring experiences; which employs repetition and restatements as both emotive and intellectual devices" (Vickery 1973:119).

The emotive and intellectual devices Frazer employed culminate in the stylistic scholarly distance and detachment he and other modern authors thereafter posed vis-a-vis the narrative and the material. One reason was that in handling such vast subject matters and encyclopedic reams of knowledge, as they did, the traditional chronical became too cumbersome a literary device. An adroit manipulation of material took hold in the form of thematization. In tandem
with thematization, an apparent impartiality on the part of
the author could be used to integrate numerous hypotheses as
structuring devices throughout the text; perhaps a scholarly
method which marked "a desperate bid for large scale coherent
relevance" (Vickery 1973:126).

In true modernist fashion Frazer's work is glued together
by its oppositions: distancing techniques are coupled with
an embracing critique of his own culture yet this highly
emotive material is cloaked by another layer of
intellectual devices. He sets his journey quest for Truth
and Reason for to rid society of superstitious remnants of
archaic arbitrary religious and magical beliefs. His knight
in shining armour, his vehicle for achieving this, was the
comparative method. The comparative method by way of its
detached scholarly distance could render acute incongruous
juxtapositions and offer a conspectus of rhetorical
strategies for the 'rendering of the ironic and elegiac' (p.
121).

Frazer not only helped realize the critical capacity
inherent in the comparative method but also demonstrated the
principles of historical and cultural relevance which
signalled the fallibility of Frazer's own theories. He had
opened up a hermeneutic circle for which the Reason and
Progress by which he proposed to save society (and close the
circle) was only one of an ageless pattern of historic
solutions. His scholarly detachment, and ironic tenor,
functioning like a defense mechanism, perhaps maintained
against the encroachment of such a fallibility.

The ironic tenor which shows up in Frazer's work and becomes a characteristic trope of modernity, to extend the psychological metaphor, becomes its coping mechanism. Through irony modern man could look upon his history as a compendium of disparate acts and accept his inherent place in it.

Like that of modern literature as a whole, Frazer's irony begins in realism with a wry recognition of human folly and broadens out into mythical treatment of men who imitate gods, are sacrificed to the needs of society, seize and hold power through unscrupulous strategems and a shrewd knowledge of mass psychology and abase themselves. (Vickery 1973:138)

This use of irony through seemingly incongruous juxtaposition has long been at the heart of the anthropological cultural critical enterprise, gone largely unnoted until the recent discourse on ethnography as a literary genre.

Another of Frazer's narrative techniques is to use multiple series of cross-references and allusions which continually underscore the 'contemporaneity of all time' (Vickery 1973:125). The use of cross-reference is also a device for maintaining a coherent subject despite vast material—it orders through strings of hypotheses. As a major structuring principle, cross-referencing allows the subject
to be shown across time, place and history, integrating disparate spatial and temporal orders into a coherent unity and thusly assuming universal or perennial character (Vickery 1973:126). The decontextualization this kind of cross-referencing can produce has been the source of most anthropological criticism of Frazer's work.

In his fabricating a universal 'contemporaneity of all time', Frazer was a pioneer of the ethnographic present. But it was an ethnographic present whose spirit was subsequently changed by the rhetoric of domination and couched in the language of science. Anthropology, as Johannes Fabian notes in, Time And The Other (1983), managed to separate time of the ethnographer from that of the 'other' so that ethnographer (first world) time exists in space separate from the mythical ethnographic present which anthropology uses to narrate descriptions of the 'other'. This technique of asserting authority over the subject of the narrative, i.e., the 'other', through distancing them in time and space has been characteristic of the ethnographic genre and has of recent come under much criticism.

It is here that the parallel line of development in anthropology and literature becomes truncated. It is interesting to note that modern literature came, in many important aspects to resemble Frazer more than did subsequent anthropological works. Vickery notes:

In effect then, The Golden Bough became central to the twentieth century literature because it
is grounded in the essential realism of anthropological research, informed with the romance's quest for an ideal, and controlled by the irony in divine myth and human custom. Together these made it the discursive archetype and matrix of [that] literature. (Vickery 1973:138)

While deriving much from Frazer's narrative and descriptive devices, anthropology adopted the then contemporary scientistic rhetoric which drastically altered the course of anthropology and buried its critical and modernist tendencies for some time to come.

In addition to the formal structures of Frazer's work the arts were also hungry to appropriate some of its tantalizing subject matter: "Frazer's tremendous influence on modern literature is that his work constitutes a fertile matrix and mirror of ideas, observations, beliefs and images central to the age" (Vickery 1973:71). The epoch saw an increasing interest in the mythical. Frazer canonized the common usage of many myths and images greatly shaping the modern mytho-poetic imagination. Many early modern authors seem unable to describe natural phenomena such as spring, without assigning to it a mythical or ritual occurrence. Myths broadened in significance from being predominantly ornamentative beauty to dynamic illuminations of the wellspring of the human imagination. Besides being called on to describe natural phenomena myths and ritual came to be
attributed to all human and metaphysical issues.

Frazer aimed to demystify religion (especially the crucifixion) showing it to be little more than superstition. To do so he emphasized the "solemnity and mystery of ordinary experience" (Vickery 1973:125). This is picked up in literature most predominantly as modern insights into the highly ritualized nature of human psychology. In rhythm with the ritualization of experience Frazer set out a cyclical theory of life, history and culture: all consisted of birth, flowering, death and revival. To strengthen his narrative, he wove through it a cyclical pattern of constant "repetition of facts and restatement of hypotheses and inferences" (Vickery 1973:122).

This cyclical model was built around a collection of myths and rituals which he organized in such a way as to underscore their universality. For this tumultuous period in which the foundations of religion were being scrutinized, a model which was centered around myth (and which pointed to behavioralism) generated a new rhythm—a rhythm which captured the growing humanism and modernism of the time. Mythical and cyclical theories of life were powerful modern substitutes for the religion Frazer was helping to tear down.

Frazers critique of modernism came on several other fronts as well and are reflected in the major topics of his work: sex, superstition and survival. In light of the ugly realities of industrialization, modernization and social upheaval, Frazer was among those who turned to a historical
symbolism in an attempt to forge powerful aesthetic myths which when combined with the comparative method enhanced its critical powers. An example of this is found in the modern authors who in post World War One Europe and America, followed Frazer's lead in trying to affirm that the irrational destruction they had engaged in was, like savage superstition, grounded in history and faulty cultural beliefs. Showing up the contradictions was for these authors, as it had been for Frazer, a process of reflection and realization and the first step in the possibility of advancing change.

Berman: Dialectics of Modernism

The work of Marshall Berman provides a sociological frame for understanding the significance of Frazer's work. I use him to locate Frazer in a narrative of anthropology as a product of the modernist sensibility to which Vickery's analysis lent the finer details. Berman's work suggests the interplay of complex socio-historic specifics such as industrialization with corresponding aesthetic production, as well as social constructions and ideology.

In his historical accounting, Berman, traces much of modernisms force back through the transformations it rent upon the land. The urban centers, with their boulevards, parks, thoroughfares and looming structures mirrored and helped create new attitudes towards work, politics, economics, art, and various types of social relations. While
Vickery's accounting of modernism via Frazer's work relies on the relationship of literature to modern thought. Berman's looks at an array of cultural products and their historical and socio-political implications.

In *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (1982) Berman points to a smattering of modern artifacts, including: the conception of modern cities and urban space, literature and especially Marx. This spirited configuration of ideas, social relations, space, and ideology he calls modernism. Berman's modernism projects a multivalent, polysemic image. At its base is the idea of a maelstrom where one finds "one's world and one's self in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction". To be part of modernism is to be part of a universe in which "all that is solid melts into air" (Berman 1982: 345), where everything is "pregnant with its contrary" and where modernism's own radically contradictory base gives rise to a perpetual dialectic (Berman 1982:19). As an ideology, modernism is both powerful and inspiring, rendered more so by realizing in its dialectic nature the crumbling of its own foundations. From its dialectics, modernism derives its cynicism and ironic character as well as its vigor.

Berman's modernism, which corresponds to Frazer's narrative techniques in flavor rather than specifics, grounds Frazer in a more far reaching concept of modernism. Frazer's illusive narrative structure with its vanishing and recurring perspectives is very reminiscent of the mood set,
and possibilities suggested in the catch phrase Berman borrows from Marx, 'all that is solid melts into air'. Frazer's juxtaposing of conflicting evidence for both critical (ironic) and dramatic purposes gives to the sense of a shifting whole and elicits Marx's atmospheric directive: all being 'pregnant with its contrary'. Frazer's reordering of the narrative by way of themes, i.e., ritual, is in keeping with Berman's modern spirit, one which dictates not only inventiveness but a perpetual new ordering of facts, ideas, artistic conceptions and social configurations.

Vickery points out that The Golden Bough, "embraces two pairs of antithetical concepts. It presents not only the irrational and unstable character of human life and affairs but also its order and stability" (Vickery 1973:74). By this reasoning Frazer is a true forerunner of Berman's modernism. Frazer, along with subsequent modern literary figures and social thinkers such as Marx, embraced the true contradictory nature of modernism: they used it to propel them further while simultaneously they found themselves caught in its dialectics. Their thought and work thrived on the negative, ironic, destructive, as well as the positive, creative, allegorical forces of modern culture's society.

Berman locates the germs of modernism in the following phenomena: 1) Industrialization and the new market based on money and the dynamics of capital. Money becomes the solvent which has the power to fragment, subordinate, commoditize and alienate in all realms of culture and
society. 2) Industrialization created radical demographic shifts starting in the Sixteenth century. Urbanization took root and with it new ideas about the nature and relationship of public and private space. 3) Public space sees the enactment of politics. The French revolution takes to the streets and claims them momentarily. The boulevards of Europe's major cities were a tribute to the new mass bureaucratic states and the mass social movements which had instigated them. 4) The new state with modern public involvement via the vote, is another important locus of modernism. And 5) we see the then new images of the universe propagated by the sciences become a major rhetorical and ideological force underscoring the modernist project.

Berman lays atop this sociologic framework, a historical three phase map of the ideological and aesthetic production of modernism with the sixteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries marking the major distinctions in the development of modernism. (Frazer and Marx belong to the age of classical nineteenth century modernism.) With this framework in place Berman builds the argument that modernism has lost its dynamism and dialectical attributes.

In the first phase, Sixteenth to Eighteenth century Europe experiences the first tastes of modern life; urbanization begins. Berman points to the works of Rousseau (Natural Man cast in a mythical past seeking the true principles by which to govern society) to typify the concerns of the period. One of the central elements of this early
modernism consists in differentiating the past from the present by encasing a mythified past in a web of nostalgia. Another element was a propensity for extensive questioning, not only in the empirical and moral realms but philosophically proposing questioning itself as a mode of thought. And finally the development of participatory democracies created mass political fervor on an entirely new scale. The period was made dynamic in its search for new vocabularies and new concepts to explain and express its changing face and its past.

The next phase, Classical modernism of the Nineteenth century, represents, for Berman, the high point of modernist ideology and modern thinkers. The nineteenth century heralded the double-sided nature of modernity. Society was living in two worlds at once: the traditional, with its values and culture, which existed extensively in the rural lands but also in the minds and memories of those urbanites who simultaneously made up the other world—the emerging modern centers. The past and traditional became a mythologized and largely romantized counterbalance to the maelstrom of modernism whose very dynamic is cast in this contradictory presence of old and new.

I find this to be a very important link up between Berman and Frazer as well as a strong demonstration of the forces of anthropology at play in modernism. Frazer initiates the genre of anthropology as a form that employs romance (as a form of nostalgia related to his contemporary conditions) and
reason. In Frazer's work what is be in differentiated in this form is not just the present and the past, but rather the "cultural" is being universalized and then separated from the present as the past in the form of reason. Berman does not address the role of reason in this process or the work of Frazer rather he envisioned the fundamental contradictions of old and new to be the fuel for the perpetual pendulum swing of modernism's contradictions.

Berman draws on the works of Marx and Nietzsche who, either as enemies or enthusiasts, incite a conscious excitement for living in a modern age. The work of both authors is rich and complex and points to the radical contradictions at the base of modern life, especially in the realms of morals and religion, social relations and economics, politics and psychology. The creative energies of the Nineteenth century came from wrestling with all the simultaneous possibilities of its modernism; its creative power was embedded in its self-irony and inner tensions.

In contrast, as we move into the Twentieth century (phase Three) the elasticity and subtleties of modernism start to dissipate. Works of modern thinkers are dominated by rigid polarities and flat totalizations. Now, "Modernity is either embraced with a blind and uncritical enthusiasm or else condemned with a neo-Olympian remoteness and contempt". Berman laments that, "it is conceived as a closed monolith, incapable of being shaped or changed by modern man" (1982:20).

Twentieth century modernism has become all consuming, it
permeates all life, art and thought. As it loses its roots it also loses much of its passion. It becomes fragmentary to an extreme degree. Berman contends that we have lost our double-sided vision. What was once a memory of tradition has been squeezed out and not replaced with a coherent history of our own modernism (although his account is an attempt to correct this). Modernism has become so expansive and fragmentary that it has lost its contradictory pose vis-a-vis history and while perpetually creating itself anew, it has become both seamless and without a base. Berman's attempt to historize modernism is to restore to it its dialectics and accompanying creative vision. While Nineteenth century engagement with traditionalism cannot be replicated, Berman's reconstruction of history—modernist history—is to serve as that type of resounding spring board.

Meanwhile, the twentieth century theorists, according to Berman, have no faith in modern man/woman's ability to act, make decisions, or change the shape of their future. Modern society is seen as a cage whose members (as Weber would have it) are shaped by its bars (Berman 1982:27). The 1960s fostered further theories of man's hopelessness. In Herbert Marcuse's, One Dimensional Man (1964), we see the individual and society as 'totally administered', there are no souls, no spirit nor inner tensions since evidently (proclaiming Marx and Freud obsolete), modern beings no longer have even ids of their own. What remained of their souls belonged now to their television sets. With Marcuse, even the vanguard was
led to despair at the futility of their own attempts, since, as no individual could be free of the system which molded it, no real vanguard could exist (Berman 1982:28).

In Berman's pessimistic summary, the Twentieth century sees and reflects, a flattening of perspective, the shrinking of imaginative range, modernity being either embraced or rejected (having moved from a both/and to an either/or), a growing lack of empathy for fellow beings, and the deceptive evoking of Marx and Hegel which does not heed to the contradictions and ambiguities which power their works.

The next step of Berman's analysis is especially suggestive as to the various tendencies of modern and post-modern artists and critics. From the 1960s through the present Berman finds three resounding attitudes to be prevalent. The three attitudes are negative, affirmative and withdrawn (Berman 1982:129). Interestingly in this section Berman reflects these attitudes off of Modern art. Berman here follows a general tendency of addressing the post-World War II period by evoking the arts as the showpiece and expression of modernism. These three attitudes, negative, affirmative and withdrawn, will be useful in positioning art historians, critics and artists in relation to their views on aesthetics, the relationship of art and society, and the relevance of major theorists and artists.

The affirmative attitude, which also corresponds to a branch of self exclaimed post-modernists, coincides loosely with the emergence of Pop Art, and meant:
Breaking down the barriers between "art" and other human activities, such as commercial entertainment, industrial technology, fashion and design, politics. It also encouraged writers, painters, dancers, composers and filmmakers to break down the boundaries of their specializations and work together on mixed-media productions and performances that would create richer and more mutivalent arts.

(Berman 1982:32)

These modernist/post-modernists rejected pure form and pure revolt as the narrow basis of modernism. They instead opened up "to the immense variety and richness of things, materials and ideas that the modern world inexhaustibly brought forth" (Berman 1982:32). Their was a generosity of vision which uncritically engaged all culture and society. It won them a reputation for being irresponsibly apolitical and even amoral. Berman caps post-modern fragmentation by placing it in a larger context and by susuming its principles under the unifying grasp of dialectics, (dialectics itself being disunity accounted for or with a purpose).

The negative vision of modernity sees itself "in perpetual revolution against the totality of modern existence" (Berman 1982:30). Art critic Leo Steinberg wrote that the modern work of art "molests us with an aggressive absurdity" (1972:15). Berman parodies the negative vision:

If only the modernist snake could be expelled
from the modern garden, space, time and the cosmos would straighten themselves out. Then, presumably, a techno-pastoral golden age could return, and men and machines could lie down together happily forevermore. (Berman 1982:31)

It is a "neo-conservative fantasy of a world purified of modernist subversion" which represses the exact modernist subversions which foster its own ideals.

The withdrawn attitude towards modernism is most strongly represented in the school of art criticism fathered by Greenberg, ironically calling itself "Modernism", (called Formalism by its critics), and in the literary circle of semioticians led by Roland Barthes. Modernism sought to free art from the impurities and vulgarities of modern life. Art becomes a search for purity of genre. Art is purified, made autonomous and held apart from any relation to the social conditions of its production or reception. It is therefore pure but insular and sterile (Berman 1982:30).

The difference between the negative and the withdrawn attitude is that the negative rejects the revolutionary projectile of modernism for the nostalgic and mythic status quo while the withdrawn rejects the remnants of the traditional. The withdrawn embraces instead the progression of modernism but isolates it from the actual dynamics which propel modern society, politics and culture. It is, therefore, withdrawn from the dialectics but not the fruits of modernism. Berman articulates the withdrawn posture by
way of an idea of the distance between aesthetic attitudes and their place in a social reality. In so doing he comes close to insisting on a tangibility for modern dialects postulating the connection between the abstracted realm of art (in this case abstract art itself), and society as if a play of one on one. However, since his general socio-historic overview is not completely transcendent (although his claim for dialectics would like to be) but does allow him to oscillate between and draw from the various aesthetic and critical camps in creating his perspective, his work provides an interesting version of a fundamental split in art criticism between concerns political and philosophical (see Harrison and Orten (1984)).

In conclusion, Berman is a contemporary thinker who attempts to formulate an overarching perspective and history of what modernism is and has been. In contrast to the highly aestheticized concerns of Vickery, Berman offers a grand-scale socio-cultural and historic accounting of modernism enhanced by his Marxian underpinnings. He does a reading of cultural products (constructions of space, time, art, and architecture) because he interprets them as equally invested in the ideology and phenomena of modernism as are the works of great modern thinkers and literary figures he also considers (namely Marx and Flaubert).

Berman places aesthetic tendencies within a framework of larger (withdrawn, negative, affirmative) attitudes towards the complex configuration of modernism itself. He shows them
to be both products and vestiges of modernism. As such it hints at how schools of aesthetics and criticism perform acts of cultural critique, in at least the simplest of forms, as reactions to the larger than life conditions of modern life and its encompassing cultural perimeters. True to his dialectical underpinnings what comes to light is a vision which proposes that modernism provide a critique of the arts while the arts likewise provide a critique of modernism.

What we can draw from Berman is a Giacomettisqué portrait of cultural products/byproducts (art, anthropology) of some larger configuration (Modernism) commenting on that system in layers of interpretation open not only in both directions but self-referentially as well. Modern art more overtly than anthropology is self-conscious in its role and ability to critique/comment on not only society or culture and the abstract construction of modernism but on itself as well. Art and art criticism do their own supra reading of themselves. It often seems, however, that art criticism thrives in a parasitic relationship to art--happy to be its literate Hermes but unwilling to explore its autonomous interests and ontology. The challenge of art criticism and art history is arguably close to that which faces the anthropology of complex society and the students of the epistemological nature of the anthropological enterprise.

To do an anthropological reading of the art world, as with most social and cultural spheres be they contemporary or labeled primitive, requires the cultural finesse to outfox
the fox, i.e., render up a fresh level of interpretive insights to phenomena which have their own slippery but built in hermeneutic arenas. Here anthropology is denied its traditional privileged vantage point as simultaneously naive, stranger, other, outsider, on the ethnographic front and expert, authority, insider on the home front. The home front like the native is no longer pristine. Both can engage the other and demand reciprocity. If anthropology's symbolic, interpretive and hermeneutic stand cannot offer up an engaging discourse it runs the risk of finding itself as unwelcome to do fieldwork at home as it is amongst native peoples who now consider themselves to have been victims of it.

Notes toward a continuation

The question of how to keep one's ideas and aspirations from becoming reified, stale, inadvertently conservative, and totalitarian has often been answered with aesthetics (such as the art of Dada and the Surrealism which aimed at shaking the bourgeoisie out of its complacency or various modern art movements which sought to change our perception of reality, for example Cubism and Abstractionism), as well as through anarchy, nonconformism and attempts to resist the temptations of 'organization' and 'institutionalization'. The motivation for this apparently nonconformist quest has its roots at least in part, in Modernism's insatiable appetite for the new, be it style, facts or theory. The urge to counter
modernism's totalizing tendencies is currently being championed by post-modernism with its celebration of fragmentation. For the post-moderns the past is differentiated from the present by its controlling nature as if all of modernism had been an exercise of authority while the present moment is a chance to diversify, fragment, acknowledge and thereby empower. In countering imperialism, post-modernism murmurs a garbled political whisper. Within the social sciences and humanities this murmur has acted as consciousness-raising and a kind of therapy of itself (like Beuys' attempt to cure his and society's war wounds).

Cultural critique has a kind of underlying political appeal (like consciousness-raising) in that it indicates a thinking, acting and living through. It is a powerful mechanism which has to find its own way, its moment, its medium. When it is forced it eventually becomes stifling dogma and can be used in creating top-down politics. Self and cultural reflexivity is a bottom-up dialogue which is appealing to anthropology because anthropology has distinguished itself by making room for indigenous point of view, ethos, voice, perspective--called differently depending on the decade and researcher. As dialogue is gaining currency as an appropriate anthropological mode so should cultural critique because it can speak in several localities--it helps to lift us out of the constraints of a discourse of self and other.
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