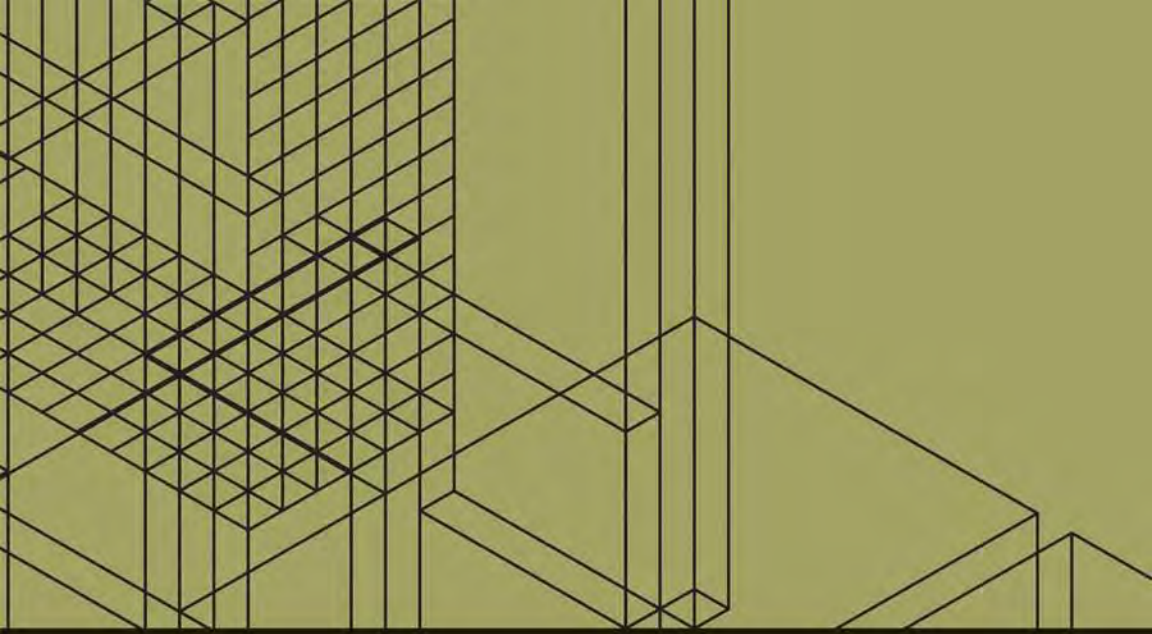
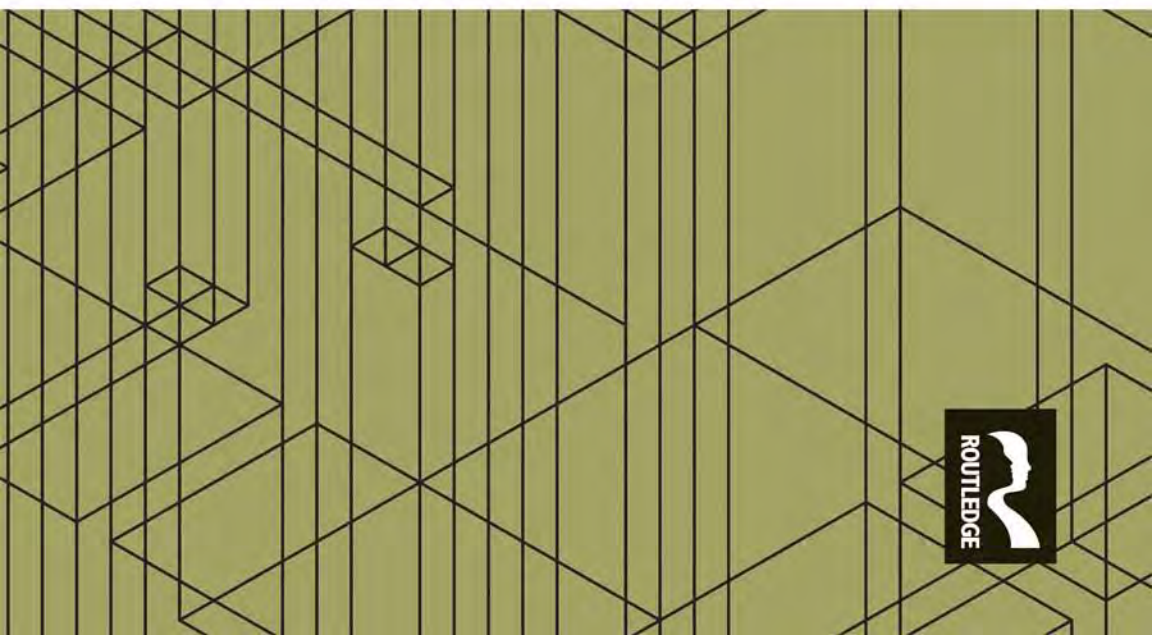


Routledge Research in Aesthetics

THINKING WITH IMAGES

AN ENACTIVIST AESTHETICS

John M. Carvalho



Thinking with Images

> What does it mean to think with images? For Carvalho, it means freeing ourselves from the constraints of aesthetic theories and instead really engaging with works of art as particular objects. Starting with works by Bacon, Michals, Duchamp and Godard, Carvalho shows us how to discover the questions these works set for us but do not directly answer, questions we didn't previously realize we should care about. Engagingly written, this book will change the way you think about art.
>
> —Deborah Knight, Queen's University at Kingston, Canada

This book advances an enactivist theory of aesthetics through the study of inscrutable artworks that challenge us to think because we do not know what to think about them. John M. Carvalho presents detailed analyses of four artworks that share this unique characteristic: Francis Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953); the photographs of Duane Michals, based on a retrospective of his work, *Storyteller*, at the Carnegie Museum of Art (2014); *Étant donnés* (1968) by Marcel Duchamp; and Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film *Le Mépris* (released in the United States as *Contempt*). Carvalho argues against the application of theory to derive appreciation or meaning from these artistic works. Rather, each study enacts an embodied cognitive engagement with the specific artworks intended to demonstrate the value of thinking about artworks that might be extended to our engagement with the world in general. This thinking happens, as these studies show, when we trust our embodied skills and their guide to what artworks and the world around us afford for the activation and refinement of those skills. *Thinking with Images* will be of interest to scholars working in the philosophy of art and philosophical aesthetics, as well as art historians concerned with the meaning and value of contemporary art.

John M. Carvalho is Professor of Philosophy at Villanova University where he teaches graduate seminars on aesthetics and undergraduate courses on contemporary music and film. He is the author of "Annunciations: Figuring the Feminine in Renaissance Painting," "Strange Fruit: Music Between Violence and Death," and many more essays on aesthetics.

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Thinking with Images
An Enactivist Aesthetics
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For my father and the memory of my mother

Contents

Illustrations

Acknowledgements

This book languished for a long time under the misconception that I could find philosophy in art. The thought was that artists are thinkers as conceptually deep as philosophers and their thinking could be found in their works. At the time, I was laboring under the idea that thinking was something that took place in the head. I also thought the thinking I would find in artworks would be very much like the thinking I found in philosophy. When I was able to give up these conceits, things came together rather quickly and with very different results.

There are so many people to thank for helping me get to these results. Among them, several stand out for their enduring support and encouragement. Alexander Nehamas inspired me from the beginning, and his influence is felt here in a shared affinity for detailed attention to the sensuousness of artworks. Joseph Margolis positively provoked me early in my career, and echoes of his conception of art as culturally emergent entities can be heard throughout this book. Michael Krausz also supported me early on and recommended me to the American Society for Aesthetics as coordinator of local arrangements for the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the ASA in Philadelphia. Through my affiliation with that society, I learned the aesthetics that was never part of my formal training. I am very grateful for all of this continuing encouragement and support.

Others stand out for their direct impact on the direction this book takes. Georg Theiner asked me to review a book by Alva Noë for an interdisciplinary journal where he was an editor. It was my first exposure to Noë's work, and it was a revelation. I did not yet know how close contemporary thinking in the philosophy of mind had come to the studies of embodied cognition I did before I had a career. Making that discovery, I leaned on the work of Shaun Gallagher which connected my interests in the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to current trends in enactive embodied cognition. Making these connections allowed me to abandon the early idea that thinking takes place in the head. I was now able to think about thinking as a set of embodied skills a philosopher or an artist sets out to deploy or enact in a culturally rich environment. With the help of these interventions, I was ready to abandon that first conceit.

Another direct influence on the direction this book takes came as the result of an invitation from Richard Eldridge to join the Philadelphia area Aesthetics Reading Group. Meetings of this group are graciously hosted by Susan Feagin and attended by Sally Banes, Noël Carroll, Robert Clewis, Richard, Kristen Gjesdal, Espen Hammer and Mary Wiseman. The opportunity to exchange ideas regularly and over time with individuals so knowledgeably invested in aesthetics is obviously valuable to anyone with philosophical commitments to understanding art. The chance to return to a way of thinking that motivated me about philosophy in the first place is more valuable still. I no longer looked for philosophy in art but for the achievements of artists skillfully engaged with their media. Philosophy now helped me understand art. I was not asking art to help me understand philosophy. With this very welcome influence, I was ready to abandon the second conceit inhibiting progress toward completing this book, and I am very grateful for what participation in this group has contributed to this progress.

None of this thinking about art and artworks would have begun at all, however, had I not met Kim Nastick. It's a story I tell frequently, because it is true. Before I met Kim, I did not have any thoughts at all about the visual arts. I liked painting and photography well enough, but I had no idea what I was looking at, how to look or why I was looking. Kim taught me all of that. No doubt she thinks I still have a lot to learn. Where her patient tutelage has been successful, I have developed and refined skills, first acquired in my study of eidetic phenomenology, that turn up affordances in artworks I would not have discovered otherwise. It is not an exaggeration to say that without her influence, this book would not be written. I owe Kim an enormous debt of gratitude for this gift.

I want to thank Petra Carlsson and Jim Wetzel who read and commented on drafts of these chapters and, especially, Deborah Knight who read and commented so very helpfully on the completed draft of the manuscript. I should also thank Villanova University for the sabbatical giving me time to write the bulk of this book and the University's Subvention of Publication Program for funding to defray the cost of including images in it. At Routledge, I thank Andrew Wenkenman, the editor of the series, for his interest in my work and Alexandra Simmons for her patience and guidance through the process of getting the work in print. I also want to thank Autumn Spalding for her expert assistance and enthusiasm.

In addition to meetings of the ASA, versions of chapters from this book were presented at meetings of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, the Society for the Philosophical Study of the Contemporary Visual Arts, the International Congress for Aesthetics, and the Congresso Interamericano de Filosofia, at Bryn Mawr College, Buffalo University, Temple University, Trent University, Rowan University, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, and the Shanghai Academy for Social Science. I am grateful for the opportunities to share my work with the many diverse and esteemed scholars associated with these societies and institutions.

Introduction
Thinking with Images

We really begin to think when we do not know what to think. When we know what to think, we are certainly thinking, but it is distinctly different from what and how we think when we do not know what to think. It is not rare that we do not know what to think. At any time, we can be taken aback by something that is unfamiliar, maybe only momentarily so, and while this can lead us quickly to the comfort of what we know, to what we know to think, the experience can also linger, leading us to think without knowing what to think. In the latter case, especially when what we experience is not just unfamiliar or new to us but quite captivating or strange, what we think and how we think, because we do not know what to think, is colored by uncertainty: we do not know what to think or whether we will ever know what to think. When we know what to think, thinking is more like following a rule.[1] This is true even where we are only momentarily at a loss for what to think. In those cases, comparable to cases where we know what to think, we search for the rule that applies to situations like it that we have confronted before. Perhaps we consult another rule that measures the similarity of the unfamiliar with what we know we know. Having found it, we apply the rule, and the result is ordinarily the hoped-for resolution of the perceived difficulty and a return to the certainty of knowing what to think.

When we do not know what to think, it appears that there is no rule that will resolve the difficulty we confront. Perhaps it happens, as in cases like those just described, that we just need to learn a rule we do not already know. Having learned the new rule and applying it to the situation in front of us, we have the impression that we know what to think; it is another case of following a rule. It may also turn out that we already know the rule, but its application is not immediately obvious to us. When we realize the relevance of the rule we know, and apply it, we know what to think, and we are, once again, following a rule. When we do not know what to think, it is not always a matter of learning the rule or of ascertaining the relevance of the appropriate rule. Sometimes it is the case that there just is no rule, and because there is no rule, we are made to think, really think about the situation we confront. This situation is the one we may face in encounters with certain works of art, specific artworks for the appreciation of which no rule

Figure 0.1 Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage* (detail of façade) (1946–1966). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Cassandra Foundation, 1969, 1969–41–1. © Association Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2018

applies or for which the application of a rule seems not entirely appropriate. In fact, encounters with artworks are often valued precisely for the challenge they present to our rule-bound ways of thinking.[2]

What I have in mind is nothing like what Martin Heidegger may have been after when he asked, "Was heisst Denken," what is called or calls for thinking?[3] What and how we think when we do not know what to think is not the essence of thinking, what thinking really is. It is a kind of thinking we do when we confront situations or engage certain objects, especially certain artworks, which make us think because, when confronted with them, we do not know what to think. In the pages that follow, what I call "thinking with images," and the thinking I do with the images discussed turns out to be a species of that kind of thinking. The artworks I discuss here are those I find most compelling, those that make me think because I do not know what to think about them. Whether they will make you think as well will depend on my persuading you that there is something more to think about these artworks than can be matched to a rule and disseminated for popular or even professional consumption. It is that something more about an artwork that makes us think because, in our engagement with it, we do not

know what to think. Again, the thinking we do with this something more is not some special activity that would count as the essence of being human. It is, rather, a particular achievement of thinking. It is the thinking we achieve or enact when we do not know what to think. I will take thinking generally to be a form of embodied enactive cognition and the thinking we do when we do not know what to think to be a particular and valuable achievement of embodied enactive cognition. Again, what I call "thinking with images" is a species of that achievement.

Enactivism is a philosophy of mind that is still controversial, but I do not defend the view here. I leave that task to those who have taken and continue to take a steady hand to that effort.[4] I offer instead a brief account of how enactive cognition comes to me as the best account of thinking we have, how it helps to distinguish the thinking we do when we know what to think from the thinking we do when we do not and why this way of thinking is especially suited to our appreciation and understanding of certain artworks. If I am successful, I will have specified a way of thinking about those artworks that generally challenges conventional conceptions of what it means to be an artwork, that is, not a work of art, an exemplar of a general category called "art," not an exemplar of one of the special arts, but a specific artifact that shows up for us as an individual and not as a token of a more or less general type. The value to giving a way of appreciating these artworks apart from their being works of art is that taken in their singularity, as individuals, these artworks give us the opportunity and the time to think without knowing what to think. They make us think, because no appeal to "art" or to properties of one or another special art tells us what to think about them. This opportunity is special if not rare, and it may be the real value of those artworks for which no rules apply or for which the application of rules in our appreciation of them seems not entirely appropriate. We especially value these artworks, that is, precisely because they make us think without knowing what to think.[5]

Very generally, as I understand it, enactivism is an ecology of mind, a view of cognition that conceives mind, body and the environment as continuous and not separate or distinct. The mind is inherently interactive by virtue of a body navigating an environment defined by all the bodies active in it. These bodies are likewise mindfully navigating this environment and defined by it just as much as that environment is defined in turn by their interactions. What I know in this embodied, enactive state is what I need to know to achieve my aims in an environment populated and defined by other forms of life aiming to achieve their own ends. I achieve my ends by engaging the environment, and the body is my way of engaging it. What I can know and achieve is relative to that body and to the affordances that show up in the environment for a body shaped by those affordances and by the skills acquired and refined for engaging the environment in which these affordances show up. I understand affordances to be "the possibilities for action provided by things," by what a thing is as well as what it invites, threatens

and does.[6] To the extent that the aims of bodies overlap, the affordances that show up for them in the environment are available in common and, so, the skills acquired and refined for engaging those affordances are also available to be shared.[7]

Think of the way an auditorium fills in anticipation of a performance. The environment of the auditorium, at first defined by its parameters, its location, its furnishing and so on, changes as bodies begin to assemble there. Those bodies navigate the auditorium with other bodies to find the best seats or the seats assigned to them but, perhaps, separated from them by the bodies of others who have arrived earlier and been seated ahead of them. The color or character of the environment changes with the bodies assembled in it, including the sound of their chatter or of objects being moved, and the affects carried and discharged by the particular bodies assembling there, who are on time or late, having arrived after an argument with a spouse or from a convivial dinner with friends, more or less happy to be there and anticipating the start of the event or not. The same is true of the way gallery spaces fill in museums for exhibitions, especially those with a timed entry for admission. In those cases, there is an initial swell with the large group admitted at the appointed time that dissipates and fills again and separates relative to the specific interests or aims of those assembled and the way those interests are directed by their relative skills, their aims, the curation of the exhibit and the audio guided tours.

At an exhibition of American Watercolors at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA), for example, we enter at our assigned time and spend as little time as possible in the first gallery with all those busy reading text printed on the walls and adjusting their audio guides, walking ahead to galleries populated by a smaller crowd of those lingering from the earlier assigned time and ahead further to the works by John Singer Sergeant and Winslow Homer we have especially come to see. We so act based on skills we have acquired and refined for achieving our aims in visits to exhibits of these arts and that we share with other patrons, both those as seasoned as we are and those who are learning the ropes aided by the explanatory texts, the arrangement of the paintings in the exhibit and their audio guides. Our actions are also based on skills we have acquired and refined for navigating social spaces in general that are applicable for the specific space we are in. Different cultures are characterized by different tolerances for encroachment on personal space, for deference to the elderly or the infirmed, all relative to the specific public space negotiated by the bodies in that environment.[8]

Getting to our assigned seats in the auditorium or navigating the museum galleries to come face-to-face with the great achievements of American watercolor painting is an example of knowing what to think. In each case, we deploy the skills we have acquired from prior experience and observation to navigate the environment and the other bodies in that environment to accomplish our aim. Approaching the available seating in the center section of the Kimmel Center auditorium from the right aisle, we see there are

six people seated between where we are standing and our assigned seats. We notice an empty row of seating just a few feet from where we are standing and take the opportunity to use that empty row to cross to the left aisle and get to our assigned seats without disturbing anyone. There is a temptation to say we do this without thinking or that we very quickly calculate the social and physical costs and benefits of asking several people to adjust themselves to accommodate us or redirecting our actions to accommodate them, making a judgment based on those calculations. For the enactivist, however, thought and action, mind and body and the environment are continuous. The body acts thoughtfully in response to an environment populated with other thoughtful bodies and defined by the interactions of these bodies. This action is thinking but an embodied enactivist form of the thinking we do when we know what to think.

When the music starts or when we come face-to-face with the masters of American watercolor painting, we may still know what to think and deploy skills we have acquired and refined from appreciating artworks like these. In the case of the paintings by Sergeant and Homer, for example, our acquaintance through the study of art history and from other chances to view and discuss their paintings either separately or in tandem will lead us to identify and distinguish their work. We note the more liberal use of drawing in the Sergeants and the tension created in the Homers by the arced bend in a fly fishing pole or in the prow of a skiff raised by the waves pushing it forward. Beyond that, I may be at a loss for what to think, but my viewing partner urges me to observe and think about the use of unpainted surfaces of paper in watercolor painting to signify white pigment. I then notice the effect on the sun-bleached surfaces of stucco housing or in the foam of waves on a rough sea. I have acquired a new skill and begun to refine it. I am still at a loss for what more to think, but I am not moved to think something more about these images. I stop and am content with what I know to think.[9]

It is not for lack of skills that I have less to think about these paintings. There is just nothing about my aims relative to these watercolor scenes that makes me think. In the case of Italian Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation to Mary, on the other hand, where my skills are more rudimentary, however supplemented by the patient tutelage of my viewing partner, I am struck immediately by a problem I cannot solve, which becomes my aim in encounters with the dozens upon dozens of these images I have viewed and continue to appreciate. Why is it virtually always the case that the angel is on the left and the virgin on the right? Even in French and Netherlandish representations of this Biblical scene, the same rule applies: angel on the left, virgin on the right and some sign, architectural or ornamental, of the division between their two worlds. Why is there so little variation on this form? And how does the artist distinguish himself in these paintings given their collective similarity? What is the difference—apart from their belonging to one or another school—in all these images? Here a deficiency in one skill set leads me past the usual considerations of symbolism and iconography to the

deployment of another skill set that draws my attention to the expressions on the virgin's face that distinguish her response—repulsed or delighted—to the news that Gabriel has communicated.[10]

These images have made me think something more about them that is not a product of my imagination nor an attempt to impose on them an interpretation based on a preconceived theory. I am moved to think by the skills I have acquired and refined for picking up affordances of gender differences that show up, in these images, in the disposition of the would be mother of God toward her spiritual father, also God, who would be the father of her child. This thinking will not occur to everyone nor will it occur to no one but me. It may also occur to those with similar or comparable skills for picking up the same affordances in these images. For those with no skills for engaging such images, this thinking may still be valuable to the extent that it models for them a form of engagement with images in general which does not, because it cannot, solve the image once and for all. It models a form of engagement with artworks that takes some thoughtful time with those artworks that make us think because do not know what to think. The value of this thinking with images, in general, will be relative to the skills we have for communicating to others what we who are thinking have to think.

The argument here and in the pages that follow might be sketched in this way. We have encounters with specific works of art in an environment we share with those artworks and with others who also encounter these artworks that give us pause, that make us think because we do not know what to think. These encounters differ from those we have in this same environment that are thoughtful but do not make us think because, in those encounters, we know what to think. When we know what to think, we follow the relevant rules to successfully achieve our ends. When we do not know what to think, the thinking we do is special and valuable in large part because that thinking is not bound or directed by rules. It is not free to think anything at all but guided in its thinking by the specificity of the artwork, the environment in which we encounter it and by the embodied skills we have acquired and refined for engaging this artwork and those like it. Deploying those skills, we thoughtfully engage the affordances that show up for us in the artwork and the environment where we find it, drawing from those affordances the resources for a thinking that does not know what to think. This thinking, which does not know what to think and does not decide what to think in advance, takes its cues from the artworks and, in this way, is thinking with the artworks or, in the case of the artworks we will discuss, it is thinking with images.

The encounters with artworks we have in mind begin with a particular, local and mindful or enactive embodiment. They present challenges for skilled individuals interested in achieving specific ends in this encounter. These challenges make us think because we do not know what to think. Others will have similar encounters and confront the same challenges in those encounters if they occupy, roughly, the same environment, embody,

roughly, the same skills and aim to enact or achieve, roughly, the same goals in that environment. It may happen that there are individuals who miss these encounters or who do not share the same interests and aims in these encounters. Differences in age, ethnicity, race, gender, ability, class, sexual orientation or, more significantly, differences in the skills acquired and refined for achieving aims in that environment may be insurmountable. More often, however, there will be significant engagements among individuals in these encounters owing to shared embodiments, skills and aims and because those embodiments, skills and aims are shared in a language also shared by virtue of skills acquired and refined in their interactions with one another. What is special and valuable, then, about the thinking we do when we do not know what to think is relative to our capacity to share it and, in sharing it, to expand what we can think. It is a feature of certain compelling artworks that they afford us the opportunity to think in this way and share this thinking with others.

Images, at least certain images, make us think. They make us think because, in our interest in appreciating them, we do not know what to think. The images discussed in this book are artistic images, images we find in our engagements with specifically visual artworks. The thinking we do with them models the thinking that might be done with other images, commercial or industrial images, even, literary images, of course, and with other non-imagistic artworks as well. In this book, we restrict ourselves to thinking with the images in distinctly visual artworks. In a first chapter, "Aesthetics without Theory," we make a more general case for the kind of thinking that shows up in the thinking about specific artworks that we achieve or enact in the chapters that follow. An argument is made there for working with specific artifacts, for thinking about artworks in their concrete singularity, ideally based on a direct acquaintance with the artworks themselves. Theory certainly figures in the skill set of a certain viewer of Italian Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation to Mary, for example, but that theory will be nothing more than a constituent in a general set of skills embodied here and now in an environment populated with other skilled bodies for which affordances in those images show up. Theory shows up, to the extent it shows up at all, as affordances that turn up in the image for beginning to think because we do not know what to think. If theory gets us thinking in this way, it does not tell us what to think.

When we turn, in "The Baroque and Bacon's Popes," to the paintings of Francis Bacon, specifically the several dozen studies he made after Diego Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (*circa* 1650), we are moved by the look of them to ask why he painted so many, why he worked exclusively from reproductions of the Velázquez, why he declined to visit the original during an extended stay in Rome (where the painting lives to this day), why he destroyed or attempted to destroy many of them, why he considered them all a failure and what he was hoping to accomplish in these renderings of the Velázquez portrait? We follow a line of thinking that links Bacon's painting

to a Baroque attention to folds noting that, in his studies after Velázquez, Bacon folds images from reproductions of the original painting with images from a film still from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), with images of diseases of the mouth and images from a news photograph of Pope Pius XII hoisted above the crowd in Saint Peter's Square on a *sédia gestatoria* or ceremonial throne. We also note the shuttering effect achieved in the "Des Moines Pope," *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent* X (1953) and connect it to Bacon's stated aim of making a painting of the way the Velázquez makes him feel. Bacon himself is manifestly thinking with images in these paintings. Images famously littered his studio. Bacon set out to think through these images to an affect. This attention to affect recurs in the studies that follow this first.

"Chance Meeting with Duane Michals" considers the photographic portraits, sequences and textually annotated images of the American artist over the course of his career. When Michals tells us he wants his photographs to make the invisible visible, he is not saying that his photographs capture a vision that, except for his image, would remain invisible to us. As he exhibits in all his images, but especially in the sequences and the textually annotated pictures, Michals is attempting to make visible what is only virtually present in what we see. And what is virtually present in these images, and in the world captured by these images, is thinking, thinking and feeling, which are present in the subject but not seen until they are photographed by Michals. Following the example of his idol, René Magritte, Michals uses images as words and words as images to make us think. With his art, Michals thinks, and inspires us to think, because he feels for the subjects of his images without knowing what to think about what he feels. He uses his camera to bring the affective power of the world to the surfaces of his images and to animate that power in the service of a thought or feeling we might not otherwise think or feel. The value of his art is that it makes us think and feel.

"*Étant donnés* | Marcel Duchamp" engages the final installation of the enigmatic French artist as the culmination of Duchamp's life's work. Completed, in secret, in a rented Manhattan office space at 80 E. 11th Street, adjacent to the offices of the Salesmen and Poultry Workers Union, Local 662, the work was a gift of the Cassandra Foundation to the PMA, where it was permanently installed in 1969. Jasper Johns called it "the strangest work of art any museum has had in it." Nearly 50 years after it was first unveiled at the PMA, the work still makes us think. In this chapter, I focus on the time the work gives us to think in relation to the time of the affect felt when confronting the spectacle of the work and while considering ourselves a spectacle for those waiting behind us for their turn to view it. I also considered the time it takes to see the artwork, the approach to the large wooden door, the adjustment to the peepholes, the struggle of the viewpoints set far enough apart to frustrate binocular vision, but our emphasis is on the way the work gives time to thinking, the thinking we do having seen the spectacle behind the door. Duchamp aimed to engage the gray matter rather

than the retinal apparatus of the viewer. His own thinking with images gives us something, *Étant donnés*, to think with this "strangest work of art any museum has had in it."

We end with a consideration of "*Le Mépris* or *Contempt*, a Film by Jean-Luc Godard." The film was not well received in the United States when it was first shown just after its release in France in 1963. It won a better reception after being re-released almost 35 years later. I emphatically suggest that American audiences needed to acquire and refine the skills necessary for engaging this densely significant film. I engage it through considerations of the novel the film is based on, *Il disprezzo*, by Alberto Moravia, published in English, until recently, as *A Ghost at Noon*. I consider Homer's *Odyssey* and Dante's interpretation of it, which is to be the basis for the film within the film. I consider Hölderlin's "*Dichterberuf*," "The Poet's Vocation," and the role of the gods' presence, and absence, in the lives of mortals. Most of all, however, I consider the indeterminacy of modern human life, the indeterminacy of an affect, *le mépris*, in the lives of a couple otherwise totally, tenderly and tragically in love, and the power of cinema, itself profoundly indeterminate, to respond to the indeterminacies of modern life in general. Godard has said, "Thinking about film and making them is no different." In *Le Mépris*, Godard is thinking with images and imploring us to think because we do not know what to think, and there is still, today, a value to be found in thinking with this film.

If our engagements with these artworks seem more topical than philosophical, more extended ruminations than arguments in favor of a thesis, I wonder whether they might not be considered collectively as a demonstration that there is a value to a way of thinking that is demanded by certain artworks and that might be enacted in our engagements with them and the world in general. When we engage an artwork knowing in advance what to think about it, either because we can only encounter it as the confirmation of a theory or because we have been told in advance all there is to encounter in it, our engagement with that artwork is not necessarily impoverished, but it is not as rich as it might be. In turn, the more we know about an artwork and the more we refine the skills we have for engaging it, the more the work offers us affordances that extend our thinking rather than bring that thinking to a conclusion, to an end. There are certainly artworks that do not afford us the chance to think much about them. The value of such works is recorded and archived in the history of art and art criticism. The value of those works we cannot be done with, on the other hand, is that they make us think. They give us the chance to experience a form of thinking valuable for making us take time to think, because we do not know what to think. This thinking may not be satisfying for everyone, but it would seem to be especially satisfying for philosophers.

Bertrand Russell attributed "the value of Philosophy" to just such thinking.[11] I am not thinking of that activity of the intellect Russell approximates to what God might think. I am also not thinking of the focus Russell

recommends a free intellect give to abstract and universal knowledge, avoiding the prejudices of a personal perspective based on the senses. I am thinking instead of the comfort with uncertainty that Russell values and the enlargement of the self to be gained by a contemplation of what is uncertain and outside the self that Russell thinks can be gained by philosophical thinking. I also have in mind Russell's appreciation of how, by decreasing our certainty about what things are, philosophy increases our openness to what they might be. By rejecting the dogmatism that has never questioned the world around us, philosophy reclaims a sense of wonder about that world. When we know what to think and think nothing but what we know to think, we are trapped by such dogmatism. When we do not know what to think, we potentially expand ourselves and our sense of the world around us. On the model on offer here, this happens by trusting our embodied skills and their guide to what artworks and the world around us afford. Our encounters with artworks, especially atypical and inscrutable artifacts, afford certain skilled auditors the chance to think, really think, without knowing what to think. This thinking is a truly philosophical activity valued for the time it makes for us to think apart from our otherwise rule-bound and routinized lives, to think because we do not know what to think, and for the terms it affords us for sharing this thinking with others.

Notes

1 While using the language of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the well-known paradox of what it means to follow a rule, I opt here for the so-called straight resolution of the paradox and avoid complications introduced by Saul Kripke's "skeptical resolution." In what immediately follows, following a rule is comparable to what Wittgenstein also calls entering a form of life. On this view, rules are shared and made more or less explicit in the context of shared activities, which constitute the form of that life. The distinction is introduced for comparison purposes only and, thankfully for me, nothing much hinges on whether my account of Wittgenstein is right or wrong or on whether there is a correct interpretation of the paradox, to be judged by following other rules, or not.

2 Cf. Thomas Hilgers, *Aesthetic Disinterestedness: Art, Experience, and the Self* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

3 Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968).

4 See, among others, Giovanna Colombetti, *The Feeling Body: Affective Science Meets the Enactive Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017); Shaun Gallagher, *Enactivist Interventions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dan Hutto and Erik Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012) and *Evolving Enactivism: Basic Minds Meet Content* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017); Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016); Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) and *Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Simon Penny, *Making Sense: Cognition, Computing, Art, and Embodiment* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017); John Stewart, Oliver Gapenne, Ezequiel A. Di Paolo, eds., *Enaction: Toward a New Paradigm for*

Cognitive Science (Cambridge, MA: A Bradford Book, 2014); Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010).

5 We might ordinarily think that works of art are valuable to us because they give us pleasure, perhaps a disinterested pleasure, as in Kant, or a promise of happiness, as in Nietzsche (see Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)). The thinking we do when we do not know what to think certainly gives us pleasure in thinking without having a particular end in mind, without having rules to follow to that end. Thinking with images, a special achievement of the embodied cognition we enact when we do not know what to think, is such a pleasure.

6 Alva Noë, *Varieties of Presence*, 120. See J. J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1979), 128, cited by Noë.

7 It should go without saying that there is not one environment but several overlapping environments defined by the thoughtful bodies interactive in them. Environments will be more or less receptive to bodies that embody, in a more or less refined way, the skills needed to navigate those environments. Environments may, in fact, be defined by restricting the acquisitions of the skills needed to navigate them. In general, however, it is in the interest of the majority that bodies generally embody skills that make it possible for them to navigate—and navigate between—environments that group bodies according to their geographical location, their social, cultural and class commitments, etc.

8 This is true, of course, not just of different national or ethnic cultures but even of the different museum cultures in one country, say New York and Philadelphia and Los Angeles and St. Louis and so on in the United States. The crowding tolerated in galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for example, is not so commonly tolerated at the Philadelphia Museum of Art or the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

9 Of course, someone may be stopped, not knowing what to think, about these paintings. Homer's use of isolated figures near a window in interiors, looking away from us, is surprising and worth some thought. Likewise, that some of Sargent's portrait subjects, especially those of young women, seem to be painted as if in reverie may give someone pause and cause them to think. Alexander Nehamas describes how one's being struck or stopped by a painting is like being struck by an attractive person espied across a room (*Only a Promise of Happiness*). On this view, a relationship may or may not develop, with a person or a painting, to the extent one acquires new skills prompted by that encounter and refined in the course that encounter. In the case of a painting as much as a person, this will transpire by making more careful and repeated observations and by asking questions or beginning to think with and appreciate the person or the painting that caught one's attention. I thank Richard Eldridge for drawing my attention to this observation.

10 See my "Annunciations: Figures of the Feminine in Renaissance Painting," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 13 (2015), www.contempaesthetics.org.

11 Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" in *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912).

1 Aesthetics without Theory

It's been a long time since Morris Weitz declared, "Aesthetic theory—all of it—is wrong" and argued that a theory of art, while "of the greatest importance for our understanding of the arts," is "not just factually difficult" but "logically impossible."[1] In a more recent publication, Dominic Lopes urges us to "pass the buck" on a theory of art, leaving the worthwhile labor of fashioning a theory of art in general to others while we take on the more satisfying and promising work of providing theories of the individual arts.[2] These theories of the individual arts, which he distinguishes from a theory of the arts, would "ground empirical art studies and practices of criticism" and, at the same time, offer a compelling account of the "hard cases" that so bedevil art theory.[3] Lopes wants to turn our attention to the appreciative kinds, practices and media, including the conceptual and symbolic resources and techniques that lead us to grasp and appreciate the art in a putative work of art. His buck passing theory of art takes the hard cases as posing puzzles requiring philosophical responses and gives us a theoretical tool for dealing with them.[4] I am encouraged by Lopes' argument and aim to take it one step further. I want to argue, in general and in a treatment of a number of different "hard cases," that we fashion theories not of the individual arts but of individual works of art. Put more plainly, I want to argue for taking each work of art in its specificity, not as an example of this art or that nor as characteristic of one or another stylistic or historical period, regional type, culture, genre and so on. I want to treat each artwork or group of related artworks on its own terms. I call this approach "thinking with images" and distinguish it from interpretation because I am less concerned with determining what the artwork in question means finally and more interested in the way an artwork makes me think. An artwork makes me think when I don't know what to think. It makes me think because, in a way, the artwork itself is thinking. I'll say how it thinks in a moment. In the balance of what follows immediately, I clarify what it means to think with images. In the chapters that follow, I put this thinking to work.

What I am proposing is, in fact, not new but anachronistic. It draws on practices in French aesthetics dating to the 17th and 18th centuries before the introduction of the German *Kunstwissenschaft*, or "science of art,"

Figure 1.1 Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *A Lady Taking Tea* (1735). © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow 2018

led by Kant's reflections on the beautiful and the autonomous judgment of taste.[5] In those aesthetic practices, it was always a question, first, of what artistic problems artists confronted in the making of their work. At that time, philosophical theory always took a back seat to artistic practices. Aesthetic questions were treated *a posteriori*, only after examining the works of art themselves, often in the presence of those works, so that the works imposed themselves on these aestheticians rather than the aestheticians imposing their definitions and theories on the works *a priori*, in advance. In such encounters with works of art, Jacqueline Lichtenstein writes, French critics were forced to truly and seriously think "where it hurt, that is to say, where one did not expect it, under the violence of a blow, the shock of an event, a surprise encounter."[6] Lichtenstein calls this "artistic thinking," *la pensée artistique*.[7] I call it thinking with images.

This is why, inspired by Lopes, I want to pass the buck not just on a theory of art but on theories of the individual arts, which are no doubt valuable for just the reasons Lopes gives, to return to thinking with the individual works of art. I do not suppose that we can return to some original, unsullied encounter with these individual artworks. The works themselves,

as well as the creation and appreciation of them, are all richly contextual (and I remark on that context next). They are also materially rich. In the case of the painting, photography, installation and cinema considered here, there will be considerations of the qualities of the materials, the manner of their application, point of view, cropping and framing, development, lighting and shadow, conditions of exhibition and so on. We begin, therefore, by giving attention to the material conditions in which we find the artwork, commenting, as much as possible, on works we have seen firsthand, using reproductions and critical analyzes to bolster and broaden what we have experienced ourselves, drawing the theory out of the works *a posteriori* and refraining from imposing a theory on them before the fact.

In this way, I propose to exemplify an approach to thinking with and not just about artworks, for engaging those works in a meaningful dialog about what a particular artwork allows or dares us to think. These engagements begin with an acknowledgment of the challenges presented by works of art for someone who is only an amateur photographer and who has no credible experience in the art studio or the cinematic arts. Philosophy and theory have taught us very little (if anything at all) about the object in front of us. We have a lot to learn about the problems confronted by this or that art practice, the practical solutions artists have devised for addressing those problems and the history of the success and failure of these solutions, as well as what artists themselves take to be the epitome of those successes and failures. When the work of art in question is "difficult," the way a child can be difficult (unruly, inappropriate, out of control), the challenges multiply, but so do the opportunities for truly and seriously thinking in Lichtenstein's sense. Artworks were chosen for this study because of the opportunities for thinking they afforded me and that I hope to share with you.

What does it mean, in this regard, to say, as we did earlier, that the artwork itself is thinking? It does not mean that certain material objects, by virtue of being art, are sentient and capable of drawing inferences from what they perceive. It means, rather, that artworks, any object really, but artworks especially, engage us. They engage us by being the site for the emergence of a *sense* that can be enacted or achieved by skilled and suitably attentive observers from the affordances arrayed in them. An artwork collects in one place elements that, by their array, make present or afford, for those who have acquired and refined skills for picking them up, an impression, a meaning, a point, not yet *the* meaning but a directedness, a hint that emerges from our skilled engagement with that artwork and motivates continued skilled engagement.[8] The elements present in an artwork, their array and the senses they afford can be relatively straightforward and transparent—Raphael's *Portrait of Pope Julius II* (1511–1512) (Figure 1.2), perhaps—or rather complex and opaque—for example, to stick with painting, Jackson Pollock's *Full Fathom Five* (1947). The artwork is thinking when it moves us to think.[9]

In any case, what is present in a work of art, what we can pick up from the affordances that turn up in the materials and the associations of those

Figure 1.2 Raphael, *Portrait of Pope Julius II* (1511–1512). © The National Gallery, London

materials used to create the work—the colors, the textures, the dimensions, the supports, the alignments, arrangements, focus, dissolves and so on—will be straightforward or complex, transparent or opaque relative to the skills of the one for whom these affordances turn up. The individual ordinarily skilled at viewing paintings will likely see the Raphael as a pleasing picture

of a 16th-century pontiff while the seasoned Renaissance art scholar will notice the stark deviation in this image from the, then, standard models for representing popes. The Pollock will likely appear opaque to all but those with a specific set of skills acquired and refined by their experiences with abstract expressionist painting in New York after the Second World War: to these specialists, *Full Fathom Five* will present an early example of what will become Pollock's oeuvre.

Images, on this view, are never thinking on their own. The artist was thinking when she set these elements down and in motion in a single work, and we are thinking, when the work is successful, in our appreciation of what emerges from the way these elements are arrayed in it. The artist may have a premonition of the sense these elements are to make in relation to one another in this work, but this sense may change in the course of creating the work due to the availability of materials, the ways the materials arrayed in it come to affect one another, an unanticipated influence by another work of art, by events in the life of the artist, changes in the work space, in short, for any number of reasons. The painter who steps back from her canvas and decides it is done, sees a sense emergent on that canvas that approximates the sense she wants to give her work. A sense emerges there, however, only because it is afforded to the artist and her particularly embodied skills as a painter. A sense emerges on the canvas, board, paper, glass, film or stucco wall in the oil, acrylic, watercolors, enamel, encaustic, lead foil or crayon applied with a brush, a roller, a marker, adhesive or a knife in the long (or short) course of its being made, on its own or in concert with the creation of other works including the works of other artists. A sense emerges for the viewer, as well, only if it is afforded to him by his particularly embodied and refined skills as a viewer, of works of art in general and of this particular work of art.

Alva Noë would call the achievement of this work of art or of our appreciation of that work "fragile."[10] Writing about perception in general, he holds that "perceptual presence is always a work in progress." It "does not come for free; we achieve it."[11] What he means is that perceptual experience, as we have been suggesting about our experience of a work of art, is a skillful grappling with what affords itself or turns up in the environment. Noë says we are distinguished by our repertoire of available ways of achieving the world's presence. In the same way, I want to suggest that our own approach to a work of art is distinguished by the repertoire of skills we have acquired and refined for achieving the presence of the art in a work of art. I want to suggest, comparable to the way Noë would have us acquire and refine a repertoire of ways of making the world present to us by grappling with and engaging the world, accepting the inevitability of mistakes and slippages, the need for adjustments and the successes to be won from active adjustments and redoubled effort. We can achieve the presence of the art in a work of art by grappling with the work of art in front of us.

In the same way that we don't require a theory to grapple with the world and achieve a more or less fragile presence of that world, we can acquire

and refine a repertoire of skills by engaging the affordances that turn up in a work of art without needing a theory to achieve the presence of that work of art. The studies conducted in this work are my own interventions, my own fragile achievements made possible by my own repertoire of particularly embodied skills, acquired and refined by my own experiences appreciating and thinking with these works of art. Although these skills and the repertoire they form are mine, these studies are not utterly idiosyncratic since the skills were acquired and refined in the company of and by associations with others who have acquired and refined similar skills and since the works of art whose presence I attempt to achieve are also shared with others who have appreciated them and achieved a presence with those works that they have shared with others.

Images think, and we think with images, when an artist establishes a site where she collects and sets in motion elements that enact a presence that viewers engage in the affordances that turn up in their skillful encounter with that work of art in its specificity as this work and no other. Of course, those affordances do not turn up for us in isolation. An important part of the skills acquired by artists and audiences includes an awareness of how one or another element or array of elements borrows from other works of art. Those skills will also include an understanding of the context for these elements coming together in this work and appearing as they do here differently or comparatively to how they appear elsewhere. This context is defined as much by what is said about works of art as by the material practices and institutions governing the creation and appreciation of works of art. The thinking we do with works of art, then, results from our skillful engagement with what is materially and discursively afforded by those works of art. In this study, I focus on works of visual art: paintings, photographs, installations and film. The thinking we do, as artists and audiences, then, results from our engagement with what is given to us on the canvases, the light-sensitive papers, the supports and the screens of these artworks.

Against Theory

I come to this "thinking with images" out of a resistance to a different sense of "theory" that is rightly supposed to pose a greater threat to aesthetics and the work of art than the theory that worried Weitz and Lopes.[12] In this case, "theory" is the name given to what are, in fact, a number of different theories that emerged and gained prominence in the decades following the publication of Weitz's article in 1956. Marxism and psychoanalysis were already well-developed in the 1930s and '40s Frankfurt School writings of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno and in the late writings of Sigmund Freud. It was not until the late 1950s and '60s, however, when Marxism and psychoanalysis became a part of the radical student movement, mobilized by the writings of Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown,[13] that this critical theory gained a certain urgency. Ever more momentum was added to this

movement by the contributions of feminist theorists in the 1970s, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Sheila Rowbotham, Valerie Solanis, Mary Daly and others.[14] And all these theories became "theory" as we know it today with the addition of "the fog from France," the introduction of structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction to the mix.

This is not the place to parse in detail the significant differences between these meta-critical strategies. For my purposes, the important point is that with the addition of this French element, theory, on the one hand, gained its greater cultural force and became a greater threat in the way post-structuralism and deconstruction influenced the interpretation of literature under the general heading "literary theory." On the other hand, with its French inspired interpretations of Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism, theory high jacked the writings of Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Judith Butler to bolster the developing queer, critical race, post-colonial and cultural studies under the complementary general heading "cultural theory."[15]

This multiplication of theories is a predictable extension of the attempt by these theorists to multiply meanings against the hegemonic mainstream but also an accidental consequence of the dissemination of theory through French and English Literature departments where "continental" philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault found refuge in American universities. This multiplicity is the target of the attacks by Terry Eagleton (once theory's champion) who gets a lot that is wrong with theory, today, right.[16] "Those who can," he writes,

> Think up structuralism and feminism; those who can't, apply such insights to *Moby Dick* or *The Cat in the Hat* . . . an interest in French Philosophy has given way to a fascination with French kissing . . . the politics of masturbation exert more fascination than the politics of the Middle East.

Theory is, he says, "shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness. This, on any estimate," he concludes, "is rather a large slice of human existence to fall down on."[17]

In other words, Eagleton seems to want to say, those who studied theory in the 1980s and '90s with teachers who were themselves students, in the 1960s and '70s, of the architects of post-structuralism and deconstruction, still practice it like students. They do not use their studies of *Moby Dick* or *Friends* as part of what Eagleton describes as "the taxing business of trying to grasp what is actually going on" but to prove (to themselves and others like them) that they've grasped the theory, that they've learned their lessons, that they know how this system works. But, of course, theory is not a system. It's not clear what it means to say, "It works." It's not clear

it has lessons to be learned. We cannot overestimate the anxiety attaching to this, by now, vast enterprise. Theory's practitioners are not typically philosophers (for whom theorizing is an occupational specialty) but literary and art critics, historians, sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists (for whom theories should follow from hypotheses tested against a body of evidence). Nor should we underplay the irony associated with this anxiety, that there are supposed "masters" whose writings, if interpreted correctly, will yield the truth.[18] Rather, we should understand that theory, as it is practiced today, is in large part a product of a certain marginalization of European philosophy in the United States (and the United Kingdom, to an extent), that the early turn to language in European philosophy made it a natural fit for programs in French and English and Comparative Literature departments and that the influx of theory significantly energized those programs. This energy, together with the themes theory presented for fresh analysis—ideology, the fetishism of commodities and relative surplus value; the unconscious, narcissism and the death drive; the gendered body, sexual preference and sexual act; the social construction of race and the cultural disenfranchisement of colonized people—attracted students to these programs who were outfitted there to deploy theory in the service of one or another of its formulations.

Theory, so fashioned, in its cultural critical variation, came of age in the Anglo-American university system, and students of programs in this system were trained in one or another of these theories, going on to become Marxists or Lacanians or French feminists and so on, more or less proficiently, more or less productively, more or less reductively. And this result is, I suspect, what has really got under Eagleton's skin. In Marxist circles, the critique of ideology has become ideology itself. In psychoanalytic circles, we find a narcissistic absorption in primary narcissism. There is no doubt that the plight of women, racial and ethnic minorities, gay men, lesbians, transgender and differently abled individuals deserves our attention, but perhaps not exclusively and not to the exclusion of everything else, especially, in aesthetics, to the exclusion of the work of art. Theory stands out in aesthetics because the theory-driven interpretation of a work of art is made into the occasion for explaining one or another of these theories, buried under the weight of a very certain agenda, subordinated to the meaning of labor power, for example, or to the fluid mechanics of a woman's body, or to the subject divided between its desire and an image of itself drawn on the axis of castration, to the subversive *patois* of a people made alien in their own country. Always, it is one or the other of these theories that dominates and not, as is often claimed—in theory—"both and."

At the other extreme of this cultural theory is a literary critical theory where the meaning of a work of art—whether a literary text or a photograph, a film, an installation or even a piece of music—is reduced, on the one hand, to the impossibility or undecidability of meaning and, on the other hand, to the *bassess* or abjection of meaning. Here deconstruction and

post-structuralism are deployed in their raw form or taken to their limit, first "exposing" the fundamental textuality of the work of art in question and then demonstrating the particular ways that language itself frustrates, seductively, the basic human desire to give expression to its experience. Worse, still, theory so construed shows how language itself exacerbates the ways these expressions never truly rise above, well, the shit that is our basic humanity, our animality metonymically figured as an olfactory sense of self and other and as the refuse into which we will finally decompose.

This is the theory that came under attack by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels in "Against Theory," published over 30 years ago in *Critical Inquiry*, a journal largely credited—along with *October* and *Representations*—with promulgating theory in the United States.[19] Drawing on the resources of no less formidable a commentator than their colleague at UC Berkeley, John Searle, Knapp and Benn Michaels argued "theory that denies the possibility of correct interpretation . . . rest[s] on a single mistake. The mistake made by theorists," they write,

> has been to imagine the possibility or desirability of moving from one term (the author's intended meaning) to a second term (the text's meaning), when actually the two terms have the same source. One can neither succeed nor fail in deriving one from the other, since to have one is to have them both.[20]

Moreover, they argue, meaning that appears indeterminate is not made determinate by adding intention to it but only by learning something about the intention that is always already present in it. Following Searle's dialog with Derrida in the late 1970s,[21] Knapp and Benn Michaels insist that there are no intentionless meanings, that where there is language there is a speaker and where there is a speaker, there is intention. Even in the case where the speaker intends to say something of the sort about which Ludwig Wittgenstein said, at the end of the *Tractatus*, we should pass over in silence,[22] we can use language to help the speaker get as clear as possible about what she wants to say. There is nothing about language itself, according to Knapp and Benn Michaels, to prevent this.

Now, there are good reasons for questioning some of these conclusions. Much of the art that delights many of us is the product of chance operations or of improvisations that effectively compromise, often quite deliberately, an artist's intentions (the performances by Marina Abromović, for example, or Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning* (1953)), and the skillful forms of engagement these works of art afford us often appear to operate beside the point of those supposed intentions. On the other hand, Knapp and Benn Michaels are justifiably critical of interpretations that, for no other reason than to flaunt their theoretical "expertise," leave the artwork to flounder in waves of indeterminate meaning. Under the influence of such theories, every interpretation of every work of art produces the same

result: a confirmation of the interpreter's competent understanding of the vagaries of post-structuralism or deconstruction and an exhibition of the impossibility of meaning in general or the impossibility of the work of art *not* meaning *that*—the abject, the *informe*, the *bassess*. But does this mean that all such theory today—whether cultural or literary—is meaningless or worthless? Or is there something redeeming about this contemporary theory that can be important for our thinking with individual works of art and—even more—for our thinking for ourselves and with others about what it means to be human beings?

The No Theory Theory[23]

Throughout these remarks, I have commented on the way theory in aesthetics—whether the theory that worried Weitz or the theories that emerged from a continental philosophical refashioning of political economy, psychoanalysis, feminism and the like—distracts our attention from the concrete materiality of the work of art. Everywhere that aesthetics takes particular works of art as exemplary of works of art in general, of the arts in general or, even, of one or another of the individual arts, it misses the opportunity to appreciate the work of art on its own terms. When we focus on the empirical materials and practices relevant to the making and appreciating of a work of art, we are in a better position to understand the art in that artwork and the relation of our humanity to art as embodied in that work.

This is precisely what Jacqueline Lichtenstein describes as a kind of "best practices" in the study of art.[24] She chastises the philosopher as well as the art historian who has been too influenced by philosophy for leaving the materiality of the work of art behind. (For her, the problem is not French fog but Teutonic philosophical dogma.) "Theory is nothing but *la raison de l'art*," she writes, citing the Comte de Caylus, an 18th century French antiquarian who laid the foundation for modern art history by emphasizing the archeology of the object, that is, an account of the work of art's physical coming to be the object in front of us. Theory is nothing, on this view, but the reason or principle for the art of the work of art we encounter, the presence of art in the work of art that we take up and from the concrete materiality of the work itself. We do well—and better than philosophers and art theorists—in our attempts to understand and appreciate an artwork, the Comte de Caylus thinks, by attending to the materiality of the object, the artistic practices that render it a work of art and, I want to add, to the presence of art afforded to those with the skills to achieve that fragile presence in this work.

This conception of theory in art as a principle or presence that turns up in excess of the material and practical exigencies of the work complements the general economy of luxury and exuberance we find in the work of Georges Bataille.[25] For Bataille, the art object is arguably the product of a particular culture's conspicuous expenditure of its "accursed share," the

practiced wasting of resources whose excess threatens the value of its peculiar form of human life. On these terms, following the Comte and Bataille, we might learn something important, about art and human life both, by observing and examining carefully how a group of people and individuals in that group extend and exhaust themselves in the making and appreciating of artworks. What materials are expended? What techniques are used? What practices exhaust these materials more thoroughly and spectacularly? Who are the artists and auditors? How are their lives otherwise sustained? How are artworks circulated and exhibited and exchanged? How are they evaluated and consumed? We will find answers to these questions only by examining the details of the object and the forms of life of the artists and the audiences who appreciate them and by resolutely resisting the temptation to generalize from those details.

So long as they are not taken in isolation, so far as we can be diverted from the tendency to explain them and, most of all, so long as we find them present in the work of art itself, the practice of cultural theories can highlight for us details of the form, content and, especially, the context of a work of art that can become significant for our thinking with it and understanding it. Out of an attention to the details of the medium, the techniques used in making the work of art, the social and historical context in which it was created and in which we find it, its provenance as well as the practices relevant to the production, exhibition, appreciation and evaluation of this particular work of art, cultural theories can contribute to the repertoire of skills we have acquired and refined to enact fragile achievements, non-binding interventions, which thoughtfully engage the art in the work of art and render it meaningful for us. Of course, and for the better, the details that warrant our attention will vary for different spectators who are differently skilled and whose repertoire, formed from personal, cultural, political and historical singularities, exhibit different styles of engagement. Our fragility in this engagement is a mark of the finitude of our unique situation *vis-à*-vis this work of art.[26] Our achievement is an indication of the extent to which the skills we have acquired are shared with others who are similarly engaged. Our attention to how the art in these works of art is present to us as a people who together expend resources for the purposes of thinking with images and understanding art will have contributed something to our understanding of our way of being human, as well.

At this point, an example might prove helpful. In an attempt to understand what is both interesting and irritating about Sherri Levine's appropriations of photographs by Edward Weston, theory turns up in the controversy introduced by Levine's copying Weston's nude photographs of his own young son and presenting it as her own work.[27] Levine's copy is made from a copy in a book of photographs made as copies of an "original" that exists only as a negative impression of the light present in a *camera obscura* while a shutter was open. Levine has made a copy of a copy of a copy of an "original" whose status as original is entirely ambiguous. In addition, by using the

photograph to represent his son as a classical Greek *kouros*, Weston appears to trade in the economy of ancient Greek sexuality, which included the love of men for boys (and everything that was entailed in that economy). When Levine, a mature, non-heteronormative woman, attempts to trade in this economy by appropriating Weston's image, she takes the love of boys to another sexual register and questions, without indicting Weston's relation to his son, the homoerotic basis of Western art and culture.

As an example of how literary theories might turn up in our appreciation of a work of art, consider the "Large Glass" of Marcel Duchamp, *La marie mis a nu par ces célibataires, meme* (1915–23), and the "Green Box" with the same title (1934) produced to accompany the "Glass." Duchamp insisted that the plastic form of the *Large Glass* embodied the written "text" in the "Box," a loose collection of 94 unnumbered notes, diagrams and plans (published in an edition of three hundred numbered, handmade facsimiles) said to have assisted Duchamp in the realization of the work. Here the *modus operandi* of post-structuralism and deconstruction show up in the juxtaposition of words and images in the "Box" and "Glass," respectively, and in the same juxtaposition of words and images in the "Box" and "Glass," themselves.[28] (Duchamp has written the title on the "Glass" and the "Box" contains drawings.) Do we take the words collected in the "Box" as (traditionally) authoritative over the images on the "Glass" in our attempt to achieve the presence of the art in this work? Of course, the words collected in the "Box" are already images of words made clear in the painstaking reproduction of three hundred facsimiles of the notes the "Box" contains. How, more generally, are we supposed to understand a work produced in the course of nearly 20 years that demands attention to a literary meaning that is random or irrelevant without an installation whose significance depends on that otherwise random or irrelevant literary element?

It is not, then, theory *tout court* we want aesthetics to do without but any particular theory that threatens to be the only theory and every theory that would ignore the work of art for the purposes of aggrandizing theory itself. Instead, every theory that contributes to our thinking with a work of art must already be a part of the repertoire of skills we bring to the appreciation of that work of art, and it must be drawn out by the affordances that turn up in our engagement with that artwork. For this reason, different theories and different sets of skills will be drawn out in our engagements with different affordances in different works of art and what turn up as affordances will be different for interpreters with different repertoires and different styles of engagement. In many cases, the same or similar affordances will be shared by works of art or auditors with the same or similar material or cultural affinities. The same or similar affordances will turn up in works of art by virtue of a shared history, tradition, genre or style. Audiences (and artists) will share a repertoire by virtue of their exposure to the same or similar bodies of work including the theories introduced in response to that body of work or the culture at large. In every case, for our purposes,

we will be thinking with images if our thoughts about a work of art are inspired by what turns up in that work for the repertoire of skills we have acquired and refined in our practiced engagements with works of art. If, for some, the expression, "thinking with images," is associated with what Gilles Deleuze says about great film directors, that they think with images instead of concepts, I have something very different in mind here.[29]

What I have in mind starts with the work of art itself and with our singular engagement with it. What I call thinking with mages has to do with the audience as well as the artist. We find ourselves thinking with this individual work of art if what turns up in our engagement with it affords us multiple points of access to it, if we are invited by the work to lose ourselves in a plurality of perspectives on that work and afforded opportunities to achieve a fragile presence in that work. The artist and the audience strive to achieve the presence of art in this work of art by grappling with materials, processes and artistic practices that contribute to that presence. The fragility of that presence demands that the artist and audience test the fitness of the many embodied skills in their repertoire and styles of engagement for achieving the presence of art in this particular work. The hedge against getting lost in this multiplicity is a commitment to selecting points of entry afforded by the work of art itself rather than by the demands of a skill set or theories these artworks are supposed to validate. Starting with the artwork, we allow that work to draw us to think what we would not, but for this work of art, think. Unencumbered by theory, but assisted by a repertoire that includes theoretical resources as part of our refined skills, we truly begin to think with this work of art when we turn up what the artwork affords us and those whose repertoire of skills share affinities with our own.

The theory that contributes to these achievements is not a "toolbox" from which the interpreter draws instruments for rendering meaning from the work of art. The theories that contribute to the presence of the art in a work of art are of a piece with the skills and practices the interpreter has acquired and refined from her engagements with works of art including, and leading her to, the work of art in front of her. Theories do not constitute a grid of intelligibility learned at school and applied to make the work of art mean this or that. The theories that form a part of the repertoire a spectator brings to her encounter with a work of art is another embodied skill practiced, in concert with other embodied skills, to achieve the presence of art in a work of art. In repeated, more and more skilled encounters with this work of art and others like it, the interpreter finds affordances for achieving or enacting the art in this work drawing on skill sets she has honed in encounters like this one. It is in these encounters that theories are realized and refined and contribute to the repertoire of embodied skills the interpreter brings to her appreciation of the art in a work of art.

What our spectator has studied in Althusser and Lacan, Butler and Spivak, Derrida and Barthes and others will become embodied and contribute to her repertoire of skills only when she puts that thinking to work in a grappling

with the fragile presence of the art in her appreciations of individual works of art. It will become embodied, as well, in her grappling with what she has studied in Wölfflin and Panofsky and Riegl and Nochlin and Fried, Kracauer and Bazin and Eisenstein and Metz and Sarris and Wollen, as well as Danto and Dickie and Margolis and Wollheim and Goodman and Cavell and Carroll and Lopes. In the end, however, all of these theories must be subordinate to the countless embodied encounters she has with works of art, firsthand, standing physically in front of paintings and sculptures, installations and the like in museums and galleries and homes, or sitting in theaters to view films on the big screen, traveling to visit site specific works in their specific sites. The skills our interpreter brings to her encounters with works of art have been acquired, practiced and refined in indefinitely many experiences with them, and the theories she embodies as part of the repertoire of skills she brings to her encounters with a particular work of art will have been shaped by these experiences.

A spectator so described, and the theories included in her repertoire, will be formed by the objects she engages rather than the objects being formed to fit one or another philosophy she brings to her encounter with that work. She will find affordances in the works she encounters that turn up for the skills and the refinements of those skills she brings to these encounters. These affordances and the probability that they turn up for this or that aesthetician will be completely local, and subject to revision. The meaning she attributes to this particular artwork or group of related artworks will be true for her and that truth will resonate with those who share her skills and who achieve the same or something of the same presence of the art in these works. These truths will never be completely idiosyncratic, however, because she lives in a world shared with others, constituted by shared beliefs and values as well, in which questions are posed and problems raised that are questions and problems for others. Likewise, the works of arts she is attempting to understand are created by artists who are a part of this same world, who, increasingly in the last several decades, also share beliefs and values, questions and problems formed by what they have been afforded from the theories more or less skillfully deployed in interpretations of works of art. Thus what the interpreter says is true about an artwork is, in the first place, true for her, and she shares her truths for the purposes of refining the skills she brings to interpretations of works of art and in order to be afforded opportunities by these works for arriving at new truths.

This notion of truth and truths runs counter to a generally philosophical sense of truth that tells us definitively what something is (or is not) and what, in a more or less general way, can be known or said about that thing. If I were attempting to draw on such notions for a theory of art, my efforts would fairly be counted a failure. The same would be true if my goal were a theory of the individual arts. The thinking I am accounting for here, and the presence of art I suppose can be achieved with this thinking, does not traffic in what can be said to be true or false about a thing. It grapples with a work of art to bring out the presence of a truth of art that is emergent

in the chance engagement of a specific repertoire of skills and the exigencies afforded by a work of art. This truth is not transcendent in any way but rather immanent to the encounter of this skill set and this work of art. It is unstable, fragile, subject to change and refinement. If it often happens that others, even quite erudite and accomplished scholars approximate these encounters to produce predictively reductive "truths," or that such scholars are attracted precisely to those artworks that afford them the opportunities for achieving such "truths," we should not be surprised. As the fable of the rabbit and the hedgehog suggests, it is the mark of every great woman or man that she or he be identified with one big idea. To the end of their careers, Arthur Danto and Michael Fried, to pick just two examples, saw in every work of art that interested them questions of indiscernibility and absorption, respectively. What I call thinking with images, if cogent and compelling, would give the lie to this fable.

We are thinking with images when we take the images to be thinking something themselves, asking questions, holding beliefs, actively thinking with us as we think with them. It starts with something about the image we do not understand, something that makes us think. When we know what to think, we are not really thinking. We are just applying a rule. We begin to think when we do not know what to think. So we are thinking with images when the image presents us with something about which we do not know what to think. What are we to think, for example, of the fact that Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation to Mary, whether in Italy or France or the Netherlands, always (or almost exclusively) place the angel on the left and the virgin on the right separated by some device in the center of the image (a stem of lilies, an architectural structure, etc.)? The repetition of this pattern affords a certain viewer an insight into what is importantly different in these images: the expression on Mary's face. On the view I am proposing, this viewer will use the skills that picked up this affordance to achieve a fragile, provisional truth that renders this difference meaningful.[30]

Svetlana Alpers's interpretation of northern Renaissance painting give a concrete example of this thinking with images. Where theories of Renaissance art derived from Italian painting had been imposed on and rendered northern Renaissance painting "barren of entertainment," Alpers was able to think the "art of describing" with images of the 17th-century Dutch masters. She associates her thinking with that of Alois Riegl, Otto Pächt, Lawrence Gowing, Michael Baxandall and Michael Fried who all "felt a need to find a new way to look at a group of images, at least partly in acknowledgment of their difference from the norms provided by Italian art."[31] She describes her thinking as a supplement to the theory launched by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* and incorporates the science of Johannes Kepler, Sir Francis Bacon and others in her account as well as a skillful attentiveness to the works of art made in 17th-century Holland.[32]

Alpers calls her way of looking at Dutch art "circumstantial." "By appealing to circumstances," she writes, "I mean not only to see art as a social

manifestation but also to gain access to images through a consideration of their place, role and presence in the broader culture."[33] These circumstance, then, consider not just the works of art but also the artists and their audiences, the function of art in northern Europe at the time, what beliefs and values works of art embodied and enacted, what, in short, these works of art were thinking. Her study of these circumstances is aided by a knowledge of the politics and economics of the period, by a measure of the tolerance for cultural difference in the region and of advances in the sciences. Her aim, she says, is "to bring into focus the heterogeneous nature of art"[34] and to locate that heterogeneity in the work of art itself, to be able to point to it in the object before us. With this thinking with images, Alpers gives us to think about Dutch art what we would not otherwise think.

Take her engagement with Jan Vermeer's *The Art of Painting* (1665–1668).[35] Where art historians before her have drawn attention to the moral meanings of the map that dominates the back wall of this painting, Alpers examines the model the map makes for the art of 17th-century Dutch painting. She starts by noting the prominence of the map that is shown in its entirety in the painting. She emphasizes Vermeer's handling of the map's materiality, the varnished paper and the paint applied to graphically set out the masses of land plotted on the map's surface. "In its size, scope, and graphic ambition," Alpers writes, the map "is a summa of the mapping art of the day, represented in paint by Vermeer."[36] It is a painting in a painting titled, "The Art of Painting" (Figure 1.3), and Alpers suggests that the idea of painting recommended by this representation of the map is given in a word, *Descriptio* "prominently written on the upper border of the map."[37]

Map makers were known to the Dutch world as "world describers." The aim of Alpers's book is to claim this title for 17th-century Dutch painters who set out "to capture on a surface a great range of knowledge and information about the world."[38] Unlike the Italian model of art as a window on the world replete with moral meanings communicated by that art, the map served as a model for the Dutch art of describing the world as it was laid out in front of them prior to the ascription of any moral significance to it.

Thinking Where It Hurts

Michael Baxandall, perhaps, comes closer to the "untidy and lively affair" of thinking with images when he emphasizes the extent to which our access to a picture will always be mediated by a "partially interpretive description."[39] He recommends that we treat art objects "as solutions to problems in situations, and by reconstructing a rational relation between these three"—the solution, the problem and the situation.[40] In his explanation or what he also calls an "inferential criticism" of Jean-Baptise-Siméon Chardin's *A Lady Taking Tea* (1735), Baxandall explores the "articulation of ideas" the painter can have acquired *en troc* (by barter) with the systematic thought of his culture.[41] He notes, in particular, the "vulgar" Lockean

Figure 1.3 Johannes Vermeer van Delft, *The Art of Painting* (*Die Malkunst*) (1665–1668) © Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien

theory of perception extant in 18th-century Europe and the way this theory figured in the solution to a problem presented by painting.

That problem can be stated as follows. Does one reproduce on the surface of a canvas a field for sensations that repeats the substance of what the eye, on Locke's view, sees in nature? Or does the painter, as Pieter Camper (an anatomist trained as a painter) suggests, heighten a single aspect of the visual field with a distinctness that accommodates the anatomy of the eye? Baxandall argues that Camper's advice makes sense only if the painter is not representing nature in his picture but the act of perceiving nature. "Selective

distinctness," he writes, "distinctness concentrated at one or several points whether across the field or in depth, registers a balance of perception, a selective attention . . . a partial knowledge, or something of the sort."[42] The painting that follows Camper's lead sees something, knows something, is thinking something and we arrive at this observation about that painting only if we are thinking, as Baxandall is thinking, with this image.

In *A Lady Taking Tea* (Figure 1.1), on Baxandall's view, Chardin paints the act of attention both as a subject in the painting and in the viewer's regard for the painting. Attention is pictured in the lady's regard for the steaming cup in front of her, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in the "complex and delicate distinctness game" Chardin plays across the field composed in the lady's visual plane that draws the viewer's attention to it. The heightened illumination on the back of the lady's head, repeated in the hand before the cup of tea, multiplies the points of fixation in the image, keeping the viewer "on his toes" and selectively attentive. The indistinctness of the lady's face plays to this visual dynamic by blocking a natural tendency to fix our attention on that visage.[43]

> What we have in *A Lady Taking Tea* is an enacted record of attention which we ourselves, directed by distinctness and other things, summarily re-enact, and that narrative of attention is heavily loaded: it has foci, privileged points of fixation, failures, characteristic modes of relaxation, awareness of contrasts, and curiosity about what it does not succeed in knowing.[44]

From our reading of Baxandall, we would say all of this has come to Chardin's painting *en troc*, by skills and affordances the artist bartered or shared with other artists, audiences and cultural denizens of 18th century Europe. For his part, and for our sake, Baxandall thinks with images by entering their world, which he does by picking up affordances in them with the skills he has refined for interpreting works of art.

Returning to where we started, it is no surprise that Jacqueline Lichtenstein praises Baxandall for his attention to the presence of the object in his interpretations.[45] She compares his method favorably with the conduct of conferences of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 17th-century France where all discussions of paintings were conducted in the presence of the works of art themselves.[46] This practice is important for Lichtenstein because it characterizes a robust critical engagement with art in France that predates the introduction, a century later, of an aesthetics defined by Baumgarten and, of course, Kant. It is this German conception of aesthetics, according to Lichtenstein, that produced the opposition between philosophy and art history, an opposition "purely internal to the academic field."[47]

Lichtenstein refers to the same essay cited at the very beginning of our remarks to reproach Weitz for assuming the importance of a theory of

art and for assuming that his declaration, "aesthetic theory—all of it—is wrong," mattered to anyone but philosophers (who of course did not heed his advice). She also reproaches him for "a misunderstanding, an ignorance even, of a long tradition, alive today, of reflection on art developed outside the field of philosophy by artists, amateurs, critics, theoreticians and historians of art."[48] In Weitz's admonition to philosophers that we "supplant the question, 'What is the nature of art?,' with other questions, the answers to which will provide us with all the understanding of the arts there can be,"[49] Lichtenstein detects a naïveté and a "remarkable indifference" to the artistic "*réel*," which, she says, Weitz shares with Jerrold Levinson, Cynthia Freeland and others.[50]

Addressing the question of *le reel* in art, Lichtenstein remarks,

> Valery writes somewhere that we think the way we bang into something [*on pense comme on se cogne*]. I don't believe he wanted to say by this that thinking hurts, that it is a painful activity that covers you in bumps and bruises, but that we truly think, seriously, where it hurts, that is to say, where we do not expect it, in sudden violence, the shock of an event, a surprise encounter. In effect, we think the way we bang into something because we always think somehow despite ourselves and especially against ourselves, against the proper habits of thought which tend always to make us prefer coherence to the truth. We think because we stumble on something which resists us, which hurts and disconcerts us, an object which defies our expectations and perturbs the functioning of our superb interpretive machinery, something very akin to what we commonly call "the Real."[51]

There is the temptation to assign this real to a distinctly Lacanian register, but in our own terms we can say of painting or the work of art in general that what is "real" in it is just what defies our expectation and perturbs us, what causes us to think because we don't know what to think. As noted earlier, Lichtenstein calls this "artistic thinking," *la pensée artistique*. I call it thinking with images. Approached in this way, with an appreciation for the complexity and the materiality or reality of the artifact, our appreciation of individual works and groups of related works of art engages us with a plurality of human beings who are part of the process and culture of art, the population of the art world, as well as with the flux of life that constitutes and sustains that art world. Aesthetics without "theory," thinking with images, proposes such an engagement with all those forms of life.

Thinking and the Time of the Studio

I have gone on for a long time now about thinking with images emphasizing the materiality of the image, but is this entirely consistent? My appeal to the materiality or reality of the image was meant to respond to what James

Elkins calls a "fear of materiality" in writings on art.[52] The word "image," however, seems to denote the memory, ideal or idea of the actually material physical object, what we call a "picture" or an "object" of which we have an (mental) image. To complicate matters further, as Elkins points out, Lichtenstein and others hold that painting is the central example of an image and the source for theorizing about images from the middle ages forward.[53] It seems incontestable, however, that we have developed ways of theorizing about other kinds of pictures—of the sorts we find in photographs or in motion pictures, for example—as well as of sculpture and installations that are not reducible to what we think about an art practice—painting—developed and refined over the last five or six centuries in the West.

Still, Elkins holds that there are limits to what we can say about the materiality or reality of art because the temporality of thought is so far out of sync with what he calls "the slowness of the studio."[54] "The challenge of the newcomer to artists' studios," he says, "is to try to think at the speed and in the rhythm that is right for a given medium or purpose."[55] Thought naturally races ahead, Elkins thinks, while work in the studio proceeds at a more furtive pace. Philosophers often complain that theorists think too quickly. We wonder whether Elkins might, and philosophers should, appreciate the rhythm of Baxandall's thinking and the subtlety of his observation that "we do not explain pictures: we explain remarks about pictures—or rather, we explain pictures only in so far as we have considered them under some verbal description or specification."[56]

According to Baxandall, this description or specification depends for its precision on the presence of the picture. It works both demonstratively and ostensibly, "taking its meaning from reciprocal reference, a sharpening to-and-fro, between itself and the particular."[57] On these terms, I am content to say "thinking with images" and mean by that a thinking with a description of a picture—a painting, a drawing, a photograph, an installation, a film, etc.—which is not a representation of the picture or a representation of seeing the picture, but more a representation of the thinking we have been afforded by the work of art and by the meaning or sense or art our skilled engagements have been able to achieve from those affordances.

This brings me to a final matter we might consider. The theory I sought to rehabilitate in the middle section of this chapter would not regularly be a part of the world an artist would trade in until the late decades of the 20th century. Trafficking in the art of our times, as I tend to do, reduces the anachronisms that might result from drawing on a French refashioning of political economy, feminism, psychoanalysis and the like for interpretations of "pre-modern" art. Where I do attempt to explain art from the past, it is to the theories and practices of the period, on the model established by Baxandall and Alpers, that I turn. In the case of Renaissance Annunciations, for example, an interest in the differences to be found in repetition, inspired no doubt by the contemporary theorizing of Gilles Deleuze and Naomi Schor,[58] alerts me to the real differences to be found in the expression on Mary's

face and to the problem, the situation and the solutions addressed in those expressions.[59] From there, research in the literature of the period points to Abelard's correspondences with Heloise in which there is a debate about the spiritual ideal for a devout woman, whether it should be the same as the ideal for a man. In those correspondences, we find a topos from the period when these images were painted: a controversy about whether it was possible for a woman, but not a man, to have both a spiritual and a carnal relation with her heavenly father. This observation alerts us to details in the differences in Mary's response to the angel's annunciation: does she demur before the news in favor of a masculine model of celibate devotion or swoon in anticipation of a distinctly feminine and carnal devotion? I do not insist that my interpretation of this group of related works of art is correct, only that it gives these works of art a meaning they have for me and that I can share with others. My aim in all this work is to stumble into things that, despite myself and against myself, make me think, that resist me and disconcert me, that defy my expectations, my ordinary ways of thinking, that make me think something I would not otherwise think. When we are truly thinking, this is how we think.

Notes

1 Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XV (September 1956): 27–35, reprinted in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts: Contemporary Readings in Aesthetics*, Joseph Margolis, ed., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 48–60. Citations are to this reprinted version. The texts just quoted appear on page 49.
2 Dominic McIver Lopes, *Beyond Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
3 Lopes, 107.
4 Lopes, 187.
5 Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *Les raisons de l'art: essai sur les theories de la peinture* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2014), 11–18.
6 Lichtenstein, 15.
7 Lichtenstein, 17.
8 The language of "affordances" is drawn from the work of J. J. Gibson especially as it has been taken up in models of embodied cognition by Alva Noë, Daniel Hutto and, especially, Shaun Gallagher. See J. J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1979); Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Prees, 2005); Daniel Hutto and E. Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013); and Alva Noë, *Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
9 If an artwork does not move me to think, it is not thinking *for me* though it may be thinking for someone else. This is because the artwork does not think on its own but only insofar as it is actively engaged, only insofar as it affords a viewer or an auditor with the skills for picking up its affordances to think. The enacted thinking of such a viewer or auditor is extended in the artwork. It does not emerge apart from the artwork, and it emerges in the artwork—that is, in the thoughtful engagement of the artwork.
10 Noë, 41.

11 Noë, 40.
12 See D. N. Rodowick's *Elegy for Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
13 Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) and *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964); Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1959) and *Love's Body* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).
14 See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970); Shulemith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970); Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Olympia Press, 1968) reprinted with an introduction by Avital Ronell (New York: Verso Press, 2004); Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beason Press, 1978).
15 See Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital* (with Étienne Balibar, Roger Establet, Pierre Macherey and Jacques Rancière), trans. Ben Brewster (New York: New Left Books, 1970, first publish in Paris: François Maspero, 1968); Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002, first publish in Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
16 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
17 Eagleton, 101–102.
18 It should be noted that many "philosophers" today are beset by this very anxiety not just because they are would be literary critics and "theorists." The situation is something of a general neurosis in American continental philosophy programs where extraordinary energies are devoted to explicating the thought of Heidegger, Derrida, Levinas, etc., at the expense of developing new ideas about the important social issues that they say concern them.
19 Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Summer 1982): 723–742.
20 Knapp and Benn Michaels, 724.
21 Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988) collects Derrida's essay "Signature Event Context," trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, as it originally appeared in *Glyph* 1 (1977), as well as a summary of Searle's response, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," and Derrida's response to Searle, "Limited Inc. abc . . .," trans. Samuel Weber, which both appeared in *Glyph* 2 (1977). For the full text of Searle's essay, see John R. Searle, "Reiterating the Differences," *Glyph* 2 (1977): 198–208.
22 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1974), 74.
23 I owe this expression to Kim Nastick who tells me it originates with Svetlana Alpers.
24 Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *Les raisons de l'art: essai sur le théorie de la peinture* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2014).
25 Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay in General Economy*, 2 vols, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991).
26 Noë, 41.
27 John M. Carvalho, "Repetitions: Appropriating Representation in Contemporary Art," *Philosophy Today*, 35.4 (Winter 1991), 307–324.
28 See W. J. T. Mitchell, "Word and Image," *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1996), 47–57; and Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

29 See also Esther Pasztory's *Thinking with Things: Toward a New Vision of Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005). As an expression for theorizing about individual works or groups of works of art, thinking with images does not make artists of philosophers, nor does it make aesthetics the art of deciphering what an artist may have been thinking with images. This is what Jorge Gracia does with the paintings of Carlos Estévez. It is not either a species of the extended mind promoted by Chalmers and Clark. That model would make the work of art an extension of more or less subjective mental processes, an archive or prosthesis for what the interpreter is thinking about that work of art or about something else entirely.

30 See John M. Carvalho, "Annunciations: Figures of the Feminine in Renaissance Painting," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 13 (2015), www.contempaesthetics.org.

31 Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), xx.

32 Alpers, 79.

33 Alpers, xxiv.

34 Alpers, xxvii.

35 Alpers, 119–122.

36 Alpers, 122.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 11.

40 Baxandall, 35.

41 Baxandall, 74.

42 Baxandall, 96.

43 Baxandall, 101.

44 Baxandall, 102.

45 Lichtenstein, 155.

46 Lichtenstein, 156.

47 Lichtenstein, 143.

48 Lichtenstein, 121.

49 Weitz, 49.

50 Lichtenstein, 122.

51 Lichtenstein, 15–16.

52 James Elkins, "On Some Limits of Materiality in Art History," *31: Das Magazin des Instituts fürTheorie* [Zurich] 12 (2008): 25–30. Text cited next is from www.academia.edu/168260 (12 March 2018), pages numbered 1–7.

53 Elkins, 4.

54 Elkins, 5.

55 Elkins, 6.

56 Baxandall, 1.

57 Baxandall, 11.

58 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

59 Carvalho, "Annuciations."

2 The Baroque and Bacon's Popes

In July 2007, *Study from Innocent X* (1962) sold at Sotheby's to an anonymous bidder for over $52 million. The painting, held in a private collection for over 30 years, had never appeared at auction before. It was a record sale for the artist, Francis Bacon, who died 30 years after completing the work.[1] The painting was thought to be valuable because, of all the popes Bacon painted, it most resembled the inspiration for the long series of paintings Bacon executed on this theme, Diego Velázquez's haunting *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1650) (Figure 2.2). Bacon would not have thought the success of his *Study* should depend on its resembling the Velázquez. In fact, he counted all of his paintings of popes failures, and not only or obviously because they failed to resemble their inspiration.[2] Bacon painted at least 45 popes (there is no exact count of how many he destroyed), mostly modeled on the Velázquez portrait, beginning with *Head VI* (1949) and culminating in *Study for Red Pope* (1971), a painting said to follow closely the *Study* from 1962. What was Bacon trying to accomplish in all of these images? What problem or question or challenge did *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* pose for him? Was it, in fact, a problem he never expected to solve, a question he hoped never to answer, a challenge set not by Velázquez's painting but by painting itself, a problem he transferred to other subjects, continuing to produce solutions that would never completely satisfy him?

It is not controversial to say painting poses a problem, for the artist and the viewer. It is the exact nature of the problem for Bacon that we want to explore here, the way these images of popes pose the problem for Bacon but also fix it in a fast and ready form. We are especially interested to know how Velázquez's *Innocent X*, the portrait and its subject, figure in the setting of this challenge. To this end, we will look carefully at the series of popes, 17 paintings in all, that Bacon painted between 1950 and 1953 of which *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) (Figure 2.1), the so-called Des Moines Pope, in the most well known.[3] We will delineate, in this most concentrated series of paintings on this theme, the elements brought together in them and Bacon's manner of plying these elements onto one another to make a complete work. With the details in front of us, we will work out or unfold the problem Bacon set for himself and the significance of

Figure 2.1 Francis Bacon, *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953).

Purchased with funds from the Coffin Fine Arts Trust; Nathan Emory Coffin

Collection of the Des Moines Art Center, 1980.1. © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS, London/ARS, New York 2018

this problem for him and for painting in general. We will find that a uniquely Baroque strategy was used by this distinctly bohemian artist to remake an image of Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* for purposes that were, to his satisfaction, never realized. We will note the special role photography plays in anchoring the image for Bacon and setting the conditions for the

possibility of a distinctly Baroque remaking of an image of Velázquez's portrait. "This is the obsession," Bacon says. "How like can I make this thing in the most irrational way?"[4] We will find in a special conception of the Baroque the key to Bacon's leveraging and operating on this obsession and, in Bacon's paintings of popes, a generalized, obsessive thinking with images.

Renaissance and Baroque

Heinrich Wölfflin famously identified the Baroque as an independent art period, distinguishing its dramatic, painterly style and open form from the calm, linear style and closed form of classically Renaissance images.[5] Before him, the period of art commonly (and misleadingly) called Mannerism, today, was thought to be a degeneration of the inner stillness and guiding line of High Renaissance style. Wölfflin argued, however, that the contrast of light and dark, the use of vivid colors and the emphasis on movement in art from the late 16th century forward was a predictable, inevitable response to the art that preceded it. In the Baroque, on his account, the solid, defined forms so exquisitely balanced and controlled in Renaissance compositions naturally gave way to exploding volumes of paint that blur the distinctions between elements, obscure the expected spatial relations between these elements and push the picture plane onto the viewer to exaggerate the drama or the mystery of the content represented. On Wölfflin's view, to get this effect, the Baroque artist de-emphasized the plastic qualities of High Renaissance form and accepted a surface agitated by competing values of light that contrasted with the static, smooth finish of images from the earlier period.[6]

Described in this way, we immediately see why Wölfflin's analysis of the Renaissance and the Baroque is said to be influenced by the delineation of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces in nature by his contemporary Friedrich Nietzsche.[7] In *The Birth of Tragedy*,[8] Nietzsche identified Apollo as "the god of all plastic energies . . . through whose gestures and eyes all the joy and wisdom of 'illusion,' together with its beauty, speak to us."[9] This description of the Apollonian compares favorably with the still, defined, plastic qualities Wölfflin attributes to the Renaissance. By contrast, in that same text, Nietzsche associates Dionysus with intoxication and "the *terror* which seizes man when he is suddenly dumbfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena because the principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception."[10] This description of the Dionysian compares favorably with the dramatic, emotive, open form Wölfflin attributes to the Baroque. According to Nietzsche, the two great forces of Apollo and Dionysus are forced together, without canceling their native powers, to generate the Greek tragic arts.[11] In Wölfflin's analysis, these two forces remain in conflict and produce, in the contrast between a starkly linear and a floridly brushy style, between a tactically closed and a purposely open form, between a depth constructed in successive planes and a depth created along a continuously receding diagonal, an innovation in art and

the interpretation of works of art. That conflict, in many ways, continues to produce innovations in art and the interpretation of works of art today.

Drawing on this association of Wölfflin and Nietzsche, we might try to align Bacon's art with the Baroque through Nietzsche's image of Dionysus—intoxicated, terror-filled exuberance in the service of art and life. Such psycho-causal explanations are unsatisfying, however, and they would be especially reductive in this case. Bacon's art is not Baroque because Bacon, the man, imbibed liberally and the figures populating his canvases exhibit the Dionysian tendencies to cruelty and terror. We get a better view of the Baroque in Bacon's paintings from a careful study of the artist's bold and vivid colors, from attention to the drama that animates the figures painted, from observations of the open form and florid brushwork. In his interviews with David Sylvester, Bacon says, "I use very large brushes, and in the way I work I don't in fact know very often what the paint will do, and it does so many things which are very much better than I could make it do."[12] Bacon does not try to hide the way his technique interrupts the smooth surface of the image. He draws attention to it. He makes art from the competing claims of the materials he works with and against, and he draws expressive qualities from this working with and against that are consistent with Wölfflin's description of the expressive qualities in the Baroque. We see evidence of these qualities, again, in the way Bacon's paintings emphasize movement and in the ways they, always dramatically, sometimes brutally, undermine any tendency to the kind of structural clarity we find differently realized in such "classics" of mid-20th-century art as Mark Rothko's *White Center* (1950) or Pablo Picasso's *Jacqueline with Flowers* (1954). Moreover, we find in Bacon's open form, perhaps most striking in the triptychs, a general tendency of his figures to merge or appear to melt into one another as in the center panel of the triptych *Two Figures Lying on a Bed with Attendants* (1968) or in the single canvas *Figure at a Washbasin* (1976).

Yet, there is one important sense in which Bacon's paintings cannot be considered Baroque in Wölfflin's sense. High Renaissance images, Wölfflin says, are composed of multiple, independent parts. While they support the overall unity of the image, each of these elements or parts could stand on its own. By contrast, in a Baroque image, according to Wölfflin, all the parts are subordinate to the overall unity of the content represented in it. So, in Leonardo da Vinci's High Renaissance *Last Supper* (1495–1497), each disciple reacts in his own way to the announcement that one of them will betray Jesus, yet the harmony or integrity of the whole is maintained in spite of the independence of its parts. In Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656), on the other hand, the whole painting and all the parts in it are brought to a focus around the point outside the painting that has attracted the attention of those in it. The significance of the artist, the infanta and her attendants, the little people and the figures in the background, even the mirror and the back of the canvas the artist is painting are all subordinate to the invisible unifying element made visible by the attention these elements are made to

give it. The parts are considered independently at their peril. Their significance depends in the way they point to a significance that makes the parts a whole, the regard of a spectator standing in front of the painting. Bacon's paintings, however, militate against such a unifying element as vigorously as they ply open and extend the forms of the contents presented in them. This is made literal in the triptychs that set a barrier between elements of the work, but it is no less forceful in a single canvas that leaves a viewer to wonder what sides of meat, an umbrella and a seated howling figure (*Painting* (1946)) can have to do with one another. Can it still make sense, then, to call Bacon's paintings Baroque? Is there anything to be gained from clinging to this account of them?

We can find a concept of the Baroque that fits Bacon's paintings and gives us a critical lever for evaluating them in a study of the 17th-century German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz by the 20th-century French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. "The Baroque," Deleuze writes, there, "refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function."[13] As Deleuze sees it, the Baroque is not a period with defining characteristics but an operation (or cause) that produces effects. What effects? According to Deleuze, the Baroque "endlessly produces folds."[14] Introducing the concept of the fold, which is found in neither the Baroque nor in Leibniz, Deleuze connects Wölfflin's aesthetics of 17th-century architecture with Leibniz's metaphysics of the monad to expound on the principle of sufficient reason in terms of the Baroque, on the one hand, and on the Baroque in terms of the principle of sufficient reason, on the other. Leibniz held that the infinite universe was contained in each finite monad. Starting from Wölfflin's descriptions of Baroque building's rounded angles, curved and circular forms, spongy and cavernous shapes put in motion and spilling out into space, Deleuze finds reverberations of Leibniz's account of a curvilinear universe prolonged, not extended, by a fluidity in matter, an elasticity in bodies and a motivating spirit that folds and unfolds worlds onto one another to infinity. For Leibniz, on this reading, the smallest unit of matter is not the atom or the point but the fold—of paper, of fabric, of earth, of light—enveloped in folds and unfolding to reveal folds and more folds, textures, a plenum separating and connecting inside and outside, high and low, matter and the soul.

It is this fold and the operation of the fold that will most helpfully characterize what is Baroque about Bacon in our study.[15] The fold will help us account for the textures on his canvas and the separation and connection of the panels in his triptychs but, more importantly, for the worlds developed and enveloped in his images, especially his images of popes. We will see that Bacon carries out his obsession with remaking an image in the most irrational way by folding one world onto another to produce yet another world that preserves all of them at the same time as it reveals how they have been stretched and perforated by being made to enfold onto one another in this way. In the paintings after *Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, we find that Bacon folds into an image of Velázquez's painting, images of a film still from Sergei

Eisenstein's *Battleship Potempkin* (1925), hand-painted images of diseases of the mouth and news images of Pope Pius XII being carried through St. Peter's Basilica to produce the series of glorious works of art reductively referred to as the "screaming popes." The references to Eisenstein and oral diseases and Pius XII have been noted by others as influences or inspirations for Bacon's popes. We want to show how these elements, already folded themselves, are folded into these compositions by the application of this specifically Baroque operation and technique. If there is something transgressive in these images, and there clearly is, we will argue that it is to be found in this operation of folding and not in the representation of an apparently inappropriate pontifical effect.

Velázquez and Innocent X

The original *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* by Velázquez is clearly Baroque in Wölfflin's sense. It was executed during Velázquez's trip to Italy (1648–1650) on behalf of King Philip IV of Spain who wanted artworks to fill new rooms in his palace at Alcázar.[16] Velázquez traveled to Venice and Florence before arriving in Rome where his renowned skill in portraiture was very much in demand. The audience with Innocent X that resulted in his most famous portrait from this period was likely gained, however, not only by a deserved reputation as an artist but also by his earlier associations with the pope when Innocent X was attached to Philip's court as Giovanni Battista Pamphili and nuncio, the diplomatic representative, of Pope Urban VIII from 1626 to 1630. Pamphili was 70 years old when he ascended to the papacy in 1644 after, as they say, "a long and stormy conclave." He would serve for 11 years vexed by strained relations between the Holy See and France, hostilities between his papacy and the Duchy of Parma, a failed attempt to intervene on behalf of Irish Catholics in the English Civil War and by a controversial liaison with his deceased brother's wife, Donna Olimpi Maidalchini. All of this may have weighed on Innocent X when he sat for Velázquez in late 1649. Though he was declared blameless in all of his affairs as pope, Innocent X was also described as "irresolute and suspicious."[17] These qualities, and the strain of his years of service to the Catholic faithful, would appear to be captured in Velázquez's portrait of him, but our aim, once again, is to give a deeper account of what about this painting so captivated Bacon's attention.

The standards for papal portraiture were reset by Raphael's *Portrait of Julius II* (1511–1512) (Figure. 1.2). Previous portraits of popes presented the pontiff frontally. Raphael portrayed Julius II at an angle. He also gave the pope an unusual psychological depth. His portrait set a precedent for subsequent representations of popes, including Velázquez's portrayal of Innocent X, but the Baroque qualities of *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* make a stark contrast with Raphael's High Renaissance image. In the Raphael, a draftsman's line separates the hem of the crimson mantle from that of

the white surplice and another finely drawn line separates the cuffs of the surplice from the flesh around the wrists. The pope's face is rendered by Raphael in exquisite detail, as if it were the portrait itself and the rest just staging for this pious visage. The image as a whole is balanced, still, and set back from the viewer, and Julius II is made to stare unperturbed, perhaps lost in thought, at a distant, undefined point in his world, a world on his side of the picture plane that is undisturbed by anything that might trouble the world of the viewer standing before it.

Not so the Velázquez. The overall quality of this portrait is rough, agitated and troubled. There is a depth established in the image along a diagonal that

Figure 2.2 Diego Velázquez, *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1650). © Galleria Doria Pamphilj

pushes the figure of the pope forward to the right from a recess in the left background. In the Velázquez, every line seems to bend under the weight and influence of one or more field of paint competing to define elements that could not stand alone. These elements, rather, get their significance from a unifying pull created by the focused attention of the portrait's subject at some point that concerns him outside his world, on the viewer's side of the picture plane. In this portrait by Velázquez, the palpable emotive content is generated by paint applied to the volumes of fabric that make up the pope's garments, by the weight of the curtains draped as a background, by the ornamentation of the oversized chair and, most of all, by the ruddy complexion of the flesh that supports the intensity of the pope's steely regard. These are the principle elements that come together to make *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* distinctly and traditionally Baroque.

Other elements in this portrait bring it closer to Deleuze's Leibnizian characterization of the Baroque. Follow the trace of white paint on the pope's right hand to the paint applied around the left hand that renders ruffles on the cuffs of the pope's rochetta. Your attention is naturally, then, drawn to the clearly folded white piece of paper the pope is holding in that left hand. Behind that image of paper on the canvas, open brushwork in red that is and is not part of the background drapery fills the forbidden void with folds of paint that anchor the pope in this scene.[18] This effect is repeated everywhere in this image and perhaps nowhere as vividly as in the pleats in the skirt of the pope's rochetta where a striking yellow-gold pigment vibrates in the varying depths of the folds in the white fabric. Deleuze, commenting on the Baroque qualities of the 20th century artist Simon Hantaï, who applied paint to a literally folded canvas, writes *a propos* our description of the Velázquez, "Sometimes light vibrates in the pleats and crannies of matter, sometimes light vibrates in the folds of a material surface."[19] Just so, Velázquez uses paint to create folds on an otherwise flat canvas that capture and vibrate light, for example, in the shadows formed from the fold of the crimson mantilla on the white rochetta. Velázquez paints folds, more generally, which hold worlds together in order to let them dissolve, as in the overlapping of white, yellow and red pigments representing nothing but spilling over one another in the lowest reaches of the right side of the painting to fill the void.

Yet none of these fine descriptions of *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* appear to have made much of an impression on Bacon who simply and repeatedly describes the painting as "one of the greatest portraits that have ever been made," and continues by stating,

> And I became obsessed by it. I buy book after book with this illustration in it of the Velázquez *Pope*, because it just haunts me, and it opens up in me all sorts of feelings and areas of—I was going to say—imagination, even in me.[20]

We might think that Bacon bought reproduction after reproduction of Velázquez's portrait because, having seen the original, he was collecting reminders of a firsthand encounter with it, but, famously, he never saw the painting itself, not even in a three-month stay in Rome in 1954, a year after completing eight of the canvases inspired by that portrait, which are the subject of our study, here.[21] He counts his failure to visit the painting in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj as "a fear of seeing the reality of the Velázquez after my tampering with it, seeing the marvelous painting and thinking of all the stupid things one had done to it."[22] "All the stupid things" Bacon had done with this great portrait, then, were inspired by reproductions of it. Something so struck Bacon in the photographic records of this image that he went on to paint his own, by his account, unsatisfying records of it.

So it could not have been the marvelous rendering of the folds of paint where light could vibrate in varying depths that inspired Bacon. It must have been something that could be seen in reproduction after reproduction of it. Perhaps Bacon tells us what it is in his earliest interview with Sylvester (in 1962).

> You're not only remaking the look of the image, you're remaking all the areas of feeling which you yourself have apprehensions of. You want to be able to open up so many levels of feeling if possible, which can't be done in . . . It's wrong to say it can't be done in pure illustration, in purely figurative terms, because of course it has been done. It has been done in Velázquez.[23]

It would appear, then, that what Bacon was able to surmise in the reproductions of *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* is this ability Velázquez had to remake the multiple layers of feelings he apprehended in his subject at the same time as he made a faithful illustration of that subject. Bacon was inspired by the reproductions of Velázquez's *Portrait* to accomplish this same feat in his own painting. This would be, after all, the problem he set out to solve in painting his popes.

> Because one wants to do this thing of just walking along the edge of the precipice, and in Velázquez it's a very, very extraordinary thing that he has been able to keep so near to what we call illustration and at the same time so deeply unlock the greatest and deepest things that man can feel.[24]

Bacon describes his aim in painting, here, in a way that invokes the Nietzschean underside of Wölfflin's concept of the Baroque, the artist standing at the edge of the abyss and daring to take in its dangers with its promise. It's relatively certain that Velázquez didn't see the problem in this way, but Bacon reveals, in this statement, that what he has borrowed from Velázquez is something he takes to be a problem with painting in general and a problem he could take on for himself on his terms.

Those terms, in his time, have been determined, Bacon says, by the way "photography has altered completely this whole thing of figurative painting, and totally altered it."[25] Velázquez's aim in painting the figures in the court of Philip IV was to make a record of the personages populating that environ. In painting *Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, he sought to make a record of the pope.[26] Velázquez happened, because of his extraordinary talent, Bacon says, to do much more. In Bacon's time, however, such a record could be made by photography (or film), so that a painter "is forced to make a game" of the recording function, and "all that he is involved with is making the sensibilities open up through the image."[27] If the precipice defined for Velázquez by the demands of illustration exposed the possibilities of unlocking deeply felt feelings in the image, the challenge for Bacon and painters of his generation was to hold onto enough illustration or figuration to anchor those feelings and sensibilities. Bacon sees this tension between illustration and expressive feeling as the kind of game we are left to play with art and life when the metaphysical comforts offered by religion and advanced medicine no longer function to give our experience meaning.[28]

Bacon's series of popes exhibits one strategy for playing this game of making these intense sensibilities open up in painting, but where are those sensibilities so evident in the Velázquez and how is it that they appear to Bacon, again and again, in photographic reproductions of the original? It would appear that the photographic copies of the original establish and maintain a distance between Bacon and the subject of Velázquez's portrait. The special power photography has of indexing the real, of repeating rather than reproducing its subject, positively fixes, for Bacon, an image of what in that portrait unlocks the greatest and deepest sensibilities one can feel.

To judge from Bacon's studies and from Velázquez's *Portrait* itself, these sensibilities come to the surface in the intensities concentrated around Innocent's regard of that point in the world of the viewer that has so captured the pope's attention. Everything in the painting conspires to focus our attention on this papal gaze. The diagonal that establishes the depth in the image pushes the figure of the pope forward toward us. The edges of the pope's garments and the parts of the *sedia* that cross over the lowest edges of the picture plane virtually bring the figure into the viewer's space. The note on the folded piece of paper in Innocent's left hand bears the (transcribed) inscription "Alla Santità di Nostro Signore Innocencio X^0 per Diego de Silva Velázquez de la Camera de Sua Maestà Cattolico" (To the Holiness of Our Lord Innocent X by Diego de Silva Velázquez of the Order of Your Catholic Majesty). Serving as both the artist's signature and his petition, it inserts a device into the image that occasions the pope's intense scrutiny of the viewer on the other side of the picture plane.[29]

> The petition has been read and now the pontiff gazes at the writer with an expectant but challenging glance. By means of this dramatic device, the portrait becomes the man rather than a mere image or record of his appearance.[30]

Photographic reproductions of Velázquez's *Portrait* isolate and index this image that becomes Innocent's renowned irresoluteness and suspicion, and it is apparently this image that captured Bacon's attention or, as Bacon himself might say, that excited his sensibilities.

Better still, as Bacon puts it, speaking of his experience at the National Gallery in London, "It's not so much the painting that excites me as that the painting unlocks all kinds of valves of sensation within me which return me to life more violently."[31] This is important, because it guards against us seeing in Bacon's studies after Velázquez a representation of the sensations and affects depicted in *Portrait of Pope Innocent X*. The sensations opened up for Velázquez that become the subject of the portrait unlock, in photographic reproductions of it, sensations that return Bacon to life more violently and more intent on producing the occasion for comparable excitement in himself and others. It should not be surprising, then, to find that not all of Bacon's popes "scream." It should also not be so surprising if we suggest that those who still appear to scream depict neither what is thought to be lurking behind the papal visage in Velázquez's *Portrait* nor what is supposed to be much nearer to the surface of Bacon's personal relation to the figure captured in these images.

Bacon says, time and again, that what he is trying to do in his paintings is remake the appearance of a thing *as appearance* by operating on it in a certain way. This is the specific function that photographs play in his work: they allow him to operate on an image. A photograph is an image of an image, it indexes, makes a record, of how a thing appeared, the image of a thing, when the photograph was taken. This is no more or less the case when the subject of the photograph is a painting than it is when it is a snapshot of an animated form of life or when it is a still frame from a motion picture. In the first case, reproductions of the Velázquez, for example, the camera is set up in a privileged position established by the conventions for photographically producing images of works of art. In the film still, a fortuitous moment in a sequence of momentary cinematic records of movement is isolated as an image of that movement. Snap shots taken of living subjects capture an image of the way those subjects appeared in the places and at the times where they were photographed from a particular point of view. Hand-painted photographic images of oral diseases, to pick another example that we discuss next, are rendered in a way that is instructive for those who have to distinguish the appearance of *herpes simplex* from *candidiasis*.

In each case, then, the photograph records how some person or thing appeared, and Bacon's experience of living subjects, of acquaintances, friends and of the peculiar dispositions of the human body seems to have taken the same form. "In a second," he says of these experiences, "you may blink your eyes or turn your head slightly, and you look again and the appearance has changed. I mean, appearance is like a continuously floating thing."[32] It is as if he views the world photographically, and his obsession in painting is, again, how to take what appears to him in this way and operate on it to render it as *an appearance*. It is the normal compulsion of art to create something

that captures the essence of its subject. Michelangelo's *David* (1501–1504) captures the essence of the character as he appears in the Old Testament by making him Goliath. Eduard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) shows that a courtesan, who appears in one way for this client and another for that, can have an essence, too. Bacon, contrarily, wants to make an appearance of an appearance. To do this, he does not copy the image, nor does he try to bring out a secret in the image that has never been revealed. Instead he introduces an irrational element into the image that allows him to remake an appearance of it.

When Bacon talks about his technique for executing this operation, he describes it as introducing a structure or an armature in the image around which elements introduced by chance will be forced to coalesce.[33] An arbitrary but fixed element is inserted as the "form" around which chance content will constellate. By this means, Bacon hopes to make the image more artificial, even brutally distorted, if in this distortion the subject can be rendered as an appearance. Bacon wants to make an appearance of the way the subject has appeared to him. He wants to avoid, violently, if necessary, the tendency to remake the truth of the subject apart from the way it appears. This is the fundamental difference in Bacon's art: he is not looking to picture the miraculous in the mundane but the profane in the present. Bacon is not hoping to reveal to the viewer something he may have missed in his experience of the world. He is rather attempting to excite in that viewer sensations he has bottled up or rendered indistinct for the purposes of living an unperturbed life. If the artist is driven by her instincts, "the foam of the unconscious" Bacon calls it, then she exposes her audience to art by bringing that audience into contact with that same instinct in themselves. Bacon uses what he calls a structure or armature to produce these effects. In the 1950s, and into the early 1960s, Bacon drew from photographic reproductions of Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* to fabricate such an armature.

Bacon and Velázquez

As we said earlier, Bacon's earliest attempts to excite such sensations using an armature drawn from Velázquez's *Portrait* was *Head VI* (1949). In this image, the subject of Velázquez's painting is captured in the figure's three-quarter turn, in the papal mantilla rendered in a muted purple and in the pontifical throne suggested by the yellow-gold adumbrations of its ornamental details. The top half of the figure's head is brushed over, drawn up in a curtain of gray-brown paint drawn down, perhaps, on a string attached to a tassel that hangs between ghost-dark eyes. Importantly, the mouth is open, a distinguishing character of Bacon's most well-known popes. Whether this represents the opening to a scream, a cry, a gasp or an oral exam is not at all clear. When asked whether all the open mouths are meant to be screams, Bacon tells David Sylvester,

> Most of them but not all . . . I've always been moved by the movements of the mouth and the shape of the mouth and the teeth . . . I like, you

> might say, the glitter and the color that comes from the mouth and I've always hoped in a sense to be able to paint the mouth like Monet painted a sunset.[34]

Of course, he admits, his open mouths all ended up as a lot of "black caverns" instead.[35] We know better than to ask, at this point, whether there is a cavern behind these caverns, a hidden meaning or secret attachment Bacon has to this expression.[36] There is no secret to an appearance. There is nothing concealed in this appearance that Bacon is attempting to reveal. We will find, rather, that there is a cavern or, better, caverns *in* these caverns, entire worlds folded into the world these open mouths unfold for us in Bacon's distinctly Baroque style.

It is well known that Bacon models the open mouths in his series of popes in part on the cry of the nurse from the Odessa Steps sequence in Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Bacon said he saw the film, and that it made an impression on him, but he no doubt worked from photographic images, film stills, from that film reproduced in any number of books about the film (images from such books littered his studio at the time of his death). The observation is strongly suggested by a review of this film sequence, which includes several compelling cries. The first are by the woman with the baby carriage just before and after she is shot. We are then shown cries by the nurse and Eisenstein himself (in cameo) both increasing in intensity and cut into shots of the baby in its carriage rolling out of control down the steps. In the final montage, the nurse cries out as a Cossack bludgeons the baby to death and as, in the same moment, a bullet pierces her eye, shattering her pince-nez and leaving blood, like tears, flowing down her face.

It is on this final shot in the montage that Bacon (and the popular imagination) fixes. The opening scene of citizens joyously greeting the arrival of the ship in Odessa's harbor unfolds violently and comes to a crashing climax in the silent scream represented there. In Eisenstein's distinctive montage style, images of innocence put in harm's way are cut with conflicting images of helplessness, on the one hand, and violence, on the other, creating a texture of dramatic tension that concludes with a complex image of a caregiver desperately in need of care. Her pince-nez, made to stand out by its contrast with the eyeglasses worn by Eisenstein's character, identify the nurse with an older aristocratic class. The violent death of the newly born and the elderly at the hands of the Tsar's militia is the double tragedy folded into this single image by the unfolding montage of attractions that comprises the entirety of this penultimate episode of the film.

It's not at all clear, however, that Bacon hoped even secretly or unconsciously to capture or invoke the horror and tragedy of the scene at Odessa in his renderings of Velázquez's Pope. He says, instead, that he wanted to make a painting of the human cry to rival the one by Nicolas Poussin in *Massacre of the Innocents* (1630–1631), which he saw frequently while living with a family near Chantilly. Inspired by the Poussin, he says, he attempted to make a painting of the cry using the Eisenstein still "as a basis on which

I could also use these marvelous illustrations of the human mouth" from that secondhand book he bought in Paris.[37] Bacon says he's been told there are "all sorts of sexual implications" associated with images of the open mouth, a hidden secret in the cavern that other commentators may want to explore, but he asserts that "it hasn't got any special psychological significance" for him.[38] He says, instead, that he "was always very obsessed by the actual appearance of the mouth and teeth" and that he "wanted to paint the scream more than the horror" that produced the scream.[39]

As a result, Bacon judges that the screams he painted were too purely visual and abstract, but how not? The violence in Poussin's painting is implied not real. Eisenstein's montage is entirely and highly stylized and formal. The photographs of oral diseases are artificially enhanced. And none of these open mouths utter a sound. Bacon never references the real, blood-curdling scream of a living human subject. Beginning with images, and thinking with and through these images, he renders an image of the human cry or scream that, in the most irrational way, makes an appearance of what was already an appearance for him. In this case, the Eisenstein still is the armature around which Bacon turns an obsession with images of oral disease with more or less repressed attachments to horror and sex and with Poussin. Bacon operates in this way to paint images that do not just illustrate the scream but that unlock, through that image, deeply felt, even violent areas of sensation that would not be experienced otherwise.

Bacon complains that purely abstract art is incapable of conveying really strong, compelling feelings. It remains, he believes, on an entirely aesthetic level, delighting in the beauty of the patterns and shapes the artist paints on the canvas. Abstract artists attempt to render rather than represent the undisciplined feelings and emotions that possess them, but, so rendered, Bacon thinks, these emotions are too weak to convey anything.

> I think that great art is deeply ordered. Even if within the order there may be enormously instinctive and accidental things, nevertheless I think that they come out of a desire for ordering and for returning facts onto the nervous system in a more violent way. . . . as the instincts change, so there comes a renewal of feeling of how can I remake this thing once again more clearly, more exactly, more violently.[40]

There's not enough tension in abstract painting for Bacon, not enough connection to what he calls the "factual." He prefers the art of Henri Michaux to that of Jackson Pollock because Michaux has not given up on the human form, because Michaux understands, better, the situation of the painter in the age of photography, walks the edge of the abyss into which he is in danger of falling if he gives up illustration altogether.

Our argument, here, is that Bacon edges ever closer to that same abyss in his paintings after Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* by plying images onto one another to the point of complicating their references, and not just

trivially so. Bacon remakes what Velázquez once made in folds of fabric, paper and paint by folding images of Eisenstein's film still and images of oral diseases—both already folded by the formal montage technique in film and the mechanical retouching of the medical examiner's lexicon—into images of Velázquez's painting. In doing so, he remakes an appearance of the image of Innocent in Velázquez's portrait for the purposes of drawing out a new set of instincts and with a view to unlocking sensations not so deeply felt before by the viewer and by Bacon himself. The last element folded into Bacon's paintings after Velázquez is the news photo of Pope Pius XII being carried on a *sedia gestatoria* or portable throne through St. Peter's Basilica. Pius XII would have been pope during the time when the majority of Bacon's paintings of popes were executed.[41] It is not likely, however, that Bacon intended to make a specific reference to this pope or to the papacy in general, except to isolate the specificity of this clerical personage.

It is one of the effects of photography that it isolates its subject, takes it out of context and elevates it above its circumstances. The surrealists used this feature of photography to produce just those effects.[42] What Bacon notices in the photographs of the processionals in which Pius XII is carried through St. Peter's on a raised, portable throne, is the uniqueness of the pope, the way he is raised above the crowd "onto a dais on which the grandeur of this image can be displayed to the world."[43] In a photograph, this image is fixed forever. With a photograph, the temptation to generalize this image or the person in it as a tragic or heroic figure is short-circuited by the specificity of the snapshot. In an instant (in Bacon's day), light reflected off a subject, captured by the camera's lens and directed through an aperture, writes an image on chemically treated film. The photographic image records the fact that this was there then. It indexes the real and preserves the moment in perpetuity. For Roland Barthes, his mother is preserved in the photograph he has of her.[44] For Bacon, the photograph of Pius XII, with the pope raised above the folds formed by the crush of admirers crowded around the raised *sedia*, is another element to be used in remaking and complicating the image of Velázquez's *Portrait*.

We will see that this last of the elements to be added to Bacon's attempt to walk the edge of the abyss between figuration and expression is the first to drop out. It does not figure at all in the series of eight painting executed in 1953 leading up to the painting of the Des Moines pope that same year. The first painting in that series, *Study for Portrait I* (1953), started out as a portrait of Bacon's friend and interpreter, David Sylvester, but after several sittings it took on the distinctive features of Velázquez's Pope: the broad, white collar folded over a mantilla, the long face and head covered with a papal cap, the ornaments that decorate the papal *sedia* here merely suggested by a loose architectural line. This line is painted in gold against a dark background. The rich crimson Velázquez had given the pope's vestments is rendered a deep purple. Faint white lines attempt to give an abstract, geometrical depth to the image, but the figure—a bust, really, all upper torso

and head, no arms or hands—nonetheless floats forward in the picture plane. This effect is exaggerated by the unpainted lower third of the canvas. Where this *Study* departs from the Velázquez is in the pince-nez given to this pope, a quotation from Eisenstein's film.

Having completed *Study I*, it is said that Bacon, "working feverishly and with great spontaneity and confidence," produced the other seven paintings in the series *Study for Portrait I–VIII* (1953) in two weeks. With minor modifications in the abstraction used to represent the pope's chair and to depict depth in the image, the significant changes that occur in the studies numbered II–VIII involve the position of the figure; in none of them is any portion of the surface left unpainted. The dimensions for all the paintings are approximately 60 x 46 inches, and all except *Study VII*, which is oil on linen, are oil on canvas. In *Study II*, the figure turns to the viewer's left and is seen in profile. In *Study III*, the figure turns back toward the viewer but looks askance to his right. In *Study IV*, the figure acquires a right arm and hand that is raised and used to cover its mouth. We see here, as well, the suggestions of a left arm and legs. In *Study V*, the arm and hand rest on a line standing in for a part of what would be the pope's chair, the eyes are now turned toward the viewer and the mouth forms a grimace or a grin. In *Study VI*, the arms are removed, and the mouth is agape. In *Study VII*, still armless and with a specter of a lower body framed by an unnatural polygon, the mouth is fully opened, teeth bared as if to scream. In *Study VIII*, the mouth is closed again, the chin is tucked into the shoulder of the left arm, which is pulled across its chest to grasp the shoulder of the right arm, which is raised, hand opened, just above its head.

Apparently conceived and executed as a series, the eight studies can be described as presenting variations of the theme of Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X*.[45] By reducing the details of the figure and its ground to the minimum necessary for representing Velázquez's Pope, Bacon was able to draw out the inspiration that converted the portrait of Sylvester into an avatar of the Velázquez in *Study I*. These studies taken together are not, however, random variations but rather a serial unfolding of the appearance of Velázquez's pope. Eisenstein's film is implicated in the pince-nez and in the wide-open mouth of *Study VII*, but it also makes an appearance in the montage that unfolds to give us the climax of *Study VII* and its denouement in *Study VIII*. This series, and the triptychs that present a more compact form of the same affect, also implicate the studies of human movement carried out in the 19th-century photographs of Eadweard Muybridge. In an early interview Bacon describes Muybridge's *The Human Figure in Motion* "as a record of human motion—a dictionary, in a sense." And, he says, "the thing of doing a series may possibly have come from looking at those books of Muybridge with the stages of movement shown in separate photographs."[46] In *Study for Portrait I–VIII*, the figure is shown facing us, turning away and back toward us, covering its mouth, revealing a grimace that opens in stages into what appears to be a howl that it covers up, again.

Provocative as this series is, it does not point definitively to the so well-known Des Moines *Study after Velázquez* painted that same year. That is, there is no unmistakable link, either in form or content, between *Study I–VIII* and the Des Moines *Study*. All that can be said is that all of the paintings of popes completed in 1953 are roughly of the same dimensions, 60 x 46 inches. We have to seek the inspiration for *Study after Velázquez* elsewhere, and we seem to find it in a series of three paintings executed and exhibited together in 1951. *Pope I–III* was, until recently, thought to be Bacon's first coherent series of popes and "the first complete series of any kind to show the same figure in a state of continuous movement."[47] The dominant palette for this series is slate blue tending toward sea green used to color the flesh and the fabrics (with the exception of the large white collar that frames the faces) and to accent the chair and the structuring armature of the images. This armature appears as a raised platform and a box on and in which the figure on his throne is seated as well as in an arc slung across the lower third of the canvas and through the feet of the figure.

In this group, *Pope II*, in which the figure, mouth open, teeth bared and gripping the left arm of its throne, faces the viewer wearing the nurse's broken pince-nez, is said to have been painted first and the others painted around it. In *Pope I*, the figure's mouth is closed, and it stares intently at the viewer through a pair of glasses closer in resemblance to those seen in photographs of Pius XII. In *Pope III*, the figure's mouth is fully agape, head thrown back and the cresting rail of the throne is made to fan around the figure's head to exaggerate this gesture. As Wieland Schmied sees it, this figure is "quite beside himself with rage; the face is racked by convulsive spasms and the mouth is wrenched open in an inarticulate screech. Thus, the series traces the successive stages of descent into hysteria."[48]

On the one hand, this is a lot to judge from reproductions of this painting, which is all we have of it since Bacon destroyed the original. It is a virtue of Schmied's account, on the other hand, that it describes the series as the unfolding of a dominant affect and, so, situates the series as a precursor to the same unfolding affect of *Study I–VIII*. At the same time, Schmied's interpretation highlights the argument against considering the series from 1951 as a precedent for the Des Moines *Study after Velázquez* of 1953. What in *Pope I–III* and *Study I–VIII* unfolds in a series of canvases is enfolded in a single image in the Des Moines *Study*. In addition, in that *Study*, the cool palette of *Pope I–III* and the cold abstraction of *Study I–VIII* is replaced with warmer tones and more fully realized illustration. The Des Moines *Study* also incorporates what Bacon calls a "shuttering" effect, a formalizing of "the folds in background curtains into stripes" that are made to pass "very emphatically through the figure," which is nowhere found in the paintings of popes from 1951 or earlier in 1953.[49]

What we see apparently for the first time in the Des Moines *Study*, are the folds from the curtains that form a background for Velázquez's *Portrait* stylized as stripes and made to appear as both a backdrop and a screen,

passing behind, before and through the figure of Innocent seated on a more completely worked up *sedia gestatoria*. The precedent for this effect has been traced back to Titian's *Portrait of Archbishop Filippo Archinto* (1561–1562),[50] but Bacon is known to have been experimenting for several years with a technique seen in Edgar Degas's late pastels that make sets of close, parallel lines seem to pass through translucent bodies, as in *Woman Drying Herself* (1888–1892) and *Woman Combing Her Hair* (1887–1890). Describing the poignancy of this effect, Bacon explains that it results from the way "the sensation doesn't come straight out at you but slides slowly and gently through the gaps."[51] The sensation is delayed or deferred, then, but also broken up by this technique. It makes its way through the surface of the image to the viewer only to retreat into the shadows formed from folds that break up that surface. This shuttering invokes the operation of a single-lens reflex camera that opens and closes a shutter to control the time that light is exposed to the film. It also approximates the operation of a motion picture camera that steams a cinematic image by minimizing the shuttering caused by the frame separating thousands of discreet images spliced together on several reels. *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* folds into a single image the distinct visual imagery of painting, photography and film as well as the variety of different processes of these distinct visual arts.

We find a precedent for the application of this shuttering device in an earlier series of three paintings thought, until recently, to have been destroyed by the artist but recovered and shown for the first time in 1998. The canvases in this series, painted in 1950, have the same dimensions as *Pope I–III* (78 x 54 inches) and were destined for the same Hanover Gallery where *Pope I–III* were exhibited in 1951, but they were never shown there. "Bacon delivered the first two canvases to the gallery," Sylvester tells us, "but at the last moment withdrew them from the exhibition, presumably because the third was lacking and they had been conceived as a set."[52] In the third painting, according to the catalog raisonné, the figure was to have been "inextricably entangled with the curtain."[53] There is, indeed, a curtain rendered in long crimson stripes separated by dark folds hanging by rings from a rod in the background of one recovered canvas titled "Study after Velázquez" (1950), but it is impossible to extrapolate from this image how the curtain may have figured in the painting that was never completed. It is also impossible to say why Bacon destroyed all three paintings, or thought he did, or why he died regretting he had destroyed them when he had not.[54]

What can be said is that "Study after Velázquez" and the first painting in this series, also titled *Study after Velázquez*, stand out in their use of purple for the papal mantilla and cap and red for the background curtain of the second canvas and for the radiant folds of pigment flooding beneath the papal throne in the first. The purple mantilla and cap draw a straight line to the representation of the pope in the Des Moines painting. There is also a hint of red, a line drawn to the dominant hue in Velázquez's original, indiscriminately dripped in the foreground of the Des Moines painting, but the main

link between the series from 1950 and the *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* from 1953 is in the use of the shuttering effect. In what is described as the second painting in this series, "Study after Velázquez," the effect is quite complex, both extending the folds in the curtain represented in the background of the painting and appearing independent of the curtain as a general feature of the image. In the first *Study after Velázquez*, the effect is more direct. It dominates the image, raining broad bands of black and gray paint from the top of the canvas through the skirts of the seated figure.

This would have been Bacon's first attempt to make Velázquez's *Portrait* his own. Besides substituting purple for the scarlet red of Velázquez's image, Bacon has pushed the seated figure back away from the picture plane without bothering to fill in the parts cut off by the bottom edge of the original. He has also introduced, as an armature or structuring device, a white segmented pipe, extending from one side of the canvas to the other and inserted under the folds of the rochetta. This pontiff clutches the arms of his throne and stares intently not at the viewer but askance, to his right, at someone or something in his world or in ours, we cannot say which. He does not wear spectacles. His mouth is agape, and his teeth are bared. Hanging from the white pipe are the folds of a gray foreground curtain through which we see the apparently wooden platform on which the pope's throne is raised and the scarlet red flooring on which that platform is built. In all this detail, the dominant image in this painting is the rain of pleated folds that pass behind, before and through that image.

"Study after Velázquez," the second painting in this series, incorporates many more variations on Velázquez's original. There appears to be significant under-painting in earth tones, orange, yellow-gold and white that have been incompletely covered over by the dominant gray, red and purple in the image. There are also traces of the slate blue and green tones that survive in *Pope I–III* the following year. The most important variations, however, are the artifice introduced to hang curtains in the background and foreground of the painting and the general abstraction of the figure of the pope. As said earlier, the background curtain is a crimson red folded with gray, which passes behind and through the seated figure. The foreground curtain rod compares with that of its companion piece, but it has a stronger echo, and there are more variations in the hues of the folds hung from it.

More dramatically, however, the papal skirts are replaced with what look like trousers, and the pope is made to cross his left leg over his right in a way that "simulates a photographic double exposure."[55] In addition, the pope appears without a cap. His head leans back, his eyes are squeezed shut and half of the frame of the pince-nez from Eisenstein's nurse clings like a monocle to the side of his nose. The animalization of the prelate's head and the tension of his balled, gripping fists succeed in undermining and violating the grandeur and stately presence of the pontiff, transforming the ideal of stability and absolutist power into a transient and contemporary image.[56] On this description by Sylvester, Bacon has remade Velázquez's *Portrait* into

a commentary on the papacy and even his own *papa*,[57] but we undertook this study of these paintings of popes to identify the problems Bacon found in painting, generally and the answers he found in painting so many popes not to diagnose the psychological motivation he may have had for painting them.

Bacon's Lost Popes

When Bacon started painting *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* in 1953, he believed that the studies from 1950 were destroyed. Working on a canvas with the dimensions (60 x 46 inches) of *Study I–VIII* painted the same year, Bacon found a way to incorporate elements from those first rendering of Velázquez's *Portrait*, to heighten the intensity of those elements and to respond to the challenge of remaking the appearance of Velázquez's painting as an appearance in the most irrational way. He began by pushing the central figure back and to the left of the canvas, an improvement already approximated in *Study II* of 1950, more in keeping with the Baroque creation of space along a diagonal deployed by Velázquez in his *Portrait*. Recovering the purple from the paintings in 1950 for the papal mantilla and cap, Bacon captured the warmth of the Velázquez by heightening the gold tones from the original and using them for the outline and ornamentation of the papal throne as well as for the rail or rod that serves as the structuring armature and support for the foreground curtain. Together with the folds of white fabric in the rochetta, this gold tone radiates a light under the pope's skirts that makes the central figure appear to be elevated (as in the photograph of Pius XII) above streams of light glowing through the shadows and folds in the lower curtain. Behind a twisted pincenez borrowed from Eisenstein's nurse are the ghost-dark eyes of *Head VI*. The mouth is open as in a gasp or scream.

The shuttering effect, here, thoroughly saturates the image. It is no longer a flat curtain that ambiguously hangs before or behind its subject but a thick and vibrating depth of sensation passing through its pope. Borrowing the suggestion of a corner from out of which Velázquez has his Innocent X emerge, Bacon paints a shadow into the background curtain to frame a room for his pope and to generate a volume of shuttering strips in which the pontiff finds himself trapped. His expression, thus, bears the look not of physical or psychological torment but of someone penetrated thoroughly and emphatically by this forceful structuring device. The pope is taken out of his element, detached from his ground in the painting, suspended in a shuttering beam of sensation. He does not cross over into the world on our side of the picture, as in the Velázquez, but hangs precipitously in a virtual world waiting to connect, like a motion picture still, to an anchor outside the painting's frame.

After his *Study* in 1953, Bacon never painted another series of popes, as if he had begun to solve the problem of rendering a series of images in

one frame, of folding images onto and over one another functionally if not endlessly. In this way, in the Des Moines Pope, Bacon achieves a Baroque affect. He remakes the areas of intense feeling the Velázquez awakens in him and makes it available for our appreciation. He leads us to walk along the edge of the precipice separating and linking illustration and the expression of the greatest and deepest things that any woman or man can feel. Of course, Bacon would go on to paint a number of portraits and studies of the human body in triptychs drawing on Muybridge as an inspiration, but in his attempts to image popes, Bacon seems to have captured in his *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* the kind of movement in an image that is normally found in film and a connectedness of the image to content beyond its frame that is not ordinarily found in painting. After the introduction of photography and film, Bacon found a way to make painting relevant by making it Baroque, by making it fold in, on and over itself to unlock feelings we might not otherwise know and, not knowing them, not know ourselves.

Before the Velázquez, the painting in Rome, which I have seen many times, and not the reproductions Bacon worked from, I am drawn into the subject of the painting, Pope Innocent X. I would even go so far as to invoke Michael Fried's concept of absorption.[58] I am absorbed by the subject Velázquez has rendered as a portrait of the pope. Before the Bacon, which I have visited once, in Iowa, I have a very different sense. I am not absorbed by the subject of Bacon's *Study*, which is, as I've said, a folding of subject matter from the Velázquez, from Eisenstein, from illustrations of diseases of the mouth and from a news photo of Pope Pius XII. I am not exactly repelled by the subject either, though the figure rendered by Bacon is daunting. I sense rather that I am confronting the artist himself in this painting, confronting the feelings Bacon says he has before reproductions of the Velázquez pope. This is not simply Fried's opposite, theatricality, but, perhaps, what Fried was attempting to capture but missed, namely, that in modern art, we are faced with the artist more than his subject, that, after photography, beginning with Manet, painting was left to show us what a painter can do with her or his medium apart from rendering representations of people and things in the world. In this regard, Bacon's paintings are quite instructive. Bacon uses figures in his works, figures of popes in our case, to show what paint can do, and his gesture is Baroque in its expressive qualities, in the way his paintings bring a figure into our world that is virtually, if not actually, present in it, the artist himself.

Notes

1 The record would not stand long. Less than one year later *Triptych* (1976) sold for $86 million, also at Sotheby's. In November 2013, the triptych *Three Studies of Lucien Freud* (1969) sold at Christie's for $142.4 million, the most expensive artwork sold at auction, until May 2015, when Pablo Picasso's *The Women of Algiers* (1955) sold for $179 million.

2 David Sylvester, *Francis Bacon: Interviewed by David Sylvester* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 71.
3 *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* is called the Des Moines Pope because, interestingly enough, it is a part of the collection at the Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa.
4 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 26.
5 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, trans. Kathrin Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966) and *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 6th ed., trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Henry Holt, 1960).
6 Vernon Hyde Minor, *Baroque and Rococo: Art & Culture* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1999), 28–29.
7 See Marshall Brown, "The Classical Is the Baroque," *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 2 (December 1982), 379–404 and Udo Kultermann, *The History of Art History* (New York: Abaris Books, 1993), 98–99, who suggest that Jakob Burkhardt, who was to become Wölfflin's colleague at Basel, anticipated Nietzsche's ideas. The revised German edition of Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was published in 1886, two years before the publication in Germany of Wölfflin's *Renaissance und Barock*.
8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy or: Hellenism and Pessimism*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966).
9 Nietzsche, section 1.
10 Ibid.
11 Nietzsche, section 4.
12 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 16–17.
13 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1993), 3.
14 Ibid.
15 The principle of sufficient reason will figure in this account as well since Nietzsche has described the Dionysian as the "*terror* that seizes a man when . . . the principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception" (*Birth of Tragedy*, section 1), and Wölfflin has apparently seized on Nietzsche's characterization of Dionysus for his characterization of the Baroque. It is precisely by virtue of the principle of sufficient reason that the infinite universe is said to be folded into every finite monad. And, when it suffers an exception, because it is expected, the *terror* is more acutely felt, as it is commonly in Bacon's paintings.
16 Jonathan Brown, *Velázquez: Painter and Courtier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 195.
17 *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*. New Advent. www.newadvent.org/cathen/ (12 March 2018).
18 See Deleuze, *The Fold*, 39. "The Baroque Leibniz does not believe in the void. For him it always seems to be filled with folded matter, because binary arithmetic superimposes folds that both the decimal system—and Nature itself—conceal in apparent voids. For Leibniz, and the Baroque, folds are always full."
19 Deleuze, *The Fold*, 36.
20 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 24.
21 Unlike Bacon, I visit the 114 x 119-inch painting in the small room set off from the collection housed in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj as often as I am in Rome, which is never often enough.
22 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 38.
23 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 27–28.
24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.
26 Besides the painting that now hangs in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj, several copies were also painted, including replicas Velazquez made for Philip.
27 Ibid.
28 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 29.
29 Brown, *Velázquez*, 199. The actual text, using abbreviations, is written "Alla Sant^{ta} di Nro. Sig^{re} Innocencio X^{0} per Diego de Silva Velázquez de la Camera de S. M^{ta} Catt.^{co}." For the scribal abbreviations in Renaissance Italian texts see Marc H. Smith, "Conseils pour l'édition des documents en langue italienne (XIVe-XVIIe siècle)," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* tome 159, livraison 2 (2001): 541–578. Velázquez hoped while in Rome to secure knighthood into one of Spain's prestigious military orders as a sign of social acceptance ordinarily denied painters in his day. In January 1650, he became a member of the Academy of St. Luke, in Rome, a society dedicated to elevating the status of artists above that of craftsmen. See Brown, 195 *ff*.
30 Brown, *Velázquez*, 200.
31 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 141.
32 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 118.
33 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 147–48. In his book on Bacon, Deleuze calls this the "diagram," borrowing a term from Charles Sanders Peirce. See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 81–90.
34 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 48–50.
35 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 72.
36 Other have not demurred on this point. See, for example, Wieland Schmied, *Francis Bacon: Commitment and Conflict* (New York: Prestel, 1996), 25–26.
37 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 35.
38 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 34.
39 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 49–50.
40 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 59–60.
41 Pius XII served from 1939–1958 and was an especially influential pontiff. He was one of only two popes to assert papal infallibility, and he used this authority to assert the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. His leadership of the Church through World War II, especially in relation to the Holocaust, is subject to controversy.
42 See Rosalind Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), 87–118.
43 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 26.
44 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections of Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
45 And so it is by Colette Crossman in texts prepared for the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden exhibition of works by Bacon from October 1989 to January 1990.
46 Sylvester, *Francis Bacon*, 30.
47 Schmied, *Francis Bacon*, 22.
48 Schmied, *Francis Bacon*, 23.
49 David Sylvester, "The Supreme Pontiff," in *Francis Bacon: Important Paintings from the Estate and the John Deakin Photographs with Essays by David Sylvester, Sam Hunter and Michael Peppiat* (New York: Tony Shafrazi Gallery, 1998), 26.
50 Martin Harrison, *In Camera: Francis Bacon: Photography, Film and the Practice of Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 102–103. See also Schmied, *Francis Bacon*, 18.

51 Sylvester, "The Supreme Pontiff," 26.
52 Ibid.
53 Ronald Alley, *Francis Bacon: Catalogue raisonné*, introduction by John Rothenstein (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), cited by Sylvester, "The Supreme Pontiff," 26. In June 2016, The Estate of Francis Bacon published the definitive *Francis Bacon: Catlogue Raisonné*, ed. Martin Harrison, five volumes.
54 Sylvester speculates ("The Supreme Pontiff") that Bacon delivered the two completed works to an artists' supplier to have new canvases put on the stretchers without giving specific instructions about what to do with the already painted canvases. Carefully rolled and stored, the paintings remained out of circulation for 47 years.
55 Sylvester, "The Supreme Pontiff," 31.
56 Sylvester, "The Supreme Pontiff," 30.
57 Ibid.
58 Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

3 Chance Meeting with Duane Michals[1]

From November 2014 to February 2015, the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, presented *Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane* Michals, a "definitive retrospective" of six decades of work by the "groundbreaking photographer." It was the largest-ever presentation of Michals's art and the first major museum exhibition of Michals's work in North America since 1998.[2] Michals has a connection with Pittsburgh and a special relationship with the Carnegie Museum, which has the largest single collection of his works. Born in nearby McKeesport, the artist made the Steel City the subject of several photographs, and published the collection of photographic works, *The House I Once Called Home*, to "reopen all [the] shuttered windows and unlock all [the] boarded doors" of his childhood home.[3] Michals won a drawing contest when he was 14 years old that awarded him the chance to take art classes at what was then the Carnegie Institute. After completing a degree at the University of Denver and serving in the Army, Michals enrolled at the Parsons School of Design but did not complete his studies there. He discovered a facility for photography only while on vacation in the Soviet Union in 1958. The photos taken there were exhibited in his first show in New York in 1963. He showed at the same Underground Gallery in 1968, but the show was largely ignored. Garry Winogrand and Joel Meierowitz walked out, Winogrand asserting, "This isn't photography."[4]

When Michals started showing his work, there were two established traditions in the medium: art photography and social documentary. Art photography was shown in galleries. Social documentary was published in magazines. Since he had no formal training in the medium, Michals had allegiances to neither tradition. Michals developed his craft, in part, doing commercial work. Early on this included photography for *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Mademoiselle* as well as the cover art for the 1983 album *Synchronicity* by The Police, but well after he was an established artist he continued to do commercial work, including a cover for *Life* magazine (March 1992) and the Gap ad campaign "Individuals of Style" (1993). In the beginning commercial photography was his main source of income, but Michals says, "I will always do commercial work, because I don't want my

Figure 3.1 Duane Michals. American, b. 1932. *Things Are Queer* (detail), 1973. Nine gelatin silver prints H: 4 7/8 in. x W: 6 7/8 in. (12.38 x 17.46 cm). Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Director's Discretionary Fund, 80.47.A-.I. © Carnegie Museum of Art

private work to have the responsibility of supporting me. I want to be free of that."[5] With this freedom, Michals created the related series of photographs he called sequences and the practice of writing on his photographs to complicate what we see with what we do not see. "I believe in the invisible," Michals declares, "I don't believe in the visible."[6] "The most important things are invisible," he says.[7] "To photograph reality is to photograph nothing."[8]

I want to explore the ways Michals makes the invisible visible is his photographs. We will consider his portraits, his sequences and his practice of writing on photographs to complicate the relations between word and image as in *A Failed Attempt to Photograph Reality* (1976), which consists of handwriting applied to the gelatin silver paper ordinarily used to print a photograph. Where we expect to find an image, we find words, instead, presented as an image—the image of a profound thought and feeling.

A FAILED ATTEMPT
TO PHOTOGRAPH REALITY

How foolish of me to believe that it would
be that easy. I had confused the appearances

of trees and automobiles and people with reality
itself and believed that [sic] a photograph
of these appearances to be a photograph of it.
It is a melancholy truth that I will
never be able to photograph it
and can only fail.
I am a reflection photographing
other reflections within a reflection.
To photograph reality is to photograph
NOTHING.

Following the example of his idol, René Magritte, we will see Michals use words as images to imagine or invent a truth rather than reveal one. We will have more to say about this practice, about the visible and the invisible and about the thinking Duane Michals does with images. In the image *I Think about Thinking* (2000), Michals shoots himself in oblique profile, turning away from the viewer to look at a book of pages blank but for the one Michals appears to be reading. Printed there, in uppercase letters, one word on a line, is the motto "I THINK ABOUT THINKING" and beneath it, on a single line, "Duane Michals." Again, we will have more to say about images such as this. What truth does Michals imagine here? To whom is it addressed? Where do the skills of Michals the photographer and the viewer of his photographs meet? What are the affordances shared by artist and audience in this image? Michals says, repeatedly, an artist is either defined by the medium or redefines that medium. Michals redefined the medium by engaging what the environment afforded him with skills that enacted a change in the way we make, see and conceive photographs, in our times. Before we get to that point, however, let's say something about photography in general, today, and about our experience of Michals's photography in particular.

Photography

From the time cell or "smart" phones were valued as much or more for their picture taking than for their call making, photographs have become positively egregious. There has been a surplus of photographic images for a long time, of course. When Eastman Kodak put a Brownie in the hands of just about everyone in the early days of the 20th century, its aim was to sell its rolled film.[9] Well before the mid-century introduction of the single-lens reflex camera, shoe box collections of the best and worst amateur snapshots filled up at the same time as a burgeoning demand for photography built up in the commercial enterprises of journalism and advertising. In comparison, art photography was, even by mid-century, a rarified business. Whether it was part of an effort to put the brakes on runaway modernity[10] or, as André Bazin put it, an attempt to save the subject of the photograph from a second

death[11] or just a highly successful marketing campaign, there was a certain fascination with these captured images. However trivial, the products of this industry were treasured, valued and collected in albums, slide carousels and random storage boxes. In part, the current craze is just an extension of this initial impulse.

Now, however, the speed with which these images are shared, facilitated by social media platforms, has spawned a new virus. Photographs were once valued for their use. They reminded us of a time or place. They saved a loved one, in a likeness captured when they were full of life, from their eventual mortal demise. They shared what we have seen with others who could not be there when we were. Photographs still have their utility, but more often than not photographs have been reduced to their value in exchange. Exchange value is an abstraction. It guarantees that one thing can be replaced by another, and that nothing will be valued for what it is but only for the exchanges it facilitates. Labor power, for example, is abstracted when one worker can be replaced by another worker because there is nothing special about the work being done. In this economy, surplus value is produced by reducing the costs of labor power to its minimum and by speeding up production. Photographs, today, cost next to nothing to make and surplus value attaches to them from the speed of the exchanges they enable. This is all made possible by digitizing the medium to match the digital basis of the social media platforms where these images are exchanged. Michals has produced his entire oeuvre on film, Kodak's black-and-white Tri-X film to be precise, mostly in available light.

The image most widely exchanged, today, in a digital format is the "selfie." These images are, as everyone knows, taken to document the photographer's presence at this site, in the company of this person or to capture just how the photographer happens to appear at this moment. Posted on Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat, texted and sexted, these images fuel an exchange of comments and "likes" that return to the "self" from the tens, hundreds or thousands of those who have found the images on the handheld screens of their own smartphones. With the innovation that allows the photographer to see themselves in the "selfie" she is about to take, there is an intensification of the narcissism in this economy. Applications that cause these images to self-destruct in a set time confirm the exclusive value in exchange for such images. Perhaps, echoing Winogrand, this is also not photography but something else altogether. It is important, here, because Michals is often the subject of his own photographs. He is never, though, trying to document some reality but always creating a fiction that discloses an unexpected truth.

In *Self Portrait as Someone Else* (1973),[12] for example, a diptych, we see two figures connected by a single-lens reflex camera attached to a tripod. In the first image, Michals appears on the left behind the camera taking the photo of a younger man seated before him, to our right, in a wicker chair. In the second image, the positions are reversed, the men have exchanged

jackets and the tripod is adjusted to the height of the younger man. As in all of Michals's images, the handwritten title is part of the work. Because that title announces the work as a self-portrait as someone else, the first image shows the artist putatively making an image of another as himself while the second image supports that supposition by showing the artist as the subject of an image made by that other. These relations, however, take place in the image bearing the title *Self Portrait as Someone Else*. In what sense is this diptych, and the scene of photography, ambiguity and magic represented in it, a self-portrait of Michals as someone else? We will find this quality in Michals's work, generally. By photographic means, Michals introduces thought into his art. He is always, everywhere, thinking with images.

The other point to clear up before we begin is our experience of Michals's art. My chance meeting with Duane Michals came while doing research on Michel Foucault. That led me to an essay found in a book of photographs published by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. The photographs were a selection of Michals's work from 1958 to 1982. We will discuss this work next. It immediately fascinated me, and right away I set about acquiring more books of his photographs. He has published nearly 25 of them. Some are very short. *Homage to Cavafy* (1978), for example, consists of 11 photographs accompanying ten poems by Constantine Cavafy. By contrast, the Carnegie Museum retrospective was vast, nearly 200 images and over 6 decades of work, mounted across several galleries. Michals has said he prefers seeing his work in books.

> I love books. I'm not interested in the perfect print. Exhibits are nice, but you leave the picture in the rooms when you leave. But if you have a book, you get to take it home, you get to feast on it.[13]

He has also said he wants his pictures to whisper. "Whereas a lot of photographs shout to get attention. Now there are big eight, seven-foot photographs—that's shouting. A little print you have to come up to—'Say what? Tell me?' It's a whole different experience."[14] This is the experience of seeing the images in the Carnegie retrospective. Some of Michals's images are quite small. You have to get close to see them, as Michals comments, to hear what they have to say. So, while there's still a fetish that values seeing the "real thing," the original, in the case of photography we have to remind ourselves that every photographic image is a print, a copy of a copy. There may be a first print but no original (unless that would be the negative) in the sense we have from painting. The books offer a resource for appreciating Michals's art that we can "feast on," where we can take the time to listen to their story, to peel back what there is to see to find what we cannot see, to think because we are not sure what to think. In this chapter, we will sample from the many books where Michals's works have been published with attention to differences in the way they are reproduced.

Portraits

It is customary to begin a discussion of Michals's portraits with a reference to the earliest photographs taken in the Soviet Union. These images were exhibited in Michals's first gallery show in 1963, in his first solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970 and included in several books, including *Album: The Portraits of Duane Michals, 1958–1988*.[15] It is not just their history, however, that recommends them to our attention. Already in these first images by a young, unschooled photographer, using a borrowed Argus C3 camera, we see a quality that will distinguish Michals's art throughout his career. In *Children in Leningrad* (1958), we find the photographer sharing a space with his subjects: two girls and a boy, the smallest girl (also distinguished by her round framed glasses) is in the center flanked to our right by the tallest child, a girl and to our left by the boy. The small girl smiles slightly, the tall girl stares straight ahead, making a contrast for the curiosity Michals captures in the eyes of the boy looking over the shoulder of the small girl in front of him. The photograph is shot from the vantage point of the children themselves "so that viewers are looking directly at them rather than down on them from a more typical adult point of view."[16] In this image, Michals enters the world of his subjects, brings us into their world and makes that world visible rather than imposing his world on them.

This practice, arrived at by an intuitive adjustment of his body to the materiality of the instrument and the bodies of his subjects, became a steady guide to portraits Michals made in the decades to come. That practice comes to be realized, for Michals, in the concept of the "prose portrait."

> A prose portrait doesn't necessarily show you what someone looks like; it's not a line-for-line reproduction of a face. A prose portrait tells you what the nature of the person is about. When I photographed Magritte, the portrait was made in the nature of Magritte. When I photographed Warhol, the portrait was in the character, the mystery—if there is one—of Warhol. You can't capture someone, per se. How could you? The subject probably doesn't even know who he (or she) is. So, for me, a prose portrait is about a person, rather than of a person.[17]

Those portraits of the children in Leningrad, of the young woman in *Moscow* (1958), of the sailor in *Minsk* (1958) were the first prose portraits. By entering the world of his subject, and inviting us into that world with his photographs, Michals tells us something about the nature of the people he captures on film. These images do not capture the essence of their subjects, who these people are *per se*. They tell us something about these people given to the photographer because, in taking their picture, he comes to share something with them.

And so it is in the photographic record of Michals's first meeting with Magritte in 1965.[18] "Duane Michals," Foucault tells us, "met Magritte and loved him."[19] Michals himself says of that first visit,

> I know there are some few people in our lives who are great givers, not just mentors in the usual sense. They open our lives, give without taking and free us in the process. They do this unbeknownst. They do it by the example of their lives and the power of their art. The power and integrity of Magritte's vision brought me there to thank him.[20]

There are 27 portraits of Magritte, images of the painter of pipes most from the shoulders to the top of his ubiquitous black bollard. The portraits most obviously "in the nature of Magritte" are those in which the French artist appears juxtaposed with one of his paintings or in double or triple exposure—in mid-range and in close-up, facing toward and away from us, forward and as if walking to our left—as a ghost barely visible in a natural setting and with the specter of nature superimposed on his form. There is also a more general sense in which these portraits are "in the nature of Magritte." Writing about the exhibit at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Foucault observes,

> We discover he uses a number of Magritte techniques—that is, the complete opposite of Bacon's—which involve polishing, perfecting a form to its highest possible level of realization, then draining it of all reality, taking it out of its familiar field of visibility and changing its context.[21]

Included in that exhibit, pertinent to our immediate concerns, is the portrait *René Magritte Asleep* (1965) (Figure 3.2).

In *A Visit with Magritte*, the image appears bled to the edges across two pages without a title.[22] In the exhibition catalog for the Musée d'Art Moderne, the image appears centered on the white space of a single page with the title handwritten beneath it. On the website for Galleria Max Estrella, Madrid, courtesy of Pace/Macgill Gallery, New York, the handwritten title appears above the image and bears slight differences from the title for the image exhibited in Paris. These are different prints. As noted earlier, Michals is not concerned with the perfect print. He is more interested in the thought provoked by the image. The print in *A Visit with Magritte*, because it is shown without a border, draws us into the image. Reading left to right, we find Magritte's face, eyes shut, cupped by his right hand and framed by the light-colored pillow, and pass into the darkness of Magritte's black suit indistinguishable from the dark cushions of the couch. We plunge into Magritte's sleep and, in that sleep, the world of dreams. This dream world is, precisely, the world of Magritte's painting. Michals writes,

> What had so engaged me in Magritte's work was its ability to perplex. In his world, I could not be sure of anything. Giant roses filled entire

Figure 3.2 Duane Michals. American, b. 1932. *René Magritte Asleep*, 1965. Gelatin silver print with hand-applied text. H: 11 in. x W: 14 in. (27.90 x 35.60 cm). Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: The Henry L. Hillman Fund, 2009.31.12. © Carnegie Museum of Art

> rooms, the moon lit up a starry sky at midday and nightgowns could display real woman's breasts. In his paintings he presented such amusing but serious ideas. I was freed from just looking.[23]

Michals makes a portrait of Magritte asleep and dreaming without showing us *what* Magritte is dreaming (because we never really know just what we are dreaming or have dreamt). Again, Michals gives us the chance to think, forces us to think. What is Magritte dreaming? Why are we being shown this image of dreaming? How has Michals such intimate access to the great artist to photograph him sleeping? Has this all been staged? How can we know? Does it matter that we know? When we are freed from just looking, we are freed to think, really think, because we don't know what to think.[24]

We see the same polishing and perfecting of a form in Michals's portrait *Marcel Duchamp* (1964). Again, Michals is not revealing a hidden truth in this image. Rather, as in the portrait of children in Leningrad, he is entering the world of this enigmatic artist. In 1964, Duchamp had persuaded

the world that he had given up art for chess. Meanwhile, he was secretly at work on *Étants donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage . . .* or *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .* (1946–1966) (Figure 0.1) in an ordinary, downtown Manhattan office space. So Duchamp has a secret as he sits for this staged portrait, but that secret is not betrayed by Michals. Instead, Duchamp is fitted or married, if you will, to the work for which he is most well know at the time, *La mariée mis à nu par ces célibataires, même* or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–1923) (Figure 4.2). Starting with Duchamp, what we see in Michals's portrait is a figure behind a glass divided longitudinally and latitudinally by the framing pieces of a *port-fenetre*, what we call in English a French window. To see Duchamp, we must look through the window, as we are instructed, in viewing *The Bride Stripped Bare*, to look through the glass and not at the effects delayed in its surface.

In Michals's portrait, Duchamp is visible through the lower left quadrant formed in the image by the window's frame, in what on his *Large Glass* would be the bachelor's domain, the site of the malic molds whose sparked excitement at the bride's voluntary stripping ignites the love gasoline powering the bride's ceremonial defloration. The bride is not forcibly stripped. She exposes herself to arouse her bachelors' excitement and to hasten the loss of her virginity. What sense, though, does it make for a bride to have bachelors? She may hope the one man who will become her husband has been celibate, but she is not ordinarily betrothed to more than one *célibataire* at the same time. Is the work really about brides and bachelors after all? If the female nude is the work of art *par excellence* and the target audience for art is male, as it would have been at the turn of the 20th century, then perhaps the bride is art, and the bachelors are that audience exhibiting a less than detached appreciation of her art. The notes collected in *The Green Box* (1934) as a literary complement to the *Glass*, however, complicate such a metaphorical interpretation. Duchamp's intention was that the *Glass* "should embody the realization of a written text which has assisted the generation of plastic ideas, and which also carried layers of meaning beyond the scope of pictorial expression."[25] In other words, the *Box* was intended to free the viewer of the *Glass* from just looking.

In this portrait, Michals invites us to think about the enigma that is Duchamp's life and work. What we see is the image of a man seated on the other side of a French window (calling to mind Duchamp's *Fresh Widow* (1920)) partially obscured by reflections in the glass of buildings across the street from our sitter. Michals, thus, brings out in this photograph Duchamp's apparent withdrawal from the art world, the interpretive complexity of the *Large Glass*, the complicity of transparency and opacity the *Glass* shares with *Fresh Widow* as well as the injunction to do something more than just look at this work of visual art. Michals gives us a simulacrum of Duchamp, a ghost of the great artist floating on the glass, weightless as the buildings reflected with him are made to appear.

The portrait *Balthus and Setsuko* (2000) (Figure 3.3) presents a different order of enigma, another invitation to think. It is fortunate that this image was included in the Carnegie Museum retrospective, because while the museum owns a print, it does not make it available to the public on its website. It is available for sale at Fahey/Klein Gallery (Los Angeles) and Galleria Max Estrella (Madrid), but it is not included, so far as I know, in any of Michals's books (including the catalog for the Carnegie retrospective). I first saw it on the last page of a New York Times Magazine as part of a series titled "Lives." It was part of an entry by Michals, "Portraits of the Artists," where he posted pictures of "the most poetical of all 20th century artists" and a short story about how he came to photograph them.

> René Magritte, Giorgio de Chirico and Balthus—the most poetic of all 20th century artists—have long been the companions of my dreams. The mystery of the visual sleight of hand, the originality of their passion and the intimacy of their surprising games. . . . I wanted to thank them for all the ways they had moved me. But how? All I could think to do is what I do. And so I set out to take their pictures.[26]

Figure 3.3 Duane Michals. American, b. 1932. *Balthus and Setsuko*, 2000. Gelatin silver print. H: 11 in. x W: 13 7/8 in. (27.90 x 35.24 cm). Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: The Henry L. Hillman Fund, 2002.33.6. © Carnegie Museum of Art

Michals photographed Magritte and de Chirico early in his career, but Balthus took perseverance. "I tried for years to get an appointment to see him," Michals writes. "Finally, a few months ago, his wife agreed."

Born Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (the younger brother of philosopher Pierre Klossowski), the artist known for his suggestive paintings of adolescent girls was in the last year of his life when Michals finally met him. Michals says he was attracted to Balthus because his paintings were very theatrical: "They pretended to be real but they were not."[27] Balthus cultivated an air of mystery about his life, and Michals's portrait preserves that mystery. The old man, wrapped in a blanket, is seated on the left of the image in an upholstered chair. The curved back of the chair echoes the outline of Balthus's left arm, shoulder and head, which we see in profile. Setsuko Ideta, Balthus's wife of 33 years, is on the right dressed in a Japanese kimono. Setsuko gazes at Balthus. Balthus gazes at a hand mirror Setsuko holds in front of him. The image in the mirror gazes at us. With this staged photograph, Michals makes visible in the mirror what would otherwise be invisible, the Balthus profile turns away from us. An enigma, however, remains.

Balthus's portrait is only completed in a mirror image of it. That mirror, held by Setsuko in traditional Japanese dress, connects Balthus's elite Western lineage to Setsuko and the East. That image, by virtue of the special property of mirrors that causes them to present what is on the left as if it were right (and vice versa), gives us Balthus's left profile as if it were the right. We, then, seem to see two right profiles with the left as right appearing to the right of the one genuinely right. The three visage, Balthus's right profile in foreground, the mirror reflection of Balthus's left profile as right in the middle and Setsuko turned three-quarter toward us in the background, occupy three planes in the image. In all of this, what captures our attention is the luminously polished and perfected profile in the mirror, the one looking out at us, the shimmering simulacrum (double, phantasm, spirit) of the artist known for polishing and perfecting sexual and surreal images of girls. The left profile is made visible only in a detached reflection of it as a right profile thus preserving the mystery Balthus so dearly cultivated. Michals's portrait makes the invisible visible only to plunge it into invisibility. "The most important things are invisible," Michals says.

Sequences

As accomplished as Michals's portrait are, the silence of them frustrated Michals. They told him nothing about the person except what they looked like.

> The things I was interested in were things like "Are they liberals?", or "Are they good in bed?" or "Is she a bitch?" I wanted to show all the things people actually are beyond what they appear to be. I began to reinvent photography to suit my own needs.[28]

One way he reinvented photography, or as he also says redefined the medium, early in his career, were the sequences: a series of related images that tell a story. Now, a lot of art can be said to tell a story. Audiences, generally, prefer art that tells a story or that they can appreciate or explain by telling a story. The story or narrative gives, at least, a general idea of what the work of art means to the artist and for the audience. Art tends to degrees of abstraction. The stories it tells, while distinctive, are not singular in the sense that they concern this specific individual or situation. The capacity to generalize of the stories it tells is the source, in part, of art's power. At the same time, precisely because the stories it tells concern human kind in general and circumstances that are transferable across space and time, the ideas conveyed in these stories tend to degrees of complexity. Narratives can be used by artists and audiences to make something complex appear clear.

The stories Michals tells do not generalize in the typical way. They do not concern some universal insight that, having come to him, he wants to share with others. They do not emerge for him from a scene he comes upon, an invisibility present in what is visible to anyone. The sequences stage a thought in images. Thought is the invisible made visible in staged photographic images of a scene that might unfold before us, or not. John Szarkowski puts it this way:

> Michals has adapted the photostory form to the function of recording original fables which touch on his intuitions concerning affairs of the spirit. The action is wholly and frankly stage-managed, which simplifies the matter of achieving both narrative clarity and visual interest. Surprisingly, we accept these tableaux as being in some sense real. . . . They show us the visible symbols of an invisible reality.[29]

Michals uses images to convey an idea that has occurred precisely to him. These are his intuitions. In 1969 he writes,

> My photographs . . . are based on very specific ideas and feelings and are premeditated illustrations of these feelings. They are based on past remembrances and new intuitive awarenesses. There are no accidents. They are the drama of the interior world, which may ultimately be more real than the exterior world. I illustrate myself.[30]

The personal valence of these thoughts shows up in the early sequence, *Chance Meeting* (1970).

The image consists of six photographs. In the first five, we see two men, one walking toward us, one walking away on a narrow sidewalk just raised above the pavement of a back alley. There is just enough room on that sidewalk for the two men to pass. Both men are dressed in white shirts with black overcoats, trousers and shoes. They are middle-aged. The one

walking toward us wears glasses and a mustache. In the second photograph, he appears to be looking at the man walking away from us. In the third, as his path meets the other man, he turns to look at him. In the fourth frame, he looks over his shoulder at the other man, and in the fifth, he turns to look back at him. Finally, in the sixth image, we see the man walking away from us stop and turn to look back at the man who had just crossed his path. Each image is shot from the same location. Formally, the lines formed by the brick wall on the left of the image give an exaggerated depth to the images. They make the alley a tunnel. The scene of two well-dressed, ostensibly attractive men, chancing to meet on a spare walkway in a narrow alley, cautiously attentive to one another, leads us to thoughts of gay cruising.[31] What we think regarding this sequence of images will be different if we are gay, straight, men or women, young or of a certain age. What Michals makes visible in this sequence are his thoughts, feelings, remembrances and intuitions about cruising, inviting viewers to think and feel with him.

In *Things Are Queer* (1973) (see Figure 3.1), Michals tells a different kind of story that is not obviously gay in the same way. The first and last of the nine images in this sequence are ostensibly the same. We return, in principle, to the same scene, but with a difference. What, at first, looked like an ordinary bathroom is now seen to be the site of vortex drawing us into the world of images, narrative, fables and *trompe l'oeil*. The second image gives the impression that the first scene has been invaded by a giant leg belonging to what proves to be, in the third image, a regularly sized man standing in what is shown as a miniaturized bathroom set on display behind a glass that reflects the bathroom scene but also shows objects (a barrel, a skyline) on the other side of it. In the fourth image, the image of what we have taken to be a regularly sized man in a miniature bathroom is shown to be an illustration for a story about a giant, a boy, a king, his daughter and three chests filled with gold.[32] So he is a giant, after all, yet we are cheated of the complete text of this abridged story by a thumb holding the book where this illustrated story is printed and blocking a portion of the image visible in the preceding scene. In the fifth image, the thumb, shifted lower on the same page, is given to a man (judging from the size of the digit) holding the book in front of him. In the sixth image, what appears to be the same man, holding that same book in front of him, is seen at a short distance, in an arched passageway that appears too dark for reading. This man appears in the next image as the subject of a photograph framed and hanging on a blank wall, a wall shown in the eighth image abutting a large porcelain basin that proves to be, in the ninth and last image, the sink in the bathroom where we began.

If we begin our viewing of this sequence with the second image, the scene unfolds quite seamlessly. The presence of a seemingly large leg in a bathroom is situated by the images that follow as part of an illustration for a book read by a man in the picture blocked from our view in that first image by the

leg. The placement of the last image first, however, displaces this narrative. How do a man's calf and foot come to occupy the scene of an otherwise ordinary bathroom? If we conceive of this sequence cinematically, seeing the first image as an establishing shot and the second as the close-up of a detail in that first shot, the sequence can, then, unfold to reveal the place of that detail in the establishing shot. A close-up, however, ordinarily shows us something that injects tension into the original shot by making visible what has not yet been seen that precipitates an action or discloses a secret. Nothing of the sort happens here, because this sort of thing, the incongruity of things, happens all the time, because "things are queer." Jonathan Weinberg argues that things are not shown to be secretly gay in this series, though its landscape of bathroom, dark corridor and voyeurism have vague sexual connotations.[33] The series, rather, shows, in a way no one of the images in it can on its own, that the world is queer, strange, in large part, because it is known only through representations (of it) that are fragmentary. What is queer, he concludes, is the certainty by which we label things as normal or abnormal, decent and obscene, gay and straight.[34] Michals's photographic series makes this sensibility visible, where it would otherwise pass by unnoticed, by staging a sequence that connects thoughts formed by each of these images on a line that crosses the series of expectations that emerge from viewing the first scene, leading us, in the final scene, to question our natural attitude toward the world.

Alice's Mirror (1974) follows a similar plan. The title apparently refers to Lewis Carroll and the heroine of Carroll's most famous stories. Michals has cited Carroll along with William Blake and Walt Whitman as among his literary heroes.[35] Carroll, of course, told stories of queer things that happen to a little girl in wonderland and beyond the looking glass. He also made a hobby of photographing little girls.[36] What Foucault, though, sees in *Alice's Mirror* is not Carroll's Alice but, again, Magritte.

> The armchair threatened by a pair of glasses as tall as the ceiling as though by some enormous crab reminds one of Magritte's comb and soap pushing a mirrored wardrobe to the back of the room in which is reflected the absent sky.[37]

This sequence of seven photographs, Foucault says, unfolds to show, as if it were still necessary, that nothing has been isolated from reality. The series unfolds to show where the first menacing scene came from.

> The armchair and the disproportionate spectacles were merely an image in a small circular mirror, itself reflected in another rectangular mirror, all of which is ultimately revealed to be in a third mirror held in someone's hand. The hand is clenched, which breaks the final mirror, destroying both the reflection and the reflection of the reflection, scattering around it fragments of vacant glass.[38]

We return, again, to the beginning, to the same, but this time with a difference. Here we return to the start by ourselves. We return from the scattered fragments of vacant glass to the image of what had been reflected in that glass. We want to recover that image, but it will not appear the same to us again.

Somehow it retains its strangeness; isolated, out of context, the scene of an armchair menaced by a pair of glasses remains surreal. Now, however, we know the destiny of this odd coincidence. It is to be represented in a reflection, itself reflected, reflected again and arbitrarily destroyed. It is this destruction, invisible in the primal scene, that we now see when we return to it. We see, in fact, that this is not just the fate of that armchair and those spectacles. It is the fate of all things to be wasted in the representations we make of them. Does this mean Michals brings us closer and closer in this sequence of images to what the first image means? Or has Michals, as Foucault suggests, out of a practiced clumsiness or powerlessness, allowed the meaning and the things they mean to escape? The series evades the event it should have recorded, Foucault says, and the effect felt on viewing the series is a kind of incongruity. It is what Foucault calls a surplus of sensations and emotions, a thought-emotion (an idea that moves the soul and spreads spontaneously from one soul to another). The sense of this sequence, on this description, is "simulacral" not because it replaces the real with its reflection or substitutes copies for the real, which multiply and become more fragile as they multiply. The attraction of the images to one another in this sequence established by the successive mirror reflections of its subject draws out and reveals the ceaseless interactions of time and experience in the event. It intensifies the real, making what is ordinarily invisible in it—its unstable and evanescent existence—a visible part of it.

Michals used photographic sequences to tell stories (*When Gertrude Met* Alice (1992)) and to show what is more evidently invisible in the visible world, namely: affect (*I Remember the Argument* (1970)), concepts (*The Human* Condition (1969), *The Moments Before the Tragedy* (1969), *Burlesque* (1979)), death (*Death Comes to the Old Woman* (1968), *The Spirit Leaves the Body* (1968)), dreams (*The Young Girl's Dream* (1969), *What Funny Things Billy Dreams* (1989)), fantasy (*Margaret Finds a* Box (1971)), fear (*The Woman Is Frightened by a Door* (1966), *The Bogeyman* (1973)), myth (*The Fallen Angel* (1968), *Paradise Regained* (1968), *The Old Man Kills the Minotaur* (1876)), perversion (*The Flashlight* (1976)), transmigration of the soul (*A Man Going to Heaven* (1967), *Grandpa Goes to Heaven* (1989)), and virtual reality (*The Mirror* (1972)). *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1982) poignantly uses visible nudity to disclose the virtual, invisible shame of the son and love of the father. In the first two of the five images in this sequence, the son is shown naked. In the third, the father begins undressing and in the fourth and fifth the son dons those clothes leaving the father naked in the final frame.

What is distinctive about this sequence in the catalog representation of it is that, like the representation of the sequence *Grandpa Goes to Heaven* in

the same catalog, it makes the third image in the sequence fill the page. In *Sequences* (1970), *Duane Michals: Photographies de 1958 à 1982* (1982) and *The Essential Duane Michals* (1997), all the images in a sequence are reproduced the same size. In *Sequences* and *Duane Michals*, the images are reproduced on a single page. For *The Essential Duane Michals*, the images are reproduced in groups of two or three, sometimes horizontally (reading left to right), sometimes vertically (reading top to bottom). In *Storyteller*, the catalog for the Carnegie retrospective, the images in a sequence are sometimes reproduced on their own separate page (*Death Comes to the Old Lady*). Sometimes the first image, with the title, is given its own page and the other images are grouped together on a second page that follows it (*The Young Girl's Dream*, *The Spirit Leaves the Body*, *Margaret Finds a Box*). Then, there are those where the final image is reproduced on a full page.

In *A Man Going to Heaven*, the first four images are presented vertically on one page (without a title), and how we read them (top to bottom, bottom to top) is only resolved on the next page where we see the figure from the first images dissolve in light at the top of the stairs. In *Paradise Regained*, the first two images, with the title at the top, are presented vertically and fill one page, the next three images are given vertically on the next page, and the final image is given its own page. Here an interesting rhythm is created by the three smaller images following the two larger ones and resolving in the largest of them all. We find a similar rhythm in *The Return of the Prodigal* Son and *Grandpa Goes to Heaven*, where the third of five images in the sequence is given its own full page as if it were the climax of the rising and falling tensions established by the images that precede and succeed it. In *The Fallen Angel*, a sequence of eight images, each image is given its own page except the fourth, where the woman appears to invite the angel to take her body, and which expands to almost two full pages. It is the largest single image in the entire catalog.

I worry that this curating of the image sequences, reversing Foucault's description of them, records the event that the sequences should have evaded. This worry is especially piqued in the *Storyteller* reproduction of *The Bogeyman* (1973), which appears to add an image to the sequence. In *The Essential Duane Michals*, only six images of this sequence are presented vertically in groups of three equally sized images on two pages. In *Storyteller*, the first two images are given their own page, and the next four are arranged vertically in groups of two on the next two pages. All of these images are, again, the same size but larger than the images in *The Essential Duane Michals*. These are followed by a seventh image, which fills approximately two-thirds of the next two pages, bled to the edges of the right page with a broad border of white space on the left. This image shows the little girl, asleep and threatened by the figure come alive in what *The Essential Duane Michals* presents as the last image in the sequence, apparently laughing as she is swept up in the arms of this threatening figure.

Darling as this image is, it seems to change the valence of the sequence. In this last image, we no longer have a bogeyman. Instead, we have someone (Michals himself?) whose embrace the little girl seems to enjoy. This seventh

image was included in a signed and dated print of *The Bogeyman* offered for sale by Christie's in March 2008. There, on a mat of unspecified dimensions, the seven images from *Storyteller*, all 3 ¾ x 5-inch gelatin silver prints, are arranged vertically along the right margin with a 7 x 10-inch duplicate of the sixth image placed in the lower left of that mat. Complicating matters further, for the Carnegie exhibit, the seven images produced in the catalog, all the same size and individually framed, were hung in a horizontal line at eye level for a child on a wall-sized reproduction of the second image in the series.[39] In that image, the girl looks up from her book inquisitively at the hat and coat on the rack beside her. It is not clear whether *The Essential Duane Michals* erred by omitting the seventh image. What seems clearer is that, in the variety of ways this sequence is reproduced, Michals's work continues successfully to evade the event.[40] This sequence is an example of Michals's powerlessness—he cannot help himself—and playfulness. The sixth image emphasizes trepidation. The second image shows us the curiosity that can bring an inanimate object to life. The seventh image reveals the staging of the sequence: there is no bogeyman, there is nothing to fear, it is all a game created to entertain a little girl. By staging the truth, Michals's works evade the event they might have recorded.[41]

Words and Images

It is common for photographs to be accompanied by words. Ordinarily, these words function as a caption. They identify or explain, in case there is any doubt, what the photographic image shows. They anchor the image with language. Because photographs captured how someone or something appeared at a particular time and in a particular place that will never be the same again—time passes, things change, appearances are fleeting—they need a context or validation to be meaningful. Mid-century semiology taught us to regard the photographic image as denotations in need of a connotation to make sense. This is the case with *A Letter From My Father* (1975) (Figure 3.4) in which we see a younger man to the right of the image, in profile, looking left in the foreground, an older man facing forward and looking at the younger man in the middle-ground and a woman to the far right, behind the back of the younger man, sharing that middle-ground. The woman is distinguished by the shape of her mouth, the collar of her blouse and the coif of her hair. The ages of the men are distinguished by the wrinkled brow and receding hairline of the one who looks older and the hair-style of the one who looks younger. The photograph was taken in 1960; we'll get to that detail in a moment. In 1975, Michals added the following text.

A Letter From My Father

> As long as I can remember, my father always said that one day he would write me a very special letter. But he never told me what the letter might be about. I used to try to guess what intimacy the two of us would at last share,

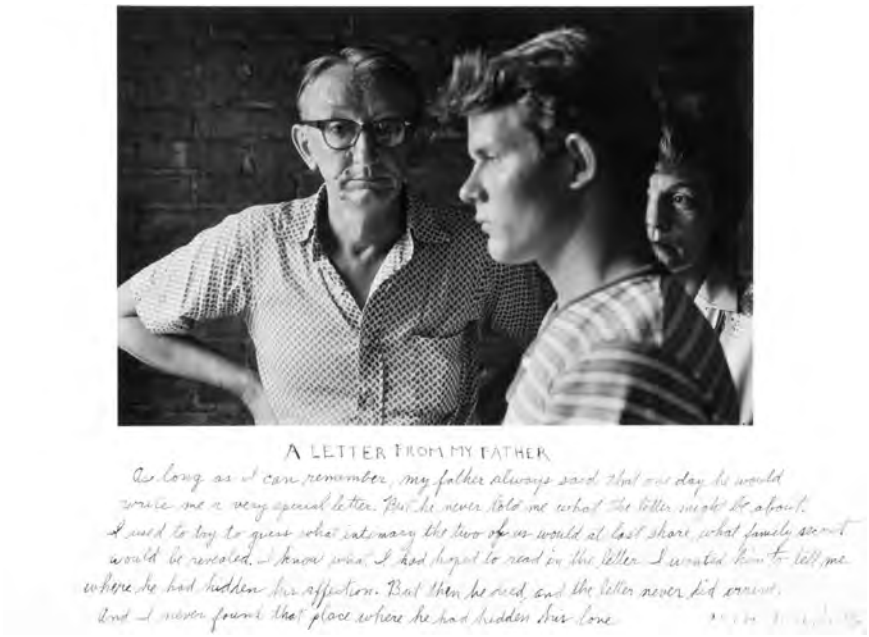

Figure 3.4 Duane Michals. American, b. 1932. *A Letter From My Father*, 1960–1975. Gelatin silver print with hand-applied text. H: 11 in. x W: 13 15/16 in. (27.94 x 35.40 cm). Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: The Henry L. Hillman Fund, 2004.16.1. © Carnegie Museum of Art

> what family secret would be revealed. I know what I had hoped to read in the letter. I wanted him to tell me where he had hidden his affection. But then he died, and the letter never did arrive. And I never found out the place where he had hidden his love.

When we add this text to the image, we feel reasonable certain we can say who is figured in it. The younger man in the foreground is the son. The older man is his father and the mostly hidden female figure is his mother. The tension between the father and the son in the image becomes its central theme. The son looks away at something outside the frame, the letter that never came, perhaps, as the father regards his son with a look that suggests a recognition, perhaps of something the son has not yet seen in himself. The mother looks on at a remove, powerless to resolve this tension.

At the same time, we are inclined to associate the first person singular pronoun in the text with the author of that text. Aligning the meaning of the text with the image, we are then led to identify the young man in the image

as Michals himself and the older man and woman as his own father and mother. These identifications also satisfy our need to find Michals revealing something about himself in this work of art. The editor of *Storyteller*, however, includes a photograph of the same three figures, dressed as they are in *A Letter From My Father*, identified as Jack, Margaret and Timothy Michals, dated 1960. Timothy is Duane Michals's younger brother. Jack and Margaret are their parents. The image Michals writes on in 1975 was taken in 1960.

This does not mean that *A Letter From My Father* does not reveal something about Duane Michals himself, but it destabilizes this sense. Is the text the supposed inner voice of Timothy, what he may have been thinking or feeling at the moment the photograph was taken? Or does the photograph, years later, invoke in Duane what Timothy may have been thinking or feeling in general? Or does this image of his nuclear family bring out what Duane may have thought or felt about his father? In fact, Michals says, "Take for example a picture of my father, mother, and brother. It doesn't matter to me what my father looked like, but whether or not he loved me. What matters is what or what did not transpire between us."[42] This obsession with the relationship between a father and his son is evident in much of Michals's work.

What we think and feel in the face of this image is only discordant or disturbing if we take the text to somehow fix the image, to keep it from sliding across a range of unstable signifiers. Michals's texts, however, have a different aim. As Foucault puts it,

> They are not there to fix the image, hold it fast, but rather expose it to invisible breezes; instead of an anchor, a whole rigging to permit it to sail free. What Duane Michals asks of these written texts is that they remove what he himself considers "stuffy" about photography. They are there to make the picture circulate in the mind—in his own mind, and from there to others' minds.[43]

A Letter From My Father gives us a thought and a feeling that occurred to Michals revisiting this old photograph that might occur to any man or woman who has sought that place where his or her father had hidden his love. He forces us to think, because we don't know what to think or because we never thought to think about this love.

Text-added images from Michals's early work, like *Black Is Ugly* (1974) and *Certain Words Must Be Said* (1976), deploy the same strategy. In 1974, and still today, the expression "Black Is Ugly" is heard against the slogan "Black Is Beautiful," part of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.[44] "Black Is Beautiful" was a response to the normal and normalizing gaze of white people, which perceived the black body as a "wretched particularity," "ersatz, aesthetically deformed, morally

disabled . . . excessive, monstrous, disgusting, that is *distasteful*" and ugly.[45] The older black man seen in profile in this image—age signed by his frail frame, his receding hairline and the weariness about his shoulders, neck and hands—has interiorized racist hatred to the point that he thinks it natural that he should suffer while white men prosper. He does not understand the reason for his "natural" inferiority, but since it has always been so, he believes it must be something he just does not understand. The one who would have the authority to tell him that it is not so must be white, and, again, our tendency is to attribute the voice of the added text to the artist whose work we are appreciating, but it need not be. Whoever he or she may be, the author of the text seems disappointed that it is too late to change this man's mind. Michals has added a text that mobilizes or volatilizes this image. What would otherwise be a silent portrait in profile is given a voice and forces us to think about the complexities of racial politics. It is not enough for whites to admit their errors. Blacks must also own and embrace an identity they have given themselves apart from the ways they have been defined by their oppressors.[46]

In *Certain Words Must Be Said*, the voice is more difficult to identify. It could belong to one or the other of the women in the image. It could also be the voice of detached spectator looking in on this scene. The setting is a bedroom. To judge from the angle of the light, it is mid-morning or late afternoon. The two women look decidedly away from one another. Neither wears a wedding band. The shadows highlight their high cheekbones. They could be models.

Certain Words Must Be Said

> Things had become impossible between them and nothing could be salvaged. Certain words must be said. And though each one had said those words a hundred times silently to herself, neither one had the courage to say them outloud to one another. So they began to hope someone else might say the necessary words for them. Perhaps a letter might arrive or a telegram would be delivered from a stranger that would say what they could not. Now they spent their days waiting. What else could they do?

What things had become impossible? What could not be salvaged? What "certain words" must be said? Again, a letter is invoked. What a letter has to say is enclosed in an envelope. We open that envelope wondering what we will find in the letter it delivers. Until it is opened, what it has to say remains a secret. Are the certain words that must be said a secret these women share, an unspoken desire reverberating between them?[47] It is entirely possible, likely even, that the thought and feeling these words might convey occur to Michals only after taking the photograph and reflecting on the composition of the image.[48] The text may, then, reflect Michals's own searching for a language in which homo-social sensibilities can be expressed.

Michals writes, however, "I make black marks on white paper. But these marks are my thoughts."[49] These black marks include those that make up the black-and-white images of Michals's photographs as well as those that handwrite the texts added to those images. Linda Benedict-Jones cites Michals as saying, "I am an expressionist and by that I mean I'm not a photographer or a writer or a painter or a tap dancer, but rather someone who expresses himself according to his needs."[50] When Michals expresses himself, he is expressing what he thinks. This point is made emphatically in *I Think About Thinking*, discussed earlier, where the text in the image is written in a book and the title of the image is taken from that text. Ordinarily, philosophers make an occupational hazard out of thinking about thinking. Aristotle's unmoved mover, famously defined as "thought thinking itself," is often cited as the paradigm for philosophical activity and, in the Christian adaptation of Aristotle's metaphysics, as the model for God. Michals is more modest. He is no philosopher. He does not presume to be supremely divine. He makes black marks on white paper that express according to his needs what he is thinking and feeling.

The Camera's Caress (1986) expresses something poignant and profound. In the image we see a nude, curly haired boy from behind. The image is cropped at the top of the thigh closest to us. We see the muscles in his back and his left arm. He is looking back at us over his left shoulder. He holds, in front of him, a large book of pages, blank except for the one we can see over that same shoulder, which reads "The Nature of Desire." *The Nature of Desire* is the title of another work from the same year (1986), which, rather more abstractly, shows another nude, curly haired boy in profile, cropped above the knee, who appears to be pushing rolls of an unspecified material to our left. The text added to this image, written as a poem, reads, "Our lives are just one moment. A breath imagined by the senses. And that moment is a great thought. And that thought is a desire. The urge to being and to be love. All at once, altogether, the same."

In *The Camera's Caress*, that image is represented by the title handwritten as text in the book held by the boy. Here the text added is more prosaic.

> Something happened when I took your picture. I became enchanted by the sight of you, standing there, looking at the book, perfect in the gentle light. I took the photograph over and over, again and again, compulsively, knowing that when I stopped, and set the camera down, the moment would be lost, as the dream dies when one awakens. And I could not bear to let it go.

In *The Nature of Desire*, our lives, but a moment, a breath imagined by the senses, a great thought, are a desire (a desire that moves the unmoved mover) to be loved, all at once, altogether, the same. This is a universal longing, a desire to be one, primary narcissism, love in the form of beauty at the end of the ascent of the "Ladder of Love" in Plato's S*ymposium*.[51]

In *The Camera's Caress*, that longing is made particular. It attaches to this particular boy, at this particular moment, in this perfect gentle light. It is the love of the beauty of particular bodies to which we return in the *Symposium* when Alcibiades draws the attention of the drinking contest both to the love of boys, in his own person, but also to the love of wisdom, in the person of Socrates. Without bothering with a philosophical discourse, Michals inspires us to think, with his images, about the wisdom of love.[52] He also links that love to the camera's caress of its subject. It is the camera that connects Michals to love in the world. Even as that love is lost in the moment when he puts the camera down, a new love is born when he picks the camera up again.

"I make black marks on white paper." This statement is the beginning of the text from *It Is No Accident That You Are Reading This* (1976). As in *A Failed Attempt to Photograph Reality* (1976), *I Am Much Nicer Than God* (1980) and *How Could It Be* (1992), this is a work consisting of handwritten text on gelatin silver paper, the medium used to print photographs. However poetic their expression, these works are not poems.[53] Rather, in the manner of his beloved Magritte, they make an image of words. They stage words and images to inspire and provoke us to think. When Magritte painted a pipe and the inscription "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" beneath that painted pipe, he set thought in motion. On the one hand, since the pipe was painted and represented as more suitable for blowing bubbles than smoking, it certainly is not a pipe but the representation of a pipe. The inscription, thus, appears to correct our tendency to accept the representation of reality as reality itself. The inscription, though, is also painted and in a way that draws attention to its mere representation of the real message spelled out by the sequentially painted letters. If the pipe is not to be taken as a pipe because only a representation of it, then the inscription cannot be taken at face value since it is a representation as well. If the inscription cannot be trusted, perhaps the painted pipe is a pipe, but since the painted pipe is manifestly not one, then perhaps the inscription can be believed.[54]

This dilemma is animated by the thought and feeling set in motion by Michals's works generally and by the works discussed last, here, in particular. When Michals claims he has a "See Dick, See Jane" brain, it is not false modesty. It is rather an honesty we would all do well to adopt ourselves. When he says, "My photographs are about questions. They are not about answers. I think photographs should provoke, should set up the questions, the premise, and not give the answers,"[55] it is profound but not pretentious. Michals is thinking, and inspiring us to think, because he feels, and because he doesn't know what to think about what he feels. With his photographs, Michals expresses himself. According to his needs, he uses his camera to caress the subject of a portrait. According to his needs, he produces sequences of images to make the invisible visible—dreams, fears, the transmigration of the spirit—or to tell a story about a scary door, queer things, a chance meeting. According to his needs, he adds texts to his photographs to

question the authority of words over images and to provoke us to think and feel for ourselves. He does not tell us what to think. Instead, he uses his camera to caresses the world, bringing the affective power of the world to the surface of his images and animating that power in the service of a thought or a feeling we would not otherwise feel or think. In this way, Michals exemplifies much of what we call thinking with images.

Notes

1 "Chance Meeting" is the title of a 1970 sequence included in Sequences (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) and featured on the cover of *Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals*, ed. Linda Benedict-Jones (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art, 2014).
2 Carnegie Museum of Art Press Room, http://press.cmoa.org/2014/05/14/duane-michals (12 March 2018).
3 Duane Michals, *The House I Once Called Home* (London: Enitharmon Editions, 2003).
4 Linda Benedict-Jones, "Duane Michals: Storyteller," *Storyteller*, 21.
5 Duane Michals, interview with Barbaralee Diamonstein, in *Visions and Images: American Photographers on Photography* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 125, cited by Linda Benedict-Jones, "Commercial Work," *Storyteller*, 215.
6 National Gallery of Canada, Press Release, "Duane Michals: Words and Images on View at the National Gallery of Canada 25 June 1999," Ottawa, Canada, 23 June 1999, www.gallery.ca/whats-on/exhibitions-and-galleries/duane-michals-words-and-images (12 March 2018).
7 Duane Michals, *Photo-wisdom: Master Photographers on Their Art*, ed. Lewis Blackwell (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2009), 34.
8 Excerpted from *A Failed Attempt to Photograph Reality*, Gelatin silver paper with hand applied text (1976).
9 The Brownie was, in fact, introduced in 1888. Its ubiquity, all the same, is an early 20th-century phenomenon. Thanks to Linda Benedict-Jones for this detail.
10 See Mark Jarzombek. "Joseph August Lux: Theorizing Early Amateur Photography—in Search of a 'Catholic Something,'" *Centropa* 4, no. 1 (January 2004), 80–87.
11 André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9–16.
12 See also *Self Portrait as if I Were Dead* (1968).
13 Eugene Reznik, "Interview: Duane Michals on 50 Years of Sequences and Staging Photos," *American Photo*, americanphotomag.com, November 14, 2014 (7 October 2016).
14 Ibid.
15 Duane Michals, *Album: The Portraits of Duane Michals, 1958–1988* (Pasadena, CA: Twelvetree Press, 1988).
16 Linda Benedict-Jones, "Duane Michals: Storyteller," *Storyteller*, 21.
17 Siobahn Bohnacker, "The Last Sentimentalist: A Q & A with Duane Michals," *The New Yorker*, http://projects.newyorker.com/portfolio/michals-empty-ny/ (7 October 2016).
18 Duane Michals, *A Visit with Magritte*, first published by Matrix Publications, Inc. (Providence, RI, 1981), redesigned new edition (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl Publishers, 2011).
19 Michel Foucault, "La pensée, l'émotion," in *Duane Michals: Photographie de 1958 à 1982* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1982), v/x.

20 Duane Michals, *A Visit with Magritte*, unnumbered pages.
21 Foucault, "La pensée, l'émotion," v/x.
22 There are no titles (nor are there captions) to any of the works in the redesigned edition of *A Visit with Magritte*.
23 Duane Michals, *A Visit with Magritte*, unnumbered pages.
24 For more of Michals's photographing dreams see *Vrai rêve* (Paris: Editions Chêne, 1977), *Sleep and Dreams* (New York: Lustrum Press, 1984) and several of the sequences, some discussed next.
25 Richard Hamilton, "The Green Book," in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, a typographical version of Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box*, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New York: Jaap Rietman Inc., Art Books, 1960), unnumbered pages. The *Green Box* was originally disseminated by Duchamp using the alias Rose Sélavy as three hundred, handmade facsimiles of a box titled *La mariée mis à nu par ces célibataires, même*, containing 94 loose items.
26 Duane Michals, "Portraits of the Artists," *New York Times Magazine* (13 August 2000), 70.
27 Duane Michals, *Photo-wisdom*, 34.
28 Ibid.
29 John Szarkowski, *Looking at Photographs: 100 Pictures from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 210, cited by Linda Benedict-Jones, "Duane Michals: Storyteller," *Storyteller*, 50–51.
30 Duane Michals, "Sequences," *Camera* no. 7 (July 1969): 22, reproduced as fig. 27, *Storyteller*, 58.
31 Cristina Rouvalis quotes Michals confirming just this for "Duane Michals: Telling the Story of the Storyteller," *CMOA Blog*, Carnegie Museum of Art (October 28, 2014): "It involves gay cruising, two guys on the street attracted to each other, passing like ships in the night."
32 The story appears to be a variation of The Story of a Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was, a Grimm Fairy Tale about a boy who does not know what it is to be afraid. "Fairy" calls to mind a slur used to interpolate homosexuals as well as Michals's *Necessary Things for Writing Fairy Tale Tunes* (1989), which includes the word "FAIRY" written out in tree branches and vines.
33 Jonathan Weinberg, "Things Are Queer," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996), 11.
34 Ibid.
35 Kristine McKenna, "Picture Perfect: For Maverick Duane Michals, A Picture Is Worth far Less than a Thousand Words When the Questions Are About the Meaning of Truth," *Los Angeles Times* (14 March 1993), http://articles.latimes.com/1993-03-14/entertainment/ca-543_1_duane-michals (12 March 2018).
36 See Roger J. Taylor and Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll Photographer: The Princeton Albums* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
37 Foucault, "La pensée, l'émotion," v/x.
38 Foucault, "La pensée, l'émotion," v/x–xi.
39 I owe this detail about the hanging of the images to Linda Benedict-Jones (email correspondence).
40 Linda Benedict-Jones reports that, as Storyteller was the Carnegie Museum's gift to Michals, he was not consulted about the curating of the images in the catalogue or the show, but that when presented with both "he loved it" (email correspondence).
41 Again, Linda Benedict-Jones reports (by email) that this reading of the seventh image is heterodox, that every other interpretation of it sees the girl as screaming. I stand with my view of it, which reflects my sense of Michals's playfulness and the ambiguous placement of the seventh image in sequences of *The Bogeyman*.

42 Duane Michals in an interview with David Seidner, *Bomb* 20 (Summer 1987) archived online at http://bombmagazine.org/article/923/duane-michals (7 October 2016).
43 Foucault, "La pensée, l'émotion," v/xi.
44 See Paul C. Taylor, *Black Is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).
45 George Yancy, "White Embodied Gazing, the Black Body as Disgust, and the Aesthetics of Un-Suturing," in *Body Aesthetics*, ed. Sherri Irvin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 245.
46 See J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 2005).
47 Lina Žigelitė, *The Becoming of Queer Art*, https://makingqueerart.wordpress.com/2011/03/08/duane-michals-certain-words-must-be-said/ (18 October 2016).
48 Foucault, "La pensée, l'émotion," v/xi.
49 Text from Duane Michals, *It Is No Accident That You Are Reading This* (1976), discussed next.
50 Linda Benedict-Jones, "Duane Michals: Storyteller," *Storyteller*, 33.
51 Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in *Plato's Collected Dialogues*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1989), 211a ff.
52 See Luce Irigaray, "Introduction," *The Way of Love*, trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluháček (New York: Continuum, 2002), 1–12.
53 Contrast Allen Ellenzweig's assessment, "Wounded by Beauty," in *Duane Michals: Storyteller*, 61–81.
54 See Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
55 Duane Michals in an interview with David Seidner, *Bomb* 20 (Summer 1987) archived online at http://bombmagazine.org/article/923/duane-michals (7 October 2016).

4 *Étant donnés* | Marcel Duchamp

From August to November 2009, the PMA presented *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, the first major exhibition of Marcel Duchamp's last great work, *Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage . . .* (*Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .*) (1946–1966). The exhibit, which included studies and supporting materials, was organized to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the installation of that work at the PMA. The accompanying catalog by Michael R. Taylor, who curated the exhibit, provides a trove of new research, previously unpublished documents and photographs as well as technical studies of the vellum covered, plaster cast figure at the center of *Étant donnés* and the landscape in the background for the work.[1] Only six months later, in May 2010, Caroline Bachman and Stefan Banz organized and curated the *Symposium—Concert—Intervention—Exhibitions* in Cully, Switzerland, to celebrate and discuss the discovery of the Forestay Waterfall thought to have inspired Duchamp's last great work. At Cully, nearly two-dozen artists, art historians, critics and scholars, including Michael Taylor, took turns deciphering the meaning of *Étant donnés*, its *raison d'être* Hans Maria de Wolf called it, at a site just five kilometers from Duchamp's supposed inspiration.[2] Still, the meaning of *Étant donnés* remains obscure. A common view, that it is the three-dimensional projection of the two-dimensional *La mariée mise á nu par ses célibataire, même* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*) (1915–1923), relies on a rather obvious narrative when Duchamp was at all times at pains to be obtuse. Is this really the scene of the bride finally stripped bare by her bachelors, ravaged sexually and left for dead, or is there something more to it? Of course, there is something more. Can it be that *Étant donnés* is about the work of art itself?

The group that made the pilgrimage to Cully and Bellevue-Chexbres, Switzerland, takes a slightly different approach. They take the reference in the title to *la chute d'eau*, the waterfall, to be the key to understanding the work and the very waterfall thought to have inspired Duchamp, the Forestay Waterfall, to be their key to understanding the significance of the waterfall for *Étant donnés*. While their motivations and excitement are sincere, we will not find much to be gained by shifting the viewer's attention

Figure 4.1 Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage* (detail of interior) (1946–1966). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Cassandra Foundation, 1969, 1969–41–1. © Association Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/ARS, New York 2018.

to the waterfall from the breach at the center of the work that the waterfall is supposed to suggest. None of the papers presented at Cully account for the connection between the waterfall seen as the female sex and the rendering of that sex in the work's central figure. As a result, we are left with a missed encounter with Duchamp and his *Étant donnés*. We will attempt to chance on that encounter by turning to a site where the formula "Given: 1. the waterfall, 2. the illuminating gas" first appeared, the so-called *Green Box* (1934), the notes collected and reproduced as a complement to the *Large Glass*. Given the title, *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, Duchamp said he wanted the *Box* "to be consulted when seeing the Glass because, as I see it," Duchamp continues,

> It [the *Glass*] must not be "looked at" in the aesthetic sense of the word. One must consult the book [*Box*] and see the two together. The conjunction of the two things entirely removed the retinal aspect that I don't like. It was very logical.[3]

The *Glass* in question is, of course, the just mentioned *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*. Consulting the formula, and other texts, from the *Box* we come to locate the waterfall and illuminating gas on the *Glass* in the Bride and Bachelor domains, respectively. These elements are not

literally rendered on the *Glass*. They are "given" virtually or conceptually. Seeing the *Glass* through the *Box* we are freed from the tyranny of "just looking" in the sense introduced by our discussion of Duane Michals earlier. Reading the *Box* through the *Glass* we confront Duchamp's preference for the mental over the retinal but also Duchamp's insistence that we associate the conceptual with the carnal.[4] The waterfall is associated with the bride's deflowering and the gas with the bachelor's arousal by the actions of the bride, but we conceive these elements on the *Glass* only by virtue of the notes collected and presented in the *Box* ten years after the *Glass* was left "permanently unfinished" by Duchamp. We are asked to make (logical) sense of what initially confronts us as nonsense.

There are contributors to the event at Cully who are, by turns, disposed to suggest that *Étant donnés*, makes sense of that nonsense. There, the waterfall and the gas are literally present, and the carnality of the work appears front and center. What these contributors do not discuss is the way the work, apart from its contents and the supposed narrative that connects those contents, reproduces what Duchamp takes to be the preferred relation of the audience to a work of art, the relation that makes a work stand out as art and that demands that the audience make sense of it. As *Étant donnés* is constructed, the work is available to only one viewer, in one respect, at one time, and this deserves our attention. There is also the view of the work available to those waiting their turn to peer through the peepholes to discuss, their tendency to stand at the threshold of the anteroom of the work, their reluctance to congregate in that anteroom while they wait their turn, or after they have taken their turn, to look.

In this context, we will introduce the element of time to our appreciation of *Étant donnés*, the time of the affect felt in the face of the spectacle and in the awareness of being a spectacle for those waiting behind you for their turn to see the work. We will also discuss time as a feature of the cognitive experience of perceiving the work through the peepholes, a question of stereoscopic and dioramic vision, and, finally, we will discuss the time of the studio introduced in our discussion earlier of James Elkins's observations about the limits of materiality in thinking about art. We will pause, finally, to consider the ellipsis that is part of the official title of the work, *Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage*, ... Given the waterfall, the illuminating gas, . . . and then what? On the one hand, this appears to be a very small thing, but, on the other, following a suggestion by Molly Nesbit, it introduces *Étant donnés* into a register of science that makes of these "givens" precisely things that cannot be accounted for by logic and metaphysics. They are what we encounter physically and sensibly, and there are apparently so many different things given sensibly in this work.[5] At bottom, we will give an account of *Étant donnés* that returns us to the time of thought, to a case of being forced to think because we don't know what to think about what Jasper Johns called "the strangest work of art any museum has ever had in it." [6]

The Forestay Waterfall

As part of an introduction to *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay* Waterfall, Stefan Banz tells the story of the discovery of the waterfall apparently seen in the background of *Étant donnés*. In the short version, Banz identifies Felix Kälin as the one who had painstakingly identified the site in 1980 but found his discovery underappreciated by then curator of 20th-century art and Duchamp specialist at the PMA, Anne d'Harnoncourt. The evidence documenting Kälin's discovery was lost to posterity until Banz and Bachmann, determined to correct the lack of attention given by scholars to the waterfall explicitly mentioned in the title of *Étant donnés*, tracked it down. The main illustration for Banz's introduction is a full-page and full-color reproduction of Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (*The Origin of the World*) (1866). The point of this illustration is to associate the most notorious representation of the female sex with the waterfall or, rather, to see in every waterfall an image of that sex that Courbet has famously pictured (not only in *L'Origine du monde* but also in *La Femme aux bas blancs* (*Woman with White Stockings*) (1861)). With the surrounding forestation standing in for pubic hair, the waterfall is thought to reproduce through the force of gravity the impulse that draws the eye from the mound of the vulva to the folds of the buttocks so obscenely rendered (working from a photograph, it is interesting to note) by the French realist. In the falling water, shimmering in the light, we are meant to see the glistening pink folds of the labia and the anticipation of penetration by the penis. On this view, every waterfall invokes the female sex, and the importance of the Forestay Waterfall is supposed to be that it inspired the elaboration on this theme for *Étant donnés*.

In his presentation for the symposium at Cully, Banz is at pains to show a connection between the Courbet and the Forestay Waterfall.[7] Banz thinks it is not trivial that, from his lodging at the Hotel Bellevue in Chexbres, Duchamp would have had a "direct view" of "the little town of La Tour-de-Peilz" where Courbet spent the last years of his life.[8] He opines that the photograph of the waterfall Duchamp took by turning away from the beautiful view of Lake Geneva (the *belle vue* that gave the hotel its name) captured the invisible presence of the French painter's death, and that this presence is, in a sense, "part and parcel of the entire work [*Étant donnés*] and its significance."[9] Banz speculates that Marcel and Teeny Duchamp saw Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* on the occasion of a dinner party hosted by Jacques and Sylvia Bataille Lacan at their country home in 1958; the Lacans had purchased the work when it appeared at auction in 1955.[10] Banz notes that Courbet's painting shares a history with the invisible presence he attributes to *Étant donnés*, being hidden behind a green curtain in a private dressing room by its first owner, in the false-bottom frame of another work by Courbet (*Le château de Blonay* (1875)) by a second owner and, by the Lacans themselves, behind an oil on wood painting by André Masson, *Masque de l'Origine due monde* a.k.a. *Terre érotique* (1955).[11] However,

Duchamp took the photographs at Chexbres that would be the basis for the landscape of *Étant donnés* in 1946, and by 1958 he would have been 12 years into the construction of *Étant donnés*. It cannot have been Courbet's *L'Origine* that inspired him to take those photographs.[12]

Fortunately for his cause, and ours, Banz entertains a more plausible connection between Courbet and Duchamp. Citing remarks Duchamp made for a symposium at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art in 1961,[13] in a BBC interview four months before his death in 1968[14] and in comments collected for publication in a volume of the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* in 1946,[15] Banz rightly points to Duchamp's censuring Courbet for inaugurating a century-long fixation on the "retinal" in art, on an aesthetic pleasure almost entirely dependent on the impression made on the retina "without appealing to any auxiliary interpretation."[16] Banz quotes Duchamp as saying,

> I wanted to get away from the physical aspect of painting. I was much more interested in recreating ideas in painting. . . . I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind. . . . I was endeavoring to establish myself as far as possible from "pleasing" and "attractive" physical paintings.[17]

Banz takes these declarations as the promising basis for looking at the *Large Glass* and *Étant donnés* as distinct visual approaches to what is visible and what is invisible, between what is "nameable, identifiable and interpretable," on the one hand, and "what we do not see although it is present," on the other.[18] The significance of Courbet for Duchamp's installations, then, on Banz's view, would be as a representative of everything Duchamp eschewed in art.

Banz takes the *Glass* to be emblematic of everything invisible. It refers, on his view, in its title and in the notes collected in the *Box*, to a bride stripped bare by bachelors, but neither a bride nor bachelors nor stripping are visibly represented on the *Glass*. The viewer is not so much a viewer, after all, then, but a conceiver or thinker who arrives at a meaning or significance by consulting the *Box* along with the *Glass*. "In *Étant donnés*," Banz asserts, "The situation is reversed. As in *Las Meninas* by Velázquez, we see everything."[19] Do we, however, see everything in *Étant donnés* or *Las Meninas*? Michel Foucault has famously detailed precisely what is visibly invisible in Velázquez's great work:[20] in the richness of the scene at court, we precisely do not see the one or ones at whom the gazes of all the figures in the painting are directed. Is it the king and queen who seem to be reflected in a mirror at the back of the room? Is it the subject of the painting in the painting that may or may not be the king and queen? Is it the viewer of the painted scene? We cannot say for certain because he or she or they cannot be seen. They are visible only as the invisible object of the regards of the figures at court included in Velázquez's painting. *Étant donnés* may seem to compare to *Las*

Meninas because it inventories a tremendous number of details in the scene presented for us: the waterfall, the illuminating gas, the nude figure, the bed of dead sticks, the brick wall, the door, the peepholes, etc., but what in fact do we see there? Banz thinks that "what is obviously there has to stand for something that is not visible even though it is there in reality."[21] It is not clear, however, that it does.

Banz is led to his conclusion because he believes that details in the elements that make up *Étant donnés*, starting with the waterfall, "stand for" or represent Courbet who is invisible though really there in that representation. Courbet is there in the female nude and the explicit representation of that nude figure's sex. He is there in the waterfall, which, again, signifies that same sex, the view of which points beyond it to Tour-de-Peilz, where Courbet died. He is there in the remains of a mill near the waterfall, which Banz interprets as a metaphor for painting as aesthetic self-pleasuring (grinding one's chocolate alone), which Duchamp presumably rejected. However, just as what is invisible in *Las Meninas* is not represented but emerges conceptually in Foucault's interpretation of it, so what is invisible in *Étant donnés* will emerge enactively in our embodied thinking with it. Banz has us pointed in the right direction. By linking the *Large Glass* and *Étant donnés* and suggesting these two works are different approaches to the same end or aim, namely, a thought about the visible and the invisible, he sets us to thinking with Duchamp about art and about the relationship between art and thought. We, however, have a different end in mind for this thinking with images.

So far as the visible and the invisible are concerned, it is remarkable how few commentators in the Forestay Waterfall collection emphasize Duchamp's rejection of the retinal in art in favor of the gray matter of the mind. Duchamp refers again and again to Courbet as initiating the retinal obsession in art.[22] These references, Banz would say, justify attributing such a significance to Courbet in unpacking the *raison d'être* of *Étant donnés*, but Banz locates the invisible significance of Courbet in the retinal splendor of the glistening waterfall, the graphic sex of the nude figure and in the visible references to the oil mill. We wonder whether the forced requirement that one peer in on this scene as one would a peep show and the visual display we see when taking in this show should give us pause, should alert us to something that cannot be seen and cannot be imagined but must be thought or achieved, must be the subject of a distinct form of thinking. Making metaphorical associations does not require much thinking. It is more like following the rules for substituting one thing for another. The thinking we have in mind does not take the form of a deciphering. It follows Duchamp's insistence that there is no one meaning to his works, that it is up to the viewer to say what they mean, that he worked on them for such a long period of time because he didn't want them "to be the expression of a sort of inner life."[23] If we consider the *Large Glass*, for example, there is no shortage of visible elements to see on it and to see through it, but we will find that

the meaning of the work is invisible though embodied, not at all reducible to a predictable narrative about hetero-normative sex but rather more open to the effect (or affect) of a thought each person achieves who takes in the *Glass* with the *Box*.

When it comes to the relationship between art and thought, Banz himself reminds us that Duchamp said he was more interested in creating ideas than in creating a painting. He wanted art to be something more than something to look at. He wanted to put art once again in the service of the mind. The mind, we would say, is best served by thinking, but, as we've already said in connection with Duane Michals, thinking that knows what to think is just following a rule. We only begin to think when we do not know what to think, and this is precisely the thinking Duchamp's art provokes. What are we to make of the *Large* Glass and *Étant donnés*? What do these works of art mean? Duchamp famously said about the *Large* Glass "there can be no solution when there is no problem. Problems are inventions of the mind. They are nonsensical."[24] Duchamp also asserted that thinking in art came down to the artist's choice.[25] "Choice," he said, "is the crucial factor in a work of art. Paintings, colours, forms, even ideas are an expression of the artist's choice."[26] In another interview, that same year, Duchamp associated chess with art through the common element of choice.[27]

What if all Duchamp's works were the consequences of different choices, different ways of embodying a thought about what makes a work a work of art, the way one conceptually enacts the variety of ways to end a game of chess? In his contribution to the Forestay Waterfall Symposium, Hans Maria de Wolf reminds us that Duchamp turned away from the traditional idea of an artist's oeuvre being a list of her or his works initiating, instead, the idea of the oeuvre being "the formal part of an intense attitude, a way of life."[28] In his interview with the Belgian film director Jean Antoine, filmed in his Neuilly studio in 1966, Duchamp says he used art as a *modus vivendi*, a way of understanding life, "that is to try and make my life a work of art itself."[29] If there is no final purpose or meaning to life, if life is not a problem to be solved, then perhaps the artist gives his life meaning by producing works that reflect the choices he has made, which choices, then, reflect a way of life, making that life a work of art. In response to the challenge posed by Samuel Becket's *En attendant Gadot*, *Waiting for Gadot* (1953), Duchamp made art.

The *Box*

The formula "Given: 1. the waterfall, 2. the illuminating gas" first appeared on one of 94 loose items collected in *The Green Box* (1934) beneath the circled, underlined and italicized title "*Preface*." The dimensions of the original *Box* and its facsimiles are 13 x 11⅛ x 1 inch making the typographical translation and bound reproduction of it by Yale art historian George Herbert Hamilton and British pop artist Richard Hamilton (9 ⅜ x 6 ⅛ x ½

inches) deceiving. The original *Green Box* was sized to fit the documents it contained. The original *Green* Box was already a work of art. Exactly what sort of work of art, we will discuss next. The typographical translation and bound reproduction was, in its way, not so much a copy of an original as another work of art.[30] While George Herbert Hamilton was mainly charged with translating the original French text into English, Richard Hamilton was charged with converting the loosely collected, translated and handwritten notes into a form that could be printed, bound and reproduced. In Hamilton's typographical version of *The Green Box*, the formula in question is printed as follows:

> Preface
>
> Given 1. the waterfall
> 2. the illuminating gas,
>
> one will determine
> we shall determine the conditions
> for the instantaneous State of Rest (or allegorical appearance)
> of a succession [of a group] of various facts
> seeming to necessitate each other
> under certain laws, *in order to isolate the sign*
> *of [the] accordance between,* on the one hand,
> this *State of Rest* (capable of [all the] innumerable (?) eccentricities)
> and, on the other, *a choice of Possibilities*
> authorized by these laws and also
> determining them.

In this transcription, "Preface," "determine," "succession," "various facts," "sign," "innumerable eccentricities" and "determining them" are circled in red. At the bottom of this page, numbered one in Hamilton's typographic reproduction, there is something of a footnote, an added exposition that reads, "For the instantaneous state of rest = bring in the term: extra-rapid." Then, beneath a red line drawn from the left margin to the right edge of the page, with the just mentioned substitution made, Duchamp writes, "We shall determine the conditions of [the] best exposé of the extra-rapid State of Rest [of the extra-rapid exposure (= allegorical appearance) of a group . . . etc." Again, how will we make (logical) sense of this seeming nonsense?

Adding to the confusion, another version of the same formula appears on a separate sheet, numbered two and printed on the verso of the page numbered one, above, expanding on this "Preface" under the heading "Notice," again circled in red with the superscript "nothing perhaps" also written in red. Here "Given" is qualified with the insertions "If, given" and "[*in the dark*]," and followed by, modifying the earlier formula, "1. the waterfall, 2. the illuminating gas, in the dark." The text goes on to describe "several

collisions" succeeding one another this time "according to" certain laws again to isolate the sign of accordance between (making the substitution recommended at the bottom of the "Preface") the extra-rapid exposition, on the one hand, and the choice of possibilities authorized by those laws, on the other: exposition and a choice authorized by the laws governing that exposition. On this page, beneath the kind of horizontal line that typically separates a text from its footnotes, we find the expression "Algebraic comparison" and under that title another formula, an algebraic formula in the sense of a general statement of relations using letters or symbols to specify those relations.

> a a being the exposition
> —
> b b being the possibilities
>
> The ratio a/b is in no way given by a number c a/b = c but by the sign (/) which separates a and b; a and b being (as soon as a and b are) "*known*," they become (new) units and lose their numerical (relative) value (or in duration); the sign/(of ratio) which separates them remains (*sign of the accordance* or rather *of . . . ? . . . look for it*)[31]

On one occasion, Duchamp dates the notes in *The Green Box* to 1913–1914.[32] He didn't initially have the idea of a box, he says, then, just the thought that he could collect "some calculations, some reflections" in a catalog or album "without relating them."[33] He says, as noted earlier, he wanted the notes to be consulted when viewing the *Glass*, because the *Glass* "must not be 'looked at' in the aesthetic sense of the word."[34] Duchamp started work on the *Large Glass* in 1915 leaving it "permanently unfinished" in 1923.[35] The notes were not made available, however, until 1934, in green felt covered boxes titled *La mariée mis à nu par ses célibatairres, même*, signed by Duchamp's alter ego Rrose Sélavy. In a letter to Walter Arensberg that year, Duchamp announced his intentions to reproduce in facsimile the notes of 1912–1915 made during the gestation and creation of the *Large Glass*.[36] The facsimiles were produced in an edition of 300 including 12 deluxe versions using phototypography or a collotype process that transfers visual information accurately and with the least distortion.[37] This choice—remembering that choice is what distinguishes a work of art from what Arthur Danto would call the "commonplace"[38]—was not typical for the time, but Duchamp's knowledge of printing led him to recognize collotype's "proven ability to print in continuous tone without the aid of halftone screen, thus offering photographic accuracy in fully permanent ink on a wide range of paper stocks."[39] As it turns out, Duchamp would turn to the same collotype process to produce his *Boît-en-valise* (*Box-in-a-Valise*) (1935–1941) and, importantly for our purposes, the background landscape for *Étant donnés*.

When the green boxes first appeared, the *Large Glass* was in pieces, lots of pieces. In transport to the Greenwich, Connecticut, home of Katherine Dreier, after its first public showing at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (1926–1927), the *Glass* shattered.[40] It would be ten years before Duchamp repaired the work, painstakingly piecing together the shards of the original, securing them between two new panes and resetting the whole in an aluminum frame.[41] The repaired *Glass* would be shown once again at the Museum of Modern Art (1946) before it was permanently installed at the PMA in 1954. At the PMA, it is sometimes shown with a facsimile of the *Box* in a glass-enclosed display case near it. The notes and the box that would enclose them are displayed in that case as a work of art and not as a resource that viewers can consult, as Duchamp wanted, while contemplating the *Glass*. The PMA sometimes also posts a wall plaque for the *Glass* with a schematic of its contents taken from Hamilton's typographic interpretation of the notes in the *Box*, but this tends to confuse viewers who have not consulted the *Box* in advance since it refers to several elements that are only virtually but not visibly present on the *Glass* itself. Of course, this is precisely why Duchamp wants the notes consulted in contemplating the *Glass*.

If we consult those notes, and not only the "Preface" and "Notice" included among them, we see the *Glass* divided into Bride and Bachelor machines. This choice and organization of the *Glass* is the realization of a linear or technical "method" Duchamp deployed to "avoid all contact with traditional pictorial painting," and it is precisely in this context that he says he wants to downplay the importance of the visual element. "Everything was becoming conceptual, that is, it depended on things other than the retina."[42] This linear or technical method was inspired by the chance to join a group of friends and artists in decorating his brother's house with small pictures. Duchamp did a coffee grinder (*Moulin à café* (1911)) that he made to explode—the coffee tumbling down alongside it, the gears appearing above it and "the knob seen simultaneously at several points in its circuit, with an arrow to indicate movement. Without knowing it, I opened a window onto something else," Duchamp reports.[43] Ironically, in opening this window, he happened on a plan for making a painting that was anything but a window on the world.[44]

The Bride and Her Bachelors, Even

Duchamp himself supervised the installation of *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, the *Large Glass* (Figure 4.2), at the PMA in 1954. The form and contents of the Duchamp Gallery have changed over the years, but all the variations have revolved around the unchanged, central position of the *Large Glass*. A bench is placed in the middle of the gallery where one can sit while contemplating the *Glass*. A variety of Duchamp's other works—paintings, readymades, *objet d'art*—have been installed in a periphery around this work, on the walls, in display cases (for a time there were works that could be seen through the *Glass*) and, currently, on a slightly

Figure 4.2 Marcel Duchamp, *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* (1915–1923). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Katherine S. Dreier, 1952, 1952–98–1. © Association Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/ARS, New York 2018

raised platform or stage. Importantly, for the installation of the *Glass*, a window was cut in the thick, stone wall of the museum allowing a view through the *Glass* onto the plaza that forms the entrance to the PMA. On the one hand, this intervention allows a wider world to enter the *Glass* as we

look through it rather than at it, on the other hand, it introduces, really and physically, an element, the waterfall, into the work that is only there virtually in the plans for the work included in the *Box*. In the plaza leading to the east entrance of the PMA, there is a fountain, not always flowing, which can be seen to contribute, in an n-dimensional conception of the work, to the functioning of the *Glass*.

Following the algebraic formula of the "Notice" from the *Box*, we are inclined to associate the waterfall with the bride's domain.[45] The fountain in the PMA plaza (*Fountain* being the title of Duchamp's most famous readymade, signed "R. Mutt, 1917," and a colloquial French reference to the female sex) realizes that waterfall, flowing from the bride's to the bachelors' domain and contributing to the narrative retelling of a bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even.[46] Following Hamilton's typographical reconstruction of the *Glass* based on notes in the *Box*, the bride's and bachelors' domains are more properly conceived as machines. "Duchamp likes machines because they have no taste and no feeling," Jean-François Lyotard writes.[47] Duchamp's machines are anonymous. They suppress the question of the author and authority. They dissimilate. They do not belong to power or politics or technology. "It's the mechanics of machination. Its effects are not recognizable and thus consumable beings, but singular, misrecognizable inventions, which presuppose the exercise of a faculty of cunning."[48] Duchamp's machines are not productive. If they are called celibate, it is not to describe their virtue but to celebrate their pointlessness.

If the machines that litter the *Glass* are pointless, it is because they have no purpose, no *raison d'être*. This is why it will not help to compare Duchamp's machines with the desiring-machines of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[49] What Deleuze and Guattari call desiring-machines are productive. They produce desiring. It is not so much their purpose to produce desiring. It is just what they do. Desiring-machines are one-way Deleuze and Guattari account for the unconscious. To refuse a theatrical narrative that reduces the unconscious to a drama starring Daddy, Mommy and me, Deleuze and Guattari, following Jacques Lacan,[50] return to an earlier Freudian typology of the unconscious as the condensation and displacement of cathexes or investments of desire in one or several objects or partial objects. Taking this one step further, again following Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari associate desiring-machines with the drives rather than desire and multiply those drives to include not just life and death, *Eros* and *Thanatos*, but all the various ways we find ourselves compelled to produce, distribute and consummate the object cause (*objet a*) of our desiring. The result of this desiring production is not tragic, as in the Oedipal narrative, but comic, a delirium, even.

"A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model" of mental health, Deleuze and Guattari write, "than a neurotic on the analyst's coach."[51] Their schizophrenic is not the "limp rag forced into autistic behavior" by "therapy" but a vibrant, animated and animating process that does not

differentiate between human being and nature or between nature and industry. Everything is one continuous process of machines coupling and connecting with one another, recording these connections and consuming the productions of this continuous machinic circuitry. For this schizophrenic, the cycle of night and day, the sun, the wind and the rain are continuous, connected processes that carry seeds and nourish them to become fields of produce for human and animal consumption leading to the production of milk and meat and leather, fur and feathers that feed and clothe industrial workers whose production produces effects on the earth that affect the warmth and cold, wind and rain that provide a climate for continued production. A seed is a small machine. It connects with the earth, a much larger and equally complex machine (composition of the soil, available nutrients, resident insects, sloped toward the morning or afternoon sun, at a relative latitude and longitude, etc.). This production is at once a recording process—wheat grew well here, grapes did better there—and this recording is written on the earth itself. The wheat growing well here marks the earth at that location with all the effects of the wheat flourishing right there. In the case of the grapes, the vines will remain after the harvest, and the relative health of those vines will mark the earth with a record of their growth. This recording, as the producing, is at once a consumption: what is produced is produced for consumption and consumption contributes to production by demanding it and demanding that a record of the production and consumption, both, be kept on the earth.

The reason for this seeming digression is that Deleuze and Guattari cite Michel Carrouges's identification of certain "celibate machines," including *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, in their discussion of the machinery of consumption.[52] It should be noted that "consumption" is a translation of the French *consummation*, which can mean the consumption of raw materials (food and fuel) as well as the ultimate perfection and fulfillment of something including the consummation of, for example, a marriage. So our bride and her bachelors have not been left behind in this discussion, but the celibate machine in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis points to something we do not find in the Duchamp, the discernment of "something on the order of a *subject*" on the recording surface.[53] This subject, which has no fixed identity, is defined in Deleuze and Guattari by the share of the product it takes for itself. It stands apart from the desiring-machines and takes form as a kind of "reward in the form of a becoming or an avatar, being born of the states that it consumes and being reborn with each new state."[54] In our example of the earth, the dairy farmer stands out from the rancher by the different shares she takes of the earth, taking milk from her cows rather than marketing their meat, and this dairy farmer stands out from every other citizen of the earth, and defines her subjectivity, by the very particular shares of the earth she consumes.

Deleuze and Guattari borrow the term "celibate machine" from Carrouges to designate the alliance between the desiring-machines and what

they call the "body without organs," which gives birth to this subject as a residuum alongside the desiring-machines, gives birth, in fact, to "a new humanity" alongside these desiring-machines.[55] Now, the "body without organs" is just the degree zero of the body, the body prior to its connections with desiring-machines and the recording of those connections on its surface.[56] The celibate machine produces on the body without organs "a genuine consummation" experienced as an erotic or automatic pleasure, "the nuptial celebration of a new alliance . . . as though the eroticism of the machine liberated other unlimited forces."[57] These forces are "intensive quantities" felt, Deleuze and Guattari tell us, as hallucination and delirium. Again, we are in the world of the schizophrenic and the Freudian typology of the unconscious: an intensity of cathexes, all positively charged, all aiming at the zero degree of intensity, the quiescence of primary narcissism, the plenum of the body without organs.

There is clearly a sense in which Duchamp would be delighted to have this celibate machinery thought alongside his *Glass*, but there is a profound difference between what Deleuze and Guattari and Duchamp have in mind. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Duchamp uses the logic and image of the machine to bypass a reductive narrative order. For Deleuze and Guattari, that narrative was the Oedipal drama of Daddy, Mommy and me. For Duchamp, the narrative has to do with painting, its retinal preoccupations but also the history and traditions that bring everything under the title "painting" to one meaning: window on the world, of the world outside us or of the inner world of the painter, in short, a representation to be understood in terms of what it represents rather than on its own terms. Moreover, while Deleuze and Guattari's celibate machines produce residual subjects, Duchamp's *Glass* produces subjects in the form of interpretations of it, which are, in the best case, drawn but also independent from the machines, which invite these interpretations. The important difference between the celibate machines of Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs and the celibate machines on Duchamp's *Glass* is that the former gives an account of a schizoid universe presented as a preferred alternative to the universe that would reduce the schizophrenic to an autistic case. The latter, Duchamp's machines, are more hallucinatory, more delirious still than Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic. The celibate machines on Duchamp's *Glass* do not offer a solution, an alternative universe, because there is no problem. Without saying so, Duchamp endorses the Nietzschean exhortation: *Amor fati*.

If we go back to Richard Hamilton's typographic reconstruction of the story that fits the notes in the *Box* to the images delayed in the *Glass*, we can get a better sense of the hallucinations and delirium that attend Duchamp's celibate machines and of why they do not represent a form of psychosis intended as an alternative model of mental health. Let's start by noticing that the *Glass* is composed of two unequal panes of glass framed together to form a whole nearly six feet wide and over nine feet high (70 x 109 ¼ x 3 ⅜ inches). It is installed in such a way that one can contemplate it from

both sides. From behind, you see the physical support for the oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire and dust delayed on the *Glass* as well as the title of the work, the artist's name and the date handwritten on the back of what we will come to know as the chocolate grinder. From the front, you see the contents delayed in glass as part of a continuum that includes a view of the palazzo that forms the entrance to the museum as well as any museumgoers who happen to pass behind the *Glass* while you consider it. Those contents include, in the upper frame, a modified version of an earlier painting, *Bride* (1912), oil on canvas, said to depict a delicate machine, a motor, the "arbor Type," Duchamp calls her (*Green Box*), and wafting from this bride a cloud punctuated by three irregularly shaped "windows," "nets" or "draft pistons." The cloud and bride appear to be attached to and hanging from the frame above them on hooks. In addition, what are called the "nine shots," random black dots created by "pea-shooting" matchsticks tipped in paint at the *Glass* appear suspended, below the cloud, in the right middle section of the upper domain, the Bride machine.

In the lower frame, the region of the Bachelor machine, nine "malic molds" dominate the middle left of the pane. The molds are stylized variants of the glass couplings used to insulate electrical connections atop high voltage towers and ordinary power poles. They are connected, by a network of "stoppages" or "capillary tubes," to a chocolate grinder crowned with a cascade of "parasols," "drainage slopes" or "sieves" and a chiasmus described as "scissors" at the center of the bachelors' domain. In addition, on the side of the molds in the lower pane, the "scissors" are attached to the "chariot," "sleigh" or "glider" superimposed on a "water wheel" or "mill." On the opposite side of the chocolate grinder from these mechanisms are the "oculist charts" or "witnesses," which mediate the bride's and her bachelors' desires. Finally, what physically and evidently mediates the two domains or machines are three plates of glass inserted horizontally in the frame that both join and separate them described, on one side, as the "bride's clothes" and the "horizon" and, on the other side, as a "gilled cooler," the "isolating plates" and the "Wilson Lincoln System." None of these elements are visible on the surface of the *Glass* but they figure virtually—with the "bottle of Benedictine," the "pump" and "chute," the "splashes," the "weight with holes," the "handler," "trainer of gravity" and "juggler," the "boxing match" and the "geared system"—in the meaning of the *Glass* by virtue of their references in the *Box*.

How are we supposed to imagine that these actual and virtual, apparently heterogeneous elements interact? Why are we supposed to imagine they interact at all? Nothing about the way the *Glass* looks leads us to see anything more than an abstraction (of what it is not clear), a "delay in glass," as Duchamp put it, of elements that have no obvious connection to one another. The upper and lower panes can each be read left to right, the formal properties of the elements included in each pane lend themselves to such a reading, but those readings do not connect the Bride and Bachelor machines

occupying the upper and lower panes to one another. It is only by consulting the notes in the *Box*, made available a decade after *La mariée mise à nu* was left "permanently unfinished," that we can connect the Bride and Bachelor machines. In one of those notes, Duchamp describes the *Glass* as a two-dimensional projection of objects in *n*-dimensions. On the assumption that every shadow is a two-dimensional projection of a three-dimensional object, Duchamp surmises that every three-dimensional object is a projection of a four-dimensional object and so on. While Duchamp would extend these projections to an indefinite *n*-dimensional universe, most commentators have stopped at four and taken Duchamp's reference to an *n*-dimension to be a reference to the fourth dimension or time, in particular, the time of the narrative that would connect the Bride and Bachelor machines on the *Glass*.[58]

On this view, we are invited to accept that this work of art works if, starting from the top, we think of water as fundamental to the bride, an "agricultural machine" as she is also called, whose truth is to be the bearer of her husband's children, to be pregnant and, in pregnancy, to break water, the resultant waterfall representing the deflowering of this bride and her initiation into this "truth." This deflowering, which perpetuates itself, is all the while prepared by a "double stripping," once by the bride's own hands and, again, by her bachelors, even. The bride does her part by drawing on a "reservoir of timid power," secreting a "love gasoline" into her "wasp" or "sex cylinder" and igniting this fuel with a spark from her "desire-magneto." The result of this voluntary stripping and ignited desire is the bride's "cinematic blossoming" in a kind of vaporized water, the "halo of the bride" (which the notes in the Box also call the "title"), the attendant cloud or "milky way" whose "nets" or "draft pistons" trap and sign the ciphered commands the bride has for her bachelors.

Meanwhile, in the bachelors' domain, the bride's waterfall turns the "water wheel" that is part of the Bachelor machine. The wheel's turning causes a "bottle of Benedictine," not actually seen on the *Glass* but virtually present in the notes from the *Box*, to rise and fall below the base of the "glider," "chariot" or "sleigh" causing that "glider" to slide back and forth in lubricated grooves. That sliding, "by a certain distension of the laws of physics," causes the "scissors" atop the chocolate grinder to open and close controlling a splash we have yet to describe and starting the grinder moving. This same movement of the "scissors," by an altogether different distension of physical laws, causes the "glider" moving in the grooves to recite its "litanies:" redundancy, boredom with life and onanism. The bachelors who, by electrical commands, have responded to and encouraged the bride's voluntary stripping, attracted now by the charge of the "desire-magneto" and the smell of "love gasoline," hear the "glider's" litanies and mimic them by "grinding their chocolate" in a "jerking movement" like "the tiny hands on electrical clocks you [used to] see in railway stations" (*Green Box*).

This movement facilitates the passage of the bachelors' "illuminating gas" from out of the moldings of their malic (mannish) desire into and through

the "capillary tubes" at the end of which, forced along by the pressure of their jerking off, this gas spills out as a "retail fog," lighter than air, which mobilizes the parasols, adds to the grinder's action, and spews out what is here described as the "planes of flow" and the "splash," a spiral movement motorized by a "butterfly pump." (Again, none of these elements are actually visible on the *Glass*.) It is the bachelors' remains, their excess, their *trait*, splashed out in the lower-right corner of the bottom pane that reflect through the "weight with nine holes," past the "oculist witnesses" and into the bride's domain as the "nine shots." This is the kind of story that is supposed to fit the notes in *The Green Box* (Figure 4.3) to the contents of the *Glass*. Here the *nth* dimension is machine time recast as the narrative time it takes the bride and her bachelors to pass through their erotic odyssey, but also standard time, the measure of movement, especially the movement of sex. The obvious meaning of the *Glass*, on this reading, is conveniently self-reflexive. *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataire, même* refers back to Duchamp himself and to his alter ego, Rrose Salevy. Eros, which is the essence of life, *eros s'est la vie*, is what the narrators of this story say Duchamp wants to tell us is the essence of art, as well.

Of course, Eros is not the same as sex. Sex is the act that takes place in a seemingly infinite variety of practices. Eros is a drive, the drive to enhance life by attaching itself to as many objects as it can. It is opposed to the death drive, Thanatos, which is the drive for quiescence. We do not need to go through the proposed machinations of the *Glass*—or *Étant donnés*—to arrive at the insight that for Duchamp Eros is, if not the essence of life, a very powerful constituent of life.[59] As late as 1966, however, while the *Glass* was still considered his great artistic accomplishment, Duchamp said he regarded humor "as one of life's vital ingredients. . . . A witty seriousness . . . It's such a necessary part of life that I don't even question it."[60] On the same occasion, Duchamp said about the *Glass*,

> The analyses which have been put forward are not necessarily of any value, since I have not offered any explanation myself. . . . What I intended is not of interest; what is interesting is the effect the work has on the spectator, on the public who will decide if the work is important enough to survive.[61]

It is time to offer our analysis of the importance of this work and to sketch an account of it that connects the work to *Étant donnés*.

Inframince

Inframince is a term Duchamp introduced in the 1930s, sometimes translated into English as "ultra-thin," that he said could not be defined but only described by examples: the difference between two objects made from the same mold, say, when the maximum precision has been obtained, would be

inframince,[62] or the difference between "identical" twins or between two drops of water from the same source. It will guide our reading of the *Glass* returning to the "Notice" and the algebraic comparison given at the bottom of the page where Duchamp writes that Notice: "a" being the exposition, "b" being the possibilities, the ratio a/b is in no way given as a result (c) but by the sign (/), which separates them. When a and b become known, Duchamp writes, "they become (new) units and lose their numerical (relative) value (or in duration); the sign/(of ratio) which separates them remains (*sign of the accordance* or rather *of . . .? . . . look for it*)." No algebraic solution to the formula a/b, read as a ratio, can be given without assigning values to both a and b, but as soon as these values are known, they become new units, lose their own (relative) numerical value, and all that remains is the sign (of ratio) that separates them. Read alongside the *Glass*, the fragment would have us take the bride, whose exposition or exposure (stripped bare) is at stake, and the bachelors, who represent the possibilities of the bride's being exposed, as variables in an interpretive equation whose solution is inexorably deferred. So long as the ascription of value or significance to the bride and her bachelors causes these variables to lose their meaning, we are left only with the *inframince* sign of their difference.

It is not the specific content of the *inframince* difference between the bride and her bachelors, between the bride's voluntary stripping and her being stripped bare by her bachelors, that Duchamp asks us to consider in contemplating the *Glass* through the *Box* or reading the *Box* through the *Glass*. It is this concept of the *inframince*, a difference that cannot be perceived but that must be conceived—that is, enacted or thought. In his interview with Jean Antoine, Duchamp says painting is an activity that has been overestimated, not all it's cracked up to be. "Especially now when it has become completely esoteric and everyone paints, everyone buys it and everyone talks about it. I wonder if it counts for anything at all when it comes to expressing more profound thought."[63] An art (or a philosophy) that tells you what to think is not very thoughtful. Art that gets you to think because you don't know what to think can begin to make a difference in your life. In the grand scheme of things, in what has become of it, on this view, art is really rather small, not all it's cracked up to be. When one makes a work of art deserving of the attention generally lavished on art, one only makes it to think a tiny bit (*inframince*) more clearly about something.[64] Will we ever see a urinal the same, again? Or a waterfall? Or a Spanish door?

Étant donnés

In fact, we missed the *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés* show at the PMA in 2009. Having lived with *Étant donnés* for over 20 years, we were not compelled to brave the crowds of people who would be attracted by an exhibition organized to showcase a single work of art. We took up residence in Philadelphia just two years after the 15-year moratorium on reproductions

of the interior of Duchamp's installation was lifted. Many, perhaps most, of those who attended the PMA show would have seen reproductions of the interior of Duchamp's installation prior to peeping in on it through the holes in the door that make up part of the work's exterior. What many of those who attended the exhibit saw through the peepholes, then, only more or less confirmed what they expected to find there. For them, perception was recognition. They perceived the work in much the same way as they perceive the world. It is rare when what we perceive is not something we recognize from a prior acquaintance. Our first view of *Étant donnés*, however, was unmediated by a prior acquaintance with its hidden contents. We knew there was something to see on the other side of the door, perhaps even that it would be strange or "disturbing," but little more. We did not know, specifically, having seen it, that it would be something we would not be able to "unsee."[65]

Anyone who has spent time with *Étant donnés* will tell you that reproductions of the interior fundamentally misconstrue the work. There is just no way to reproduce this n-dimensional work of art in a two-dimensional photograph of it. Even multiple photographs that would include views of the anteroom where we find the door, the door seen at a distance and up close, a view of the mask that has formed around the peepholes from patrons pressing their face against the door to look inside, as well as views of the details that compose what is on the other side of that door, all of these views if they could be taken together would not add up to a view of the whole. Photographic reproductions that reduce the work to its interior, in addition to flattening the diorama and, so, missing the dramatic foreshortening of the interior scene, also fail to capture the range of experience viewers have with the work. That experience comes in different forms, from the museum patron seeing the work for the first and only time to patrons who have spent years contemplating the work to those with a custodial responsibility for maintaining the work (who may also be patrons who have spent years contemplating it). The work is so enigmatic that there are museum patrons who, through an opening at the edge of the Duchamp Gallery, peer into the room with the large wooden door set in a brick frame and walk away thinking they have seen the work. Those who see it once and only once, even those who have consulted a catalog prior to visiting the museum, maybe still wonder what it is they have just seen.[66]

That was our first, unmediated experience with the work. We were startled, taken aback, looking away, wanting to see it again, not wanting to see it again, forcing ourselves to look at it again. We did not know what to think and, so, we really began to think. What was it we just saw? Did what we saw through the door include seeing the door that we could no longer see while peering through it? Why were we made to see whatever it was we saw in the way we were made to see it? We were not yet in a position to consider how we were being seen by those waiting their turn to peer through that door. We were simply caught up in the affect, the vivid feeling of what we had just seen, the searing imprint of it left on our mind's eye and that feeling,

being taken aback, giving us pause, gave us time, the time we took to think and colored that time and that thinking with an embodied but unspecified intensity. In this way, *Étant donnés* gave us the waterfall, the illuminating gas and . . . time.

Then we saw it again, and again and again, repeatedly for nearly 30 years. We took time with the work, taking note of the anteroom where you find the work, of the central position of the door on the far wall of that room, of the tendency of patrons waiting for their turn to peer through the door's peepholes queueing at the entrance to the room. Were these patrons acknowledging the room as part of the work? Were they giving space in that room for the experience of patrons ahead of them hoping to have that space for their experience? Some patrons do look quickly and leave abruptly. Some linger with the work. When there is not a queue, the room does provide a space to spend time thinking about what you have just seen or to provide a brief respite between successive viewings. To force an extended view of the work, we made a practice of peering through the peepholes long enough to identify as many as possible of the media said to be mixed in the production of *Étant donnés*:

> Exterior wooden door, iron nails (once used to insert into the peep holes, no longer a part of the work), bricks and stucco, interior bricks, velvet, wood, parchment over an armature of lead, steel, brass, synthetic putties and adhesives, aluminum sheet, welded steel wire, screen, and wood, Peg-Board, hair, oil paint, plastic, steel binder clips, plastic clothespins, twigs, leaves, glass, plywood, brass piano hinge, nails, screws, cotton, collotype prints, acrylic varnish, chalk, graphite, paper, cardboard, tape, pen ink, electric lights, gas lamp (Bec Auer type), foam rubber, cork, electric motor, cookie tin, and linoleum.[67]

We never found the piano hinge, but the exercise forced us to give extended attention to the interior of *Étant donnés*, and in our extended regard of the work as a whole certain key features of the work turned up for our increasingly skilled engagement with it, including small changes in the work resulting from the restoration and repairs made in preparation for the 2009 exhibition.

Before getting to the affordance that turned up for us in this way, let's pause to contemplate the work of art as it is presented. *Étant donnés* occupies two small rooms. The room on the other side of the door measures 83½ x 70 x 49 inches. In what we call the anteroom, a larger space, the would-be viewer enters from the back and to the left of the door that is the only object in that room. The wall plaque is immediately to the viewer's right. A cursory glance at this plaque will lead the viewer to note that the work consists of a Spanish door, bricks and stucco but also that long list of media just enumerated, which are not obviously included in the room. Nothing on the wall plaque instructs the viewer to attempt to see what is on the other side of that

door. If the viewer knows to look through the peepholes, or is motivated by some native curiosity, she will walk to the door, tripping the motion sensors to light up the scene on the other side of the door, press her face up against that door, maybe pressing a hand against it for stability, and look in on a scene that is no less macabre after countless viewings.

Through the door, our viewer, now a proper voyeur, will peer in on another scene. The peepholes are only a first filter. Through the peepholes, she finds herself in a meta-voyeuristic situation. She does not peep through an exterior door into an otherwise unexposed interior. She peeps, instead, into the scene of a view through the breach in a brick wall set back from that door onto an outdoor scene. So, before getting to the content of that outdoor scene, *Étant donnés* is structured to force us to become the voyeurs for art Duchamp thinks we are, to gratify our voyeurism with an iteration of the act, and to punish that act by confronting it with a gruesome image. About *Fountain*, the urinal he submitted to the First Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, Duchamp agreed that he did it "to throw it in their faces."[68] Is there something in *Étant donnés* that Duchamp wants to throw in our faces?

Duchamp does not reward the effort we have made to ignore the wall plaque and cross the room, to bend down or stretch up to peer through the door with a spectacle that would encourage us to repeat those ordeals. No, he shows us something that makes us think twice about ever undertaking those ordeals, again. Yet the work remains a source of interest and intrigue for scholars and general audiences alike. Scholarly treatment of *Étant donnés* predictably multiplied in the years after the moratorium on reproductions of the interior of the work was lifted.[69] This includes the interpretation by Rosalind Krauss, which draws on thoughts about voyeurism by Jean-Paul Sartre, who never saw the work or commented on it, and from writings by Jean-François Lyotard who may have made the trip to Philadelphia to see the work sometime before 1976.[70] Krauss maps Sartre's account of the voyeur caught from behind peeping through a keyhole onto our encounter with *Étant donnés*. In this way, she attempts to capture the experience of looking in on something forbidden and the feeling of being caught in the act. That feeling, Sartre calls it shame, results from an awareness that another has made the voyeur the object of her regard. The voyeur, who has made an object of the subject he sees through the keyhole, is made an object by the one who sees him, reducing him to shame.

On a busy day in the Duchamp Gallery, it may happen that a short queue forms waiting their turn to peer through the peepholes onto the interior scene. One senses their presence, but it is less shame—the museum is, after all, filled with nudes—than decorum or social grace that is felt. Aware, given the way the work is constructed, that the time we are taking with *Étant donnés* keeps others from taking time with the work, we are inclined to defer to waiting patrons, especially when we will have ample opportunities for spending time with the work on other occasions. From Lyotard, Krauss

draws the more useful conception of *Étant donnés* as "a kind of optical machine through which it is impossible *not* to see."[71] According to Lyotard, in this optical machine, the viewing point and the vanishing point, ordinarily geometrically opposed to one another, are the same. On this model,

> the vanishing point, or goal of vision, is manifested by the dark interior of a bodily orifice . . . a physical rather than a geometrical limit to the reach of vision. And the viewing point [the peep holes] is likewise a hole: thick, inelegant, material.[72]

Krauss follows Lyotard in concluding that the destiny of our peeping eyes is the breach between the thighs of the reclining nude figure. When our eyes see the vulva, "you can't fail to notice," "it's all you see," the eyes see themselves.[73]

However persuasive this view may be, we are consistently overwhelmed by readings like these with what is taken to be the uncontroversial subject of this work. Why are apparently erudite viewers or voyeurs taken in by what is calculated to spark the greatest controversy when what is most obvious may very well be intended to distract our attention from what is more interesting about the piece? What is so commonly construed as a "vulva" does not bear an obvious resemblance to any ordinary human anatomy. Where Lyotard sees "erect large labia," "tumescent small labia," "the gaping orifice of the vagina," and "even the swollen vestibulary bulbs around the lower commissure,"[74] we see something that more resembles the dehiscence formed around a wound than anything else. It looks to us as if something has been cut out between the legs of the figure in this scene and that the wound has failed to heal. It is as if Duchamp wanted to represent the evidence for castration anxiety. The little boy can only see his mother's sex as mutilated, not as what it is, because in it he sees what will become of him if he contests his father for his mother's love. Still, even this view of *Étant donnés* depends on accepting that wound as the sole focus, the *raison d'être*, for all the elements assembled in the composition of that work of art.

Dalia Judovitz counts the nude figure and the landscape as two hinges on which the references to sexuality in *Étant donnés* hang, but her focus remains on the sexual explicitness and excessive realism of the image of the nude seen through the peepholes in the door.[75] This excess, "hyperrealism" she calls it, breaks up the voyeuristic equation of sight and pleasure in the visual experience of the work. What Krauss describes as shame Judovitz attributes to the objectification not of the voyeur but of the presuppositions (the givens you might say) that govern visibility in general. The image, she writes, " 'unmakes' its viewer. The authority and the legitimacy that Western 'retinal' painting confers on its spectator are here undone, because the blatant sexuality of the image challenges the act of looking."[76] Judovitz refers to drawings Duchamp made while working on *Étant donnés—Morceau choisis d'après Courbet* (*Selected Details After Courbet*) (1968) and *The*

Figure 4.3 Marcel Duchamp. *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)* 1934. Ninety-four facsimiles of manuscript notes, drawings and photographs, and one original manuscript item, Broyeuse de Chocolat, contained in a cardboard box with punched holes forming the title, attached copper strips on front and back covers and green-flocked interior. Box: 13 1/16 x 11 x 1 inches (33.2 x 27.9 x 2.5 cm). The Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, 1950–134–986. © Association Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/ARS, New York 2018

Bec Auer (1968)—as documents of "the failure of the male gaze to penetrate or objectify the notion of sexuality"[77] and suggests that the "reality" of the scene in *Étant donnés* emerges as a mere decoy, "an object simulating the illusions of life by acting mechanically as lifelike."[78]

Nevertheless, Judovitz dedicates the balance of her 1995 treatment of *Étant donnés* to a discussion of the sexuality of the nude figure.[79] This sexuality is characterized as androgynous, but the mechanical manner of the nude's presentation is said to render her "dead" and, by comparison with the nude figure in René Magritte's *L'Assassin menacé* (*The Threatened Assassin*) (1926), a "dead nude," the coincidence of Eros and Thanatos, sex and death.[80] The eroticism of *Étant donnés*, on this reading, derives from its lifelike staging of life "more successfully than life itself."[81] Here we appear to have two examples of the *inframince*: masculinity and femininity set not in opposition to one another but in conjunction, and art giving us a look at life that brings out something we would not recognize otherwise. Judovitz opens her discussion of the *inframince* with a consideration of molds in

Duchamp's work. She quotes Anne d'Harnoncourt on the "paradox" of the mold, "of an impression taken from life, captured in lifeless material [that] works to create a form of realism that seems highly artificial, so intimately related to the real thing and yet so remote."[82] The most important mold in *Étant donnés* is, for Judovitz, the mold for the nude, formed primarily from the body of Duchamp's lover from 1946 to 1951, Maria Martins.[83] For Judovitz, the central paradox of *Étant donnés*, the *inframince*, is a form of realism, an illusion of life, artificially, mechanically, acting like a form of life, and the centerpiece of this hyperrealism is the nude.

For our part, however, we are struck by the utter irreality or artificiality of this scene. Nothing here looks like life. Neither does it look like death. What might otherwise be construed as a window onto a world, in light of Duchamp's stated aversion to the history and tradition of painting, looks rather like the effect of a forced encounter between a voyeur and the spectacle the voyeur enacts by his actions. The voyeur does not see here what he hopes to see. He sees what he fears he might see. A voyeur, in general, sees the world in terms of the opportunities it affords his lurid intentions. The target of his intentions, something as ordinary as a man or woman undressing, is eroticized by his peeping. His voyeurism makes this man or woman a spectacle for him. In *Étant donnés*, the spectacle is eroticized in advance, and that eroticism is thrown in the face of the voyeur. That eroticism is not intended to reward the voyeur. It stages a confrontation with him. "This spectacle is the n-dimensional aim of your lurid ambitions," we might imagine Duchamp saying, and the voyeur he is addressing, here, is the general audience for art.

What the audience for art sees as art is elevated by the attention the audience gives it. That attention is characterized by the skills audiences have acquired and honed in their encounters with art. *Étant donnés* does not give its audience what their skills have prepared them to see. It turns those skills against them. It makes what they count as art an unwanted fetish. Something as ordinary and regularly revered in art as the nude female is made an optically unappealing lure, and *Étant donnés* makes its audience work to be taken in by it. As we see it, Duchamp has constructed the viewing point as two peepholes set at such a distance from one another, through such a thickness of wood, over such a fitfully perspectival landscape that the privilege of binocular vision is occluded or challenged. It is not easy to find a single vanishing point or find a single viewing point in this construction. A simple experiment performed with the work, closing one eye and then the other while peering through peepholes, shows that there are things seen through one of the holes that are not seen through the other. Precisely what things no doubt varies for different voyeurs, varies with differences in their embodiment—are they taller or shorter, older or younger, more male or more female, far-sighted or near-sighted, wearing glasses or not—and with differences in the specific skills they have acquired and refined for engaging works of art. In every case, what each specific viewer/voyeur sees not just

through the peepholes but especially through the peepholes will be achieved or enacted by her or his own experience.

On a traditional theory of perception, a "snapshot conception of seeing," this optical situation would not be considered unusual.[84] It just heightens the circumstances of ordinary vision in which the mind produces a single, stable representation of the world from inverted, non-identical, flitting or saccadic data collected on two retinas. Conflicts resulting from differently sourced data are resolved in the visual cortex, which makes a single, stable whole from the otherwise partial, binary views. On an ecological philosophy of mind, however, in which we are dynamically engaged in the world around us, perception is a fragile achievement of the thoughtful exploration of that world.[85] Perception is active, not receptive, an achievement not a recognition. It is a skilled engagement with an environment full of things, affects, ideas and other active perceivers, as well. On this enactive philosophy of mind, perception enacts the world as a field of affordances for acting in the world. On this view, the art patron, the voyeur, enacts a world of art that affords his actions in that art world. If he sees himself in the wound, it is not because of a coincidence of the viewing and vanishing point but because he has engaged his skills as a patron of the arts to achieve or enact this "breach."

This ecological view makes better sense of our experience with *Étant donnés*. The spacing of the holes, the arrangement of the objects in the diorama and the artificial perspective situation produces a challenge for a thoughtful exploration of the work and highlights the thoughtfulness required to appreciate it. What we conceive as taking place behind that bolted door, on a traditional view of perception and from the point of view of aesthetic theory and a long history of looking at works of art, may be a viewing point that is impossibly coincident with a vanishing point. What we can realize, instead, on an ecological and enactive theory of perception, precisely as we struggle to fix our gaze on any single point in this *mise en scène*, is how the aberrant series of details we attribute to this work does not readily resolve, how *Étant donnés* gives nothing, except perhaps the waterfall, the illuminating gas and, in a very different way, again, the time it takes to engage it. We already noted the time it takes to wait our turn to view the work and the time we take to feel and think about the work. Here we note that it takes time for our eyes, each of them, to skillfully negotiate the perspective divide, for the one to seduce the other into contributing a detail that gets immediately absorbed into another detail, crossing back and forth, in an attempt to see what is otherwise hidden from us. Having seen reproductions of the interior, we can attempt to recognize the scene in the fragmented details of it we get by looking through the peepholes. To really see it, however, to see it for ourselves, we must enact or achieve what is visibly hidden there and, at the same time, spilling out from the other side of the brick barriers. In the time it takes to thoughtfully explore this scene, we only successfully index the contents and enact, piece by piece, series of contiguities whose thick intersection

becomes *Étant donnés*, on the basis of which *Étant donnés* gives nothing but the time we take to thoughtfully explore and think with it.

One thing that turned up for our thoughtful exploration of the work in our experience of it after the 2009 exhibition was the smell of the door. We have associated *Étant donnés* for the longest time with the smell of molding wood. As you press your face to the door to peep through the holes, there is a notch between the doors that conveniently accommodates your nose. An indication that a sense of smell should be included in the appreciation of the work is found in Gianfranco Baruchello's identification of the smell of the wood with the scent of stale sperm.[86] We missed that smell in recent experiences with the work. Michael Taylor tells us that the door was cleaned in preparation for the 2009 exhibition. We anticipate that the smell of mold will return to the door. Whether it really smells of stale sperm (or how we could confirm such a claim) is not the point. The point is that the experience of *Étant donnés* is not limited to what we see on the other side of that door. It includes waiting our turn to peer through the door, the visual perspective forced by the construction of the piece, the smell of the door, the sense of others waiting behind you to take their turn, the difficulty of seeing what is on the other side of the door, the affect felt by enacting or achieving what is behind that door and the space of the room you step back into after seeing what you could and taking time to think.

Which Leaves Us with the Givens

Molly Nesbit's contribution to the Forestay Waterfall Symposium is printed in a section of the volume produced from papers presented at that event given the title "Drinking Black Coffee:" it is the only essay in that section.[87] The reference to coffee is obscure but relevant to our concerns. Nesbit refers us to comments made by Otto Neurath as part of a critique of Max Weber's studies of society. "Empathy, understanding and the like may help the research worker," Neurath wrote, "but they enter the totality of scientific statements as little as a good cup of coffee which also furthers a scholar in his work."[88] Neurath was one of the Vienna Circle scholars who sought to expose traditional philosophical problems as pseudo-problems and to transform them into questions subject to the empirical judgments of experimental science. Nesbit conjectures that Neurath was referencing Poincaré's claiming to have been inspired, late at night, by having drunk black coffee. "The idea about coffee," Nesbit suggests, "interferes with the standard machinery of logic; it introduces a break—it is another way of saying that in the beginning there were givens that escaped."[89] Neurath seems to have in mind, however, if Poincaré is indeed his reference, the idea that coffee sustains a rigorous attention to the real, empirical problems worthy of a scholar's scientific scrutiny. Nesbit appears to have in mind, instead, Duchamp's remark that black coffee escapes the tautologies to which logic reduces everything metaphysical, "because the senses are in control! The

eyes see the black coffee, the senses are in control, it's a truth; but the rest is always tautology."[90] Black coffee, used as a stimulant, inspires Poincaré to see his science and logic through to the end. Black coffee in its sensible, empirical manifestation otherwise points Duchamp beyond logic, beyond tautology.

Tautology is an abyss. It is inspired by the intuition that everything in the conclusion of a sound logical argument must be already contained in the premises. Nesbit claims that Duchamp was fascinated by the abyss of tautology from the time of the *Large Glass*.[91] She also connects Duchamp's fascination with tautology to his concerns with the *inframince*. If tautology was an abyss, the only truths were experiential, like the warmth left on the seat of a chair by someone who has just got up from it.[92] This sensation, however, like the sense that the coffee is black, escapes understanding. Nesbit draws this observation into a discussion of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*, which is not our concern. We are interested, however, with Nesbit's remark that black intuition took the place of the *inframince* in Duchamp's thinking about art, that the black in the *Rotoreliefs* pulled between the senses. "They make a hinge at the end of the mind. It swung outward and never closed."[93] These observations give us a view on the givens in *Étant donnés* that lead us to something more that an openness to what the work might mean.

In the first place, they take us back to the premises that have been guiding our appreciations of art in this volume as a whole. Any theory imposed from without, ignoring what is sensibly given, can only fall into the abyss of unproductive nonsense. Theory sees only more theory, sees only itself. This is true whether it is a theory of art, a theory of the arts or a theory of an art. We have insisted that we start with what is given, the work of art in front of us, with what is sensible and subject to the situation governing the empirical reception of what is given in that work of art. The peephole structure of *Étant donnés* dramatizes this situation. We are forced to make a scene of our looking at a scene on the other side of the breach in a brick wall. We must take up a peculiar posture, adapt our bodies to the inelegant holes in the door, make ourselves a sight for those waiting behind us to do the same. The feeling that the time we take with the work precludes others from taking time with the work also emphasizes this situation. Lyotard is correct in this respect: *Étant donnés* is an optical machine that makes it imperative that we look, and when we look it is impossible to not see.

What we see, when we look, is the vellum covered mold of the nude figure unnaturally close to the hole in a brick wall. We've discussed the wound between the splayed thighs of the figure but not yet the way the location of the peepholes and the position of the nude force our gaze down on this wound. We have also mentioned the androgyny of the figure but not yet the way this results in part from the mold of the left arm being cast from a different body, the body of Duchamp's second wife, Teeny, after the first arm broke. The left hand, in particular, appears unsuitably large in comparison with the body to which it is attached, and that left hand holds the lamp, the

illuminating gas. What in the *Large Glass* was given allegorically as part of the Bachelor machine and manifest in the trait pushed along the capillary tubes and spilling out in a retail fog is given sensibly in *Étant donnés*. When we look, what we see is a gas lamp of a specific type, the Bec Auer, powered by electricity, not gas, which illuminates a frosted bulb painted light green to simulate the soft glow of gas light.[94] The reference to the Bec Auer calls attention to advertisements for the lamps made by the Belgian lighting company, which featured barely dressed young women holding the phallic incandescent burners in what has been described as a "moment of erotic surprise."[95] Whether these advertisements that appeared at the turn of the 20th century were an inspiration for Duchamp's adolescent onanistic pleasures,[96] in the artificial daylight flooding the interior scene of *Étant donnés*, it gives us a sensible reminder of the way gas lighting changed the diurnal rhythms of human life. The proliferation of gas (and soon afterward electric) lighting made it possible for human beings to ignore the rhythms of the rising and setting sun, to separate from nature, including, perhaps, their own human nature. In any case, here, it is only one of the sensibly, experiential givens in this tableau.

The other specifically named given is, of course, the waterfall. The waterfall in *Étant donnés* is given in two parts: the background landscape derived from photographs taken of the Forestay Waterfall at Bellevue near Chexbres, Switzerland, on the one hand, and the shimmering apparition created by a perforated wheel turning in front of a fluorescent lamp housed in a Peek Freans biscuit tin, on the other. What have been mistakenly described as gelatin silver photographs in that background landscape are now known to be a collage of collotype prints composed of fragments cut from enlargements of the photographs Duchamp took of the Forestay Waterfall at Bellevue in 1946.[97] In fact, Duchamp made two landscapes using this photocollage technique. In the first, from 1946, he developed the methods for the placement and layering of the photographic fragments he would deploy in composing the more ambitious backdrop for *Étant donnés* beginning in the early to the middle 1950s.[98] For the later work, Duchamp used 12 photographic fragments from enlargements of two of seven photographs. In addition, this later work does not include any images of the buildings that can be found in the original photographs or in the 1946 study. In fact, Duchamp excludes all elements of human construction, including a church steeple visible on the horizon in one photograph. "Instead, he expanded the collage by repeating specific natural elements—trees, bushes, and foliage—primarily along the horizontal axis . . . in anticipation of the dimensions of the final tableau-construction."[99] Derived from enlargements of black-and-white photographs, the collage was hand-colored with oil paint based on notes Duchamp took during his 1946 visit to achieve the final effect of the backdrop for *Étant donnés*. What Duchamp achieves (or enacts) in this way is not a representation of a landscape but the creation of an element that plays into the overall presentation of the tableau-construction.

The other part of the waterfall is fabricated by the assemblage of a biscuit tin and a motor-driven rotating disk documented in the *Manual of Instructions for Marcel Duchamp Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage*.[100] Produced by Duchamp to assist in moving the tableau-construction from the 14th floor, 80 East 11th Street commercial office space where he completed the work to its permanent installation in the PMA, the *Manual of Instructions* was published by the PMA on the 100th anniversary of Duchamp's birth. This assemblage, the biscuit tin and rotating disk, which is a part of the work not seen but realized as an effect, adds to the tableau-construction of *Étant donnés* an element that moves and makes a sound. Positioned to the right and just below the lamp, on the same plane as the nude figure's left hand, the shimmering light and the sound of the wheel turning in front of the fluorescent lamp attract the eye of the viewer/voyeur. This element complicates the attention a skilled observer gives to the work. Flitting from the wound to the shimmering light, which is set too far back of the nude figure, to the lamp to the wound that appears too foreshortened, straining to see around the brick barrier to the head covered in hair to the bed of sticks back to the shimmering light and so on, the saccadic movement of the skilled observer's eyes struggles to take in the scene. Again, if we don't come to the work with some preconceived idea of what to think of it or what to think of Duchamp, given what we see in front of us, we don't know what to think.

How can we be worthy of this encounter with *Étant donnés*? It is not a question of having a commendable moral character but of bringing to the work what will bring out the best in it and the best in us. How, on these terms, can we be most worthy of our encounter with *Étant donnés*? It is a matter of becoming a skilled apprentice in the art of this particular work of art. If we compare it, again, to the encounter of a problem in chess—given the position on the board of precisely these pieces, mate in so many moves—we are worthy of this encounter to the extent that we have studied the history of these gambits. Given what we know, the choice we make will reflect our preparation for "innumerable eccentricities" that might arise in our attempted endgame. Given the waterfall, the illuminating gas, what are we to think that will not lead us into the abyss of tautology? What are we to think that will allow us to notice (perhaps nothing) the *inframince* difference between art and the commonplace in what is given to us here? This can be compared to the situation we encounter in life. Given what we know, apart from the tautologies of logic and metaphysics, the abyss of science and religion, given the situation as it presents itself, how will we choose to act? This is the point of the ellipsis in the title to Duchamp's last work. In the face of what is given, how will we choose to act? Duchamp lived frugally to give himself "a choice of Possibilities," to give himself choices with which he could live. Duchamp chose art as a *modus vivendi*, a way of life, a way of thinking when you don't know what to think and gave us something to think with him.

Marcel Duchamp worked on *Étant donnés* for 20 years, including the time he spent preparing the *Manual of Instructions* for the disassembly and reassembling of his "*approximation démontable*" executed between 1946 and 1966 in New York. That we are still thinking about this work testifies to the demands that the time of the studio makes on the time for thought. Duchamp thought that a work of art lives and dies just as people do.[101] On the one hand, what gives art life, Duchamp thinks, is mediocrity, because the vast audience for art is only capable of this level of engagement. On the other hand, exceptional works of art require a level of engagement that is accomplished and rarified, and the life of this art will be equally accomplished and rare. With *Étant donnés*, Duchamp aspires to this rare accomplishment in art, and, for us, he has succeeded in this aspiration.

Notes

1 Michael R. Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés,* with essays by Andrew Lins, Melissa S. Meighan, and Beth A. Price, Ken Sutherland, Scott Homolka and Elena Torok (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009).
2 Hans Maria de Wolf, "Beyond Swiss Cheese and Bullet Holes—Part II: And Some Other Elements in Duchamp's Notorious Endspiel, Étant donnés," in *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall: Symposium—Concert—Intervention—Exhibitions*, ed. Stefan Banz (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2010), 172.
3 Marcel Duchamp quoted in Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, with an appreciation by Jasper Johns (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 42–43.
4 Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 111.
5 Molly Nesbit, "The Hinge at the End of the Mind: Duchamp's Work in Progress," in *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*, 278–293.
6 Jasper Johns, quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1980), 276.
7 Stefan Banz, "Paysage fautif: Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall," in *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*.
8 Banz, "Paysage fautif," 30.
9 Banz, "Paysage fautif," 38.
10 Banz, "Paysage fautif," 50.
11 Banz, "Paysage fautif," 49.
12 Dominique Radrizzani says Duchamp could not have seen the Courbet before his visit to the Lacan country home. Radrizzani, " 'The lake changes its dress every hour': Marcel Duchamp in Vevey," in *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*, 61. Whether Duchamp even saw it then is not at all certain.
13 Marcel Duchamp, "Where Do We Go From Here?" Remarks at a symposium at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art, 20 March 1961, trans. Helen Meakins, Studio International 189 (January–February 1975), 28.
14 "BBC Interview with Marcel Duchamp." *The Late Show Line Up*, BBC Television Post-Production Center, London; interview conducted by Joan Blackwell, 5 June 1968, in Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999).
15 James Johnson Sweeney, "Eleven Europeans in America," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 13, no. 4–5 (1946).
16 Duchamp, "Where Do We Go From Here?" 28.
17 Sweeney, "Eleven Europeans," 20.

18 Stefan Banz, "Paysage fautif," 34.
19 Stefan Banz, "Paysage fautif," 35.
20 Michel Foucault, "Las Meninas," *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970), 3–16. See also John M. Carvalho, "The Visible and the Invisible in Merleau-Ponty and Foucault," *International Studies in Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (1993): 35–46.
21 Stefan Banz, "Paysage fautif," 35.
22 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 43.
23 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 18.
24 Duchamp quoted by Winthrop Sargeant, "Dada's Daddy," *Life Magazine* 22 (28 April 1952), 100–111.
25 Marcel Duchamp, "Life Is a Game: Life Is Art," interviewed by Jean Antoine, *The Art Newspaper* 27, trans. Sue Rose (4 January 1993).
26 Ibid.
27 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 19.
28 Wolf, "Beyond Swiss Cheese and Bullet Holes," 172.
29 Marcel Duchamp, "Life Is a Game: Life Is Art," interviewed by Jean Antoine, *The Art Newspaper* 27, trans. Sue Rose (4 January 1993).
30 *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, a typographical version by Richard Hamilton of Marcel Duchap's *Green Box*, trans. George Herbert Hamilton (New York: Jaap Tietman Inc., Art Books, 1960).
31 In all of the formulas from the *Green Box* reproduced here Duchamp's typographical idiosyncrasies have been preserved as much as possible.
32 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 42.
33 Ibid.
34 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 42–43.
35 Carlos Basualdo, *Philadelphia Museum of Art: Handbook* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2014), 340–341.
36 Paul Thirkell, "From the Green Box to Typo/Topography: Duchamp and Hamilton's Dialogue in Print," *Tate Papers* no. 3 (Spring 2005), unnumbered pages.
37 Ibid.
38 Arthur Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).
39 Paul Thirkell, "From the Green Box to Typo/Topography."
40 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 75.
41 Basualdo, *Philadelphia*, 340–341.
42 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 37, 39.
43 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 31.
44 It may help to compare Duchamp's idea for the Box complementing the Glass with Jacques Derrida's concept of the supplement in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). A supplement, in Derrida's deconstruction, is something that appears to be secondary coming to the aid of something purporting to be primary, which itself is already secondary. Writing, for example, appears to supplement speech, but speech already supplements language, and in writing, we find better the displacements, the differences and the differential relations that are fundamental to language. Conceiving the Box as such a supplement to the Glass would make it a potential key to what the Glass itself is trying to decipher, but for Duchamp there is nothing to decipher. "There is no solution because there is no problem," Duchamp says. For Duchamp, the Box complements the Glass just in case we consult the Box in our contemplation of the Glass, and the Glass complements the Box by giving references for what is described in that Box. This reciprocal relation does not obtain with the Derridean supplement as is shown in the

example of masturbation (*Of Grammatology*, 155). Far from being a supplement for sex, Derrida says masturbation is originary, the presence to ourselves that we represent in our sexual relations with others. In the fantastical narrative of *The Large Glass*, the bachelors' auto-affection (masturbation) is inspired by the Bride's voluntary stripping. The presence of the Bride to the bachelors is, indeed, an absence (she is blocked from them by her clothes on the horizon of her share of the Glass and, on their share, by the gilled cooler and the isolating plates), and the bachelors' desire is represented to the Bride in the nine shots. The Box, however, is not an auto-affection in relation to the Glass, and whatever is present/absent on the Glass will only perversely have anything to do with sex.

45 Richard Hamilton's typography of the Glass based on the Box puts the waterfall in the bachelor's domain, and that is where the waterfall functions (turning the water wheel or mill), but that waterfall originates in the Bride's domain on our account of it.

46 Responding to a question about the meaning of "even" in the titles given the Glass and the Box, Duchamp says he had come to be interested in words, and the bringing together of words to which he added a comma and "even," "an adverb which makes no sense, since it relates to nothing in the picture or the title. . . . This 'antisense' interested me a lot on the poetic level" (Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 40).

47 Jean-François Lyotard, *Duchamp's TRANS/formers*, trans. Ian McLeod (Venice, CA: The Lapis Press, 1990), 99.

48 Ibid.

49 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lang (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

50 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacque-Allain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), "The Unconscious and Repetition," 17–67.

51 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 2.

52 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 18. Carrouges also turns up in Duchamp's interview with Cabanne in connection with Carrouges description of the Large Glass as a "negation of woman." Duchamp agrees that the Glass realizes the negation of woman in the social sense—woman as wife and mother—but not of woman as the hetero-normative object of a man's desire.

53 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 16.

54 Ibid.

55 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 17.

56 This body is closest to degree zero in utero. Deleuze and Guattari write, "The body without organs is an egg: it is crisscrossed with axes and thresholds, with latitudes and longitudes and geodesic lines, traversed by gradients marking the transitions and becomings, the destinations of the subject developing along these particular vectors" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 19). As it matures, as it makes connections, records them and consumes the fruits of these connections, this body without organs is ground zero for future connections, which it repels (primary repression) when it feels threatened and for the formation of subject positions gleaned from the connections it has made.

57 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 18.

58 See Craig E. Adcock, *Marcel Duchamp's Notes from the Large Glass: An N-Dimensional Analysis* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) as well as Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press,

1994), 110–118. A weaker argument would wager that the conception and execution of Rube Goldberg's intricately designed machines that performed simple tasks in response to the performances of previous tasks prefigure the movement through time of Duchamp's Glass, mapping a narrative reading of it.

59 Duchamp tells Cabanne that eroticism "was the basis of everything I was doing at the time of the 'Large Glass.'" It remained disguised, "but not disguised out of shame," hidden, underlying.

60 Marcel Duchamp, "Life Is a Game: Life Is Art," interviewed by Jean Antoine.

61 Ibid.

62 Herman Parret, "Le corps selon Duchamp," *Protée* 28, no. 3 (2000): 93 www.erudit.org/fr/revues/pr/2000-v28-n3-pr2784/030608ar/ (12 March 2018) citing Marcel Duchamp, *Notes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 19–47.

63 Antoine, "Life Is a Game: Art Is Life."

64 Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1991), 382.

65 Unauthorized reproductions of the interior were available prior to 1986, but as unauthorized they were not taken to be a reliable representation of what there was to see on the other side of the door. As we go on to say, in fact, they were not reliable.

66 And if you fail to look through the peepholes (or if you look only once and quickly look away), have you failed to see the work of art? If not, what questions does that raise about what we experience when we experience a work of art? Are we going to allow that the one who looks into the ante-room, sees the door, perhaps looks at the wall plaque and walks away experiences the same work of art as the one who peers patiently and persistently through the holes bored in the same door? But if that holds, and Duchamp would likely insist on it, then the subject of Étant donnés (and of the Glass) is the *inframince* difference between how people respond to "works of art" and how they respond to everything else with the expression "works of art" picking out whatever these people take to be a work of art and nothing more.

67 This catalogue is taken from the PMA wall plaque. It is now known that it is vellum and not parchment that covers the armature of the nude figure.

68 See Thomas Gist, "(Ab)Using Marcel Duchamp: The Concept of the Readymade in Postwar and Contemporary American Art," *tout-fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* 2, no. 5 (April 2003) and "Duchamp," in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), 207–208.

69 As Michael Taylor notes, unauthorized photographs of the interior of the work circulated shortly after it was installed and appeared in the second edition of Arturo Schwartz's *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Abrams, 1970) and a stereoscopic projection of the interior scene was authorized by the PMA for inclusion in a Centre Georges Pompidou retrospective of Duchamp's work in Paris, 1976. The PMA briefly considered lifting the ban on photographic reproductions of the work, but voted in 1976 to uphold it (Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, 156–160).

70 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 252–302; Jean-François Lyotard, *Duchamp's TRANS/formers*, trans. Ian McLeod (Leuven, BE: Leuven University Press, 2010), 48–75.

71 Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 112.

72 Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 113.

73 Lyotard, *Duchamp's TRANS/formers*, 193.

74 Ibid.

75 Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 205. See also Dalia Judovitz, "Landscape as Ironic Causality in Duchamp's Étant donnés," in Banz, ed., *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*, 86–97 and "Epilogue," in Lyotard, *Duchamp's TRANS/formers*, 239–255.

76 Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 204.
77 Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 208.
78 Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 209.
79 In her contribution to the Forestay Waterfall collection, Judovitz comments on the ironic causality (cos alités) of the landscape in Étant donnés, "Landscape as Ironic Causality in Duchamp's Étant donnés," *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*, 86–97.
80 Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 205.
81 Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 209.
82 Anne d'Harnoncourt and Walter Hopps, *Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage: Reflections on a New Work by Marcel Duchamp* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987), 37, cited in Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 215.
83 Melissa S. Meighan, "A Technical Discussion of the Figure in Marcel Duchamp's Étant donnés," in Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, 242–244.
84 See Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997) and David Marr, *Vision* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Sons, 1982).
85 See Alva Noë, *Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 91–96 and passim.
86 Gianfranco Baruchello and Henry Martin, *Why Duchamp: As Essay in Aesthetic Impact*, (New York: McPherson & Co., 1985).
87 Nesbit's essay is titled "The Hinge at the End of the Mind: Duchamp's Work in Progress," Banz, ed. *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*, 278–293.
88 Otto Neurath, *Empiricism and Sociology*, ed. Marie Neurath and Robert S. Cohen (Boston: D. Riedel Publishing Co., 1973), 357; cited by Nesbit, "The Hinge at the End of the Mind," 283.
89 Nesbit, "The Hinge at the End of the Mind," 283–284.
90 Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 107.
91 Nesbit, "The Hinge at the End of the Mind," 279.
92 Nesbit, "The Hinge at the End of the Mind," 285.
93 Nesbit, "The Hinge at the End of the Mind," 290.
94 Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, 77. See also Marcel Duchamp, *Manual of Instructions: Étant donnés: 1⁰ la chute d'eau, 2⁰ le gaz d'éclairage*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), 20.
95 Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, 77.
96 Ibid.
97 Beth A. Price, Ken Sutherland, Scott Homolka and Elena Torok, "Evolution of the Landscape: The Materials and Methods of the Étant donnés Backdrop," in Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, 263–264.
98 Price et al., "Evolution of the Landscape," 266.
99 Price et al., "Evolution of the Landscape," 266–267.
100 Duchamp, *Manual of Instructions*, 6–9.
101 Antoine, "Life Is a Game: Life Is Art."

5 *Le Mépris* or *Contempt*, a Film by Jean-Luc Godard

In June 1997, Rialto Pictures, with the imprimatur of Martin Scorsese, re-released Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film, *Le Mépris*, first seen on a big screen in the United States in October 1964 and not seen in theaters there since December of that same year. Godard's film was not well received by U.S. audiences upon its initial release. Bosley Crowther writing for the *New York Times* said that "it would seem that he [Godard] could put his talents to more intelligent and illuminating use than he has been doing in his recent pictures—especially *Contempt*" (as the film was titled in the United States).[1] *Le Mépris* was the fifth film by Godard to be seen on a silver screen in the United States.[2] *A bout de* soufle (*Breathless*, 1960) was screened in 1961. *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962) was screened in 1963. *Une femme est une femme* (*A Woman Is a Woman*, 1961) and *Band á part* (*A Band of Outsiders*, 1964) were both screened as part of the New York City Film Festival in September 1964. By "recent pictures" Crowther would appear to be referring to *Une femme est une femme* (1961) and *Band á part* (1964) screened just one month before *Le Mépris* opened at Lincoln Arts and basing his evaluation of Godard's talent and intelligence on *A bout de souffle* and *Vivre sa vie*.

The reception was quite a bit different in 1997. In a review of the re-release, Phillip Lopate, again on assignment for the *Times*, wrote,

> What makes "Contempt" a singular viewing today, even more than in 1963 [he is referring to the French premiere], is the way it stimulates an audience's intelligence as well as its senses. Complex and dense, it unapologetically accommodates discussion about Homer, Dante, and German Romantic poetry, meditations on the fate of cinema and the role of the gods in modern life, the creative process, the deployment of Cinemascope.[3]

For those of us who suffered with VHS tapes for so many years, the re-released film was a revelation. Whole sections of the image cropped by the pan-and-scan technique used to fit the film for television monitors were seen for the first time. The colors, now saturated and rich, were distinctive,

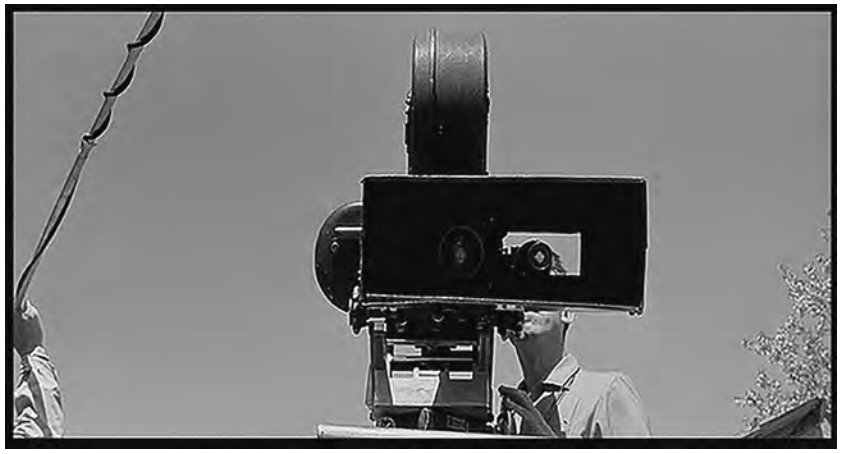

Figure 5.1 Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Mépris* (1963), film still

the soundtrack was clear, the subtitles were refined and, importantly, the original aspect ratio (2.35:1) was preserved. Twenty years after that re-release, *Le Mépris* still stands out among Godard's many, many films. Part of the story we want to tell here is how it happened that Godard's film came to be received so differently. We discuss the way *Le Mépris* adapts literature to film, the way it preserves sensations in color and sound, the way it tells a story about something indeterminate, an affect, *le mépris*, as it emerges out of the concrete realities of the Mediterranean Sea, its environs and the people who inhabit them. We also discuss how Godard, who once said, "To me, thinking about film and making them is no different," thinks with images and implores us to think with those images, to think because we do not know what to think.

Motion Pictures

My thinking with Godard began with a screening of *Suave qui peut (la vie)* (1980) as *Every Man for Himself* on 6 March 1981 at the Arcade Theater in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Godard appeared in person that night and answered questions after the film. The event was organized by the Department of Film and Video, Carnegie Museum of Art, the same one that mounted *Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals* 33 years later. I knew little about Godard and was just getting to know something about film at the time. I knew enough to know that Godard was important, and I was running in a crowd of graduate students who tried (vainly) to distinguish themselves by attending what they took to be obscure cultural events. *Suave qui peut* had only a limited release in the United States after

its appearance at the New York Film Festival in 1980. Switzerland nominated the film for an Academy Award as Best Foreign Film (Godard made the film there), but the nomination was not accepted and the film did not pick up distribution in the United States.[4] What I remember most vividly about my one experience with the film on a big screen is the use of a technique, Godard called it "decomposition," I describe it as variable speed slow motion, which slowed the image rhythmically to a freeze-frame before releasing its hold and letting the image return to normal speed. For someone who enjoys looking at film as much or more than becoming absorbed in the story, the effect, drawn from an attention to the image itself, was stunning.

With the exception of the 1997 screening of *Le Mépris*, which we saw twice, my acquaintance with Godard's films since *Suave qui peut* has largely been through VHS tapes and DVDs. Fortunately, through the efforts of the Criterion Collection since 1984 and the improvement of entertainment systems in the past 20 years, the home viewing experience has improved considerably. Still, there were decades when I viewed my favorite films, which never made it to a big screen near me, on television screens with a fixed 4:3 (1.33:1) aspect ratio playing rented VHS tapes. This arrangement, which made every film look the same (and look like television), was not so much a problem for films shot in the Academy standard aspect ratio of 11:8 (1.375:1), but as widescreen formats, beginning with Cinemascope in 1953 and aspect ratios of 5:3 (1.667:1) to 12:5 (2.39:1) came to dominate the motion picture industry, the result was an image trimmed at the edges that appeared taller than it would on a motion picture screen.[5] Letter-boxing on some VHS tapes helped retain some of the integrity of the image, but that integrity would only begin to be rescued when television monitors began to be manufactured as flat screens that could accommodate widescreen motion picture formats and DVDs became the dominant medium for sharing copies of films in 2003.[6]

The home viewing experience was and is still a compromise, however. Films are made to be seen on large screens in auditoria filled with people of all kinds. The collective reception of films, captured in shared laughter at humorous episodes, gasping at what scares or astonishes us, weeping at what moves us to tears, testifies to the social cognition that binds us to one another, in general, and that we witness as part of the motion picture viewing experience in particular. Yet, being able to view films on big screens only when and where it is calculated that maximal surplus value will be reaped from screening them, makes the home entertainment option attractive, even vital. At the same time, it changes the general viewing experience for film. In the home entertainment environment, the social context is preserved, to an extent, by the shared commerce and technology that make these films available for viewing on a small screen. It is also preserved in the shared conventions for viewing these films—ideally, we set aside time to view the film from beginning to end without interruption—in the conventions of shared public information about these films to be found in print and online

newspapers and magazines, as well as in the marketing and fan-based advertising devoted to glamorizing them. This social context is, however, virtual, a shared conception of that context, and not an actual part of the home entertainment viewing experience.

The home entertainment experience for viewing films invites comparison with listening to recorded music. Excepting the case of recordings of live performances, the music captured on LPs and CDs is made in a studio often, though not always, from patching together asynchronous performances of parts of the music engineered to produce a musical whole. What is true of a particular track of an LP or CD is manifestly true of the album as a whole, which is composed of tracks ordered to encourage the continuous attention of the listener. This compares to the way scenes in a film are composed from multiple takes and the film as a whole is composed by ordering those scenes to encourage the continuous attention of the viewer. Now if the LP or CD is to the listener what the big screen film is to the viewer, including all the ways auditing the recording of a film may be compromised by the quality of the playback technology and the environment in which the music or the movie is experienced, then the home entertainment experience of a film seems comparable to digital copies of the original recording. Of course, in our time, many films (most of them?) are viewed as streaming digital files.

That is, the distortions that result from compressing digital music files seems comparable to the distortions experienced by viewing something made to be projected on a big screen projected on one that is considerably smaller. It is also the case that for an increasingly large population of listeners and viewers, the compromised experience is taken to be the norm. There's more to be said about that phenomenon at another time. Those who still experience the difference, however, find their experience of these simulacra less than satisfying, though this seems less the case with film than music. The digital music file is a convenience. We can always in principle replace it with the analog copy. *Le Mépris* may be screening somewhere in the world at this moment, but I may not be able, even in principle, to get there in time. (When I can, of course, the event is something special.) In the case of film, the DVD is something more than a convenience, and yet, on the view I am advancing here, I would hesitate to write about a film I had not seen on the big screen.[7]

My aim in this chapter is to give an account of *Le Mépris* that will allow the reader to view and think about this film in ways she might not otherwise. We will look at Godard's contributions to C*ahiers du cinéma* in light of the claim that "instead of writing criticism" Godard "now films it." We will discuss the appropriation of the literary form of Moravia's novel, Homer and Hölderlin in the form of *Le Mépris*. We will not discuss the autobiography that others have thought is crucial for understanding the narrative of the film, the observation that Godard and Anna Karina were experiencing their own bout of *le mépris* at the time and that the film was a commentary on their relationship.[8] We will discuss the affective quality of

le mépris, this indefinite something that emerges from the concrete realities of the Mediterranean environs, and film, generally, as something indeterminate, a world that emerges from the concrete realities of making a film (the sets, the actors, the equipment, the money, the marketing, the politics and so on). We will, moreover, consider this indeterminate affect, what emerges, in *Le Mépris* and in film generally, as what creates the space and time for thinking, what forces us to think.

The Most Beautiful Fraud in the World

The affect that emerges in film, generally, and Godard's films, regularly, what forces or, better, invites us to think, is sometimes attributed to the effect of Berthold Brecht on Godard's filmmaking. (Godard includes a direct reference to Brecht in *Le Mépris*.) Godard does not make movies to lull us into complacency or simply to entertain us. Godard wants his movies to make you notice how they have been made. What you notice if you pay attention to the film in its making is not just the formal elements but the sheer artifice. "Cinema is the most beautiful fraud in the world," Godard once said. How did we get you to follow the story here? Why can you not keep your eyes off this beautiful woman or that gun? To what extent have we manipulated your expectations? Why have we manipulated them? What are we hoping that you notice? What are we trying to hide? What are we trying to say? Why do we want to say it? This is just the beginning of what Godard wants us to think when viewing his motion pictures, and then he wants us to ask, where are the answers to all these questions present in the cinematic images themselves?

These are the sorts of questions Godard asked and answered in the reviews of motion pictures he wrote for *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s. For example, in a 1957 review of Roger Vadim's *Sait-on jamais?* (1957) (screened in New York as *No Sun in Venice*, 1958), Godard quickly retells the narrative and then gets to the business of specifying the necessary and sufficient reasons for naming Vadim "the best of the young French directors working today."[9] It is necessary, Godard writes, because Vadim is "with it," up to date while his contemporaries are behind the times. Then, to find sufficient evidence for this claim, Godard looks at the film itself. Apart from the drama set in motion by the different attachments three men have to Sophie, a pretty woman "still desperately anxious to be thought of as a naughty girl," Godard opines that

> Vadim will become a great director because his scenes are never occasioned by a purely abstract or theoretical idea for a shot; rather, it is the *idea of a scene*, in other words a dramatic idea, which occasions the *idea of a shot*.[10]

When Vadim cuts the scene of Sophie just as she stands in the tub,

> it is because the whole of this scene and the next are constructed, not on the fact that Michel [her lover] is looking at Sophie in the bath, but on the fact that he already has looked at her and so is less interested in her body than in her thoughts.[11]

What is she thinking? What is Michel thinking? How does the image alert us to those thoughts?

We single this review out for attention because one year earlier, Vadim directed Brigitte Bardot, whom Godard would cast in *Le Mépris*, in *Et Dieu . . . créa la femme* (1956) (released in the United States as . . . *And God Created Woman* (1957)). Godard comments on *Et Dieu . . .* in his review of *Sait-on jamais?* to support his claim about Vadim's resolute modernity and to credit the camerawork of Armand Thirard, who was director of photography on both films. He describes the earlier film (*Et Dieu . . .*) as the work of an *auteur* and the later one (*Sait-on jamais?*) as the work "only of a director."[12] He also goes out of his way to describe Bardot, who plays the sexually attractive and promiscuous Juliette, the fantasy of every man she meets, as "a more engaging actress than Françoise Arnoul" who played the equally promiscuous Sophie in *Sait-on jamais?* Indeed, Bardot's performance in *Et Dieu . . .* established her as a star of French cinema. Seven years later, when shaping her role as Camille Javal in *Le Mépris*, Godard would work against the type she established in her early films. Godard observed this type in the image Bardot projected in Vadim's film but attributed this type to something Bardot lent to the image of her, something of Bardot, which emerged in that image (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Mépris* (1963), film still

In a December 1963 interview with Yvonne Baby printed in *Le Monde* on the day *le Mépris* was released in France, Godard credited Bardot, at first, with facilitating the making of the film. "Thanks to her," Godard told Baby, "everything suddenly became easy and everybody was delighted, including the Americans, or to be more exact, Joe Levine, who partly financed the whole affair and who had been guaranteed . . . the film would be 'very commercial.' "[13] In an interview with Jean Collet, for *Cinéma d'Aujourdhui*, in September of that same year, however, Godard spoke of the difficulties presented by working with Bardot on the film.[14]

> Paul Javal (played by Michel Piccoli) is the first of my characters who is realistic, whose psychology can justify itself . . . Bardot not at all. Her character came from what is Bardot. If I had had another actress for Camille Javal, the film would have had a much stronger psychological side to it. . . . With Anna [Karina], for example, the character would have been much deeper. For example, I would have been able to show the scene in the taxi as it is in the book, and with Anna I would have been able to show that she believes something other than we have seen. With Bardot it was not possible. Her nature is different.[15]

In this statement, we can read Godard's deep understanding of his actors and his way of thinking through the possibilities and the stumbling blocks presented by these actors. These opportunities and obstacles are physically embodied in the actors' very comportment. Godard describes *Le Mépris* as *A bout de souffle* but "made with different actors, so it came out entirely differently." Something different emerged from the elements these actors contributed to the narrative and the film. He credits Bardot with helping him make the film more musical and less grotesque. He describes the difference in working with a group rather than with individuals in making the film. "We have five survivors of a shipwreck," Godard says,[16] or, again, "shipwreck victims from a modern world landing on a mysterious island, Capri, where the water is blue, where there is sun, and where everything has to be reinvented, including the cinema."[17]

The *Odyssey* in Homer and Dante

Le Mépris translates and adapts for the screen *Il disprezzo*, Alberto Moravia's 1954 novel about a man and woman who fall out of love with one another or, rather, the story about a man who loves his wife but feels he is not loved by her in return.[18] The story revolves around the intimacies of four principle characters: Ricardo Molteni, a writer; his wife, Emilia; Batista, a film producer; and Reingold, the director hired by Batista to helm a film version of Homer's *Odyssey*. It is told exclusively from the point of view of Molteni, the husband, who reminds us incessantly, when he is not obsessing over why his wife has fallen out of love with him, that he is better suited to

writing drama for the theater than film scripts for the movies. Yet it is out of love for his wife or, rather, to suit his idea of what will inspire love for him in her, in particular, a home of her own, that he agrees to write film scripts for the money he needs to pay installments on a new apartment and a car.

Molteni is 27 years old. Emilia comes from a good family that has come on hard times after the Second World War. She is not well educated and working as a typist when she meets Ricardo. (In the novel, she is the only one to address him by his first name.) The *Odyssey* is not the first film script Molteni writes for Batista, but it is the script that makes the money he needs to pay off the apartment and secure, in his mind, what Emilia needs as a foundation of her love for him. At the same time, however, it is the job that takes him further from his dream of writing for the theater and, because he harbors a resentment of Emilia for being, again, in his mind, the cause of his taking this assignment, it is the job that drives a wedge between himself and Emilia. As much as he loves her, or says he loves her, Molteni also resents Emilia, but he resents himself as well for taking the assignment to suit her or to suit an idea of what she wants that is of his own making. When they first visit the apartment after committing to purchasing it, and Emilia passionately throws herself at him, Molteni takes it as confirmation of his supposition that Emilia was unhappy living in a furnished room, that she thought less of him for not being able to provide more and that she now truly loved him only because he had so provided something more. That love, however, was conditioned, in his mind, on Molteni taking on work he felt was beneath him. Molteni could not bring himself to see his own unhappiness as the cause of his feeling that Emilia no longer loved him.

Molteni obsesses, instead, with finding a sign and a reason for that lost love originating in Emilia herself. Did it start with his sending Emilia off in that two-seater sports car with Batista at the wheel? Molteni followed in a taxi that was waylaid by an accident, leaving Emilia and Batista alone for a time. Is that what precipitated Emilia's decision, on the first night in their new apartment, that she would sleep alone on the sofa in the next room on a regular basis? It's at that point, at least, that Molteni says he has a "feeling of the impossibility of contact and communion between my body and hers. It was a suspicion," he says, "which I had never felt before."[19] Molteni has the impression that something has changed, but Emilia denies it. Molteni presses. He insists. He interrogates Emilia incessantly until, finally, she says, "I despise you . . . that's the feeling I have for you, and that's the reason why I've stopped loving you. I despise you and you disgust me. There's the truth for you."[20] That won't, yet, be enough for Molteni.

At this point, Moravia interrupts the narrative to give us some background about Emilia, her lack of a good education, her family history, but, again, this is told from the point of view of Molteni, because now that he has the truth he wants to know *why* Emilia has fallen out of love with him. He presses her further but only succeeds in driving her farther from him

until, finally, she succumbs to what have only been the implied advances of Batista leaving Capri with him and leaving Molteni the following note:

> Dear Ricardo. Seeing that you do not want to go away, I am going myself. Perhaps I might not have had the courage to go all alone, but I am taking advantage of Batista's departure. And because I am afraid of being left alone, and Batista's company, after all, seems preferable to solitude. But in Rome I shall leave him and live on my own. However, if you hear that I have become Batista's mistress, don't be surprised. I'm not made of iron, and it will mean that I haven't been able to manage it and couldn't stand it. Good-bye. Emilia.[21]

In the final pages of the novel, Emilia returns to Molteni but only as an apparition. She has come to a fatal end in the passenger seat of Batista's car, and Molteni has written this story, Moravia tells us, to bring her back to him in an image of beauty and consolation.

The narrative of Ricardo and Emilia's lost love is paired by Moravia to the story of the love between Odysseus and Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*. If Molteni is Odysseus, and his waylaid taxi the parallel to Odysseus's interrupted sea journey, Batista would appear to be a suitor and Emilia's love and resolve is to be rewarded, on Homer's telling of the story, by Molteni's courage and cunning. Molteni is, however, neither courageous nor cunning. He does nothing to protect Emilia from Batista's advances. He seems rather to expose her to them. Yet Molteni is attracted to the connections between his life and the life of the figures from Homer's epic, at least as he understands that epic. The *Odyssey* enters the narrative because Batista believes a film about Odysseus's return from the war to Ithaca would be a commercial success. Having noticed that films with themes taken from the Bible have been highly successful, Rheingold, a German, has persuaded Batista that, for the Mediterranean people, "Homer is what the Bible is to the Anglo Saxons."[22] A film about Homer's epic, then, would arguably have the appeal to those people the Bible has for the others.

In considering this idea and re-reading the *Odyssey*, Batista says he has found something that is missing from current neo-realistic films, something Batista has the feeling "was needed in the cinema as it is needed in life—poetry."[23] True to his nature as a producer, however, what strikes Batista about Homer's poetry is that it is "always spectacular." He takes the story of Polyphemus, for example, the one-eyed Titan, to be comparable to "King Kong, one of the greatest pre-war successes."[24] Molteni, quickly surmising that this is not poetry as he understands it, is immediately reserved about taking on the project. His hesitation is assuaged and his excitement partly piqued by Rheingold's reassurance that apart from what Batista may want, they would make a preeminently psychological picture, a film based on the relationship between Odysseus and Penelope. "I intend to makes a film," Rheingold declares, "about a man who loves his wife and is not loved by her in return."[25] As he is about to protest it is not true that Penelope does

not love Odysseus, Molteni is drawn in by the parallel of this interpretation of the epic to his own life. He loves Emilia. Why does she no longer love him in return?

As it turns out, Rheingold's interpretation of the *Odyssey* is not psychological but psychoanalytic. He interprets Odysseus's sea journey as a wholly interior drama and a journey through Odysseus's unconscious mind. Molteni at first resists because of the way Rheingold's Freudian reading ignores what is literally stated in Homer's verse. Rheingold conjectures a "conjugal repugnance" between Odysseus and his wife, that Odysseus went to war to get away from Penelope and that he does not want to return home. Molteni wonders aloud why they are bothering to go to Capri to shoot a film about a man's mind. Instead, he offers, they are going to Capri to enter the world inhabited by Homer and described in his poetry, a real world emerging from the interaction of a bright-colored sea with a luminous sky along a deserted shore, home to a civilization "which developed in accordance with, not in antagonism to, nature." We should, Molteni says, accept this world as it is, "believing in it as Homer believed in it, literally, without going out of our way to look for hidden meanings."[26]

Ultimately, however, when he has made the decision to renege on his commitment to write the script for the film, Molteni invokes, by way of explanation, the "Ulysses canto" (Canto XXVI) in Dante's *Inferno*.[27] Moravia reports Molteni's recitation of the canto in fragments (210–211),[28] including the final stanza where Odysseus meets his tragic end, but omitting the stanzas that would seem to be pertinent to his story where Odysseus says

> Not fondness for my son, nor reverence
> For my old father, nor the due affection
> Which joyous should have made Penelope,
> Could overcome within me the desire
> I had to be experienced of the world,
> And of the vice and virtue of mankind;
> But I put forth on the high open sea
> With one sole ship, and that small company
> By which I never had been deserted.[29]

"This, Rheingold," Molteni declares, "this is the Ulysses I should have liked to create . . . this is how I see Ulysses."[30] The irony here, as Rheingold seems to appreciate, is that Dante's Ulysses, based on characterizations of the Greek hero by the Latin authors Virgil and Cicero, is quite different from Homer's Odysseus. Molteni had to this point been Homer's champion. Now he has apparently reverted to his Italian roots, and he confesses that he finds in Dante's verses "not merely the idea I had formed of the figure of Ulysses, but also of myself and of my life as it ought to have been and, alas, was not."[31] Molteni appears to concede, then, that his infatuation with Emilia and winning her love was misplaced and that he ought never have abandoned, whatever tragic results might follow, his quest for the knowledge

of human life he would have gained by writing for the theater. Moravia, for his part, uses Molteni and Dante to challenge the authority of the German interpretation of Odysseus and that of the ancient Greek poet.

"The Poet's Vocation"

When Godard adapts this narrative for cinema, he makes several telling changes. The Italian producer is replaced with an American, Jeremy Prokosch (played by Jack Palance). Ricardo Molteni becomes the French writer Paul Javal (played by Michel Piccoli) and Emilia is now the French Camille (played by Bridget Bardot). Rheingold is replaced by Fritz Lang, playing himself, and a new character is added, the multi-lingual assistant to Prokosch, Francesca Vanini (played by Giorgia Moll). In this way, the conflict between an Italian filmmaker and a middling German director, mediated by an Italian writer, becomes a conflict between American money and French literary sensibilities mediated by a famous German director. In Godard's film, Italy is figured in the cultural and natural environs of Cinecittà and Capri and in the person of Francesca who translates between English, French, German and Italian. In one of many important and memorable scenes, Francesca and Lang discuss a poem by Hölderlin, "*Dichterberuf*" ("The Poet's Vocation") (Figure 5.3). Lang recites the last stanza of the poem in German, and Francesca translates it into French.

> Furchtlos bleibt aber, so er es muß, der Mann
> Einsam vor Gott, es schützet die Einfalt ihn,
> Und keiner Waffen brauchts und keiner
> Listen, so lange, bis Gottes Fehl hilft.

Figure 5.3 Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Mépris* (1963), film still

> Mais l'homme, quand il faut, peut se résist
> Sans peut seul devant Dieu, sa candeur se protége
> il a besoin ni d'arme ni de ruse, jusqu'à leur
> a l'absense de Dieu vient à son aide.[32]

Lang approves of her translation, and the two continue to discuss the last line in French. At first, Lang tells Francesca, the poet had written "so lange der Gott nicht da ist" (as long as God is not absent).[33] He changed it, Lang says, to "so lange der Gott uns nähe ist" (as long as God is near us). The final version, "as long as God's absence comes to his aid," contradicts the first two, Lang says. "C'est très étrange," he concludes, "mais vrai." "Comment dittes-vous étrange en Italian," Lang asks. "Strano," Francesca tells him. We return to the significance of Hölderlin's poem next.

This exchange takes place in the screening room immediately after Prokosch has responded caustically and violently to the dailies Lang has shown. Lang introduced the screening by telling Prokosch, "Each picture should have a definite point of view." "Here it is the fight of the individual against the circumstances," and he adds, "I don't know if you are able to understand it, Jerry, I certainly hope you can. It's the fight against the gods." Prokosch scoffs at this wisdom, but we are clearly meant to see Lang as the adult in the room, here. The American producer is, by contrast, the child whose interests are piqued only when the screen shows a naked woman swimming just off-shore, a mermaid Francesca explains, prompting Prokosch to ask, "Fritz, that's wonderful for you and me, but do you think the public is going to understand that?" This display of immaturity is consistent with the angry kicking and throwing of the film cans at the end of the screening and colors Prokosh's attempt to purchase a more satisfying result by paying Paul to rewrite the script. Paul agrees, because he needs the money, and because, as Prokosh tells him, he has "a very beautiful wife." Camille, the only main character missing from this ensemble, is in fact present by her absence.

It is not surprising that Lang should be the hero of Godard's film. By 1963, Lang had made 42 films beginning in the silent era. With *Dr. Marbusse* (1922), *Metropolis* (1927) and *M* (1931), he was an established master of cinema, but he chose to reinvent himself in the United States after heroically refusing to make films for Goebbels in 1933. He did it with films like *Fury* (1936), *Scarlet Street* (1945) and *The Big Heat* (1953), leading Godard, and others, to count him with D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Howard Hawks and Nicholas Ray, all referenced in the film, among the great American film directors. In *Le Mépris*, in a reversal of the portrait of Rheingold by Moravia, he is the one who attempts to save the film about Homer's *Odyssey* from Prokosch's bombast and Paul's attempt to psychologize it. In his adaptation of Moravia's novel, Godard has given Lang the voice of reason, and this is because in very large measure *Le Mépris* is a not a film about lost love, though it is that, it is, rather, a film about film, about making a

film.[34] Prokosch is not so different from Moravia's Batista, except that, as an American (and a stand-in for the producer of *Le Mépris*, Joseph Levine), the crassness of film production is broadcast and exaggerated through his character. Paul's French origins exaggerate Molteni's idealism. He is aloof and somewhat removed from the conflicts presented by his interest in writing plays and his willingness to take money for writing film scripts. He is also, though not entirely, removed from, though no less obsessed with, Camille's loss of love for him. Camille is Bardot. She becomes Bardot. The actress does not grow into the character. The character becomes the actress. Camille is not the uneducated forlorn but resilient Emilia but a film star with her own aims and desires. When Camille pouts or struts or demurs or offers herself to Prokosh's advances, it is Bardot who pouts, struts, demurs and flaunts her sexuality. Francesca is the linguistic glue for these shipwrecked survivors, but Lang, alone, stands out among them as the philosophical voice and vision. The film is grounded in his embodiment of a film director, the director whom Godard, precisely, aspires to be.

Polyphemus

Le Mépris opens with something of a preface to the film. A long shot becomes a medium range shot and then a close-up of a motion picture camera tracking a woman walking out of the background steadily, purposively forward into the middle and foreground of the image. We watch, from what will prove to be a loosely fixed point nearly under the rails guiding the tracking camera, as the crew—an assemblage composed of a camera, a dolly, the cameraman and several assistants (one pushes the motion picture machine, another holds a perversely muffled mike, yet another coils a cable linking the camera to an invisible source of power)—motions toward us following the movement of the woman walking increasingly to our left reading from a softbound text. Her orange sweater and beige knee-length skirt repeat in reverse the colors of the roof and façade of the building behind her. Her walk is momentarily interrupted and continued. Her voice is drowned out by the soundtrack, a passage from the theme by Georges Delerue used exclusively in *Contempt* and used here diegetically to swallow the scene in affect.[35] As she walks past us, as it were, out of field, the camera and cameraman fill the screen looming above us in profile accented by a segment of the boom attached to that muffled mic. Patiently, as we look up, in a gesture meant to emphasize the importance of this scene, we see the cameraman meter the light of that bright blue Mediterranean sky, gaze back into the viewfinder, and rotate the camera forward and down until we are staring into the aperture of the camera's lens. The mic boom is redirected to the target of the camera, and we who have been watching this scene are now the subject of it. We confront our Polyphemus (Figure 5.1) and the odyssey of *Le Mépris* begins.

The woman in this scene is Francesca. The cameraman is Raul Coutard, Director of Photography of *Le* Mépris. The film, then, opens with a scene

showing the filming of a film about making a film. It's more complicated than that, of course, because *Le* Mépris is not obviously about making a film version of Homer's *Odyssey*. It is at least in part a film about making film in general, and Godard has cast Lang as the director of the film about Homer's *Odyssey* to emphasize that point. He has also opened his film with the filming of the filming of the filming of a film. That is, the moving picture that opens the film is a shot of a tracking shot (the film will also end with a tracking shot) for a film about making a film. It is an image of the film we are watching (itself an image) and an image of film itself, an image of film captured in this spectacle or phantasm (the image of an image without a reference) of *Le Mépris*. On the one hand, this just restates in a complicated form the film-within-a-film logic of all Godard's film. On the other hand, we want to notice how it significantly displaces the reality of the film we are watching, even of film itself, by positioning the images we will come to identify as *Le Mépris* somewhere between the irreality of Lang's *Odyssey* and the hyper-reality of the opening sequence we have just described.

To say it again as straightforwardly as possible, the opening scene of *Le* Mépris has an uncanny relation to the film as a whole. It shows the filming of *Le Mépris*. Ordinarily, we are not shown the filming of the film we are watching in the course of watching it. The artifice of the filmmaking is hidden from us in the film we are watching. In addition, the film we are watching in this case, *Le Mépris*, is about the making of a film, a film to be derived from Homer's *Odyssey*. The film we are about to watch is not real; it is a fiction derived from a novel by Alberto Moravia. The film to be made in the film we are watching will not be real; it will be another fiction, based on another fiction, still. Moreover, while what we see in the opening scene appears to be real, the scene we watch being shot in this scene will not appear in the film it is shown to be shooting; and yet it does appear. It appears virtually but not really. It shows the filming of the action leading up to Paul's entrance on the Cinnecità lot after the scene Godard inserted to satisfy the American producers for *Le Mépris*. Since he has already shown it, and it is part of the viewer's reception of the film, Godard does not feel compelled to show it again. Attributing a hyper-reality to this opening shot is our attempt to describe this dynamic.

We also want to note Godard's voice-over credits read during this opening scene and the music played throughout it. First, by reading the credits, the integrity of the image is maintained. It is not compromised by text written over it. Next, Godard's reading is dramatic. It is paced to match the music, and it is sonorous, especially when it comes to pronouncing his own name. Then, if George Delerue's "Theme de Camille" functions diegetically in this scene, as a device that moves the narrative forward—here, music identified with a character in the film, Camille/Bardot, is used to introduce the film as a whole—then Godard's voice-over similarly functions diegetically. Godard tips his hand, here, when he ends the voice-over with a citation from André

Bazin, his editor at *Cahier du cinéma*. " 'The cinema,' Bazin said, 'substitutes for our gaze a world more in harmony with our desires.' *Le Mépris* is a story of that world." It is contested whether these are Bazin's own words. Supposing they are Godard's words, words that, if attributable to Bazin, Godard has here adopted as his own, then it is a vindication of our claims about the indeterminate reality of *Le Mépris*. The world of the pleasure principle, a world more in harmony with our desires, is at odds with reality. Godard is telling us that *Le Mépris* is a story stemming from the excesses we are prone to when we leave reality behind and that cinema is a tool for contriving those excesses.

When we say the music and Godard's voice function diegetically in this scene, we mean to indicate, in the first place, that they do not belong to this scene. No one in this scene hears the music or the voice. The music and voice belong to the film instead. They are included as embellishments for the viewer's experience of the scene in the film. They intimate what the viewer should feel and, perhaps, think about while she is watching it. In this scene, the music and Godard's reading are paced to match Francesca's gait and the movement of the tracking camera that mirrors it, and the scene is paced to fit the length of the first movement of Delerue's "Theme." Together, the sound and image conspire to form a whole whose meaning is entirely contained, as if it could stand on its own. The scene is preceded by an image of the title for the film in red, uppercase Helvetica letters accompanied by a chord composed of stacked intervals of a minor third, a diminished seventh chord with a flatted ninth, played twice, which resolves into the "Theme" that accompanies the opening scene. The diminished chord sets an ominous tone for the film, and that tone is complemented in the minor key of the "Theme." In this short film within a film, this preface, we are told a lot about the subject of this film and given a foreboding that it will not end well, that something bad will happen to someone who is not all bad.

This opening scene is famously followed by the inserted image of Camille as Bardot confirming Paul's admirations for all her physical attributes, from her feet and thighs, her ass and breasts, to all the sensory features (eyes, nose, ears, mouth) of her face. As is well known, the American producer, Joseph Levine, embodied by Prokosch but who also places a call to Prokosch in the film, insisted that his investment in Bardot be returned with more nudity. Godard complied in his own way. He allows enough of Delerue's "Theme" to resonate from the prior scene to connect the two and restarts the "Theme" again as soon as Camille begins the inventory of her physical attributes. The scene ends with Camille concluding, "So you love me totally, Paul." "Totally, tenderly, tragically," Paul responds. This scene compresses cinematically the love Ricardo feels he and Emilia have established at the beginning of Moravia's novel. It is the basis for the love Paul will feel is withdrawn by Camille in the course of the film. It is against the context of this love that we will come to appreciate what Camille means when she tells

Paul, as Emilia told Ricardo, "*je te méprise*," "I despise you." What does she mean?

Le mépris

Godard said about *Le Mépris*, it is

> a fleeting feeling of the vanity of things, all that happens is of no importance. All this is in a space defined by the *Odyssey*, the sea, the Mediterranean sun, etc. It is the rapport of these concrete realities with something indeterminate.[36]

On the one hand, that something indeterminate is *le mépris*, not the title of the film but the diffused affect that is the subject of the film. On the other hand, it is the situation of human beings cut off from the gods and, so, cut off from the idea of a world inhabited by gods, a world that has a sense we can attempt to understand, even if we are never successful at grasping it. On another hand altogether, that indeterminate something is the cinema itself. If the cinema substitutes for our gazes something more in harmony with our desires, cinema, as Godard says himself, is a substitute for the point of view of the gods, for the sense the world would make if we could understand it.[37] What we see on the motion picture screen is an attempt to understand our lives that removes what is not essential and at the same time highlights the ways what is absolutely ordinary about our lives is truly essential to them. Godard makes films to make us think about our ordinary lives without telling us what to think about them.

Let's start by considering *le mépris*, which, as the title tells us, is what the film is about. It appears to be something Camille feels. "*Je te méprise*," she tells Paul in answer to his pressing questioning, but this assertion is not really an answer to Paul's question. Paul wants to know *why* Camille has fallen out of love with him. *Je te méprise* is not obviously the cause of that falling out of love. It is rather an account of how Camille who has fallen out of love with Paul is feeling, and she expresses that feeling as a transitive verb. She despises him. *Le mépris*, however, is not a verb but a noun, an indeterminate something that affects both Camille and Paul. At the start of the film, they are totally, tenderly and tragically in love with one another. Then there is a misunderstanding, and Paul and Camille drift farther and farther apart. If Paul still loves Camille, as he says he does, it is mixed with psychological and physical expressions of anger and resentment (he lies to her mother to test the truth of Camille's claims, he grabs Camille by the shoulders to try to force the truth out of her). If Camille is falling out of love with Paul, it is not without some reluctance, regret and remorse. *Le mépris* is the affect that colors the relationship between Paul and Camille or, rather, it is the affect that emerges from their shared thoughts, feelings, words and actions.

Le mépris, then, is not an emotion. Emotions, it is true, can be shared. Groups of individuals can experience shared joy or sadness, but, ordinarily, this is because individuals in the group are each experiencing something like the same psychic state. What they feel can be experienced in ways specific to each individual, but what they experience differently is the same thing, joy or anger or happiness or grief. These emotional states are socially constituted. We recognize sadness and surprise and trust, and we express these emotions by adopting what have been constituted as the look or comportment socially associated with them. *Le mépris* is not such a thing or, better, perhaps, what is represented in the film is what emerges from the rapport of Paul and Camille and the concrete realities of the film, the script, the sea, the Mediterranean sun and so on. It is not an emotion but an affect, not a strictly psychic state but something indeterminately embodied in and emerging from all of these organic and inorganic realities. Moravia has Ricardo describe it, for his part, as a haunting "feeling of the impossibility of contact and communion between my body and hers." In the novel, we never get unmediated access to Emilia's point of view. In the film, *le mépris* is not so one-sided. We see it emerge from the increasing dissonance between Paul and Camille heightened and intensified in the scene from the apartment that occupies the middle third of the film.

Before getting to that scene, let us comment briefly on the potentially misleading translation of *le mépris* as "contempt." Contempt is something someone feels for someone else. It is a sense of scorn, disapproval or righteous indignation of the one who contemns for the one who is the target of his contempt. It is sometimes called a "hard feeling" and associated with a "moral shape"; that is, its evaluative presentation is said to include moral concepts, and moral features of the one contemned may be assessed in determining whether the emotion fits its target.[38] Macalester Bell reports that social scientific research supports the assumption that the moral vices of overweening ambition, arrogance, hypocrisy, racism and cowardice are found to be particularly contemptible,[39] and she argues that contempt is the most efficacious response to these vices: it "*answers* these vices and mitigates their damage."[40] Contempt, on this account, is a righteous response to unwarranted claims of superiority, especially when such claims involve "dishonoring other persons or attempts to *exact* esteem and deference."[41] This emotion does not obviously describe what is felt by Ricardo in Moravia's novel, and it seems especially inappropriate for what emerges *between* Paul and Camille in Godard's film.

Affect and Emergence

The apartment scene in *Le Mépris* has been commented on extensively.[42] Our interest is in how the indeterminate affect, *le mépris*, *emerges* from the mundane interactions, petty disagreements, deceit and physical and psychological abuse that take up the extended time Paul and Camille spend in that

apartment in the middle third of the film. It begins with the two of them entering the apartment in a light mood. Camille needles Paul gently about the drapes, "red velvet or nothing," she says. They go back and forth over who will bathe first, who will set the table, plans for a meal. Camille drinks a Coke from its distinctively shaped glass bottle. She wants to show Paul something she bought, a brunette wig that gives her the look of Ana Karina, Godard's companion of several years. Paul is in the bath wearing his hat and smoking a cigar when she approaches him. "*Regard*," she says. Camille thinks the wig suits her. Paul says he prefers her as a blonde. He is mildly irritated. She responds in kind saying she prefers him without a hat and a cigar in the tub. He's playing Dean Martin, he tells her, in (pronouncing the title in English with a strong French accent) *Some Came Running*. She responds by telling a joke about Martin's ass. Paul says he doesn't get it. He is now out of the bath, draped in a large white towel, standing in the passage between the public and private spaces of the apartment. He asks Camille, again, why she doesn't want to go to Capri. "Because you're an ass," she says. Paul slaps her.

The camera immediately goes in tight on Bardot, filling the frame with her profile pressed against the wall. She is still wearing the wig and draped in a large red towel. She turns to Paul and tells him he frightens her, that it's not the first time. Paul shows contrition. The music comes up to suggest the tension has been resolved, or not. After what is presented as an ambiguously playful and threatening gesture, Camille slips away. We find her next seated on a closed toilet smoking and thinking, she says. Paul repairs to the bedroom to dress. He answers the phone. It's Camille's mother on the line. Paul lies about Camille's whereabouts to test whether Camille was truthful when she said she spent time with her mother that afternoon. This leads to their second major confrontation in the private space of the bedroom. Camille, now without the wig, threatens to divorce Paul if he ever does anything like that again. She, then, strips the sheets and blankets off the bed and drags them to the living room where she makes a bed for herself on the couch. It's perfectly normal, she says, thousands of couples do it. She just gets no sleep when she's in bed with Paul. Nothing has changed, she says, I'm the same as always. Paul suspects otherwise.

He strips the sheets and blankets from the couch and returns them to the bed. He confronts Camille again, now in the tub where she is soaking reading aloud from a book about Fritz Lang.[43] Paul presses her about why she doesn't want to go to Capri and about why she doesn't want to sleep with him. Camille avoids the question about Capri and rises from her bath, covering herself with the oversized red towel. She tells Paul (tenderly) he is being ridiculous. It's not true that she doesn't want to sleep with him. She appears to be playing with Paul's affections. The scene of their disagreement moves to the red living room couch. Camille taunts Paul. Paul responds with anger. There is something hanging in the air that they both draw from and fuel. This something indeterminate belongs to neither of them but consumes

them both. Paul and Camille finish dressing separately and, then, one last time Paul confronts Camille. He wants to talk to her.

They move to another public space, to the blue chairs separated by a table with a lamp on it.[44] Camille, again in the wig, is wearing a green dress. She is clutching a black cardigan. Rather than the typical two-shot or matched over-the-shoulder shots, Godard has the camera pan back and forth between them as they talk, the lamp, controlled by Paul, turning off and on in a seemingly random pattern. The conversation goes nowhere. Paul makes insinuations, makes demands, makes accusations. Camille defers, denies the point, concedes the point, seemingly indifferent. She gets up to leave. Paul rushes at her and grabs her by the shoulders and turns her toward him. He wants the truth, but for Camille there is no truth. For her, what Paul wants is irrelevant. His insisting on this truth just shows Camille how little Paul understands. Paul gets rough. Camille swats him several times with her sweater and pulls away from him, and it's here, as she is walking away and down the stairs that she looks over her shoulder and says to Paul, "*je te méprise, et tu me dégoûte*," "I despise you, and you disgust me."

What has happened here? If anything, that indeterminate something, *le mépris*, the subject of the film, has been made to emerge in the concrete relations that constellate there. Between Paul and Camille and Camille's mother, the apartment divided between its public and private spaces, the opportunities presented by work on the film and the trip to Capri, the Mediterranean environs of that Italian island and the epic narrative of the *Odyssey*, the vanity and avarice of the American producer, the cinematic and moral authority of Fritz Lang, among all these organic and inorganic elements and the concrete relations established between them, an indeterminate affect, *le mé*pris, emerges and colors irrevocably the love Paul and Camille had shared—totally, tenderly, tragically—only several hours ago. In the last third of the film, as a consequence of this emergent affect, we watch their life together plunge toward an apparently tragic end.

The Absence of the Gods

This end was anticipated in the scene in the screening room discussed at the beginning of our treatment of *Le Mépris*. That scene begins, we remember, with Lang advising Prokosh that every film should have a definite point of view. "Here," he continues, "it is the fight of the individual against the circumstances, the eternal problem of the old Greeks." The "old Greeks," here, are Homer's Greeks. For them, the circumstances were formidable and the cause of seemingly arbitrary consequences. Those Greeks created gods, as their protectors and mortal enemies, to personify those circumstances and give some account for the fates that befell them. As a result, their destinies could be perceived as tragic since, while they often ended in misfortune and even death, they were the consequence of a particular god's disposition and the incapacity of mortals or the other gods to prevail against him. In

Homer's epic, Poseidon is Odysseus's mortal enemy and Athena Odysseus's protector.

"I like gods," Prokosh says, responding to images of the immortals projected on the screen in front of him. "I know exactly how they feel." Prokosh thinks he is a god. He thinks he knows what it is to be superior to and little understood by those who are not also gods. The ancient Greek gods, however, are not misunderstood by mortals, because, as Lang reminds Prokosh, "gods did not create man; man created gods." Odysseus understands Poseidon and his wrath very well, from the mythology created to account for the god and his own implication in those myths. He grasps it in the environmental forces conspiring to hamper his trip home, and he understands his own strategies and strength in combating those forces as Athena coming to his aid. When it comes to the indeterminacies that have come to govern their circumstances, however, the modern individuals, Paul and Camille and those modern viewers who follow this image of their life together, cannot appeal to such gods to understand their circumstances or their fate. Modern life, as it was for the old Greeks, is cut off from any apparent purpose or end, but unlike those Greeks, we moderns do not have the luxury of creating gods to intercede on our behalf. We are left to our own devices.[45]

This seeming impasse returns us to Godard's insertion of Hölderlin as something of a coda to the scene in the screening room. After Prokosh has acted out and Paul has accepted the check, all the principles, save Lang, make their way out of the darkened room. Francesca returns hurriedly, saying to Lang, in German, "Ich habe vergessen." What exactly she forgot, we never know, but this is Lang's cue to begin reciting the last stanza of Hölderlin's *Dichterberuf*, "The Poet's Vocation." The last line, remember, Lang says is very obscure. At first, Hölderlin wrote, that the poet who stands alone before God is fearless just in case God is not missing. He changed it, Lang says, to read, "so long as God is near us." In the final version, Hölderlin writes, "So long as the absence of God comes to his aid." The poet stands fearless before God, when he must, not when God is present or near to him, but when God's absence comes to his assistance. Why has Godard inserted this coda into this scene at this time? In the first place, of course, to make us ask this question, to make us think. More than that, however, it anticipates the indeterminacies already set in motion when Paul, though he does yet grasp it himself, accepts that check from Prokosh.

Godard ends the scene by having Lang ask Francesca how to say "strange" in Italian and repeating her answer, "*stranno*," as they exit the screening room together. It is strange and about to become more so. He then cuts to a wide shot of the sun-drenched exterior showing Paul on the right and Camille to the far left calling out and running toward him. Her path is crossed, however, by Prokosh speeding around the corner of the building in his red convertible. Prokosh is not yet a suitor but Paul's Poseidon, his mortal enemy. Unlike Odysseus, though, Paul does not grasp Prokosh as a threat, and he encourages Camille to ride with the American producer in

that two-seater sports car, thus setting firmly in motion the indeterminacies that will haunt Paul and Camille for the remainder of the film. Without a god to come to their aid, neither Paul nor Camille exhibit the resolve of Hölderlin's poet. Camille calls back to Paul as Prokosh speeds away (a foreshadowing of the crash that will kill Camille in the film's ending) and Paul calls after her running futilely in pursuit of the speeding car.

Why, for Hölderlin's poet, does the absence of God comes to his aid? Because in the absence of God, the poet was free to pursue his art apart from the clichés that colored all poetic references to the more than human world. More, in the absence of God, Hölderlin himself found ways to fill that more than human world with truths drawn poetically from the human world around him. Hölderlin is held up to be an icon of German Romanticism, and German Romanticism is in no small part a sensitivity to the more than human in the all too human world. Hölderlin's poems bring to language truths about the world that are not available to those who understand the world relative to a truth, God, that is positively other-worldly. Hölderlin struggled with his verses because of a clairvoyant intuition into the ways of the world, especially the forces in nature that the old Greeks attributed to their gods, and the difficulty of finding language to express them. The "vocation of the poet," the business or the calling of the poet, is to be attentive to the ways the world shows up when there is no final purpose assigned to that world by science or God.

For Paul and Camille, though they do not and, perhaps, cannot know it, it is cinema that poetically fills the void created by God's absence and gives meaning to their life, a reason to go on living where there is no apparent purpose or reason for doing so. For all his grousing about the "hack" work he takes on writing screenplays, Paul is engrossed in the film world. He is at home in the screening room, absorbed by the images on the screen, which he recognizes as the widescreen aspect ratio of Cinemascope.[46] His excitement to find in the paper that there will be a local screening of *Rio Bravo* (Howard Hawks, 1959) leads us to think he's seen the film one or more times already. His play-acting Dean Martin's part in *Some Came Running* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958), which features Frank Sinatra in the leading role, leads us to think he knows this film well. (Godard's insertion of these references to postwar Hollywood cinema draws modern audiences into that film world as well and, in 1963, when the film was first released, anticipates a very particular audience for *Le Mépris*.) For her part, Camille, as Bardot, embodies the cinema itself. Before her leading role in *Le Mépris*, she had made 30 films with titles like *La femme et le pantin* (*The Female*, 1959), *Cette sacrée gamine* (*Naughty Girl*, 1956), *Manina . . . la fille sans voile* (*The Girl in the Bikini*, 1952) and, of course, *Et Dieu . . . créa la femme*. She appears on screen as Brigitte Bardot. As stated earlier, Camille becomes Bardot.

In addition, Paul and Camille cannot be lost in a world without gods because they are characters in a film by Jean-Luc Godard. They are caught in the narrative arc of *Le Mépris*, what Godard has described as "a fleeting

feeling of the vanity of things" where "all that happens is of no importance. All this is in a space defined by the *Odyssey*, the sea, the Mediterranean sun, etc. It is the rapport of these concrete realities with something indeterminate."[47] Their story will have a purpose and an end. It is a sad end but, in the end, not an especially tragic one. There is no noble character undone by some internal flaw. It is not even especially melancholic. No one has any remorse (except, paradoxically, Francesca) for the loss of Prokosh (with his death Godard improves on Moravia's novel). There may even be some who thrill to Bardot's demise (after the way she has toyed with men's affections in film after film to this point), though mostly we are sad that the love Camille shared with Paul was finally unrequited. Yet, by the end of the film, Paul and Camille have shared a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, and this brings us back to the opening scene of the film.

Whether he is quoting something Bazin wrote but we cannot yet document or that he heard in conversations with him, Godard prefaces his film by attributing to Bazin the statement, "The film substitutes for our regard a world more in harmony with our desires." Speaking in what is clearly his own voice he adds, "*Le Mépris* is a story of that world." In what sense, now, is this true? What about the world of Paul and Camille is more in harmony with our desires? We see Camille, the source, or so Paul thinks, of his turning away from art, die in a fatal crash. We see Paul's nemesis, Prokosh, who would also keep him from art, die in the same crash. In what sense is this world more in harmony with our desires? With Prokosh and Camille out of the picture, we find Paul and Lang, in the film's final scene, bidding adieu. Paul will go back to writing for the theater, and Lang will complete what he started, a film about the *Odyssey*, which returns Odysseus to his home, Ithaca.

In a world more in harmony with our desires, the gods are absent and our lives, which ordinarily appear to us in fragmented disarray—in part, perhaps, because of the vain clichés that assign the gods the capacity for making our lives meaningful—those lives, because of art, the art of cinema, appear coherent and whole. In the absence of the gods, there is cinema, which Gilles Deleuze wrote gives us "reasons to believe in this world."[48] Cinema gives us a reason to believe in this world by telling a story which in its simplicity stands out from the bad script which is the world around us. "In Godard," Deleuze tells us,

> The ideal of knowledge, the Socratic ideal, which is still present in Rossellini, collapses: the "good" discourse of the militant, the revolutionary, the feminist, the philosopher, the filmmaker, etc., gets no better treatment than the bad. Because the point is to discover and restore belief in the world . . . no longer believing in another world, or a transformed world

but in the world immediately before us, the world prior to its being dressed up in fine discourses or philosophy that attempt to make it meaningful or

important.[49] Not even cinema is made more meaningful in this view. It is just an indeterminate something that emerges from the concrete realities of the making of a film.

The final scene of *Le Mépris* reprises the opening shot (Figure 5.4). In it, again, we see the filming of the filming of a film. This time, Raoul Coutard's camera shoots the mock camera crew setting up a tracking or traveling shot of Odysseus arriving in sight of Ithaca. Godard, making a cameo appearance as the assistant director on the set, signals to Lang that they are ready to roll. We hear "avante" followed by "aktione" announced through a megaphone and watch as the camera assemblage moves from right to left filming Odysseus, arms raised, a sword in one hand, laying eyes on Ithaca, at last. For someone who has traveled so far, Odysseus here takes only a few sideways steps to his left as Coutard's camera pans the scene, zooming in slightly on our hero and then panning to his left leaving us with an extended, widescreen shot of the horizon or, rather, of the indeterminate meeting of sea and sky, the unreal line dividing the screen into two shades of blue, the bottom half modulating just slightly in the ebb and flow of the Mediterranean. Ithaca will be added to this scene later, in the editing. In fact, we've already seen a scene of Odysseus climbing out of the sea onto terra firma in the dailies shown in the screening room. "Cinema," Godard said, "is the most beautiful fraud in the world." In this final scene, as the first, *Le Mépris* is asking us to think about the beauty of this fraud, the beauty of this motion picture and of motion pictures in general. This beauty is not just given to us. We have to work for it. It will be a frail accomplishment, when we accomplish it, of the skills we have refined for picking up what the filmmaker has skillfully afforded us in the making of this film. "The only reality of film," Godard, again, "is the reality of making a film." *Le Mépris* has shown us how that indeterminate thing, cinema emerges when we bump

Figure 5.4 Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Mépris* (1963), film still

into the concrete elements that are at once the stumbling blocks and the elements necessary for a motion picture to be made. A motion picture gets made when we think about motion pictures—that is, when we apply ourselves to the skillful collecting of the affordances that turn up in the making of that motion picture. In Godard's motion picture, the indeterminacy of *le mépris* is a stand-in for the cinema itself and for an existence that, precisely because of the absence of gods, must be lived thoughtfully, again, by applying ourselves to the skillful collection of the affordances that turn up in our everyday lives. Over 50 years after its original release, this is what *Le* Mépris is still asking us to think.

Notes

1 Bosley Crowther, "Contempt," *New York Times* (19 December 1964). We will have more to say about the translation of Le Mépris as "Contempt" next.
2 *Le Petit soldat* (1963), Godard's fifth film, would not be screened until April 1967.
3 Phillip Lopate, "Brilliance and Bardot, All in One," *New York Times* (22 June 1997). In a YouTube video for the Times, A. O. Scott reported that Godard's "passion for his chosen art form is as volatile and intense as any great love affair. And it is that passion, the rawness of that passion, that makes Contempt so provocative fifty years after it was first made." ("Critics Pick—'Contempt,'" 2 August 2010: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrWAxBr4GDQ&index=2&list=PLLwf8Vu2K3PFqJ5UxCK7mAev7m6vrgcfV) (12 March 2018).
4 The winner that year was Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears by Vladimir Menshov (USSR). The other nominees were films made in Spain, Japan, Hungary and France, Françoise Truffaut's Le Denier metro.
5 Of course, not all film projectors were outfitted to show wide-screen format films in the theater themselves, but I never saw these films in the theater at all since I was not living in New York City at the time.
6 See Anna Bakalis, "It's Unreel: DVD Rentals Overtake Videocassettes," *Washington Times* (6 June 2003).
7 No doubt it is now known that this is the fate of films that will never be shown on big screens in certain markets. Some more commercial films are clearly made with a televisual audience in mind. It is also the case, however, that the experience of films that do make it to mainstream markets can prepare us to view films as simulacra of the "real thing." It is also the case that the market for foreign and "art house" films in the United States has expanded some beyond New York and Los Angeles and that these films are shown in secondary markets in as little as a week after they open in those primary cultural centers. As such, the skills for viewing films have become more generally accessible and easier to refine allowing viewers at home a virtual experience of the big screen projection of a film. IMAX, RPX and 3D big screen projections have been introduced to give film viewers something they cannot get at home even as home entertainment monitors try to keep up with these innovations.
8 See, most recently, Tyler Knudsen, "Watch: Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina: A Marriage on Film," *IndieWire* (30 April 2015) http://www.indiewire.com/2015/04/watch-jean-luc-godard-and-anna-karina-a-marriage-on-film-132941/ (18 June 2018).
9 Jean-Luc Godard, "Sufficient Evidence," trans. Tom Milne, in *Cahiers du cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge,

MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 47; originally published in *Cahiers du cinéma* 73 (July 1957).
10 Godard, "Sufficient Evidence," 49.
11 Godard, "Sufficient Evidence," 49.
12 Godard, "Sufficient Evidence," 48.
13 Yvonne Baby, "Shipwrecked People from the Modern World: Interview with Jean-Luc Godard on Le Mépris," trans. Royal S. Brown in *Focus on Godard*, ed. Royal S. Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1972), 37; originally published in *Le Monde*, 20 December 1963, 18.
14 *Le Mépris* was released in a modified form (it was shorter by twenty minutes and dubbed) in Italy in October 1963. Production on the film was completed between April and May 1963.
15 Jean Collet, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," trans. Toby Mussman in *Jean-Luc Godard: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Toby Mussman (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), 146; originally published in *Cinéma d'Aujourdhui* 18, 1963.
16 Collet, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," 151.
17 Baby, "Shipwrecked People from the Modern World," 39.
18 Alberto Moravia, *Il desprezzo* (Milan: Valentino Bompiani & Co., 1954), in English translation by Angus Davidson, *Contempt* (New York: New York Review Books, 1999); all references are to this translation. Moravia's novel was first published in English as *The Despised Husband: A Ghost at Noon*, trans. Angus Davidson (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1954).
19 Moravia, 29.
20 Moravia, 109.
21 Moravia, 236.
22 Moravia, 85.
23 Ibid.
24 Moravia, 86.
25 Moravia, 89.
26 Moravia, 145.
27 Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno of Dante: A New Verse Translation*, Bilingual Edition, trans. Robert Pinsky (New York: Farar, Strauss and Giroux, 1996).
28 Moravia, 210–211.
29 *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888), Canto XXVI, 90–100.
30 Moravia, 211.
31 Ibid.
32 Both verses transcribed from the film. For the original German, see Friedrich Höldelin, *Gesammelte Werke, Band I* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1922). For the English, see *Nine Poems: Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover, Web Connections www.conjunctions.com/online/article/friedrich-holderlin-05-31-2005 (12 March 2018) and *Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover (Oakland, CA: Omnidawn, 2008).

> But if he must, the poet remains fearless.
> Alone with god, simplicity keeps him safe
> And needs no weapons and no cunning,
> As long as God's absence comes to his aid.

33 In the film, Lang appears to recite "solange Gott nicht da ist," so long as God is not there or missing, and the English subtitles for the film follow Lang's recitation, but Francesca's French translation, "tant que le Dieu n'est pas défaut," suggests that Lang may have misspoken. The last line contradicts the other two only if the first version by Hölderlin agrees with Francesca's French. In fact, David

Farrell Krell confirms that early handwritten manuscripts of the poem give the first versions of the last line as "so lange der Gott nicht fehlet," so long as the god does not go missing, and "so lange der Gott uns nah bleibt," so long as the god remains close to us. So it appears that Lang has misspoken and Godard has allowed Francesca's French to stand as the corrective. Many thanks to David Ferrell Krell for his invaluable help in support of this insight.

34 "The only truth about film," Godard once said, "is the making of a film."

35 That is, the soundtrack does not belong to this scene but to the filming of it. It is a sound image that recurs throughout the film to link Homer's Odyssey, to Dante's Inferno, to the lives of Paul and Camille, in scenes of several simultaneous past events (for Paul and Camille, the past of their tragic falling out of love). It is also a pure sensation of affect, a feeling that by the end of the film belongs to no one who produces or experiences these sensations.

36 Jean Collet, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," 143.

37 Jean Collet, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," 151.

38 Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61.

39 Bell, *Hard Feelings*, 98.

40 Bell, *Hard Feelings*, 96.

41 Bell, *Hard Feelings*, 101.

42 See, for example, this commentary in the online journal *Interiors* www.intjournal.com/0212/le-mepris/ (12 March 2018).

43 There's a certain cinematic teasing here as Godard plays to a certain viewer's hope of glimpsing more of Bardot naked body. Godard's preferred viewer, however, like Paul, is more interested in what Camille is thinking in this scene.

44 Some want to make something of the color of the furniture in the apartment and the colors of the scene in general. The red is hot and passionate, the blue cool and cerebral, the white neutral between them. Apart from red, white and blue being the colors of le trois colors, the French flag, the symbolism of the colors doesn't help us much here. There is nothing especially cerebral about this last confrontation between Paul and Camille. They've exhausted the bed and the couch and the tub, even the office. The blue chairs, which have been visible throughout this scene, make a contrast.

45 It is ironic that in the scene Godard was made to insert to satisfy his American producers' investment in casting Bardot, the only evidence of the indeterminacies and the absence of gods that will come to plague Paul and Camille is found in the use of filters and music. Otherwise, Paul and Camille are represented as determined by their love for one another, totally, tenderly and tragically. For lovers, we might say, as with poetry and cinema, it is the absence of gods that come to their aid.

46 Lang tells Paul the format is not good for human subjects and better suited to shooting snakes and funerals. The French version of Cinemascope was called Franscope to avoid trademark conflicts with 20th Century Fox, which developed and owned the Cinemascope brand.

47 Jean Collet, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," 143.

48 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 171–173.

49 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 172.

Conclusion

All artists think. Often, though, that thinking is a means to an end, a matter of identifying and following the rules for the purpose of representing or expressing one thing or another in a completed artwork. There are rules governing what may be the subject of an artwork, what materials may be used to make it, the ways those materials should be assembled to make that artwork and so on. There are rules governing the composition, the scale, the tone, the degree of abstraction (Bacon thought Pollack went too far), etc. Artists often follow the rules to solve or avoid the problems they confront in their art making. When they follow the rules they are certainly thinking, but are they really thinking? Are they reflecting on the means necessary for realizing the work they aim to create, or are they experimenting with the affordances that turn up for them in the field of that creative activity? In the first instance, it is a matter of overcoming obstacles keeping the work from being realized. This thinking is largely though not exclusively instrumental. It surely includes imagination, but the imagination is engaged in the service of the end to be achieved, and we evaluate the work in terms of whether it has successfully achieved that end. In the second, it is more a matter of identifying the problem that affords the artist the chance to achieve an aim in her work. This thinking is embodied in the skills the artist deploys in her engagement with the environment where the work emerges. Here the imagination turns up in the artist's skillful working with the problem presented in achieving her work. In this case, we evaluate the completed artwork by the way it engages the audience in the same problem.

Philosophers, too, often follow the rules for the purposes of thinking in response to problems they confront in art, in artworks and their lives in general. Whether as practitioners of conceptual analysis, hermeneutics or pragmatism, philosophers regularly follow rules leading them to the necessary and sufficient conditions, the interpretation or the argument to the best explanation for what otherwise perplexes them, including what perplexes them about artworks. The aesthetics we have practiced in studies of works by Bacon, Michals, Godard and Duchamp attempt to do something more. We engaged these artworks, in the first place, as if they, and the artists who created them, were thinking themselves, and we attempted to think, really think, with them, to think because, confronted by them in their concrete singularity, we did not know what to think. Joseph Margolis has described artworks as "physically

embodied and culturally emergent entities."[1] What we call "thinking with images" participates in the emergence of those physically embodied, cultural artworks. Arguably, all manner of appreciating artworks participates in their cultural emergence. What distinguishes our distinctly philosophical appreciation is its embodied, enactivist engagement with the concrete singularity of the artworks appreciated and our attention to the distinctive thoughtfulness of the artworks and our appreciation of them. We have drawn attention to a way of thinking occasioned by encounters with specific artworks, which we value for what it reveals in the artwork and what it recommends for our engagements with others like (and unlike) ourselves and the world in general.

In life as well as in our encounters with artworks in that life, we acquire and refine skills for accomplishing aims in environments that challenge us, give us pause, make us think because we do not know what to think. Our encounters with specific works of art are to be valued for the ways they highlight this distinctly philosophical thinking. Artworks will afford opportunities for thinking in this way to those with shared skills and the embodiment of those skills. It may also turn out that an artwork affords such an opportunity for an individual who deploys her skills to make the opportunity affordable to others. The relevant skill, in any case, comes from identifying in the work a problem that does not admit of a solution and then does not bend to the application of any set of rules for eliminating the obstacles to appreciating that work. Ideally, this thinking will be afforded by a direct acquaintance with the artwork in its concrete singularity. In my case, I visit the Velázquez Bacon never saw in the Galleria Doria Pomphilj every time we are in Rome. We spent several days at the Carnegie Museum of Art retrospective of Duane Michals's photographs and "feasted" for hours with the catalog produced for the show. We saw *Le Mépris*, finally, on the big screen on its re-release, and we have spent 30 years visiting and revisiting Duchamp's *Étant donnés*. With Jacqueline Lichtenstein, we recommend that a robust thinking with images is best enacted in immediate proximity with the artwork itself.

What we gain from direct exposure to the artworks that interest and attract us is a refinement of the skills specifically relevant to engaging them. We also gain an attention to details unavailable in reproductions from which scale and color and lighting and the affect felt in the presence of the artwork can only be inferred. Engaging the artwork in the context of the site where it "lives" and in relation to other works exhibited in its vicinity gives us insights that add to the achievement the artwork makes for us. Then our appreciation of art and the aesthetics that is a part of that appreciation becomes for us a form of life that we can compare with other forms of life leading us to appreciate and understand something about ourselves as human beings and about the world we share with others.

Note

1 Joseph Margolis, *What After All Is a Work of Art?* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania Sate University Press, 1999), 68–71.

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