

PROLOGUE

Having seen the headlines during the last few days, we may wonder whether we should not reproach ourselves for talking about art while Rome burns. Personally I do not feel this way at all. Since we have not yet managed to learn action, where action seems to be appropriate, and we frankly do not quite know what our action should be, we may be doing the only thing we can do to preserve our culture which seems threatened, and that is to concern ourselves with art, which is, after all is said and done, one of the great residues of any time and civilization, and which happens to be the thing about which this panel knows something.

Since every lecture or series of lectures must have a title, we had baptized this series "Art and its Relation to the Individual and to Society." This was long before we had really stuck our heads together to discuss seriously the exact content. But when we did sit down and began to chew what we had bitten off, we discovered soon that if we were qualified at all to speak on such an ambitious subject, we should first have to define our terms. We'd have to establish a more or less common basis from which to approach art, and we found that to talk about art in the abstract was just so much wind. We decided therefore to discuss first what to do with the concrete work of art and then only gradually to let society and the individual into the picture. Therefore our title became, strictly speaking, invalid, and made place for the more modest one: "The Art Series" which promises nothing specific.

Whether or not this will be the series to end all series, depends very much on your participation in the discussions. The twelve members of the panel, of course, could not handle all the material which the field of the arts presents, and at the proper moment you can raise new points, especially as they suggest themselves to you during the reading of the papers.

There will be two lectures of about twenty minutes each, every night of the series, followed by the customary intermission and question period. The exhibits in the corridors are put up in connection with the series, although not every item will be referred to specifically.

Tomorrow, Thursday at 4 p.m. the Drama Workshop will be open to the community. Tuesday afternoon at 5, the Music Seminar will have "open house" for a performance of the compositions Mr. Clarke will discuss in his speech, and for a dance demonstration by Miss Wile.

Mr. Fergusson will now read the opening paper called "Speaking about Art" in which he will also announce the other speakers and their topics.

Stefan Hirsch
March 16, 1938
Bennington College

Talking About Art

This has been announced as The Art Series. But if you think you are going to find out by this series what art is, you are mistaken. The purpose of the present paper is to explain why this is so. I shall endeavor to give you some of the reasons why it is difficult to talk about art; a very congenial task for one who does try to talk about art. Then I shall go on to explain the methods we are using in this series, what our aim is, and what the arrangement of the talks and demonstrations will be.

Now if you try to give a simple answer to the simple question, "What is art?" the first difficulty you encounter is the bewildering mass of material on the arts. The arts have been with us a long time, as long as we have any record of human beings. The cave men were apparently practising some of the arts in 18,000 B. C.; and while we venture no prophecy in the face of modern enlightenment, we may say that at present the arts and the artists are still with us in a way. And all this time the arts have been involved in innumerable ways with human life and its cultural patterns and techniques. Industry, agriculture, marriage customs, religion, government, are all reflected in the arts or have been influenced by them. Our knowledge of some primitive cultures is based entirely on works of art which they have left; and most of us would question the insight of a historian who tried to give an account of the culture of any period, even the most advanced, even our own--without an understanding of its arts.

Perhaps for this reason, the distinction between art and other human techniques is by no means clear. There are not only painting, sculpture, music; there are also the arts of government, of medicine, of teaching, of cooking, of dress, of conversation. There are handbooks on the art of love, and there are artists in graft and diplomacy. Edna St. Vincent Millay says, that Euclid alone has looked

on beauty bare. People who don't like philosophy think that it is a kind of art. The writers of cigarette ads, who are perhaps artists themselves, tell us about the art of life, and they give us a simple method for identifying an artist in life; she serves camels at her cocktail parties.

But suppose you confine yourself to the arts in good standing, the plastic arts, music, literature. You find that in all those centuries since the cave man the arts themselves have been evolving, dying out, dividing, combining and proliferating in endless complexity. The medieval art of staining glass has died out, but the movies threaten to provide a new medium. What was poetry for Shakespeare was barbarism for Voltaire. The eighteenth century thought the gothic was crazy and pathological, but the nineteenth century restored it in a taste which we now deplore. Some of the late romantics wanted a fusion of all the arts, and now we are trying to sort them out again.

But suppose you confine yourself to one art, and try to define it, fix its boundaries, and answer at least for it the question "What is art?". Suppose for a moment that the theatre is an art. Then is a movie starring Shirley Temple, art? If Shirley Temple is art, what does that make Macbeth? If Macbeth is art, what does that make Shirley Temple? Even in the case of a supposed single art, there is no simple criterion for distinguishing the original from the substitute, the good from the bad, art from things like art. So much for my first point, that you cannot give a simple factual answer to our question because there are too many facts about art.

But unfortunately this does not prevent people from answering the question to their own satisfaction. The very fact that art is so ubiquitous makes it a tempting and legitimate subject of study for specialists in many different fields, and its stubborn presence is a social and cultural phenomenon, makes it necessary for everyone with a philosophy to account for it in terms of that philosophy. To add to our difficulties, then, we have a vast body of theory and guess-work about

art, artists, the place of art in society, art and belief, the economic conditions of art, the psychological roots of art, and so forth, by various specialists and special pleaders. Who is to sort out all this material? Who has enough training in two dozen sciences and pseudo-sciences? None of us, so far as I am aware, claims this knowledge, though we are glad to accept help from the rest of the college, and are willing to be instructed up to the limits of our time and capacity.

But it is not exactly the information derived from other fields that worries me here. It is that this information is presented from so many points of view, each so tempting that it tends for the moment to obscure all the rest. Everyone really believes, deep down, that only explanation in terms of his own set of ideas really explains. Let's get down to essentials, we say to ourselves, what is the real, namely, the psychological explanation of this play? What early trauma accounts for the author's obsessive interest in the sea and the symbol of drowning? Or if we have a different set of ideas, we say, where does the play really stand? Is it fascist or proletarian? or bourgeois individualist? Plato thought that the most important question to ask was whether the play was good for the moral tone of the state, whether it would make the citizens flabby and effeminate or healthy, military, and forward-looking. For Dante, and I suppose for anyone with a religious point of view, the most fundamental meaning of art is to be sought in the so-called anagoge, its relation to our ultimate beliefs and values, in other words, to our idea of God.

I should say that none of these explanations is wrong. There are psychological, economic, social, moral and religious explanations for art. Partial explanations become wrong only when they are offered as the whole truth. Needless to say, no one has a monopoly on this type of myopia and egoism. Artists are just as likely to think of scientists as a variety of artist - witness Miss Millay - as scientists are to think of artists as abortive scientists who never learned to measure. Yet there is no theoretical reason why a psychologist should not under-

stand art also; artists sometimes admit that they have psychologies, and there are social scientists who recognize other than economic causes. In short, if explanations derived from special fields are not wrong but partial, why should it be impossible to sort them out and give each its due weight in a comprehensive study of art, its sources and its relationships?

We are, in fact, bound to believe that the actual confusion which prevails in contemporary discussions of art is not hopeless. I, myself, believe in the possibility of a philosophy based on that of Aristotle (some of you may have heard this already) which would distinguish between art and science, art and conduct, art and religion, without reducing any of these disciplines to each other or arguing any of them out of existence to satisfy the demands of some rationalistic criterion of truth. Meanwhile there is no such philosophy, or even a generally accepted starting-place for such a philosophy, in the modern world. There are many philosophies, some good, some less good, some based on one field and some on another, some highly conscious and some in the stage of inarticulate prejudice. Discussions of art are too often only vicarious discussions of these philosophies, yours and mine, based on that feeling that only my explanation really explains. The college reflects in a small way the large chaos of contemporary thought, and we of the panel have decided that the attempt to bring order was too much for us to undertake as a winter period project. This completes what I have to say about the second main point, that there are many incommensurable theories of art and that they make it practically difficult to talk about art.

And now at length I come to the one point we have explicitly agreed on as a basis for this series. We make no pretense of a united front, there is no message we would leave with you, and as a group we hold no position on culture or civilization. But we do think that, in order to talk intelligently about art, you must have direct, first-hand experience of actual works of art. And we mean not only that we, who are doing most of the talking, but also you, who are supposed to be listening, must know works of art if we are to understand each other. This point

may seem obvious and unimportant, but it is connected with what we think art and art education is, and so is close to the heart of the problem.

Any work of art is a concrete individual thing, and therefore there is no substitute for experiencing it, coming to know it directly. You may try as hard as you like to describe a picture or a play or a piece of music to someone who has never become acquainted with it, you will never be able to devise a substitute for the original. Even if you are able to describe it technically to someone who understands the technical language of painter or musician, no artist interested in the original would be satisfied with what you could tell him. In this respect coming to know a work of art is like coming to know a person. Hearing about people is no substitute for meeting them.

This same point may be approached in another way. You may say that the artist has no results to offer the public except the work of art itself. It is just those concrete elements, those particular colors and forms and no others, in just those relationships and no others, which combine to make the work of art. The artist has no conclusions, which may be separated from the work and presented in abstract or mathematical language like that of the scientist. He cannot overawe us by announcing that the new star is 18 times the size of the sun, or startle us with the fact that we are 65 percent water, or reassure us about the progress of culture with the information that we have forty times as much medication as Socrates and that our modern Noel Coward will probably live ten years longer than Shakespeare. The artist has nothing but his concrete works to offer, and unless you are willing to become familiar with them by the slow processes of experience, you can get nothing from the artist at all.

Perhaps this accounts for the fact I mentioned before, that many writers, from the advertising men to the philosophers, have felt a kinship between art and action: both, that is, deal practically with the concrete. What did you get out of your trip to Europe? or from working in an office or factory for two months? Many things, but nothing that you can summarize in a formula and convey to someone

who never saw Europe or that factory. You are in the same plight if someone asks you what you got out of Macbeth or the B Minor Mass. There is, in short, a close analogy between learning from experience and learning from art. If you take the point of view of one who is trying to make or perform art, these analogies become still clearer. Working out an idea for a picture or a poem, endeavoring to arrange the concrete elements of word or color in accordance with that idea, may be compared to pursuing a policy or sticking to a code of ethics through and by means of the particular contingencies and relationships of life. Have you noticed that the Bennington College catalogue states that "intellectual development cannot be isolated from the development of the whole personality"? The college tries in theory, at least, to recognize that the student behaves as a whole, that she meets people and things as well as abstract ideas and recorded facts. This is no doubt connected with the fact that the practise of the arts has been admitted into the curriculum. For there are many analogies (which were dear to the Greeks) between making and doing, architecture and government, art and conduct: the practical skills, wherein a real individual person learns to deal with other real people, or with real instruments and materials.

All of this would be no news to the Greeks, but it constitutes something of an innovation in American academic life, and brings certain peculiar difficulties with it. It is as difficult to talk about a real student and evaluate her progress, as it is to talk about or evaluate a real work of art. The trouble is, you have to know the student. How easy if we could say, she is 30% honest in her work. How simple if we could tell her counsellor that she played that concerto 70% right. Then we could all be "objective". But as you know, we do not in practice attempt to put our reports in this form. Does this mean that we have simply broken down, and are prepared to admit that we are subjective, arbitrary and fanciful in our estimates of student work? No, I think it means that we have a less rationalistic and mathematical criterion of objectivity, that the object itself--whether student, student performance, or student work--has come to seem more impor-

tant than our abstract scales and numerical measuring-rods.

This is something of a digression, but I hope it may help you to see why an artist is on the spot when an inquirer with very little experience of art wants to know why art is good or bad, what a certain work of art means, or simply what art is. How simple if we could tell what it is as the anthropologists describe stone implements--with a few accurate measurements; or if we could tell what it means as Pavlov tells us what the sight of food means to his dog--by measuring the amount of fluid the delighted digestive system secretes in anticipation of a meal. For an artist these objective methods wouldn't work. He has gone through long training in his kind of objectivity, in sharpening his ability to see the object itself directly, and he must ask the inquirer to do the same. He must take the inquirer, if he really wants to know, point out the elements in a given work of art, and gradually lead him to perceive how all those elements compose into a whole with a concrete unity of its own. This is the basis of instruction in all the arts here at Bennington. And as long as student and instructor stick close to the particular picture or poem or piece of music or dance composition, identifying the elements which they have before them as they talk, there is no reason for the instructor to talk through his hat or for the student to get lost. But as soon as the instructor stops talking about King Lear, for instance, and goes on to the plays of Shakespeare in general, his chances of coming to a real understanding with the student are greatly diminished. If he then proceeds to English drama and then to the art of the theatre and then to the performing arts and then to art with a big A, the verifiable and really intelligible content of his remarks diminishes in proportion as he gets more abstract.

This completes what I have to say about the concrete nature of art, which makes it difficult to talk about without having the material firmly before you. This, as I said, is the point we agreed on for this series, and we have tried to plan it so as to include as much experience of art as possible. The next speaker this evening, Mr. Krob, on the utilitarian aspects of art, will illustrate

his talk with slides. Tomorrow evening Miss Osgood will analyze Emma, which I hope you have all read; and Mr. Craighton will talk on the medium of language. Friday evening Miss Wunderlich will talk on art as a voice of its time, and Mr. Hirsch will give an introduction to painting with an analysis of a painting. Next Tuesday Mr. Clarke will talk on folk and cultivated art, and Mr. Luening will give an introduction to music illustrated on various instruments. On Tuesday afternoon, the music seminar will be open for two demonstrations, one by Mr. Clarke in which works will be performed which he will discuss in the evening, and one by Miss Wile, who will give an introduction to dance illustrated by an analysis of a dance composition. On Wednesday evening, Mrs. Hirsch will talk on modern and traditional art, with slides, and Mr. Lauterer will give an introduction to art of the theatre, with an analysis of two settings for King Lear. On Friday, Mr. Fowlie will talk on art and the spiritual problem of man, and Mr. Gray will discuss the judgment of art. Throughout we have been guided by the notion that it was more important to know art than to know theories of art. And this made it unnecessary for us to be responsible for each other's points of view, or to attempt to appear unanimous.

I hope you have noticed that I have not been practising what I preach in this talk. But before I stop talking through my hat, in this abstract manner, I should like to tell you how we want you to listen to this series, and what we hope you may get out of it.

First of all, you will have a number of concrete works of art analysed for you. These works are of interest in themselves, and we hope, in addition, that the analyses will show you what is meant by understanding in art. These works will be paintings, musical compositions, a dance, a novel--examples of various different arts. As you become familiar with them, one after the other, we hope that you will perceive certain analogies between them. You will hear many of the same words applied to the analysis of different arts--words like rhythm, unity, form. Does this mean we could define rhythm in a way that would do for music and literature both?

Perhaps, but in terms so general as to be almost meaningless. It would be better to say that there is an analogy between rhythm in music and rhythm in literature, and that your understanding of one will improve your understanding of the other. We invite you to perceive this kinship between the arts and on this basis to form your general ideas, and your definitions of art with a capital A, for yourselves.

We have also in this series a few talks which are designed to help you to think about art in relation to other things. I might mention Mr. Krob's paper on the utilitarian aspects of art, Miss Wunderlich's on art as a voice of its time, and Mr. Gray's on judging art, as examples. Our intention, as I said early in the paper, is not to provide you with a philosophy of art but rather to show you what you would need to make one, and these papers are designed to help you in this way. And so, when you have become acquainted with art through the demonstrations, we invite you to take the final step for yourselves, and relate whatever you have decided art is to whatever other values may be dreamed of in your philosophies.

Francis Fergusson
Art Series: I
March 16, 1938
Bennington College

The Utilitarian Aspect of Art

In the first place, it is important to decide what is meant by the utilitarian aspect of art. We can readily say that it is the need of man to construct, to write or to compose something for some express usage or purpose. This need is to man as primary as his food, his sleep and drink. But this utilitarian aspect, it must be remembered, is only the drive, the reason for his doing things. It is, of necessity, allied to the media and means in which he can work, or to the media and means that he can discover in making something work. And the media and means calls for materials that he has at his disposal or can unearth from some source. This search for materials brings into play barter and trade, the economic principle. Thus, this utilitarian aspect may be said to indicate a direction, a primary force, which, while it is not all-important, is a vital organ in the organic whole.

Since man's building is one field of art that is most easily associated with use or function, this field will be discussed chiefly, to attempt to clarify this aspect of utility and to see it in its relation to the other aspects.

In the beginning man lived in caves and self-devised shelter made of the materials at hand and he found materials suitable to the climate in which he lived. He built according to the particular properties of the material at hand, finding means to strengthen his simple construction, and building shelter to satisfy his primary needs. At his death one of the means of retaining him in conscious memory was to construct a tomb to house his body and a pyramid to suggest the greatness of his power.

Rock sculpture and paintings are interpreted as including forms for early man to worship. And from their tombs to their temples was a step in idea, in their endeavor to find clues to the spiritual meaning of their being, to divine, by ritual, a directive significance of their existence. The remaining caves, tombs, and

temples and the varied shelter of all peoples surely attest their use.

A directive significance of architecture was formulated into rules in the writing of Vitruvius. He ventured a dogma of order, arrangement, fitness, symmetry, and propriety. Definitely in propriety and arrangement we find use functioning and to an extent creating fitness and order. There is an amazing similarity in the quality and honesty of the architecture of that Augustan age and of today. He decried imitation, poor construction and the lack of ethics of the builders.

Though new architectural forms were devised at various times and utility played its part, it was not until the rationalizing eighteenth century that the reasons for architecture began to be considered. Architecture was seen primarily as a visual experience, as an external expression. In the Renaissance, for instance, the architecture seems to have been a search for external grandeur, while practically speaking, it was mere copying, with some inventiveness in creating new details. The painting of that time, however, showed greater creative development.

But to go to the middle of the eighteenth century; there were several essays on architecture written by Marc Antoine Laugier, a French abbot and scholar, a member of the academies of Angers, Marseilles and Lyons. He wrote about architecture as a reality and sought to put it on a rational basis. He felt that the judgment of the aesthetic value of architecture should not be based on instinct alone but on reason as well, and several fallacies of classic architecture are pointed out, such as bending a pilaster around either an outside or an inside corner when it is so evidently not a true means of support. Another fallacy is the one of placing little pediments or gables over windows, which in reality suggest a roof coming through the wall. And another discrepancy is the use of deep cornices in the interior, its primary use on the exterior being to keep the water from running down the wall, and the low height of the heads of the windows in the rooms which is necessitated by the cornice treatment, thereby cuts down the

penetration of light into the room.

Laugier's conception of architecture was quite remarkable, in that he called for a related distribution in the various parts of a plan, both as to the interior and exterior; and he asked that the architects have a better knowledge of the weights of the roof, walls and floors, and of the bearing power of the supporting earth. Light and air and view were considered important to him, also a release and freedom in the interiors.

This is probably the first writing on town planning. He felt that towns should have leading to them and within them, large thoroughfares bordered by rows and rows of trees and large places. The town should be more of a forest with streets running through, and on the streets the heights of buildings should be related to the width of the streets. It is unfortunate that some of the planners of Europe and America did not read and heed these ideas.

He was very daring in saying that symmetry, a divine order of classicism, should be abandoned from time to time and that we should move toward utility without neglecting the agreeable.

Altogether his is a sane approach to organic architecture. The social and economic aspects are not stressed but are suggested in his statement of the move toward utility. In almost every instance noted here, function plays an important role. Isn't it quite possible, if we want to do so, to name him as the father of contemporary architectural thought?

Pegel believed that the material of architecture is matter itself in its immediate externality as a heavy mass, which is subject to mechanical laws, its forms remaining the forms of inorganic nature. And it is the will to assemble, though externally, in accordance to artistic form. He feels the contrast of the inner spiritual quality of architecture with the external expression of the art. Although he rationalizes soundly about construction and utility, his vision of the unity of expression of architecture is not clear. He sees it as it is commonly seen today by the outside observer, as exterior form.

Schopenhauer's views are more rational and direct than Hegel's. He feels that this art does not affect us mathematically, or mechanically as does Hegel, but dynamically, and what speaks to us is not mere form and symmetry, but the fundamental forces of nature. His reason made him state that support and burden is the fundamental law, that no burden shall be without sufficient support and no support without suitable burden. There must be an ease about the support, but no superfluity. Lack of visible support disturbs the eye, as for instance, in the projecting corner balconies on houses. He felt that there was an insufficiency in the idea of support and burden, in high pitched roofs, and that the architecture of Italy with its flatter roofs had more aesthetic value. Schopenhauer practically creates a formula that though a thing may have utility, it has no value aesthetically unless its theme is support and burden.

He felt that architecture has its existence primarily in our spatial perception, and that beauty arises from the unconcealed exhibition of the ends (which is definitely utilitarian) and the attainment of these ends by reasonable structure. This structure is his idea of support and burden and his is the first expression of architecture as honest structure, and he holds no fear for the exhibition of this structure, which point is ardently expressed in contemporary architecture.

Schopenhauer discloses more thoroughly, than did Hegel, his feeling of the conflict of the inner spiritual quality of the Gothic interior with its stridently energetic exterior and the contrast of the outer materialistic grandeur of classic architecture with its sometimes mean interior. One definitely feels that he was searching for a unification of the interior and exterior expression of architecture, by means of his theory of support and burden, into a more rational entity.

In the late nineteenth century due to the great industrial expansion, cities became more crowded and the skyscraper came into being. Steel as a new material succeeded iron for use in the structure. A man working with Dankmar Adler in Chicago, Louis Sullivan, by name, built among the first of these and they showed a great lightness; more voids and less solids were seen. His idea of town planning

was one tall structure per square mile.

He is one of the first architects to relate utility structure and materials into a better whole. With his great love of nature and man, Sullivan believed that it is man's purpose to use his creative ability for social betterment. He believed that function as a basis, but not alone, could create great architecture but that it also called for emotional and spiritual realities.

Frank Lloyd Wright was one of Sullivan's young craftsmen who, after some years, struck out on his own. His first important house was the Winslow house, built in Chicago in 1893. In this house one sees the low horizontal, the wide overhanging eaves, the disposition of wider windows, and feels the growth of the structure from the earth. This was a new conception of architecture, one which allied the structure and use and form to the earth.

Wright is a complete individualist. He has been, and is, a great moving force in creating organic unity out of the various aspects of architecture.

Today, Wright believes that our great centers will be decentralized. He is most conscious of the social problems in the respect to the use of land and enclosed space, and has planned a unified community called "Broadacres".

Wright's influence was felt in Europe far more potently than in America, but the architects there were working with similar intent in clarifying the air of the superfluities and superficialities of architecture.

Otto Wagner, an Austrian, was lecturing, building and prophesying the horizontal, great simplicity and the honest exhibition of construction and materials, and the creation of forms in harmony with modern life. He was strong enough to override the fanciful Baroque character of the architecture of Vienna at that time.

Walter Gropius, one of the most vital forces in the new architecture, came to the fore in Germany in 1911 when he built with Adolf Meyer, the Fagus Boot Factory at Alfeld an der Leine. It was conceived in steel and glass, and new methods of construction were introduced. There was a striving for maximum flexibility in use and for strength with maximum lightness. The usual cold separation of interior

space from the outside, by means of small punctured holes in the wall, is changed to one in which an airy lightness makes the inside and outside practically one. The Werkbund Exhibition Building in Cologne a few years later, was a structure of simple wall areas in contrast with great expanses of glass. There is an honesty of expression of the uses of his buildings, of his materials, and of construction. There is no sham face that is ashamed to disclose the building.

Gropius, who will lecture here on March 31, is one who has discovered that a correlation of the social, economic and technical aspects, with utility and structure primary, can create aesthetically sound architecture. He has made constructive contributions to town planning, one being that instead of overwhelming the earth with tall structures, there should be a restriction on the maximum amount of enclosed space which could be built upon in a particular area, in relation, of course, to its use and transport facilities.

Another important materialization of this creative power, was the reorganization of the Grand Ducal School at Weimar, which later became the Bauhaus at Dessau. We all know of the acknowledged influence of this school, on the quality of German architecture and industrial arts, and of art in the whole world.

Alvar Aalto is another who sees organic unity in all phases of design. He has produced some superb new architecture in Finland, which has great inventive quality in plan, in materials, and in ideas of construction. Properties of new and old materials have been investigated and new uses put to these materials as, for example, in his chairs of bent plywood, of which there will be an exhibition here this spring. He arrives at symphonic completeness in all his work, through this scientific direction.

Utility, this primary force of the correlated aspects of architecture, is closely interwoven into the whole fabric. Utility affects planning for the needs of man, which planning is essentially the organization of enclosed space, with a new sense of its relation to what is outside.

Upon utility depends the choice of materials whose physical properties, such

as color, texture, density, strength and possibilities of fabrication and whose cost best serve honest construction and sensible living arrangements within the construction.

The economics of materials and labor affects the essential uses of things in determining the length of service and the amount of the cost of upkeep that may be desired from them.

Man is allowed freer expression in creating things today, but he must know or find out about the various aspects of his problem and correlate them. The more he can know of the theoretical as well as the practical, the formal values, as well as the technical solution, the more valid and creative will be his efforts.

Necessity can rebuild on the site of outworn buildings, and build on new sanely planned areas in urban and outlying districts. If it utilizes sympathy and understanding, it will integrate the various aspects; and if fed by a scientific imagination, with a far vision which encompasses the object in complete reality, it will arrive at the ends in view. These powers used together, will realize the unity of the new architecture. If organized properly, it can fashion new lighter, stronger, and more economic aesthetic forms for the needs of man.

Suggested Bibliography

Walter Gropius, The New Architecture and the Bauhaus

Nicholas Pevsner, From William Morris to Walter Gropius

Brownell Baker and Frank Lloyd Wright, Architecture and Modern Life

Russell Krob
Art Series: II
March 16, 1938
Bennington College

LITERATUREAnalysis of Jane Austen's Emma

To analyze a novel is to look back at it to see how it is responsible for what happens to one when one reads it. In reading Emma what happens is that Jane Austen lets one watch Emma find out how to succeed in her attempts to make a satisfactory attachment to another person. In this experience are only the words, the author, and the reader. But all one can actually look at are the different kinds of words and the different ways they are related by the author. Since the words are symbols, some evoke places, things, people; others suggest the characteristics of these things and their actions; others the relationships between them, and all of the words reveal Jane Austen's attitude toward her material. The order, syntax and sound of these words give shape to the story they tell. Thus the final total experience of reading Emma comes because Jane Austen has used those words in that order. As Mr. Creighton will tell you, each word will be different for each reader, so the extent of each reader's understanding of the whole will be different. All the kinds of things made by these words, their order, and the relationships between them in Emma, are such that the first part of the book seems to establish various loosely related beginnings, the middle part of the book to change those and bring them into closer relationship, and the end of the book to complete the fulfillment of each and the integration of them all. To show all these interrelationships which constitute the novel, one has to classify the things Jane Austen has made by words. These classifications do not tell what constitutes the novel; they merely provide ways of looking more closely at its elements. Those referring to the progression of events, or to the shifting relationships between people, or to the necessary outcome, are applicable to all novels; but a broader application of this analysis would mean applying the method of procedure, not the specific

classifications used.

The reader's idea of Emma is the central thing made by the author's words. That seems to come primarily from the words making Emma's actions, i.e. the way she behaves. As one reads, one is aware that that is shown by what Emma says, desires, does, and thinks about, by the relationships she is involved in, and also by indications of what Jane Austen thinks of her, what she makes Emma think of herself, and what she makes the reader think of her. The rest of the book reveals Emma's surroundings, the place, people, and ideas, their influence on her and hers on them. I shall call all that the picture of Emma. To indicate how it is made I shall examine the first chapter, then merely describe some of the developments of beginnings established there in order to show how the novel is an integration of changing patterns, which in the end completes the revelation of the picture of Emma.

The revelation begins in the first sentence: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her." One can see her traits, her surroundings, her situation, her idea of those things, and Jane Austen's idea of them also. First by her name, she is made a whole person at once. Then she is modified to a person of a special sort, with appearance, temperament, and endowments of her own. In the second part of the sentence the glowing description is added to; she is made a complex person who really thinks she is blessed, but the author suggests that she is subject to trouble. Each word is essential, for besides contributing its own significance, and its influence on the meaning of every other word, it also becomes part of the rhythmic and syntactical build. Emma is the subject of the sentence throughout, and both the rhythmic and syntactical stress necessitate emphasizing the word seemed. It is a point not to be missed that semblance and truth are two very different things in this book. The order of the words adds another kind of emphasis. Here Emma's blessings precede any hint of unpleasantness, and one sees that the emphasis on the pleasant part of her life comes from

the very order of the sentence. And this is to be the order of the middle part of the book. Another aid to the meaning comes from the sound of the words: handsome, rich, comfortable, and also distress and vex. Thus while giving the first glimpse of Emma, Jane Austen is also beginning her elaboration and clarification of the whole story, the whole picture of her.

The next sentence begins the picture of Emma in action, by surrounding her with people, suggesting influences on her, and establishing her relations to those people. Learning of her surroundings means learning more about Emma, about her opinions and desires, about how she will begin to behave, and more about what Jane Austen thinks of her. That her father was a "most affectionate, indulgent father . . . with habits of gentle selfishness and of being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself" suggests the kind of person that Emma is influenced to be. Jane Austen's next statement that Emma was mistress of the house, and that she and her governess were like intimate sisters reveals the kind of relationship Emma wants to have with others, and prepares the way for the first mention of one of her desires, that of having her own way. "Miss Taylor's mildness of temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint, and . . . Emma had been doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but chiefly directed by her own." The sense of the closeness of this relationship is increased by the balanced and close-knit structure of the sentence telling about it.

So far the information presented since the first sentence has been of a pleasant kind; the next paragraph suggests the reverse: "The real evils . . . of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself: these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments." This sounds serious, but "The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that (the disadvantages) did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her." The seriousness seems lessened, though it is merely stated that Emma did not know

of those faults of hers. It is made less serious by the next statement: "Sorrow came - a gentle sorrow - but not at all in the shape of any disagreeable consciousness. Miss Taylor married." This is a brief but important hint that Emma's real sorrow is to come from a growing awareness of herself and of "the evils of her situation". But the subject is abruptly changed from Emma to the topic of marriage which is to be her prime interest throughout the book. Thus the story is begun on a wedding day. Emma is sitting with her father, thinking with pleasure of her part in promoting the match. She continues to promote matches, to act according to her own wishes, to think too well of herself, and to strive to have others think well of her, so that through the long course of her mistakes she manages to avoid the "disagreeable consciousness" until she is threatened with the loss of what she finds she really wants, her own marriage to Mr. Knightley.

Her main desire is indicated while she is regretting the loss of Miss Taylor--the desire to attach herself to someone else. She does not yet know how to make a satisfactory relationship with another, so she pretends to be above making one, to long for an impossible one, and concerns herself with matchmaking for others instead. What she wants is another like Miss Taylor, who "had been a friend and companion . . . intelligent, well-informed, useful, gentle, interested in the ways of the family, interested in all its concerns, and peculiarly interested in herself, in every pleasure, every scheme of hers; one . . . who could meet her in conversation, rational or playful." This sounds like a description of Mr. Knightley, but in her search for such another relationship she tries first Harriet then Frank Churchill before she finds it with Mr. Knightley. By that time it is satisfactory, for she has grown so that she no longer craves everyone's blanket approval, and she has been through the period of disagreeable consciousness.

Then as one begins to learn of her neighbors, her town, and her time, one can notice how that all is related to Emma. The structure of the sentence

about Highbury is characteristic of the arrangement of the whole book, and of Jane Austen's whole conception of the group, each part bound to each other, and all linked with Emma herself. "Highbury, the large and populous village almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn, and shrubberies, and name, did really belong, afforded her no equals." This sentence in suggesting Emma's relations to the town, also suggests her relations to the whole social system in which she lived. Jane Austen's or Emma's conception of "equals" and of the importance of that concept in a way of life in a small English town in 1816, is very different from ours in America in 1938. To grasp the full picture of Emma, then, it is necessary for us to alter our interpretation of such a word, and to attempt to provide a contemporary context for it. The novel itself can be a context, but any additional information about the customs and thinking of that other day and place will help our grasp. This concept of equals, and many others such as the concepts of consequence, civility, or sense in the next few sentences are also material essential for the final picture.

The nature of Emma's existing relationships to people is suggested in her argument with her father about Miss Taylor's new condition. This argument reveals Emma's reactions to Mr. Woodhouse's nervousness, his distaste for any change, his dislike of marriages, his desire for deference, and his wish to be always in the right. These traits of his are all used later by Jane Austen in shaping Emma's final relationship to Mr. Knightley. One sees Emma's traits, too, - her wish to be in the right, and her habit of wheedling her father. The first character added is Mr. Knightley, the sensible, cheerful brother of her sister's husband, who is already an intimate friend and frequent caller. After he comes, one sees that Emma's centre of interest shifts to herself, and that what she now wants from Mr. Knightley is his good opinion of her.

An indication of the foundation of the coming relationships is given in their conversation. When Mr. Knightley says that it must be better for Mr.

Weston to have only one to please instead of two, Emma agrees by saying, "Especially when one of those two is such a fanciful, troublesome creature." This playful remark about herself is taken by her father as referring to him. The clarification of this error indicates the shape of much of what is to follow: reversal of opinion, straightening out of delusions, truth substituted for fancy. And the error is no less ludicrous than the progression of Emma's mistaken beliefs that Mr. Elton was in love with Harriet, or that Frank was, or worse still that Mr. Knightley was. Then Emma adds information about her relationship to Mr. Knightley by saying that he always likes to find fault with her - in a joke. Her hurrying on to say that she and Mr. Knightley always say what they like to each other suggests Emma's kind of misunderstanding, but her self-assurance and good spirits carry her right over it. The next statement indicates him as the probable person to bring her to disagreeable consciousness. "Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them; and though this was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him suspect . . . her not being thought perfect by everybody." The clause - "though this was not particularly agreeable to her", - because it is subordinate, helps to minimize the possibility of her yet taking Mr. Knightley seriously, for the main clause shows Emma's main concentration on keeping her father from having the disagreeable experience of knowing that anyone did not think her perfect.

These beginnings are so far of about equal kind, not very serious, not likely to promote change. But the change does begin when Mr. Knightley criticizes Emma--not in a joke. She has begun by exaggerating her part in making the match for Miss Taylor. Mr. Knightley's doubts lead him to say, "You are more likely to have done harm to yourself, than good to them, by interference." His warning her not to do it again shows his interest in her, in her welfare and development, but her reaction to this is to defy it. So Emma changes

again and her reply to him is her statement that she has decided just to look about for a wife for poor Mr. Elton. This prepares for increasing changes, and furnishes the foundation for all that is to follow, for her next attachment to Parriet, and for her plans for the marriage between them.

All the rest of the book is related to this first chapter in the subsequent change or development of each element. One way to look at these changes is to isolate certain kinds and think of them as forming patterns. Sometimes a pattern seems to be made from repetitions or elaborations of a kind of behavior; sometimes from growing desires, or shifting efforts to fulfill a desire; sometimes from the growth or decline of personal relationships; sometimes from ideas and fancies expanding till they are confirmed or exploded sometimes from increasing likenesses shown among people, or places, activities, or events. These patterns are in the form of progressions, rhythmically mounting until they merge in the chapter in which Emma discovers herself, and resolving on the last page. Then the difficulties and misunderstandings are cleared, and the people's desires have become closer so that the fulfillment of one becomes the fulfillment of another also. The reader is aware of the author's making a kind of super-pattern by her shifting and emphasizing and consolidating the relationships between the partial patterns. From this selection and handling of material one gets her comment on the picture of Emma that she is making. Thorough examination of all these patterns would require notice of the role of every detail in the book. Mention of two patterns will be enough to indicate their nature and their interdependence. These are the progression of Emma's self-knowledge and the progression of her attempts to fulfill her various desires.

The main pattern in the book, because it shows the main change, is the progress of her self-knowledge, of her awareness of her self. One can see in the beginning that she has a very limited and warped idea of herself; that she regards herself primarily as the perfect person she wants to be. A slight

uneasiness during her planning of the match between Harriet and Mr. Elton is the first hint that she doubts her own perfection. But when Mr. Elton is preparing to propose to Emma, she is "too eager and busy in her own previous conceptions . . . to see him with clear vision". And she can't take in John Knightley's suggestion that Mr. Elton's real attachment is for her. "She walked on, amusing herself in the consideration of the blunders which often arise from a partial knowledge of circumstances, of the mistakes which people of high pretensions of judgment are forever falling into." When Mr. Elton does propose, she is not amused; she explains it away as inconstancy to Harriet or drunkenness. But she does see how she has wronged Harriet. Here is her first remorse, and her first admitted error; one sees that she has the capacity for knowing herself, and for seeing what deluded ideas she had. "The first error, and the worst, lay at her door, It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. . . She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more." In a moment she breaks this resolve by beginning to think of another husband for Harriet. But she catches herself, blushes, and this time laughs at her own relapse. By that she has sidestepped the first opportunity for facing herself.

Then she is distracted by her next absorption in Frank Churchill. She fancies herself his favorite, and whips herself up into a state of thinking she is in love with him. Not until she begins to speculate about the future of their affair does her self-knowledge increase. This time she sees how she has been exaggerating her own feeling. ". . . a strong attachment certainly must produce more of a struggle than she could foresee in her own feelings. 'I do not find myself making any use of the word sacrifice. . . I suspect that he is not really necessary to my happiness. So much the better. I certainly will not persuade myself to feel more than I do.' . ." Of course this makes her think of a Frank and Harriet match, but by this time she knows of the danger of such speculations. When Harriet mentions her new attachment to the

man who saved her, Emma cannot help being pleased, and cannot resist giving her a little encouragement.

The first real stock Emma takes of herself is after she has insulted Miss Bates. Mr. Knightley, "whose opinion she has always valued", gets her to see that she has been ungracious, unfair. She is full of self-accusation and mortification over her snobbish neglect of Miss Bates and her niece Jane Fairfax. This becomes almost unbearable when she finds out about Jane's secret engagement to Frank, and she is doubly grieved to think that she has been the second time the cause of poor Harriet's unrequited love.

This state of remorse and self-examination is the setting for Harriet's announcement that she is really interested in Mr. Knightley. Then "she touched, she admitted, she acknowledged the whole truth. . . Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself. Her own conduct, as well as her own heart, was before her in the same few minutes. She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before." Here she reaches true knowledge of herself, and though she exaggerates as usual, she does see the nature of her meddling actions; and she does see that human relationships are more than what she merely fancies them to be. This revelation coincides with her discovery that she has been acting contrary to the true wishes of her own heart. Thus the major patterns merge at this point, and the rest of the book is concerned with her winning Mr. Knightley. Now she can see that the way to win him is to become the kind of girl he has tried to help her to be. She is never at ease, even after their engagement, until her remorse over Harriet is removed by Harriet's marriage to Mr. Martin. While her self-knowledge has been progressing, there has also been a progression from her blind attachments to Miss Taylor, Harriet and Frank Churchill to this clear-sighted love for Mr. Knightley.

That wish to attach herself to another is related to all her other desires. The pattern of her attempts to fulfill them is complex for it includes her conscious desire to make matches, her half-conscious desires to

stand apart, and be admired by all around her, but especially by some one person, and her subconscious desire to have power over all around her. One successful attempt to make a match for Mr. Elton only diverts this urge of hers. She makes plans again for Harriet, speculates fantastically about Jane Fairfax and Mr. Dixon, plays with the idea of making a match for herself with Frank, and can never satisfy this ruling passion until her own match with Mr. Knightley is made. The progression of this pattern is from others to herself, from a slight misunderstanding over a small person to an almost disastrous error over the desirable Mr. Knightley, and from something completely in Emma's hands to a situation over which she seems to have no control. In order to be admired and have power she wants to lead balls, bestow largesse, be consulted and obeyed, to amuse herself as she chooses, and to avoid any situation that would make her appear anything but best. These desires begin as almost unknown to her; they progress into her consciousness when she has learned to see what she is doing. One sees that the use Jane Austen makes of Emma's self-knowledge is to provide her with a vision of how to fulfill her desires. After her discovery she forgets that she thought Highbury afforded her no equals, and that she thought she could never bear the idea of Harriet's marriage to Mr. Martin. Now her main desires are to get Mr. Knightley, and to avoid the consequences of having twice persuaded Harriet to hope to marry above her station. Finally her own marriage, and Harriet's to Mr. Martin, provide the fulfillment of these aims.

These patterns are connected with many others, such as the growth of all the influences of people, place, action on Emma, the shifting of the various relationships and Emma's ideas of them, and the increasing clarification to the reader and to Emma of the necessary outcome. Jane Austen lets the reader see this outcome before Emma sees it, so the focus of the story is shifted from the series of events to Emma's progressive understanding of those events.

The whole is ended when all the changes are completed, and the picture of

Emma has become clear. One sees that Jane Austen has used the setting, the plot, the characterization, the tone and her ironical comment to make this whole. Emma is finally revealed by the last changing influence on her: Jane Austen's final comment comes only with the closing episode: ". . . they were befriended . . . Mrs. Weston's poultry-house was robbed one night of all her turkeys. . . Pilfering was housebreaking to Mr. Woodhouse's fears. He was very uneasy; and but for the sense of a son-in-law's protection, would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life . . ." Now Emma can be married in the Highbury that afforded her no equals to the man who loved to find fault with her, because now her father is afraid of a poultry thief.

The purpose of such an analysis as this is to point out some of the elements of this novel, and to remind you that if you don't look, you won't see. What you get out of any book depends ultimately on your previous experience and habits. I hope your experience of this analysis will contribute to your next reading, perhaps, of Emma.

Catherine Osgood
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Bennington College

Sentences from Emma

"Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her."

her father was "a most affectionate, indulgent father . . . with habits of gentle selfishness and of being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself"

"Miss Taylor's mildness of temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint, and . . . Emma had been doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but chiefly directed by her own."

"The real evils . . . of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her."

"Sorrow came - a gentle sorrow - but not at all in the shape of any disagreeable consciousness. Miss Taylor married."

". . . a friend and companion . . . intelligent, well-informed, useful, gentle, interested in the ways of the family, interested in all its concerns, and peculiarly interested in herself, in every pleasure, every scheme of hers; one . . . who could meet her in conversation, rational or playful."

"Highbury, the large and populous village almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn and shrubberies, and name, did really belong, afforded her no equals."

"Mr. Knightley likes to find fault with me--in a joke."

"Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them; and though this

was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him suspect . . . her not being thought perfect by everybody."

"You are more likely to have done harm to yourself, than good to them, by interference."

"too eager and busy in her own previous conceptions . . . to see him with clear vision".

"She walked on, amusing herself in the consideration of the blunders which often arise from a partial knowledge of circumstances, of the mistakes which people of high pretensions of judgment are forever falling into."

"The first error, and the worst, lay at her door. It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. . . She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more."

"I do not find myself making any use of the word sacrifice . . . I suspect that he is not really necessary to my happiness. So much the better. I certainly will not persuade myself to feel more than I do."

"She touched, she admitted, she acknowledged the whole truth . . . Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself. Her own conduct, as well as her own heart, was before her in the same few minutes. She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before."

". . . they were befriended . . . Mrs. Weston's poultry-house was robbed one night of all her turkeys . . . Pilfering was housebreaking to Mr. Woodhouse's fears. He was very uneasy; and but for the sense of a son-in-law's protection, would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life. . ."

Language as an Art Medium

The literary artist, like T. S. Eliot's Mr. Sweeney, has "gotta use words when (he) talk(s) to you". Words are not pure symbols, they are imperfect symbols which through use become loaded with subjectivity. They have no inherent power of mirroring actuality: they are substitute stimuli, with no other power to awaken ideas in our minds than that which they have accumulated from having been previously associated in our experience with these ideas. Each word drags after it the psychological stuff of a person, a race. The logical element in man has frequently been disturbed and irritated by this inevitable tendency of the word to take on flesh, the symbol imperfection. Perhaps he has always felt that the curse of Babel was about to descend upon him; certainly he has laboured heroically from time to time at the task of scouring his weapons, his words, against the expected onrush of chaos. Stuart Chase is merely the last, for the moment, of a long line.

Bacon called words the "Idols of the Market-place" and considered them "troublesome"; the scientific enthusiasts of the seventeenth century regarded words as one of the greatest obstacles to the advancement of learning; and the Royal Society in 1661 demanded that its members in their writings bring "all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can". Language as exact and colourless as the mathematical symbols x, y, z has been a perennially fascinating ideal to man. Schemes for an infallible universal language abound, and none more remarkable, I feel certain, than the Reverend John Wilkins' Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language (1668) in which he boldly attempted to reduce everything in the universe "to forty Genus's", and then by a bewildering combination of lines, curves, loops, hooks, and dots, to devise for each thing a symbol which would denote its genus and species. "God"

is symbolized by a straight line; if an acute angle is added on the left side it becomes "God the Father", and so on. This universal sign language may be transferred to any particular language, and among the fascinating examples of the possibilities of the English alphabet which Wilkins gives are these: God becomes Da; Idol, da; Spirit, Dab; and Body, odab. Wilkins' Universal Language embodies the aim, however faulty his execution, of the scientist, to limit, fix, and make his language as precise and objective an instrument as possible; but for the literary artist it is the final degradation of words: language stripped to the bone of pure symbol, shorn of its rich covering of subjectivity, and become "marks", mere tags to be attached to things.

For the literary artist cannot accomplish his task by means of the pure symbol alone. Language logically and scientifically used can never convey to us the sense of sin that sweeps over Stephen Daedalus as he confesses to his priest: "His sins trickled from his lips, one by one, trickled in shameful drops from his soul, festering and oozing like a sore, a squalid stream of vice. The last sins oozed forth, sluggish, filthy. There was no more to tell. He bowed his head, overcome." Pure symbol cannot describe the First Church in Old Bennington with a full moon behind it, or the face of a friend. Only a suggestive emotional use of words, in which logic may play a negligible part, can bring us these intimate realizations. G. K. Chesterton puts the difference between the emotional and scientific uses of language amusingly, but incompletely, when he says:

"... if the extreme logician turns for his emotions to poetry, he is exasperated and bewildered by discovering that the words of his own trade are used in an entirely different meaning. He conceives that he understands the word 'visible', and then finds Milton applying it to darkness, in which nothing is visible. He supposes that he understands the word 'hide', and then finds Shelley talking of a poet hidden in the light That is why the common arithmetician prefers music to poetry. Words are his scientific instruments. It irritates him that they should be anyone else's musical instruments."

Chesterton leaves us with the impression that this non-logical, poetic use of

words is vague or fantastic. It is not. "Visible", as we find it in the First Book of Paradise Lost, is not there solely for its musical values:

"A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all:"

It is used with the most precise intention, to convey vividly, powerfully the sense of desolation and hopelessness that came upon the fallen Satan as he gazed at the dungeon whose flaming rim gave forth not the hope and comfort of light, but served only to reveal a darkness of "sights of woe" and "doleful shades". Swinburne's "blind lips" is not a momentary biological aberration, but an attempt to fix exactly the subtlest of impressions. It is to be justified not by its verifiability in the logical world, but by its effect in the poem.

Amy Lowell's definition of Imagism embodies the aim of literary art: "a clear presentation of whatever the author wishes to convey. Now he may wish to convey a mood of indecision, in which case the poem should be indecisive; he may wish to bring before his reader the constantly shifting and changing lights over a landscape, or the varying attitudes of mind of a person under strong emotion, then his poem must shift and change to present this clearly." The nature of language compels the poet or novelist continually to experiment with new combinations of language, to ring the old changes upon words in a new way, or to invent new ways of stating things, in order to carry over the exact thing he wants to say. With the most subjective, irrational use of language he may achieve the most precise of ends. It is because the means have been confused with the ends that imaginative literature has at times been distrusted or ignored. It is the end, the effect, that is important: in literature, whatever may be true in morals or politics, the end justifies the means.

How, then does language operate to produce its effects? What happens to us when we read silently the words of poem or story? Watch a child in the early stages of reading, and you will probably see his lips laboriously going through the motions required to produce the sounds of the words, though no sound escapes his lips. Education and practise drive these movements inside; we cease to wear our phonetic hearts on our lips, but movements, however slight, of the vocal chords still go on. Words have not only a feel, but a sound; we do literally read to ourselves - an inner speech accompanies the words taken in by our eyes. It is difficult to catch the mind at work here, but some sort of speed-up process seems to take place in swift reading; we slur syllables, truncate words, or pass them over. But whatever the individual shifts adopted some form of inner speech is a necessary accompaniment of their reading for the majority of people. A minority of readers, however, by some process of short-circuiting, which I cannot explain, have acquired the ability to take in the meaning of a printed page by the eye alone, with no need of an accompanying suppressed vocalization. This is obviously a quicker way of reading, and as man becomes more efficient at this comparatively recently acquired skill of his this ability may be more generally developed. The effect, if any, upon literature of a wide-spread purely visual reading is not easy to gauge. Possibly an increase in fiction of the "headline" presentation which John Dos Passos uses in certain sections of his trilogy, or in poetry, an extension of the E. E. Cummings typographical gymnastics. Many of Cumming's poems are so difficult to read with an accompanying suppressed vocalization that it seems possible they were written primarily for the reader who can encompass them solely with the eye.

Not only do we score our reading with sound, we also illustrate with pictures. Visual images are such a common accompaniment of reading that it has at times been assumed that the primary aim of words is to evoke visual images in the mind of the reader. Seventeenth and eighteenth century critics fre-

quently speak as if the way to the poetic heart lay exclusively through the eye, and poetry only succeeded in evoking emotion when it produced a vivid visual image in the reader's mind's eye. This visual bias shows itself in criticism from time to time; readers are to be found who habitually demand a succession of pictures from the poet, and from the novelist clearly detailed scenes and characters recognizable on the street, and consider themselves fobbed off when they don't get them. The persistent visualizer, however, runs some risks: it has been remarked that the Song of Solomon, when fully visualized, becomes riotous nonsense: "Whoever", it has been asked, "saw a woman with breasts that looked like a pair of roes and hair like a flock of goats?" But many people do not immediately translate a visual word into a visual image; others consider themselves almost incapable of responding with a mind's eye picture; and others still claim to think entirely by means of images - individual capacities of visualization vary enormously. Words may evoke most powerfully "images" of sound, smell, touch, and movement, and they possess an important range of powers beyond the purely sensuous field.

We respond to words in many ways; we may react to the word in terms of its precise meaning, defining it hastily in our minds by means of a synonymous term, or adding to it other explanatory or limiting words; we may translate it into a definite image of the thing named - some readers are so concrete minded that the word bravery will not call up for them any abstract idea of fortitude but the picture, say, of a soldier in battle; we may regard the word as a thing in itself, quite apart from its meaning, and respond to it as a visual form; we may hear it as musical tone, appealing to the ear alone; or we may respond to its emotional mood, or associative values rather than to its intelligible meaning. The varieties and combinations of these responses are infinite.

If it has seemed at times during this discussion of the effects words may have upon us that we are the passive instruments upon which they play that impression must be erased at once. The response to words is an activity which

may involve the whole personality of the reader, the total sum of his interests. No one would accuse Edna St. Vincent Millay of attempting to hide her poetic light under a bushel of unintelligibility, yet of 62 Cambridge undergraduates who were asked to write their impressions of a sonnet from The Harp Weaver, 17 declared themselves unable to make out the mere sense of the poem, and 24 failed to understand it without realizing their failure. The sonnet reads:

"What's this of death, from you who never will die?
 Think you the wrist that fashioned you in clay,
 The thumb that set the hollow just that way
 In your full throat and lidded the long eye
 So roundly from the forehead, will let lie
 Broken, forgotten, under foot some day
 Your unimpeachable body, and so slay
 The work he most had been remembered by?"

I tell you this: whatever of dust to dust
 Goes down, whatever of ashes may return
 To its essential self in its own season,
 Loveliness such as yours will not be lost,
 But, cast in bronze upon his very urn,
 Make known him Master, and for what good reason."

The poem is addressed to a human being; Mr. Richards supplies a prose paraphrase which runs: "You should not think of death, for you will not die. It is inconceivable that God having made you so perfect will let you perish, your loveliness is too great to be lost, since when God dies your image will will be permanently retained as a memorial of his skill as a creator". Many of the students' comments on this poem are like the following: "Failure of communication, as after the 20th reading the nature of the addressee was still obscure"; "I don't understand whether the poet is addressing a woman, or a statue": "I am not quite sure whether the person addressed is the most famous statue of a great sculptor, or a beautiful human being"; or "Quite an ingenious way of saying that the artist has made a cast of a beautiful woman."

These examples of a failure to arrive at the mere prose meaning of a poem have not been quoted in order that we may feel a cozy sense of superiority. On the contrary. It is just possible that there, but for the grace of

Cambridge, go you and I. The word, as anyone who cares to consult I. A. Richards' Practical Criticism will find ample proof, does not spring clear and shining from the printed page. The activity necessary for a reader to realize a poem fully may be as intense as the effort required to understand and appreciate mathematics. Criticism, historical, psychological, interpretative, may help us, but there is no genuine substitute for the activity which we must be ready to enter upon when we are faced with a work of imaginative literature. The fact that words may be taken in a variety of ways enables literature to achieve its greatest glories, but it also produces the most pressing problem in its appreciation. The nature of language makes possible to literature a tremendous range of effects, and it constitutes almost a standing invitation to carelessness of interpretation. Because words may be taken in many ways, we are too often content to take them in any way, carelessly ignoring the contextual clues to the thought or feeling they embody. For in literature the word is never in isolation: it means what it does because it is part of a disposition of words which modify, combine, or contrast with one another in various ways. The word age has several senses which we all know; in addition it has a look, a sound, and a feel; and beyond this it has a range of associated ideas, such as dignity, honour, deference, power, experience, decrepitude, and the like. Any of these factors in the total meaning of the word age may be brought into play; but it will be influenced by the words that surround it, so that we may pick out from among these possibilities the particular meaning, or meanings, called for in the work. Upon some readers an isolated word will work only too well, touching off a train of pseudo-activity which bears no, or little, relation to the value the word possesses in the given context. Mr. Richards' students provide some interesting examples of this in their impressions of Alfred Noyes' sonnet for The Eightieth Birthday of George Meredith (which was untitled, and the author's name withheld in the interests of the experiment). The sonnet begins with the lines,

"A Health, a ringing health, unto the king

Of all our hearts today! ----"

and it is the word king that set the hearts aflame. One student replied, "Prejudice against first line. Nobody worships the kin, and patriotic verse tends to be insincere"; another, "'King' associates itself in my mind with Tyranny, an impossible subject for poetry"; and a third, "As a staunch royalist and one who loves to sing with all his might and main that grand old song 'Here's a Health unto His Majesty' I had thought after reading the first line to enjoy this little poem. But what a disappointment." A closer attention to the phrase "of all our hearts" might have provided a clue that the king was not George V. In any attempt to discover what literature is saying, a too great susceptibility to the word may be quite as prejudicial as a hardening of the heart.

Too often we respond to literature with ready-made attitudes, royalist or republican, or we interpolate irrelevant personal experience, or we passively allow words, scenes, characters to touch off floods of reminiscence, rosy day-dreams, wishful reconstructions of our past which may, but probably will not, have anything to do with the work in hand. This tendency, which at times goes so far as to involve a reversal of the role of writer and reader, springs from the nature of man. Clive Bell, in his little volume "Art", says that "To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions." He speaks as if we might suddenly decide to lay aside our health, history, and environment; but the difficulties of supposing that our mental furniture may be mysteriously removed from the garret and our libidos sneaked out the cellar door when we sit down to read a book are enormous. In practice we know that experience enriches enormously our reading, that it is impossible for us to appreciate literature which makes use of experience utterly foreign to our own. But we are less conscious of the possibility that our personal experience may

be irrelevant, and may result in the distortion of our response by the introduction of something which does not properly belong to it at all. Sometimes it is very easy to decide that experience is irrelevant, and when I was reminded during one of the movements of the danced epilogue to Electra of the antics of Miss Gracie Allen in the motion picture A Damsel in Distress, I had no difficulty in rejecting the recollection as an irrelevant personal intrusion into a work of art, not a comment upon the content of Miss Martha Follis's choreography. But there are other cases where the test is less easy to apply. The only preventive, as I see it, against these intrusions of the personal in literature is a sharpening of our awareness to words and their relations with one another.

The activity which we call reading has for its end the discovery and realization of what is in a work of literature. Literature is an arrangement of words so intimate, interlocking, and dependent one upon the other that it is only by the closest attention that we shall be able to select out of the many possibilities the meaning, or meanings, that is imbedded in the arrangement. It is only when we have succeeded in doing this that we can properly be said to have responded fully to a work of literature; and it is only then that we are in a position to judge our experience. All questions of value, it may be stated dogmatically, are pointless until we have discovered what it is we are evaluating. But value is another story, and Mr. Gray is the teller.

John H. Creighton
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Bennington College

Art as a Voice of Time

The French philosopher Taine says a creative artist is always the product of his time, country and race. If he is right, it means that a work of art is, so to speak, the voice of a particular period of time as lived by a particular people in a particular land. As if, for example, a North American author today were by chance to write an historical novel about the first settlers of Crete, his work would remain none the less a reflection of 1938 and, furthermore, 1938 as lived by an American and not a Chinese or a Russian. These supposed ancient Cretans and their life, in spite of all possible accuracy in their portrayal, would mirror, in one way or another, American thought and feeling. The author would sooner or later betray himself and represent unconsciously his own time with its peculiarities, thoughts, ideals, and tendencies.

At first, this theory seems absolutely correct. For it is true the sculptures of Grecian antiquity, in their noble simplicity, reflect not only the spirit of particular artists but that of an entire period, which considered only human beings as beautiful as gods worthy of being sculptured. On the other hand, the apes of a Moselsio, with their humanlike souls, could only originate in a time which had learned to consider apes as close relatives of man and which attributes to humanity a nature not altogether godlike. Tiziano could paint his robust women only in an era remote from our ideal of dieting and starving.

Not only sculpture and painting but also literature, as far back as 2000 years B.C., reflects the fashions and taste of the time. We learn from Homer how the Grecian ladies wore their hair; from the Roman satirists that the women's stockings were even then as thin as cob-webs and that in Imperial Rome not only women but also men used makeup, lip stick, and nail polish. From

the German poets one can determine accurately whether a woman of a particular period should be slender or fat; whether to be considered pretty she had to wear her hair bobbed or, as described by Storm (so eagerly read in American high schools) she had to wear at the nape of her neck, "A knot too heavy for her delicate neck". But not only what an artist says but the way he says it, often reveals the taste of his times. For just as you can determine from the style of a building to what epoch it belongs, so from the language used in a German poetic work you can tell whether it originated in a time dominated by French influence or in an epoch, like 1914 or today, when the use of foreign words is considered treasonable. Here, of course, the origin of what is meant by taste and style, lies deeper.

The spiritual, political, and sociological tendencies of a period, its philosophic attitude, put their stamp on a work of art and thus date it. Religious concepts, whether pagan, Christian, or Jewish, have always used arts as their medium of expression. For medieval arts, the Church and Catholicism whether accepted or rejected, were taken for granted just as the Greek gods were for Homer, whereas, in the modern Russian literature, God and the Church are not even mentioned except in a derogatory sense. The teaching of the great contemporary philosophers and scientists also is incorporated in the works of the poets. Often the reader gets his knowledge of these theories indirectly and unknowingly through arts. As i.e. the classic German authors, Goethe and Schiller, gave poetic expression to the philosophies of Kant and Spinoza and modern prose in great part would be unthinkable without modern psychology, especially Freud.

The strongest influence on literature, however, comes from the sociological structure of a time. Every sociological epoch has its characteristic ideal for humanity or at least a type of personality which it considers worth striving toward, and therefore worthy of being perpetuated in the arts. A glance at modern Russian literature shows that in Russia today the Proletarian

is the center of interest and the embodiment of the highest power, whereas German literature of today shows the soldier and the peasant as playing the first violin. The increasing importance given the bourgeois and bourgeois problems starting with the last of the Middle Ages, can be gathered from a study of the literature of those years. Mirrors of their time, the poets teach us all the details of bourgeois points of view and conditions of life. How far literature is the reflection of the ethical standards of a writer's period can be learned by reading today a book of that bourgeois epoch which challenges comparison with our own period so changed from the standpoint of cultural history, i.e. the idyllic bourgeois poetry with its tempo as yet uncontaminated by auto or subway, is easily recognized as a voice from an earlier century, even if the reader does not live in New York. Especially the status of woman, as described in literature, is an echo of the time: the problem of love without marriage, of adultery and illegitimate children, constantly occurring less than 100 years ago as the most important literary motives are no longer treated so tragically today. They are sometimes taken as matter of fact phenomena or as subject matter for medical journals rather than for literature, as i.e. the subject of birth control. The Gretchen tragedy in Faust and the tragedy of Hester Prynne in the Scarlett Letter, in spite of their permanent literary value, are in a way voices from a bourgeois world of a limited period. Conflicts arise at the beginning and the end of the bourgeois epoch, caused on the one hand by the transition from the medieval world of knighthood to that of bourgeoisie, on the other by the transition still going on today, from the declining bourgeoisie to the rise of the proletariat. These conflicts find expression once again in art, especially in literature. I.e. the misalliance between a middle-class maiden and an aristocrat, a problem which to a modern American would probably seem just funny, is one of the vital literary examples of such conflicts. The works of the great classic German authors are full of such situations. At the other extreme, toward the

decline of the epoch, one of the chief motives in literature is the awakened conscience of the bourgeois toward the under-privileged and weaker creatures as i.e. proletarian, children, women.

Just as the sociological structure of a period is expressed in arts, so its political views. I will not quote examples from the modern German, Italian, or Russian literature because one might consider the output of those countries today pure propaganda and not art. But just as in those countries today, so every country has always put its political stamp on its contemporary arts. How much even Goethe, who doubtlessly transcends the limitations of time and space, bears the mark of his period, I discover when I read him with my students here. A word interpreted by them as portraying almost submissiveness or servility means to one who has lived under a monarchical form of government just the tone of the century. It would lead too far afield to show here that the democratic ideal also, like every other political tendency, finds an outlet in contemporary art and literature. Poetry is rich in war and revolutionary songs, and fiction provides no end of books which either glorify war (like publications during the World War) or advocate peace (usually in a period following a war). All of these are voices and echos of their time.

Closely affiliated with political views are philosophical theories. I am uncertain under which heading to discuss the fact that the literature of the past few centuries emphasized the individual while our present time begins to stress problems of classes, nations, or other collective groups. Here again I am not thinking of political propaganda using arts as an instrument, but of real art as an end in itself. I.e. of books like Werfel's "40 Days of Musa Dagh" where he deals with the Armenians, or of the same author's "Eternal Road" where the Jews are discussed. Literature here, too, mirrors the time, which altogether shows less interest in the individual than in the group to which he belongs.

Just as thoughts, theories, ideals and tendencies find their expression

in literature, consciously or unconsciously, so do actual facts and occurrences . . . all the way from the simplest events of every day life to historical situations and scientific discoveries. As i.e. when you open Sinclair Lewis' "Babbitt", you hear on the very first pages not only the tooting of automobile horns, but face the entire technique of the 20th century; just so in Goethe's works (not only in his letters and his autobiography) you find the yellow mail-coach and hear, as befits the romantic sentimentality of his time, the driver singing or blowing sad melodies on his horn. Wars and revolutions, legal trials and earthquakes, floods, inventions and shipwrecks find their echo not only at Hollywood but also in art and literature proper. How long the echo resounds depends upon the importance of the event. The World War still reverberates in the European literature, in books which must be clearly distinguished from those which make us hear already the rumbling of the next storm. Economics and social events and realities like depression, prosperity, capitalism, feudalism often unintentionally resound in the deeds and speech of literary personalities. Just as one can sometimes recognize by a man's dialect from which part of a country he comes, so one recognizes occasionally through a simile or word to what period an author belongs, no matter what period he happens to describe. I have in mind Stefan Zweig's book on Magellan, the discoverer of the Straits of Magellan, which appeared a couple of weeks ago. Through the minutely realistic descriptions the reader actually loses himself in the 16th century. But it escapes the author that in one place he speaks of the grave of the Unknown Soldier, which betrays him as a participant in the World War. Also he speaks occasionally of kidnapping which implies an acquaintance with modern culture.

And still none of these facts prove that art is the voice, mirror, echo (call it as you will) of time. The average person, not burdened with an inferiority complex, i.e. the masses, like their reflection in the mirror, the sound of their voice, their own echo, whether this occurs in the mountains

where they call aloud, or in society where people afford an echo. The "time" as I conceive it here is just a mass of creatures and their commonly shared opinions and feelings, determined by a date. This time, except in the rarest cases never gives the creative artist the recognition masses are accustomed to give their own reflection and words. I need not give examples here. You all know that even the greatest geniuses were not accepted as representatives of their time: Schubert, Wagner, Heine, even Goethe--they all suffered from lack of understanding by their contemporaries. But one does understand one's own voice. There is a comedy by the German poet Hebbel, founded on historical documents, about Michel Angelo: the great sculptor buries his Jupiter one night on Capitol Hill, after making it look old and dirty. The next morning, when they dig up the statue, Michel Angelo at long last receives the recognition only because his work is taken as a product of antiquity. There is another thing which refutes the theory that art is the voice of time. Voice is a secondary thing, not primary. Schiller puts it correctly when he says the spirit builds the body and not the reverse. But the echo, the voice, the reflection in the mirror, all depend upon the reality they re-echo or reflect. They do not create the original but are caused by it. The true creative artist, as we conceive him, moulds his own time, and puts his stamp upon it. And when we see him as the expression of his time, he may represent a time of his own making. Here again examples are not necessary. You all know that an era is often started by a poet or by a painter and that a genius is profoundly independent of time and space.

Since this is true, and yet what I said before is also evident, that even Goethe bears the stamp of his time, we face the difficult question as to what extent an artist is permitted to reflect his time and how far we expect him to transcend its limitations. To answer this question I turn to an author who is deeply interested in his own epoch and tries to interpret the problems of the immediate present: Stefan Zweig. I shall refer to his following works: the

biblical drama "Jeremiah", the biography of "Erasmus of Rotterdam", and the poem "Heroic Moment". In all three he commits himself on events of modern times in a wider sense. In "Heroic Moment" he uses the escape of the Russian author Dostojewski from execution; in "Jeremiah" the World War; in "Erasmus" his theme is intellectual freedom versus fanaticism. The poem about Dostojewski takes us within the barracks of Petrograd where the Russian poet and 8 companions are awaiting capital punishment for high treason. The plot is short and clear: the prison wagon drives up and in this cage, dark as a tomb, the condemned men are driven to the place of execution. There the death sentence is read aloud. Blindfolded, three at a time, they are bound to the stake. With his last glance Dostojewski sees the little church which glows in the red of the setting sun like the Sacramental Cup at the Last Supper. Now the prisoner stands with covered eyes, and his entire life passes before him: his childhood with father and mother, his brother, his wife. He hears the cos-sack's gun click and feels the approach of death. Suddenly an officer drives up, commands a halt, and delivers a paper granting pardon from the Czar. The bandages are taken from the prisoner's eyes and once more he sees the little church shining like a chalice in the golden glow of the evening. This is the moment when Dostojewski feels life claim him again. Now, one might expect him to kiss the earth or to embrace his fellow-prisoners in endless joy. But the ecstasy which seizes him is different, is Christlike:

Und Tönen schwillt empor aus den Tiefen,
 Als riefen
 1000 Stimmen in einem Chor,
 Und da hort er zum ersten Mal,
 Wie die ganze irdische Qual
 Ihr brennendes Leid
 Brunstig über die Erde hin schreit.
 Er hort die Stimmen der Kleinen und Schwachen,
 Der Frauen, die sich vergebens verschenkt,
 Der Dirnen, die sich selber verlachen,
 Den finstern Groll der immer Gekrankten,
 Die Einsamen, die kein Lächeln berührt,
 Er hort die Kinder, die schluchzenden, klagen
 Und die schreiende Ohnmacht der heimlich Verführten,
 Er hort sie alle, die Leiden, tragen,

Die Ausgesetzten, die Dumpfen, Verhohnten,
 Die ungekronten
 Martyrer aller Gassen und Tage,
 Er hort ihre Stimme und hort, wie sie
 In einer urmachtigen Melodie
 Sich in die offenen Himmel erheben.
 Und er sieht,
 Da einzig das Leiden zu Gott aufschwebt,
 Indes die untern das schwere Leben
 Mit bleiernen Gluck and die Erde klebt.

And then for the first time he hears,
 How the whole earthly torture shrieks out
 Her burning anguish over the world.
 He hears the voices of the young and weak,
 Of the women who yielded themselves in vain
 Of the girls who lost themselves in ruin,
 The dark secret hate of the ever afflicted,
 The lonely ones who know no smiles.
 He hears the children, who sobbing, cry on,
 He hears them all who bear this grief,
 The dulled, the derided, the damned,
 The uncrowned martyrs of all walks and ages,
 He hears their voices and hears how they
 Pierce the open heaven in a mighty chorus.

While the soldiers with brutal hands drag the pardoned prisoners back into the wagon, Dostojewski experiences the Heroic Moment, the absorption within himself of all human suffering. At the same moment an unique individual experience of one who is still considered a representative of modern times, is exalted by the poet Stefan Zweig into an eternal phenomenon, the purification through suffering and the realization of brotherhood through pain.

The drama "Jeremiah", written during the war, was produced in Zurich, since it was not allowed to be published in Germany, owing to its pacifist tendency. It treats of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebukadnezar, but is an unmistakable allegory alluding to Germany just then in the midst of war. Anyone who lives through the war and witnessed the Germans' ecstatic belief in victory and their tragic plunge from delusion to truth, understands the role of Jeremiah in this drama: His is the role of admonisher, of advocate of peace and self-knowledge, scorned and spat upon; doubtless the portrait of the pacifist who received similar treatment in all countries engaged in the war. No doubt the author through the solemn words of this play transmits to the

reader his feeling of disgust for the bestiality and senselessness of war. However, in so doing he succeeds in sublimating his own ethical problem, his own agony over a world gone mad, to a universal problem. The drama becomes a challenge to humanity, a dogma of peace, teaching that the material conquest of a country does not involve its moral defeat, and that a victory, tainted by blood and crime can never be profitable to the victor.

More actual and therefore more stirring is the biography of Erasmus of Rotterdam. In his Jeremiah the author's attitude toward his own epoch was already critical. In Erasmus he goes further: his criticism points out our lost ideals toward which we ought once more to strive. One cannot escape the idea that this book was dictated by disappointment in an exploded culture. The humanist, Stefan Zweig, writes a book about the humanist Erasmus; and in so doing sounds the death knell of humanism, living in the midst of its defeat. The author incarnates in the figure of his hero Erasmus the truest and deepest significance. Erasmus represents here that spiritual tendency whose only aim is truth, which places knowledge above faith and obedience. This school of thought, far from fanaticism of any kind, allows to every human being freedom of mind and religion. It recognizes only one bond between all men, not based on community of blood or nationality or denomination, but on the common search for truth and freedom. So Erasmus through his unsectarian attitude and his international principle becomes the first Paneuropean who argues for world peace on humanistic, i.e. spiritual grounds. The greatness of these thoughts is overshadowed by the tragic conflict in Erasmus' character or rather by the violence of the time for which he was no match. For with the ethics of his universal philosophy he combined the diplomacy of a man of the world, the egotism of the recluse and the weaknesses of one concentrated upon his own plan, who purposely closes his eyes to the requirement of his days.

His antagonist in the contest between world philosophies is Martin Luther, who puts faith above knowledge. More fighter than scholar, and opposed

to any form of diplomacy and ecumenism, he fights for his faith with courage and determination. Evidently it is not remote from the author's intentions here to draw some kind of a parallel between Luther's power and the despotism of modern dictators. But a real comparison, of course, was not given. For while Erasmus is the personification of a spiritual attitude the loss of which Zweig deplores, Luther's leadership does not originate, like the brutal materialism of modern dictators, from struggle for power. On the contrary we read between the lines something like a bitter statement that there was once a leadership, founded on moral ideals.

When I consider this book about Erasmus as a reflection of our time, I see it under two aspects: first, as a lament that universal thought regarding understanding between nations, races and individuals, independent of political and religious boundaries, which Erasmus advocated and also our own century so earnestly craves, is shattered by dictatorship and fanaticism; and second, as a protest against the leaders who destroyed to so great an extent the universal will toward human solidarity.

And yet the symbolic portrait of Erasmus and his movement is more than just that, and more than a mere cry of pain of the time and about the time. The author was not interested in informing a contemporary world about the cultural debacle of his own country. In spite of the masterly presentation the importance of the book lies neither in the character-drawing nor in its contribution to history. But Stefan Zweig succeeds in making the phenomena of that spiritual movement "humanism", Universalism or however we call it, a universal question. Its eternity, shown as originating from the sacredness of the human heart, sounds like a consolation to the contemporary reader but consolation only because the phenomenon is freed from any particular time and place, treated on a basis far remote from Europe of the 16th or 20th century, and discussed in a sphere of questions, which never grow old. In answer to the question whether a work of art is a voice of the time, I say, "Yes". For

its author, as a material being, is bound to his time. But I answer also, "No". For it is the task of every art to lift truth above reality and to extract the temporal facts from the time. He only is a true artist who succeeds in freeing himself from the fetters of time and represent things limited by time, sub specie Aeternitatis.

Eva Wunderlich
Art Series: V
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Bennington College

P A I N T I N G

The savage or the child, seeing the sun move from east to west, concludes that the earth is standing still. We consider this conclusion infantile. It is based on incomplete knowledge, on a lack of experience with contributory phenomena, which, when fully absorbed, widen the scope of our world-picture, once and for all.

In the struggle for understanding of our physical environment we attempt to bring our notions of it in line with contemporary and adult scientific thinking. Sometimes we find ourselves thwarted by the time-consuming difficulties of mathematics and other techniques. But never do we claim that our ignorance entitles us to be considered judges of scientific ideas, unless we belong to some fundamentalist southern legislature. And, we never quite dare to say: "I don't know anything about science, but I know what is true."

Even in scanning our social horizons we should judge as juvenile such a statement as: "Education for Negroes is bad because it makes them insolent and then they want to marry your sister". We do recognize the existence of methods to gather more accurate information of the subject, but since we are dealing here with complicated economic and historical factors and primary group reactions, we may not come to such agreements as in Science. But after careful objective research, our statements on the subject are apt to have a sound very different from a snap judgment.

Strangely enough, in art-judgments, the infantile method is still followed by such paragons of scientific and social thinking as professors and captains of industry. It does not seem to occur to them that certain techniques of looking might amplify their capacities for enjoyment.

One of our colleagues has been perpetually outraged by the art exhibited

in the faculty dining room. "I want something beautiful" he exclaimed. When asked about the precise nature of beauty, he tried to skirt the question by suggesting that I hang some of my own work. The assumption being, in a mutually selfish way, that, for once, we should agree on beauty.

The one certain thing we know about beauty is, that we shall never agree on it completely. Suppose the college had decided that Mrs. Garrett would have to select our students according to looks instead of talent. Imagine what ructions there would be among faculty, administration, and students. No, we could never agree.

I suggest as an approach to a definition, that beauty is something apprehended in a transaction between a person and an object during a variable interval of time. It neither resides alone in the object, nor in the person, nor in the interval of time. When beauty is apprehended it appears to be an inherent quality of the object, which it is actually no more than is the blue of the sky, or the smell of an onion. A certain state of mind is necessary for the apprehension of beauty, and since we cannot all have the same states of mind, we shall probably differ eternally. And, a certain object is likewise essential, and it would be interesting to determine, what the apparently inherent qualities of an object are, which, given the state of mind, affect us as beautiful, or conversely, as ugly.

In painting, we are immediately faced with two major factors: The subject matter and the execution. Our varied upbringings will make us disagree violently on the fitness of much subject matter. We may not like murder, and therefore consider ugly all art dealing with it. Yet, some of us might have enough sense of human fellowship to be intensely interested in another person's statements on the subject. And indeed we manage to find very beautiful, as presented, the passions of Lady Macbeth or the crucifixion of Christ.

What, then, is the intervening factor which, to certain people at certain times, converts the ugly into the beautiful? Undoubtedly it is the execution

or, what we generally call the form.

In the study of the form of a painting we find ourselves, as innocent spectators, on much more common ground than in the study of subject-matter. Fortunately we have relatively few ethical, religious or other social connotations with the simple elements which make up form in painting. Our connotations are, up to a point, almost physical, and in the physical sphere we (diagram 1) do have many experiences in common. We stand up vertically, we lie down horizontally, when we move some of our limbs reach out obliquely, we have a front and a back, a right and a left. The proper use of these elements of our physical self determine a good deal of our physical comfort. The architect, the sculptor and particularly the painter uses, perforce, visual elements which carry within themselves connotations with these simple physical states of: standing, lying down, moving, and their psychological correlaries, which of course change slightly with different individuals. Standing means standing still, but the emphasis may be felt to be on the active effort of standing or on the quality of stillness. Yet, standing is always more active than lying down and less so than moving. It is also less immobile than lying down and more so than moving. Very few people are ever conscious of all this when they look at pictures, largely because these and other elements rarely occur isolated or in pure form. Yet, a horizontal picture, such as this one by Juan (Plate 1, #3) Gris, is less agitated in its proper position, than when we turn it vertically. Moreover, the oval inner frame immediately acquires the precarious balance of an egg on its tip.

Herbert Read distinguishes three stages of the aesthetic experience: (1) the immediate perception or apprehension of the object, (2) the reaction of the affective system to the form of the apprehended object, and (3) the reaction of the spectator's mind to the conceptual nature of the object, to the "content" that is to say, of the work of art and to all its secondary associations. As a rule we slur over the first two stages very rapidly and land

with a bang in the third. It is much akin to disliking a very ugly person at first sight, who later turns out to be wise and lovable, and who finally loses in our estimation some or all of the disagreeable features of his ugliness. The other way around, a ravishingly lovely creature upon closer acquaintance often loses all her charms and becomes nothing but a vulgar, uncomfortable chatterbox. Some few rare people avoid such errors intuitively, whether it be in the judgment of people or pictures; a large group has learned through training and experience, but the majority judges at first sight. None, of course, can switch off emotions when confronted with a painting, but it is astonishing how superficial reactions can be avoided by training; which means, training in looking for the essential elements, and seeing them all and in relation to the whole.

Before we inspect this painting we shall look at some elements of pictorial form. The simplest case is a dot in the center of a square. You may not know it, but you are now having an aesthetic experience. The first step was the immediate apprehension: dot in center of square. The second step, the reaction of the affective system to the form of the object is, I dare say, a feeling of something in complete balance and at dead rest. On this, most of us would agree. The third step, the reaction of our mind to the conceptual nature of the object, to the content and its secondary associations may constitute the beginning of disagreement, but certainly not the end of experience. You may think: "Bulls Eye" or "Center of Universe" or "Dark Hole" or "Star" and henceforth your associative mechanism will take each one of you in an orbit of her own. You may also think "nothing much to look at, boring" or "the last, final, pure abstractions, Great". But all this is based on your having perceived the dot in the square and no more.

(diagram 3)

Next we shall shift the dot upward. A balance is still maintained, but a touch of life has been added, activity, movement. Then we lower the dot and suddenly there is a sensation of weight and awkwardness. You may consider

(diagram 4)

these observations irrelevant, but actually you live by them, instinctively as it were. When you consider hanging a mirror on a square wall (diagram 5) you will hang it almost certainly according to the second position of the dot, because it enlivens the wall without unbalancing it. You can play with this indefinitely. Place the dot at the upper right (diagram 6) and a strange unbalance results; you are inclined to let the square rotate around the dot as an axis until it comes to rest. Since this cannot be done with a picture a certain tension arises and it is the sum of such tensions that make for the movement and life in a picture.

Just a little more about dots. We think of them as having no real dimensions, even though they do cover a small area. But their character lies in the fact that they emphasize a definite location. There is also a quality of sharpness about them, they irritate the eye, they flicker. But there are two ways of making dots acquire substance, that is as enlargement of size or number. If we enlarge the dot (diagram 7) it has still one of the characteristics of the old dot, namely that of absolute balance. But the dead rest has disappeared to a certain extent. The elements of line, surface and shape have been introduced. The outline, a circular curve has moved near the edges of the square and our eyes begin to play with the varying distances between the periphery of the circle and the edges of the square. If we now (diagram 8) elongate the square and the disk, we get a rectangle and an ellipse. Here is the second fact to be noted about our picture. The horizontal position has already been mentioned. We can now observe three more elements of pictorial form, those of repetition and variation, and the resulting phenomenon of rhythm. As the eye plays again with the distances between periphery and frame, it becomes aware of the fact that the length and height differ and that the bend of the curve changes constantly during one quarter of its course, but, that it is then repeated in mirror image and repeated thus four times. This repetition and variation introduces an ordered complexity which the eye or the

soul experiences pleasurable to the extent that it can grasp it. The rhythmic element, according to Mr. Luening's definition: "relationship of time units", is fairly simple here. It takes the eye a certain time to run along one quarter of the curve and then the same time to do the next quarter and so on. The relationship is that of four even beats. Or maybe not quite even. Do we connect a sensation of effort with the climb from the left point to the top, and hence a little more expenditure of time, than during the next quarter where we descend ever more rapidly? This is ultimately a question to your own nervous systems. Personally I am inclined to this view, which would be expressed in musical notation approximately like this diagram 9: a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a half note. Juan Gris himself seems to have been aware of this asymmetry of symmetry and for this reason he may have shortened the ellipse with the yellow crescent on the left. This new curve is at the same time a further variation of the original theme. Still another variation is the black, curved edge on top, and a few smaller curves in the picture.

From here on the matter becomes rather complicated and while the eye responds to the multiplicity of elements, our language is not quite adequate to describe the welter of events and at the same time transmit the unity of the pictorial structure. Try as we may for instance, we cannot at the same moment describe the shape and the color of a simple form, but we can certainly and easily see and experience it simultaneously.

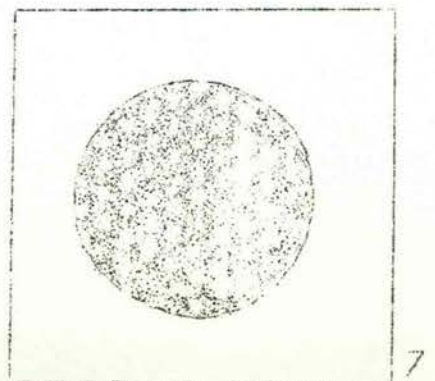
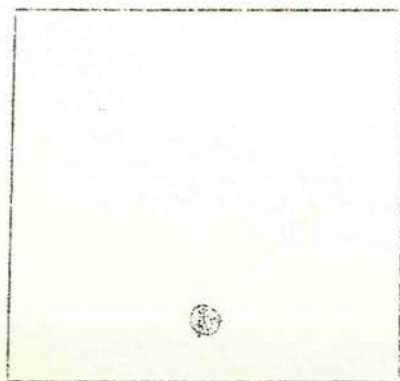
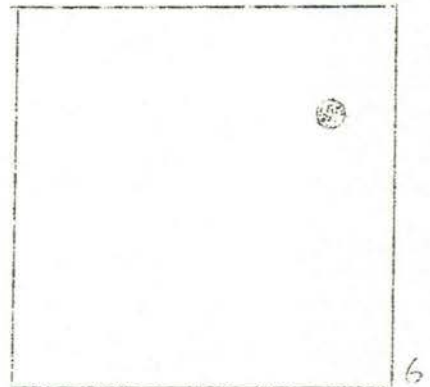
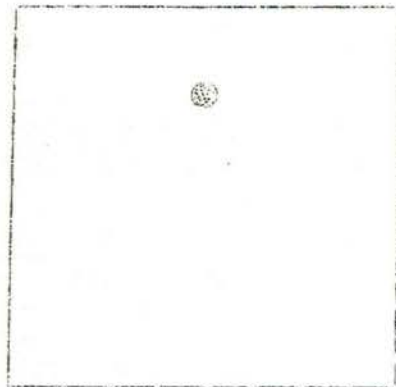
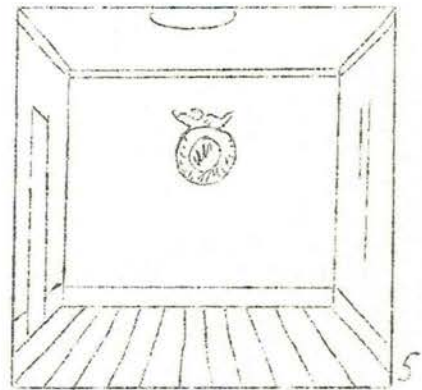
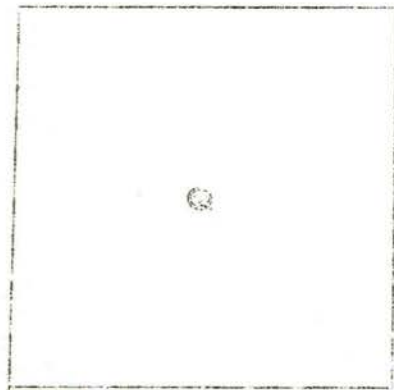
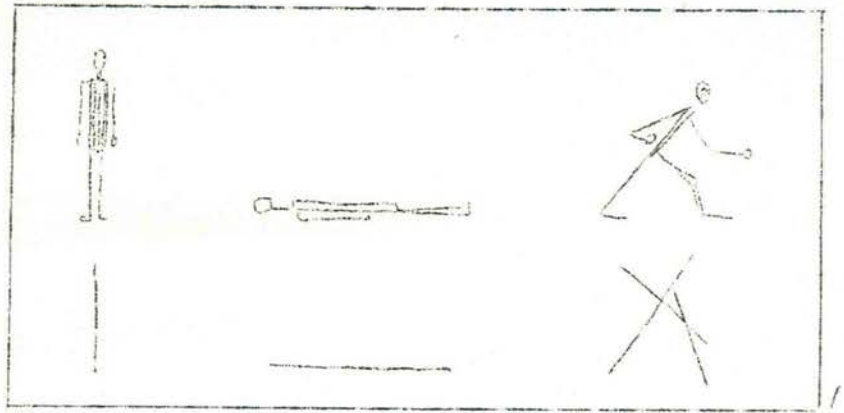
So you will have to bear with me if I speak about isolated elements. If you agree with me that the placement of dots in a square has some definite effect on your mood, you will probably follow me if I claim that the same is true of dots in an ellipse. (diagram 10) I have marked here the position of the two outstanding single dots in this picture. It is quite impossible to state unequivocally just what effect they produce, but as we make ourselves aware of their positions, the effect becomes strong and inevitable and is felt

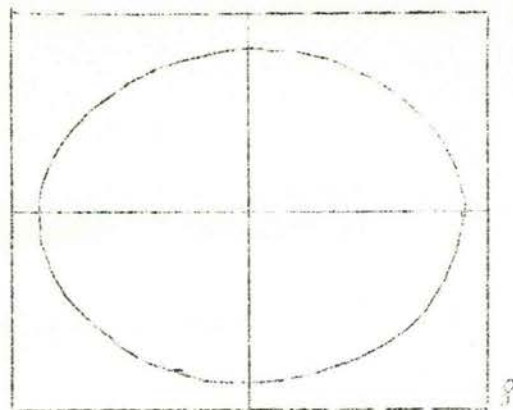
agreeably or disagreeably. The fact that one is the cork in a bottle and the other a fruit in a bowl is noted long after this effect has taken place. Repetition, variation and rhythm have been heightened in complexity. But there is still another use of the dot in this picture and that is: to produce texture and area. In this diagram (11) I have isolated only two such areas. One is the aforementioned bottle and the other is part of the wooden table. An even spreading of dots has been used for thousands of years to give an air or gaiety to textiles and other objects. Why it has this effect I don't know. But what does it do in the picture before us? It gives a sense of Translucency and it imparts to the area which it covers a certain vivid life, especially in contrast with some of the flat areas. Where the dots stand dark on light our mental fingertips record something more substantial and solid than the surrounding areas. Where the dots are dark on dark we record something soft and velvety, namely shadow. The wood texture dotting registers rougher than other surfaces and if it is painted in dots instead of wavy bands, it enlivens the surface much as the stars do the dark sky.

I don't believe in racing through a landscape at 60 miles per hour except for the sake of getting there. As far as experiencing the beauty and meaning of it goes, I am for the hiker or even the settler. A picture, too, has to be dwelt upon. You cannot see a picture any more in twenty minutes than Paris in three days. You cannot learn from me now all about how to look at pictures in the style of "Piano made easy in six weeks, take our correspondence course!" I am only giving you a glimpse into the workshop of criticism or appreciation and I am trying to show you that most of its mystery is 90% effort and 10% imagination. And most of the effort consists in getting rid of preconceived notions. I shall not speak about color in this picture at all. It is impossible to be as superficial about color as I have been about just dots, and still be intelligible. There is one more element which I should like to discuss. The lines in this picture "start" in a way with the horizontal at the

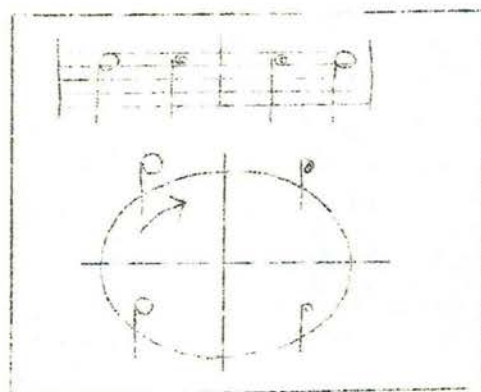
bottom and "end" with the curves in the upper part. Between is a rich development of oblique straight lines. They enclose many areas, variations of the trapezoid shape in blue, immediately above the horizontal on the right. But the main direction of the long and therefore dominating lines is from the lower left to the upper right. Kandinsky who has made intensive studies of pictorial elements shows the following diagram (12). He calls figure A the Harmonic Diagonal and figure B the Disharmonic Diagonal. A is lyric tension, B dramatic tension. He says that the upper triangle in Figure A rests more lightly on the lower triangle than in Figure B. He claims that we look at pictures as we do at people. That the left side of the picture as we see it is really its right side, that most of us have a freer command of our right side than of our left and that we expect the same of our vis-a-vis. Be that as it may, if you concentrate on this problem you certainly will find a difference in effect between these two directions and inasmuch as this is true, this picture has its own mood through the preponderance of the Southwest-Northeast directions in it.

I could go on in this vein until the whole world would seem to be full of dots. But in the end many of you will still ask why do people paint this way, what is the picture all about. The title is "Abstraction". But actually it is a semi-abstraction, because it has, believe it or not, definite, recognizable subject matter. There is a table, a bowl of fruit, a bottle, a floor and a panelled wall. The table is drawn in perspective and placed against the blue area which can be construed to represent a distorted cross-section of the table. Bowl and bottle are drawn in perspective, but throughout, the perspective is destroyed by the intersecting of violently contrasting color areas. In other words, the picture is a piece of "Theme and Variations" much as you have it in music, with just a reminiscence of a table with a still-life on it. I selected this picture for my demonstration, because it shows so clearly the use of what is generally called the abstract formal elements. Actually they

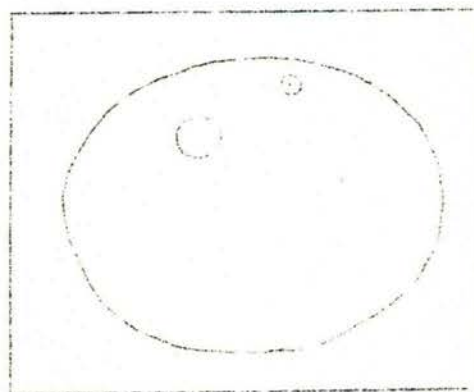




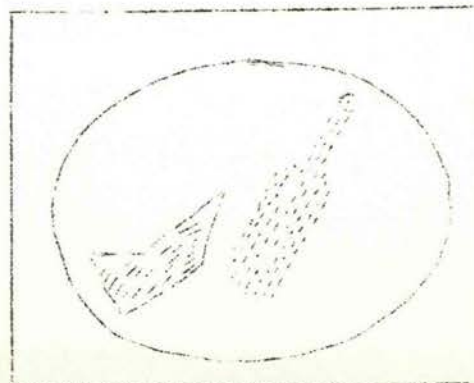
8



9



10



11

12



A



B

should be called the concrete, objective elements, because it is they that give any picture its actual character, no matter how photographically its subject matter be rendered. Why did these people paint this way, obscuring the reality of their subject-matter? I can give you only a guess. These painters who started working this way around 1910, began to question the reality of traditional concepts of science, ethics, economics and psychology, together with many workers in other fields of science and art. They recognized only one basic reality in painting and that was the real and concrete nature of form and its elements, some of which I have just discussed. And now I shall ask you a question: Can you give me one single and logical reason why a painting should be painted so that it resembles clearly any object in nature? Your answer will be, of course, that, if painting be communication it ought to be intelligible. I don't know how intelligible I have made this painting, but don't forget that these painters had reached a point in their social adjustment where they despised most of what the society around them stood for, and therefore they did not particularly want to speak in a language whose sound did no longer ring true to them. And, lo and behold, some people learned their language and more of them pretended to understand it. Today you can hardly find a building on Park Avenue which does not contain some Cubist painting. It has become "the thing". Mr. Clark will develop this theme next week and I shall only say this much, that just as the painters set themselves apart from a world which did not understand them, the owners of their works have constituted themselves into a precious elite. If you don't believe me, ask one of them sometime to explain his Picasso to you. But don't misunderstand me; I am not condemning this picture in the least. It tells very eloquently the story of its time: what was important and real to a sensitive, gifted, and socially thwarted human being at that time, and, by inference, what was not. In a sense this applies even to the owner, if one makes the reservation that they are twenty years behind their times, which in the field of science would

be considered, shall we say, undistinguished.

A picture never proves anything - it only states something. Even no subject matter is a content. Content is not accessible to logic, as is mathematics, but only to experience, sensory perception and feeling. To understand, or rather to experience the content, one must master the language and that, apparently is only possible through repeated direct experience. You see, this whole business is a big vicious circle in the center of which are written the words "direct experience".

Stephan Hirsch
Art Series: VI
Bennington College
March 1938

Reading List

Prall, D. W., Aesthetic Judgment

Barr, Alfred H., Cubism and Abstract Art

Rich, Daniel Catton, Seurat and the Grande Jatte

Weep you no more, sad fountaines

(From 'Third Booke of Ayres' 1603)

Of unknown authorship

Andante

John Dowland
(1593-1626)

VOICES
(Unison)

pp

weep - you no more, sad fountaines, what need you flow so fast?

pp

Look - how the snowy mountaines Heav'n's sun doth gently waste.

p

But my son's heav'nly eyes View not your weep-

ing.

That - now lies sleeping, now - lies sleeping

dim.

softly Here sleep ing, now softly lies sleep-ing.

dim.

MUSIC

The dictionary defines music as a science and an art. Some of the content of this paper should have been presented in the Science and Culture Series last year; but the Music Division forgives the Science Division for the oversight, and thanks the chairman of the Art Series for allowing this material to be included now.

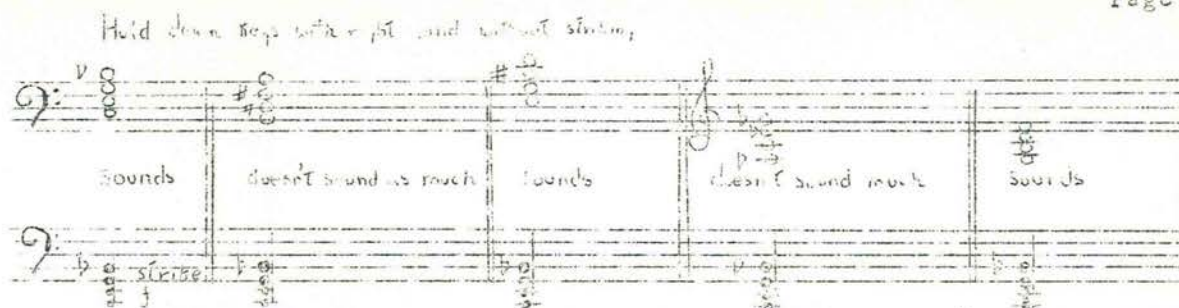
It seems appropriate to introduce here a quotation from The Harmonics of Aristoxenes. It is said that this gentleman, a pupil of Aristotle, was the first man to build a foundation for a science of music. Musical artists have accepted his findings as valid. I quote from Aristoxenes:

"...not astonishing to any one who has reflected on the extraordinary ignorance of mankind about the most spontaneous and universally beloved of the arts, and their no less extraordinary indifference to its potent effects on the mental and moral character."

An examination of the musical work of art, taking into account the scientific and artistic progress made since Aristoxenes, may illuminate his statement.

I shall begin by defining briefly the elements of music. These are harmony, melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, timbre or tone quality, and form. The term musical composition as it is used in this paper means the audible work of music.

In the beginning there was one tone. A musical tone is a succession of periodic, atmospheric pulsations capable of being heard. Every tone has a series of upper partials or natural harmonics. (Insert 1, Page 63) The richness and quality of a musical tone depend on the proportions in which the different harmonics enter. Musical scales and some systems of harmony are based on this harmonic series. These relationships of upper partials were often discovered

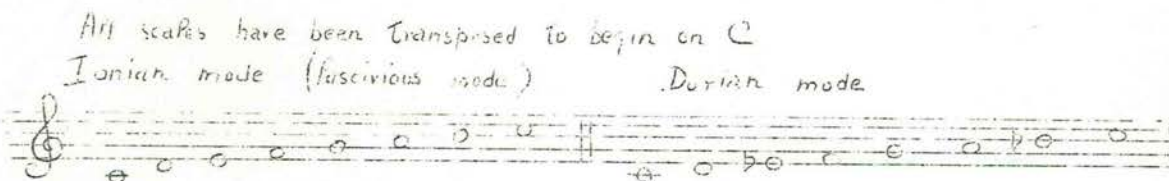


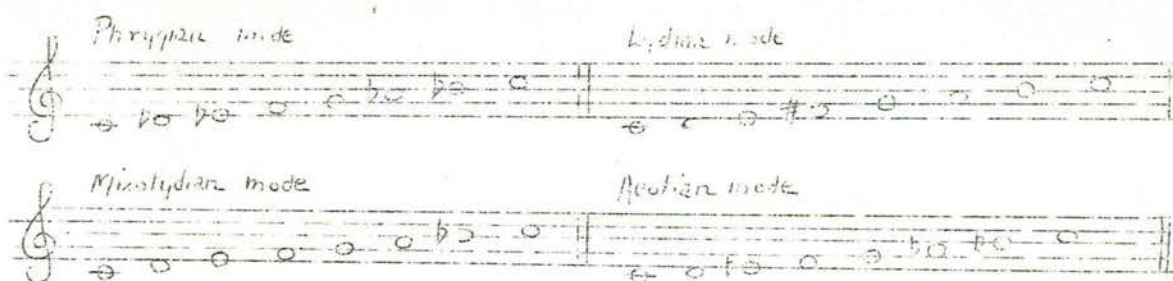
by scientists, and often suggested by musicians with unusually keen ears and later verified by scientific experiment. Even though the pitch of a musical tone may remain unaltered, that one tone can be sounded by different instruments varying in tone quality. A note when sounded on the piano, on the flute or sung by a voice, has a different character. Helmholtz states that the quality of a sound is determined by the proportion in which the various upper partials are heard in it. The emphasis on higher harmonics adds brilliance to a tone. This is a basis for expansion, improvement, and changes in musical media. These changes in tone quality have a powerful effect on the development of music. This could be demonstrated (had we the instruments here) by comparing the sound of a Bach orchestra with the sound of a jazz band; by comparing Monteverdi's orchestra, which consisted for the most part of now obsolete instruments, with the orchestra of Bach's time; by comparing Mozart's orchestra with that of Wagner. The schools of singing differ because the tone quality varies with the language, i.e. we have an Italian school of singing, a French school, a German school, etc. The harpsichord and the Steinway grand belong to the same family; but the tone quality of the latter is entirely different from that of the former. We might include here the modern reproducing instruments—radio and phonograph, etc., which have already developed to a point where an engineer by adjusting a lever can change the tone quality of the instrumentation which is being reproduced, at will. Now instruments not yet widely used, but nevertheless existing, include the Theremin, the Rhythmicon, the Hammond organ, the double keyboard piano, and many others. Any change in the tone quality of the musical media raises a number of questions for composers, interpreters, and listeners. For instance, when Bach is

played on a modern grand piano, should it be made to sound like a harpsichord? Should Bach be performed only on a harpsichord? Or should his music, which was written for harpsichord, clavichord, and other keyboard instruments of his day be transcribed to fit our present means? Should Mozart be sung with a voice that has been trained to yell its way through the Wagnerian orchestra? Is a jazz orchestra a legitimate medium with which to express a musical idea?

Musicians cursed with good ears are considered fussy when they complain that certain halls are difficult to perform in. And yet, the auditorium has a direct effect on tone quality. In a sense it is as much a musical instrument as the bell of a trumpet. The trumpeter can mute a trumpet at will, but the auditorium is generally muted for us by an architect who cares little about acoustical engineering. The sound projected from concert platform to auditorium is often so blurred and distorted that the composer's intention can hardly be recognized. Compositions written for one type of hall are played in others unsuitable for the particular purpose, because proper auditoriums are not available. And yet purists protest on musical aesthetic grounds when transcriptions are made to fit our time and our concert halls.

But we must get back to our scales. A scale is a division of the octave into intervals suitable for musical purposes. These intervals, or distances between notes, were first discovered by experimenting with different relationships of the harmonic series. Many scales have been used by the various musical cultures. I shall play a few for you. The so-called ancient Greek modes, the scales authorized by the medieval church, sounded about like this:





The Pentatonic scale about like this:



Our own 12-tone scale sounds like this:

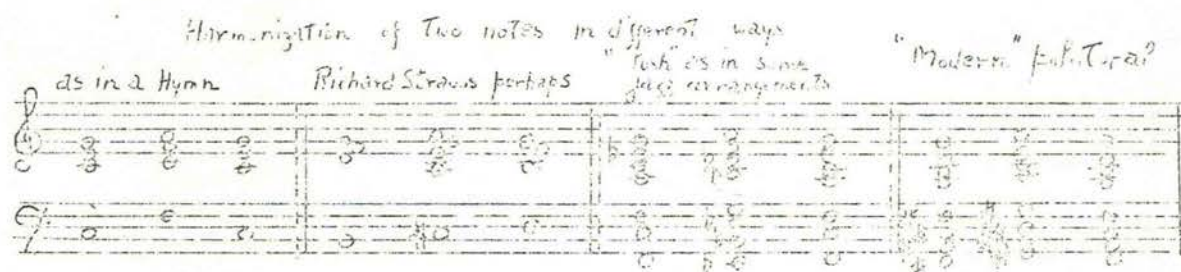


Around the time of Bach, Andreas Werkmeister tempered the scale. This was done by bringing the various scale series then in use into a system, inaccurate from the stand-point of physicists, but practical for the performer. This tempered scale is the 12-tone scale we use today, within which we can approximate many other scale forms. After the World War, quarter-tone pianos were built, and music composed for a 23-note scale. A 53-tone scale was proposed first in the 16th Century, by a man named Mercator, a famous Flemish mathematician. Harry Partch, a young American, has recently built a viola, and a harmonium-like instrument called the Ptolemy, both using a 53-tone scale. Edgar Varese advocates and hopes for electrical instruments which could produce differences of one vibration in pitch. Some musicians and scientists agree that the 53-tone scale is probably a more satisfactory vehicle, for musical ideas than our present 12-tone scale; it would enable us to find purer and more interesting harmonic relationships. Of course you can imagine that the manufacturers of instruments, directors of conservatories, and all others who are interested in maintaining the present methods of musical practice, because of habit, and for reasons of comfort, shudder at the thought of a complete change in the existing mechanisms and practices in music. It would be expensive, too.

The question is (and it's an old one) shall we go back to a simplicity which disappears in a void, or forward to a complexity which disappears in a

blurr, or stay where we are? The answers we here are: "On the one hand", "On the other hand", "Yes", and "No", "Perhaps", and "What's the difference?".

I have mentioned the word 'harmonic' several times. Harmony is the relationship between simultaneously sounding tones and the relationships of such groups of tones, called chords, to each other. Rooted both in physics and mathematics, it is sometimes called a science. There have been innumerable systems.



Rhythm is the relationship between time units. Single notes or combinations of notes have different lengths in time, varying both within the piece and in different musical compositions. (see music)

Tempo deals with the speed with which these time units progress. (see music) Dynamics deal with the relationship between the degrees of loudness and softness in music. (see music) Melody has to do with the relationship between a succession of single notes. These successions of single notes are called melodic lines or melodies. When two or more melodic lines are combined, counterpoint evolves. (see music) Form is the art of balancing these contrasting elements in such a way that the essential unity in the musical idea may be suggested to the auditor. Musical composition may be either improvised or notated. While it is possible to improvise a piece which has form, it is extremely difficult, particularly when a group of musicians attempt this. Such powers of concentration are required that the improvising composer, assuming he is master of the elements involved, would have to remember every tone he had played in order to create a balanced composition. This may be why many popular compositions, improvisational in character, interest us for a while, but soon fail to hold our attention.

Musical notation is the art of expressing musical ideas in writing. This use of a visual medium to convey an aural image has its difficulties. Our system of musical notation is decidedly limited. The good interpreter recreates from the printed or written page, conscious of all the factors involved, producing much more in sound than the notation itself can possibly express exactly; the bad interpreter much less. There exists a vast literature in which the attempt has been made to explain the form and content of music through the use of verbal formulae. These formulae may help to interest people in music, but unfortunately in the light of direct experience with compositions, musicians and laymen alike have discovered that the exceptions to these verbal laws seem to be more interesting and valid than the laws themselves. The understanding of form and content apparently comes only after repeated direct contact with the sound of a composition.

And now to the matter of values. We ask ourselves and others (mostly others), "What is good music?" We want to know about the value of a composer's idea. This idea is expressed in sound or more often in musical notation by the man who composes the work only at the time he composes it. We may assume that it is significant to him while he is composing it; otherwise, he could stop and play ping-pong, go to a movie, or attend a church service. He might even tear it up--sometimes we wish he had. Before the idea reaches the listener, what happens? Approximately this:

The composer transfers his aural image to a rather inadequate system of musical notation; then the interpreter enters the scene. He may grasp the composer's idea and he may not. Let us assume that the work is a contemporary concerto for piano and orchestra--and here may I make the brilliant aside that all music was at one time contemporary music. Before the rehearsal, musical science enters. Not in the form of a physicist, or a mathematician, but represented by--a piano tuner. This gentleman tempers the scale so that all of the notes are just a little off pitch. This he does by ear. In the rehearsal

if there is time, the orchestra, by ear--and this is art--adjusts its pitch to the piano. Before the concert the piano is tuned again, it having been banged out of tune halfway through the rehearsal. At the concert, if the furnace is temperamental--and they generally are--the hall is too hot and the wind instruments go sharp. If it is too cold the strings go sharp, and the wind instruments flat. Playing in tune becomes very difficult, almost impossible. The new concerto, however, is performed. Those in the right of the auditorium hear mostly brass, second violins, and percussion. Those on the left hear mostly first violins and bass. In the gallery the balance is pretty good. The use of new musical resources, inevitable in any contemporary work of significance, worries both orchestra and audience, conditioned to the familiar and shocked into resistance by the new tonal combinations which they are hearing. If the work is broadcast, the sound engineer, often mistaking a climax for blasting, reduces things to a neutral blur. Then after one hearing the auditors attempt to judge the quality of the composer's idea. The composer, after it's all over, has himself psycho-analyzed.

It looks as though Aristoxenes was right. We may ask, if the composer's idea is really distorted in this way, how has it been possible for musical compositions to survive at all? The answer is perhaps this: The wise composer, aware of the imperfections of this best of all possible worlds, forms his work in such a way that in spite of imperfection in performance, auditor and interpreter are able to recognize even after one hearing whether the elements are balanced; whether the work is well formed. This recognition suggests a rehearing of the work. After repeated rehearsals, the form becomes increasingly clear until eventually the idea which it suggests can be apprehended and then evaluated.

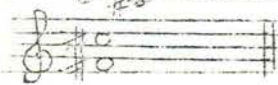
I will now analyze for you very sketchily an air by John Dowland, which the chorus will sing. An air is a type of vocal composition of the late 16th and 17th Centuries in England. It is performed in one or two ways; either as

a solo sung with instrumental accompaniment, (generally lute or viols) or as a melody supported by other voices. We have no lutes or viols available and we are having the melodic line sung by the entire chorus, the accompaniment played on the piano.

In the piano accompaniment the emphasis is harmonic; it consists mostly of three-part chords. The main melodic line is sung by the chorus, although the melodic element is also present to a lesser degree in the piano part. The piece uses the transposed Dorian scale as a key basis. It resembles $f\sharp$ minor, but it ends on the fifth step. Tones foreign to that scale are introduced only three times in the piece. The harmonic plan is quite simple at the beginning, and gradually becomes more complex with more rapid and constant changes of chords at the end of the piece. The melodic line sung by the chorus moves within this range.



The melodic line centers around this interval.



Beginning somewhat above the middle of the range, it rises near the middle of the piece to its highest point, and then gradually drops, as it progresses to the end. The rhythmic scheme consists of notes held for four beats, three beats, two beats, one beat, three-quarters of a beat, and one-half beat. The shorter notes are concentrated in the first half. In the second half the rhythmic scheme expands somewhat, rhythmic complexities can be detected in the rhythmic imitations between the voice part and the accompaniment. The dynamic scheme is this: very soft, gradually increasing in volume to about the middle of the piece, gradually diminishing in volume to the end of the piece. The tempo is marked Andante (walking). No change is indicated during the piece. I suggest that the total impression from this arrangement of the musical elements is about this: at the beginning a slight tension, at about the middle of the piece a gradual increase in tension, followed by a gradual lessening of tension, the end much more relaxed than the beginning. In other words, after the beginning, there is a rise and then a drop to a point below the beginning. This musical form is closely

related to the words of the text.

Otto Luening
Art Series: VII
Pennington College
March 1938

Folk Art and Cultivated Art

The contrast between Native Virtue and Foreign Country Graces is great. Greater still is the contrast between the cultivated man who has a healthy respect for the popular art of his time and place and--a snob.

In the year 1750 Bach died. That same year Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son, "The lowest peasant speaks, moves, dresses, eats and drinks as much as a man of the first fashion; but does them all quite differently; so that by doing and saying most things in a manner opposite to that of the vulgar, you have a great chance of doing and saying them right. . . A man of parts... is to be known from the vulgar, by every word, attitude, gesture and even look."

Contrast the musical life of Bach's Leipsig with that of Chesterfield's London. The patrons of Leipsig had encouraged the growth of a musical culture which, because it was true to its time and place, transcended them both and lives on here and now. Bach, a German who composed French Suites, English Suites, and the Italian Concerto can scarcely be called provincial. Yet it was the cultivation of that rich flowering of native folksong, the Lutheran chorale that made Bach, Bach.

No such healthy attitude toward the people and its art existed in Chesterfield's London. He and the circle he reflected were doting on Corelli. They delighted in their own excellent taste, not because--in this case--it was excellent, but because they felt it set them apart from the man in the London street. In such an atmosphere, is it any wonder that eighteenth-century England produced no Bachs?

A cultivated artist is said to find his vitality, his spirit, his raw

material, or as it is usually called, his roots in the people around him. If this is true, a man who tries to be different from the vulgar in "every word, attitude, gesture, and even look" is a man uprooted.

How does development in the field of art take place? Many people, including most art historians put the emphasis on the "dripping-down" process. They hold that important innovations have been made by a few highly cultivated artists and have slowly, perhaps in garbled form, filtered down to the common people.

On the other hand, folklore enthusiasts acclaim the "bubbling-up" process. They maintain that the art which is strong and living effervesces from the life of the common man. Some would even assert that once this vigorous art strikes the world of fashion, something deadening inevitably happens to it. We all know what happens when a spirited swing band strikes Broadway or when a spontaneous peasant girl strikes Hollywood. But this is not universal --nor inevitable.

Those who see either the "dripping-down" process or the "bubbling-up" process as the all-important thing in artistic progress may be compared to the blind men who disagreed about the elephant. Neither sees the whole picture.

Though still an oversimplification, dividing art-appreciators into two types may clarify the matter. First, there is the man of fashion. By this I mean anyone who looks to established arbiters for the formation of his own taste. We all belong to this type to a greater extent than we care to admit. Second, there is the independent appraiser, who forms his judgment by a direct approach to the work of art itself.

Although courtly or leisure groups tend to be men of fashion, the distinction is not necessarily one of class. A member of the most insecure social group may look to the high-up mentors for his opinions on art and hence, according to my definition, be a man of fashion. This is especially true in

present-day America with its terrific regimentation of taste brought about by high-pressure salesmanship and advertising, by radio plugging, movie previews, and campaigns of art dealers and concert bureaus.

Conversely, a member of a group which is considered fashionable is often able to go beyond fashion for fashion's sake and make an independent appraisal.

The distinction is not between professional and amateur. With very great or very little training in art, one may still find one's taste formed by fashion. The much derided philosopher of "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like" has this to be said for him. He is asserting his independence. He will be lucky if further training does not lead him to the position of saying "I know a lot about art, but I don't know what I like" and hence of falling back for his taste on the arbiters of fashion.

Now how do the "dripping-down" and "bubbling-up" processes function in the worlds of fashion, and of independent appraisal? Obviously development in the world of fashion takes place at the top alone since all its other members are followers. Hence the chances of any development actually starting in this world are extremely thin.

In the world of independent appraisal, however, something new may develop anywhere at any time. Bubbling up from the folk-art of the common man, the novelty is at first resisted solidly by the world of fashion as vulgar and barbarous.

Only when the arbiters on top of the world of fashion have a reason for accepting a progressive development in art does it penetrate into that world at all. Then what actually happens within the world of fashion is indeed a "dripping-down" of the new element.

The arbiters have spoken: whereupon the followers furiously appreciate.

Let us examine examples of the way in which new developments have been accepted. "The Cradle Will Rock" and "Pins and needles", the most striking new manifestations in American musical life, are certainly expressions of the

Aspirations of the common man. Yet they are tremendously fashionable. Why? The critics of the New York Times have hailed them in glowing terms. Mrs. Roosevelt has expressed her admiration for "Pins and Needles" in her syndicated column. One after another of the arbiters of fashion have done homage. This partly because these are good shows and partly for reasons outside the artistic field. The followers of fashion have responded with their usual alacrity and behold, after difficult struggles, these productions have bubbled up into hits.

Going back into musical history let us review other important innovations. Consider the final acceptance of the "vulgar saxophone" as a legitimate chamber instrument; "low ragtime" as an integral part of cultivated music; the "vain fiddle" as the leading instrument of serious orchestral music; "familiar style" as the basis of harmony; the "lascivious scale" (major scale) as the predominating scale of cultivated music; "false music" as the system of sharps and flats; the imitative principle of country rounds as the basis of such high art forms as the fugue; scales common to primitive music throughout the world as the authorized modes of the church.

The seal of approval of many leading authorities was necessary before the "vulgar saxophone" and "low ragtime" were accepted in America as suitable for use in serious music. Many fashionable people still rebel--perhaps the right authorities have not yet spoken.

The violin, today acclaimed queen of instruments, once went through the same history as the saxophone. Anthony Wood states that before the English Restoration of 1660 the gentlemen who attended music parties played on Viols, "for they esteemed a Violin to be an instrument only belonging to a common fiddler, and could not endure that it should come among them, for fear of making their meetings to be vaine and fiddlering." It was only when His Majesty the King, for quite extraneous reasons--he was trying to keep up with

Versailles--said the word, that the violin become the favorite of the man of first fashion.

In the sixteenth century, music consisting of simple chords, one after another as in the modern hymn, was called "stile familiare"—familiar, or vulgar, style. It was common in the Netherlands and Palestrina had used it to some extent, but only the benediction of the Council of Trent made it the thing among church musicians.

Few are aware that the major mode, the predominant scale of today, in which Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" is written, was banned for centuries by the church as the "tonus lascivus"—the lascivious mode. History does not record what far-seeing arbiters of church fashion finally allowed church music to be enriched by this scale---nor how much popular pressure was needed for them to reach this conclusion.

"False music" was for years the name for sharps and flats, that is, for any music which could not be played exclusively on the white keys of the modern piano. For years church musicians sang this "musica ficta" in defiance of the rules before anyone dared to write it down, though the people had long been using it in their own music.

The country rounds of England contained the germs of the imitative style, which long after led to that great and fashionable form--the fugue. Yet they reached a high point of perfection, one voice answering another in the most skilful way, before a cultivated person, probably the monk John of Fornsate, about 1240, thought one of them worth writing down and preserving for posterity. This is the famous "Summer is icumen in." Historians always quote it, usually as a freak, rather than as the culmination of a folk tradition, long ignored by the fashionable as a vulgar practice, but soon to become the basis of much of the greatest music of succeeding centuries.

Finally we come to the story of the Ecclesiastical Modes, or Greek Modes, of which Mr. Luening has played examples.

Actually these scales are the property of the folk of every continent on the globe. They apparently have been used for folktunes since time immemorial.

The contribution of the church as far as the scales themselves were concerned was to give them names. And the names given them were out of a Greek theory book--read upside down.

Folk ways have bubbled up into the Church since Christianity began, and that greatest of all arbiters of fashion, when gracious and understanding, has accepted them, infused them with something of her own, and filtered them down again to the faithful.

The question may be asked, "Why does the fashionable world matter to the artist if, as you say, it consists of people who do not think for themselves?" To this I would answer, it matters very much indeed. Try as we may to get people to develop their own taste through objective criteria, the people who still look to arbiters for their standards remain very numerous--and very influential.

The most elaborate and, according to some, the greatest forms of art can develop only under the patronage of the arbiters of fashion. Based though it is on the vigorous, but less developed art of the common man, cultivated art requires time and money for training and materials.

The real question is, what kind of people shall we have as our arbiters of fashion? It should be clear from the foregoing that it is only when the arbiters have a democratic attitude, that is, are receptive to the new developments advanced by the common man, that cultivated art flourishes.

If some sort of Federal Arts Bill could be passed at Washington which would establish democratic representatives of the people as the official arbiters of fashion in art, there would be great hope for art in America.

In reference to the present Coffee Bill (H. R. 9102) "to provide a permanent Bureau of Fine Arts," John Martin writes, "Certainly the time will come when we will look back at these days when the arts are dependent upon the

speculative instincts of the financier and the whims of the private patron with as much dismay as we now look back at the days when common schooling was similarly left to chance and private devices."

The fusion from the vigorous art of the common man bubbling up and the training and talent of the cultivated artist dripping down, into a functioning, percolating process demands the existence of receptive, democratic patrons. Remember Chesterfield's London and Bach's Leipzig.

Henry Leland Clarke
Art Studies VIII
Pomfret College
March 1938

T H E A T R E

The first point I should like to make is that theatre is an art, complete in itself, like music or architecture. I raise this point because many people think that it is some distant relative to Art because it borrows elements of other arts. The following question might test such a notion. Does the art of sculpture contribute to the art of painting when the painting is of a piece of sculpture?

It has been demonstrated time and again that it avails very little for the theatre when a man has a sense of painting and brings it to the theatre, or a sense of movement, or even a sense of literature. It appears that he must have fundamentally a sense of theatre and then bring to it his especial talents. Every person working in theatre has some sense of theatre, no matter what his job might be and every person in the audience has likewise some sense of theatre; that is what accounts for its existence. In each person that sense is probably different in degree. That is just as true of people working in the theatre as in the audience.

Granted that this sense exists, how will it be defined? I offer this definition: It has certainly to do with the desire "to show the word"; meaning, to give life to the word. That is what designers do as they design settings that are significant - it is what actors do as they act significantly. These things show the word in that they show, with and through life, the imagination of the poet or playwright which inspired and now informs the word. Through such showing we see what was before the word, what is in the word and what comes after. We might say that theatre makes the word concrete.

I wish that I could describe the aesthetic of theatre; that for this occasion, for sake of clarity, I might declare the component parts to be 26 in number and define the shape and relative power of A,B,C, and D, and so on. Then we could easily see why and how plays are different. Perhaps in one, item C would be omitted and through a simple estimate we could arrive at the result and its reason. But such a device for examination is hardly meaningful in the art of the theatre or in any art. The plot in the play might seem to be thus and so truly, and the characters may seem to be precisely this or that but they are so because of their relation to the plot and what is perhaps equally true is that the plot is thus and so because of the characters. Furthermore, since the life is produced by this plot and these characters, it will be unique to that particular relationship of plot and character. Another play will be another life. Each play comes to life as an organism. In a sense, it is life itself, because of the medium of acting employed.

Now I am going to speak of words in the theatre. The words employed in theatre are in the text of dramatic poetry, also called dramatic literature. This text is no more all of the drama than dramatic design, but it is, to quote Ashley Dukes, "as essential to the action of a play as words are essential to the action of our lives." To return to a statement I made before concerning the necessity that a sense of theatre be fundamental in theatre artists, Dukes says: "To write for the theatre is to write a libretto that may be made into an opera. To write for the theatre is not to dictate, but to contribute,--not to impose, but to collaborate."

Unquestionably, the fundamental creative work in the theatre lies in the word, the written text - in the voice of the poet. Now, to quote Copeau, one of the greatest artists in the contemporary theatre, "The problem of theatre is to create a direct and intimate connection between the author and audience, to show the imagination and thereby the voice of the poet to those who see and listen."

Attempts to solve this problem are mirrored in the theatre practice of all periods. Theatre practice is composed of four elements, speech, acting, production, and scene. A definition might be as follows: the reason for and purpose of this practice is to transform the word and the abstract ideas created by the sense of the words into concrete action and to make of this action an organic whole--a structure expressive of a rhythmical and relative life.

Now for the sake of analysis let us reduce each of the elements in this practice to its simplest state.

Speech makes audible and in a way intelligible the word of the playwright by means of diction, tone, volume, inflection, tempo, and emphasis.

Acting makes visible and in a way intelligible the word through expressing the action implied by means of movement, characterization and emotional life.

Production, which is composed of direction and stage management, makes in a way intelligible this action so seen and heard by weaving these parts into a continuous flow and directing this flow through a pattern, orderly enough in its construction to make for repetition.

Scene makes visible and in a way intelligible the word by making the stage appear to be that thing or place imagined or described by the playwright.

These are the elements of theatre art and it is clear that this art borrows elements from each of the arts, but in their use, there is a single purpose and that is, to show the word. Nevertheless the result is a highly complex art.

There are ways, however, of viewing this complexity of elements, that might clarify the problem. Let us first consider the setting. It is an object and plastic like a piece of architecture or sculpture. It is produced in space likewise, and if every single part of the setting is related to every other part through line, plane, volume, color and structure then we could say that it is a Form in Space.

Now let us consider the speech and movement necessitated in the "showing of the word". These are activities rather than objects - they are akin to singing and dancing. They are performing arts rather than plastic arts. They are performed in Time; that is, the form comes into being in Time.

As a result of distinguishing the elements through this consideration we find that the setting is the only element which lacks mobility, common to the rest. The artists in the theatre at the beginning of this century recognized this and the changes they brought about in the theatre were due largely to their efforts to make the scenic space of the stage alive--that is--to make it as dependent upon Time for its existence, as far as the audience was concerned, as upon space. Lighting, a medium made possible, by Science in this period, enabled them to proceed in this direction. Controlled light is a powerful means of adding mobility to space through changing the appearance of objects in space. Now by designing the setting with great consideration of the lighting, it also becomes a form, as the acting becomes a form, through the expressiveness of the changes felt rather than by virtue of the appearance of the plastic object. For example, in the Turgenev comedy produced here two years ago, the lights were constantly changing - that is, no single area in the setting was constantly illuminated with the same intensity throughout the performance. The result was that the space of the setting was also varied in size and quality constantly.

Lighting of this kind was not introduced into the theatre merely to make the art pure, for its own sake. It was rather a seeking to make the elements employed in theatre art more of a kind, more "one single thing" so that lighting could be more skillfully used in "showing the word"--so that the word would be more vivid, not the showing. These changes in theatre practice might be thought of as the tuning and perfecting of an instrument. Truly, theatre may be considered an instrument but it is an instrument having a life of its own, rather than merely being a "thing" employed, for each part of the instrument

is a living person. Moreover the theatre is a living, a life. Its expressiveness is in its living and present form, not in the past and finished. I think it was Stark Young who said, "Dramatic incidents point to meaning, but they cannot contain meaning - the meaning piles up privately and poetically - it is what we come to after the show is done." Another way we might say that is that the artist in the theatre translates time into a condition of meaning. We have all at some time said, "under those conditions, that's true". Theatre as art selects and shows those conditions, whatever they need be, so clearly that the essential idea is vividly felt to be true.

Though that is primarily a description of "when" the theatre is art, the "how it is art" is also in it, but not so clearly stated. And it is extremely difficult to do that without resorting to professional jargon. But I will try. In the beginning I said something about "showing" and a moment ago I mentioned "conditions that make for the truth of art." This action of showing and the matter of conditions relative to an essential idea, come very close to being the point of the art of the theatre.

True, one could show conditions, with technical skill, concerning an essential idea but the showing might in no way be art. Art activity requires a certain sense, an intuition of the essential idea, whether it be a thing, a place, or an event; and of its relation to time. This sense of the thing in time, when demonstrated in either life or art is termed rhythm. A dictionary definition of rhythm is "the order of elements in their succession". That is probably too general to be very helpful.

Richard Boleslavsky in his notes on acting gives this definition, "Rhythm is the orderly, measurable changes of all the different elements comprised in a work of art - provided that all the changes progressively stimulate the attention of the spectator and lead invariably to the final aim of the artist." While he did not claim this to be final as a definition it does clarify the meaning considerably. It would seem that if these changes are to lead to the

aim of the artist, they must come out of the purpose in the use of the medium as the artist sees it.

The dramatist's purpose in the use of words comes from his sense of rhythm; from his own sense of time and life fused with his sense of whatever the living idea of his play might be. That rhythm is therefore in the words and in the way they are assembled and in the meaning of the words and in the emotions evoked by the expressiveness of these meanings.

As the dramatist realizes his purpose in words, so the purpose of theatre practice is to show the word concretely. Showing is more than seeing, in that seeing can be general, but when we are shown anything we are made to see it in a particular place, at a particular time, in a particular way. It is this sense of rhythm I spoke of before which is brought to bear upon the making of each of these particulars.

For instance, in "King Lear", the essential idea in the play might be described as "betrayed". When the play is produced the activity of theatre will center about this essential idea and its life. For it is not static or dead as an idea in the play. Sometimes it succeeds this way and sometimes another way and then again it is diminished and perhaps it even suffers defeat at moments. This might be called the rhythm of the living idea itself within the written play. The rhythm of each part of the play and of each part of the activity in theatre practice will relate to this fundamental rhythm or expression of life in the idea.

I have selected two designs for Act I of King Lear by two designers: Adolph Appia and Norman Bel Geddes, to point out how and in what degree design may relate to the play and the showing of the word. I would have you bear in mind that design is but a part of theatre practice but even so it must be expressive of the basic rhythm of the essential idea - how, when, and where it is expressed in the play and what is the resultant rhythm. Let us take but a bit of the opening scene. (See Plate 1, #1 and #2)

Enter Kent, Gloucester, Edmund.

Kent: I thought the king had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glo: It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most; for equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

Kent: Is not this your son, my lord?

Glo: His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it.

Kent: I cannot conceive you.

Glo: Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had, indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

Kent: I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

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If you have read the play recently this is enough to serve our purpose - for the living or essential idea has to some degree caused what passed between these characters and the way it passed also - and it continues to throughout the play. Let us return to the question: How, when, and where was this idea betrayed revealed?

Recall these words: "I thought - more affected - seems so - it appears not - curiosity in neither - is not this - cannot conceive - smell a fault - wish the fault undone."

What might the sum total of these words and their meanings be expressive of? Surely it is an atmosphere charged with fear and anxiety, a place possessed by lurking things felt rather than seen, a place of guarded speech and constant evasion, evoking a feeling of vastness but massive rather than nebulous because of the import felt behind each guarded speech.

Now the thoughts that stem from this idea and produce those manifestations of life termed the characters, and the words with which they express these thoughts, are in sum a moving proposition or rhythm, containing that very variety and detail we felt in the cunning, the honesty, the nobility, the faith-

fulness and the ingratitude we sense in the play.

This rhythm might be that of a sustained strain of long duration, composed of parts proportioned so as to have that variety within a formal frame that one senses in the behavior of the characters in that society of which they are a part, and these parts when compounded should produce that sensation of detailed massiveness that is felt in the total play of "King Lear".

Now let us turn to the settings. First, the design of Appia. I would say that it has that quality of imagination we feel in the words and that as a space arrangement it would relate to movement resulting from those words - and as an appearance it would relate to a costume which would permit movements in them springing from these same thoughts which result in the words. The second is Geddes' design. It is more illustration than design. It is an expression of an idea which one might have after "King Lear". It is more a picture of the play.

For a clear picture of the rhythmic relationships existing in any concentrated activity which moves toward a single end, I would like to quote from Elie Faure. "It was while watching one day a surgical operation that I discovered the secret of "composition" which confers nobility upon any "subject". The group formed by the patient, the surgeon, his aides and the spectators appeared to me like a single organism in action. I saw at once that it was impossible it should not be so, since each was at his own task and all united about the same center where the event was taking place, some through their profession, others through their passionate interest in the spectacle, this other because he constituted the chief reason for the event. It was the event itself, the very nature of the event that determined in every dimension and aspect of the group, the positions of the bodies, arms, hands, shoulders, and heads, none of which avoided the all powerful influence without weakening thereby the harmony and rhythm of the group. The light fell where it was

necessary for it to fall for each of the actors to see what he had to do. The disposition of the surfaces, the arrangement of the planes, the succession of the masses, the height or lowness of the relief was determined by function. An inner functional logic rigorously established a visible structural logic of which nothing could be modified without the functional logic ceasing at once to move toward its end."

That is a superb description of the rhythm of showing and since that is the art of the theatre, it leaves very little to be said.

However, there is one brief statement I should like to quote as a conclusion. This is by a Chinese painter of the 11th century: "One must find out the proper relation between master and servants (that is, the principal and secondary motifs) in the composition, which mountain should be master and how it is supported by the trees, and which tree should be master and how it is supported by the mountains, then one should play with the brush and in."

Arch Lauterer
Art Series: IX
Bennington College
March 1938

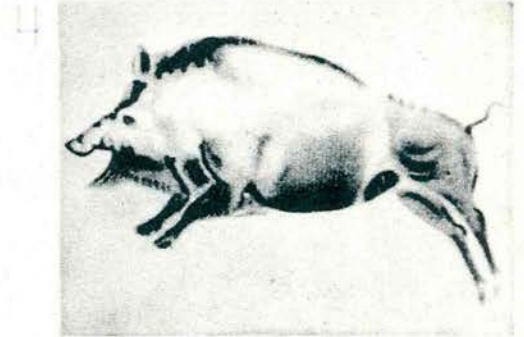
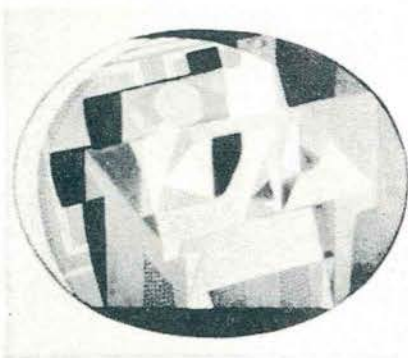
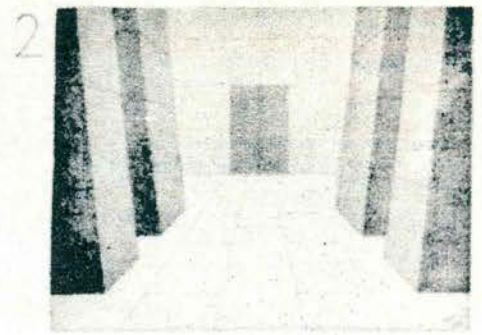
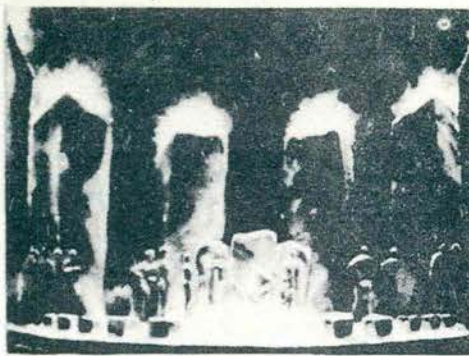
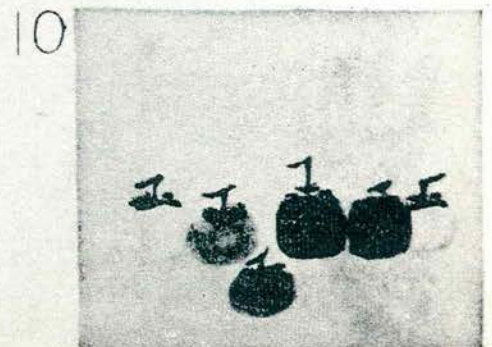
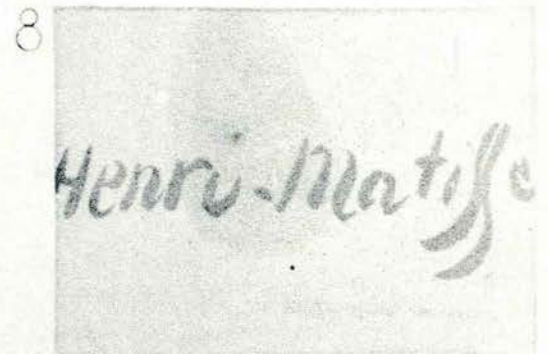
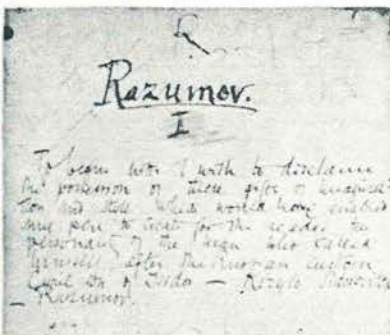
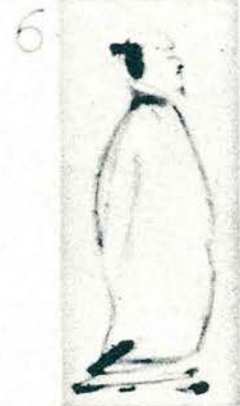


PLATE ONE





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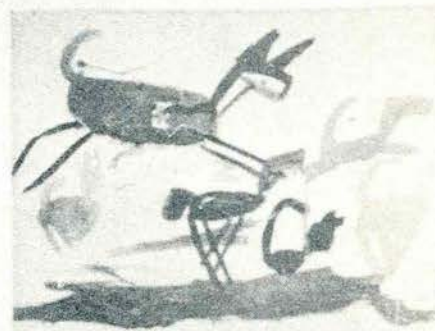
PLATE TWO

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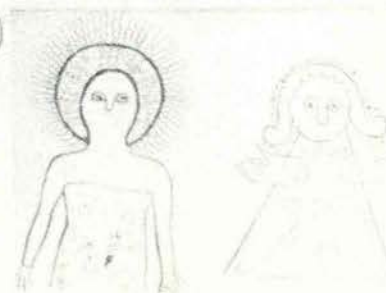
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HISTORY OF ART

A history of the plastic arts might better be called: a description of the debris left over between wars, gathered variously by scholars, museum scouts, military generals, random travelers, romantic writers of fiction or just stray peddlers. For centuries, man has patiently picked up those pieces, collected them, preserved them, catalogued them, more or less correctly, pasted them together, more or less convincingly, constructed shrines and museums around them, copied them, sold them, imitated them, and handed them over to the art historian to digest--if he can. Perhaps it has appeared to him, of late, futile to try. If an Englishman's home instead of being his castle, is going to be his underground cellar in the future, it does seem a waste to spend time learning about what have been the contents of the Prado Museum! But he does his best, and finally presents it all to us--usually between the covers of a book, with the remark that we have here scientifically prepared data. Since he insists upon his pursuit as a science, though the scientists are the first to disown him, and since it deals exclusively with works of art as its subject matter, you have here the inevitable conflict between subjective and objective judgments, between qualitative and quantitative assaying, between examining a work of art with an utterly detached viewpoint--so detached that the picture is sometimes not even looked at!--or bringing to it everything we may know from reading about it, talking about it, asking opinions about it, anything except looking at it or thinking about it.

Somewhere between the devil of the "purely scientific approach" and the deep sea of the ecstatic rhapsodizers, interpreters, aestheticians, and critics, the conception of art history suffered not so much a sea-change as some-

thing more akin to a nervous breakdown. The modern art historian, proceeding to investigate art from its earliest beginnings, from its lowest form of animal life, so to speak, to get to the bottom of art, discovered that art had no bottom, that some of its lowest forms were its highest, even, that some of those objects which had always been denied admittance to a respectable museum of art but reposed in a natural history museum were hailed as among the finest art works of man. Further, that he could no longer depend on the reliability of his antecedent art historians who had been going on a few very grave mistakes for several generations.

The result is the somewhat schizophrenic situation of one older body of art historians who stoutly maintain the racket of speaking of the Rembrandts in the Metropolitan Museum as the prototype of Rembrandt's style, though nearly half of them have been demonstrated to be fakes, of insisting on the importance of documenting works of art from literary sources, although they are well aware that we know quite as little about the personal lives of the makers of stained glass windows or of Piero della Francesca as we do about Shakespeare, (which is almost nothing) and that the main body of our greatest works of art remains completely and eternally anonymous.

I am not trying to talk myself out of a job, but the art historian has been all too ready to travel a very great distance on a very small amount of gas--(or hot air). Most of us are perfectly willing to accept dead truths or old ideas that can be neatly tucked away where we no longer have to examine them--just as happens with a picture which we hang up to decorate our walls, and promptly forget to look at. But a new truth is a disagreeable affair. If we bring it into our houses we may have to rearrange all the furniture. And alongside it, those old, familiar things assume new and strange shapes as it singles out its formal affinities.

Wilenski has stepped on a few of these old cliches, such as the "Greek prejudice", which assumes that a final perfection in the sculptor's art was

achieved by the Greeks, and particularly by the Athenians in the fifth century B.C., that the greatest Greek sculptors were called Myron, Phidias and Praxiteles; and that all right-minded contemporary sculptors should imitate the productions of these masters, though all attempts to equal their perfection will, of necessity, be in vain. The fact is that no works by these sculptors survive.

Wilenski says: "In Imperial Rome, in Italy, in Renaissance times, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and everywhere in our own day, dealers in antiques, collectors of antiques, professional archaeologists and historians of Greek sculpture, restorers of antiques, academic sculptors imitating antiques have been and are vitally concerned with the maintenance of this prejudice. Countless museum officials, university professors, and educational officers in every country of the civilized world constitute other groups whose very (economic) existence depends in a large measure on maintaining the legend of the final perfection of Greek sculpture."

As to Phidias he goes on: "No work by the hand of this artist (fifth century B.C.) is known to, or presumed to, exist. It is a thousand years or more since any one has seen the colossal statues which he made with the aid of assistants some of whose names survive."

"The Elgin marbles are not by his hand. There is no evidence of any kind that they were even made from his models or designs. He was not the architect of the Parthenon."

But Professor Tucker, Litt. D. (Cambridge) Hon. Litt. D. (Dublin), a professor of classical philology, calls Phidias "the world's greatest sculptor" --as do nearly all the histories of art!

From New York's Metropolitan Museum comes this: "We must imagine this colossal figure the Olympian Zeus. . . (never having seen it, we must imagine it). . . grandly conceived and carved in simple lines; gleaming with its gold and ivory, but the brightness tempered by the figures wrought in the drapery;

the sceptre sparkling with precious stones; and the throne elaborately decorated--a combination of grandeur and richness."

E. T. Cook in the Handbook to the Greek and Roman antiquities in the British Museum, writes: "The works of Phidias here collected show us Greek art as it was in its brief poise of perfection. . . . Of Phidias the sculptor it may be said . . . that "there is a strange undercurrent of everlasting murmur about his name which means the deep consent of all great men that he is greater than they."

It is just this "everlasting murmur" which has been so destructive in the plastic arts, this spoken or written undercurrent that has carried along on its surface most of the taken-for-granted misconceptions which we blithely spout at cocktail parties. There was even this question in the general culture test in fine arts: "Who was the great emotional and tragic sculptor of his age?" The answer is supposed to be Scopas, whose work no one has seen in four hundred years. Yet we were all taught this cliché in school. Actually almost all our knowledge of Greek Sculpture is based, not even on the dubious fragments that have actually been found, but on the restorations and reconstructions that were concocted out of the meagre finds. Thus a great metaphysical superstructure is built up, much as Spengler did his narrow, elaborate and exceedingly subjective decline theory, from the broad statement by Dr. Flinders Petrie that there have been eight periods of civilization, subject to cycles--and as the Third Reich worked out each of their three official race theories, differing for soldiers, peasants, and business men, from casual phrases of Franz Boas in re linguistic Aryan distinctions.

But don't dismiss the Greek prejudice idea as Mid-Victorian maunderings. As recently as 1931 Sir Banister Fletcher published this: "Greek architecture stands alone in being accepted as above criticism, and therefore as the standard by which all periods of architecture may be tested."

There is the crux of the matter. A perfect example of circular reasoning.

If anything stands alone as being above criticism, then you will as a sequitur, establish it as a standard by which all others are judged. Then everything else is "later" or "earlier", better or worse - as easy as pie. Precisely the same thing happened with the prehistoric cave paintings. When they were first discovered they were considered a priori, to be falsifications. Because, it was objected, these productions could only be the work of really skilled artists! And since we assumed (A) that all skilled artists are highly civilized, and (B) that primitive people are not; then we conclude (C) that this could not have been the work of primitive people. Then it was established by the anthropologists beyond all reasonable doubt that they could only have been done sometime before 18,000 B.C. This was a staggering blow to the cliché-mongers and the circular reasoners. When however, there was further research into the whole question of primitive man, since the contemporary climate of thinking dictated an attempt to gain security by establishing genealogies fifty thousand years back if possible, it became increasingly clear that primitive man was a long way from unskilled labor or ignoble achievement in art. When some of the skill existing primitive peoples came under observation, it became more and more evident that such phrases as "uncivilized savage" had to be revised. Mrs. Emma Hadfield, writing of the Lifuans among whom she had lived for twenty years, calls them "a laughter-loving people, although possessing high moral qualities. . . The basis of their culture is artistic. . . They have sweet and musical voices and they cultivate them. . . and are great orators. . . In one of these islands, so great is their eloquence that they employ oratory to catch fish. . . But Lifuans (and this is significant) were not acquainted with the civilized custom of making rules for warfare and breaking them when war actually broke out. . . An indemnity was paid by the conquerors to the vanquished as it was felt to be the conquered rather than the conqueror who needed consolation, and it also seemed desirable to show that no feeling of animosity was left behind." Not only a . . .

delicate mark of consideration to the vanquished, but also very good policy, as some Europeans may have had cause to learn. Obviously a people such as this cannot be called uncivilized.

The next step was (Plate 1, #4) to re-examine the art of such primitive peoples and re-classify it. Of course all labels are convenient, especially for conversation at a picnic, but we are more apt to dismiss things with a catchword than to inquire into them. The art historian, with the excuse that he is scientific, is only interested to give these objects a name or a dating, where the artist was content to give them a form, life. They are thus relegated to a card file, for the same reason that valuable jewels are deposited in bank vaults, to draw them out of circulation.

We are all guilty of this thoughtless ticketing: the artist, as a neurotic; the scientist, as cold and unemotional; the Spaniard as passionate; the Irishman, good for a laugh; until conversely we say any neurotic "has the temperament of an artist". . . a woman has (Plate 1, #5) "the classic grace of a Greek statue" and we get back to the Rise-and-Fall theory of history of art. Here you have chronology in all its viciousness. It is plausible, comfortable and though completely misleading, it satisfies a most human desire to think of all history as something tied up in a neat package; we are uneasy, insecure, if we are not given the account of a period or an epoch as a sort of cross between the graph of a curve and a geometric problem. The name for the first part is usually "early" or "archaic", the second is "Classic" or "Full flower" and the final one, "Very late" or "decadent". It is true to type as the Hollywood movie except that the happy ending comes in the middle. As a result, the art historian falls at once into the role of art critic, although he claims to make no pronouncement of values--for there is always an implication of judgment in his terminology, and still more in his attributions. Within this framework of time-determination he subtly establishes a hierarchy of values. Early work is patronizingly called "fair", "crude but promising", something around C-.

The middle part is described in glowing terms, gets up to A++ with a prospective purchaser in view, and those which are poor in quality, transitional, or too differentiated to fall within his pattern are "decadent", graded from C to F-. Another bit of circular reasoning. Even in an otherwise valuable study of the work of children, this same weapon of historical sequences appears. The child proceeds from line to areas, we are told. Since he is given only the technically difficult wax-crayon to work with, he can scarcely do anything else! But, again, the implication is that line drawing is a less artistic procedure than the coverage of area. If this were so, (Plate 1, #6) most of the Chinese painters would fall in the three-year-old class.

The time and money pressures exert their influence here, too, and determine the extent of our knowledge. Excavations are conducted in Greece rather than Turkey, and so we say we "know more" about Greece. After the continent of Africa had been opened up by colonization, we became excited about African Negro sculpture. The Baku oil wells are exploited and there are marvelous finds in Ur and Chaldea; the building of the trans-asianic railroad and the development of the Standard Oil in China pre-figured the scholarly research into Chinese art. Both Fruit and Oil have interested us in Mexican and Central American finds, in the Aztec or Maya calendars. Now, I am not saying this to make you cynical, nor would I presume to go into cause and effect, (I leave that to Veblen) but I should like to indicate that it is factors such as these, of limitations on expenditures--grants from foundations, government subsidies, university research departments, that govern what we shall and can know about the history of art.

In addition to this, almost all knowledge of art objects in literate countries such as ours, comes from books. Just as Shurman, in his preface divides the books into two classes, works of art may be characterized as: those accessible to be looked at and therefore not discussed, and those not looked at but discussed unceasingly. The latter are read about, known about

--and accepted as standard. This is not true of the other arts. In literature one does read the novel, the story, the poem, the play, one even sees the play produced, or hears the music performed. But experience in looking at pictures? . . . Maybe it's because the tongue is so much quicker than the eye, . . . or because life is short and art--any art--takes a long time.

There is one simple way to begin--with the visibly perceptible facts. We are all quick to notice such things as the graying of hair with age, the thickening of a waistline from a gain in weight, the reddening of a face from embarrassment. These facts do not escape our eyes. The anthropologist distinguishes between such periods as paleolithic and neolithic through his senses. He sees and feels whether a stone implement is polished or unpolished. He sometimes assumes that without the accompanying documentary records; our knowledge is slight, yet we know as much about the pre-historic cave-man from the shape and color of his artifacts, or the shape and color of his bones as we are ever likely to know.

The first step, as all the demonstrations and analyses of this series have tried to show, is to provoke participation on the part of the spectator, an effort to make him become more aware, to make him keen, perhaps, rather than precise, but to make him respond. But there are also things he already knows, like differences of style. We are all perfectly familiar with the character readings done from handwriting. We all accept the fact that there are noticeable differences in the lines traced by different individuals, easily seen, (Plate 1, #7) though they may not all be as interesting literary documents as this.

We even accept the fact (Plate 1, #8) that the whole spirit of an artist's temperament may be, not merely implicit, but expressed in his signature--we say it has his "mark". As a matter of fact, if one goes over old documents, even the X's that illiterate people make, show an astonishing variety of differences. It would be easy for the slightly trained eye to distinguish between

them. This freedom on the signature of Matisse is no accident--nor the fact that it differs so obviously from the straight up and down style of Joseph Conrad. The modern artist has acquired an almost uncanny facility with his brush, facility and freedom, partly from becoming interested in Oriental art and the fabulous dexterity of the Chinese painters, (Plate 1, #9) whose writing and painting were tied up together. The famous canons of Hsieh Ho insisted on: Life-movement, or a rhythmic vitality, and a structural use of the brush, (Plate 1, #10)--useful to both painter and calligrapher. The stems and petals on the persimmons actually remind one of Chinese characters. Even this pre-historic Bison (Plate 2, #11) has a great deal of the quality of free drawing: note the tail and one of the hind legs, particularly. It has even more in common with the drawing of the Chinese in a way (Plate 2, #12) than this late Japanese painting of a Yak, even though nearly all of Japanese painting up to the fifteenth century was highly imitative of the Chinese. But the essential silhouette, without background, treated with soft gradations from dark to light, also the tremendous vitality of the animal, independent from any so-called realistic details, harks back to the Bison in style--without the barest possibility of influence. They both have much in common with the movies we saw the other day, the Plough That Broke the Plains, observation and intimate understanding of cattle in the grazing ground.

As a matter of fact, the formal connections (Plate 2, #13) have always been more important than the chronological ones--especially to the artist. In this slide of an Egyptian statue around 1950 B.C. and of an English sculptress of almost 1950 A.D. there is a perfectly conscious influence.

At the beginning of the century, the greater artists became more intensely interested in "earlier" art. Their own works had revealed to them other values, those of simplified contours, of Clive Bell's "significant form", of art in its beginnings, the primitives, archaic periods, the art of the naive mind, largely because these earlier art-forms have been interested in universals--

I mean by that the simple conditions of human life common to all peoples at all times; e.g. the proud dignity and concentration expressed by the erectly seated human figure.

I submit that a work of art must be something more than just an ordered and intentioned projection into form of the formless--which is well enough for a definition of an object created with artistry. It must have besides, if it is to partake of the creative, the quality of self-revelation in some essential way, some intimation of an experience that one could conceivably have in common with the artist--and thereby reveal something of ourselves to us. It may even shock us at first because of the intimacy or the newness, for we are often shocked to see ourselves laid bare. But the artist must say, like the Book of Revelation: "Behold, I make all things new!" Even Bacon, echoing Aristotle's insistence that there must be a certain admixture of unfamiliarity in the genuine work of art, wrote: "There is no Excellent Beauty that hath not some Strangeness in the Proportion." That is why merely the copy or the reproduction does not satisfy us.

The pregnant woman (Plate 2, #14 & #15) in its simplest presentation has always been a subject that the artist, no matter of what age, has managed to imbue with some intimation of the fertility symbol. Lachaise was undoubtedly not unconscious, either, of these pre-historic finds in his employment of these massive, rotund, expansive forms, expressive of inner tension.

This figure (Plate 2, #16) of the Chinese Goddess of Mercy, who started life as a man, the first thousand years in Buddhist India under the name of Avalokhitesvara, and gradually became more and more of a feminine deity, is in the position of what was known as 'The Gesture of Kingly Ease'. This is a position of relaxation which was symbolic--associated only with the ruling lords--but which you may have observed is not uncommon around here. (Plate 2 #17)

Such things as speed--especially of animals seems to be so dynamic and arresting that (Plate 2, #18) children are very apt to be fascinated with these

subjects. Sometimes they catch the character of speed with the very style of their brushes far better than more mature painters.

(Plate 2, #19) It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century in French painting, however, that an artist had the brilliant idea of going directly to the horse races for his subject matter, instead of painting the rearing horses of the academic antique statues as the other painters had been doing for a century before him.

Mr. Creighton referred to "Blind Lips" the other night in his lecture. It made me think of these two drawings. (Plate 2, #20) The anthropologist who discovered the one on your left in Australia accepts it without comment as an interesting work of art, presuming that the mouth was left out on purpose to prevent the figure from speaking, as a kind of magic.

John Ruskin refers to the one on the right as an example of "hopeless Gothic barbarism; the barbarism from which nothing could emerge--for which no future was possible but extinction."

Perhaps the only conclusion to be drawn is that we often see in a work of art the result, not only of our experiences with other works of art, but the experience we bring to it from life. The art historian does not refrain from criticism, which is autobiography as Mr. Ruskin proves.

Any modern approach to understanding the history of art involves acceptance of the idea of relativity. We have to admit, not only that all that we learn from history is that we do not learn from history, but that most of what we learn from the History of Art, (in caps.) we must sooner or later proceed to unlearn. We have to exert our knowledge of the laws of perspective on the long vista of art works presented to us. And one of the primary rules of perspective is that the view changes from every changing vantage point. We are forced to do precisely what the artist does, and re-arrange our emphasis. If the problem of teaching history of art is to arrive at some conception that is so definite as to be satisfying, and so elastic that new conceptions may be

filled into it, perhaps the spectator must become something of an artist, too.

It seems to me that the history of art should be rather like the scaffolding that was erected around the Cathedral of Chartres when they were repairing that building. While it was up, it was used extensively by the sexton and others to obtain some very wonderful and strange new views of various parts of the building. It gave a queer, exciting flavor to the old cathedral, making one imagine that it was still in the process of its creation. But it was never intended as a permanent affair; it was meant to be pulled down when its job was done, so that the Cathedral could once more be looked at as it was meant to be looked upon--freshly, and directly.

Elsa Hirsch
Art Series: X
Bennington College
March 1938

Poetry and The Spiritual Problem of Man

It is possible in a canto of the Divine Comedy or in a sonnet of Mallarme to analyse a modulated thought, to apprehend in a metaphor a familiar emotion, to delight in an unfamiliar experience transcribed by a symbol. It is possible in a Bach fugue or a Mozart symphony to analyse the consonancy of successive sounds, to apprehend the proportions of a begun and completed tonal monument, to delight in the integrity of a controlled and audible light. Art demands of us this disciplined attentiveness in order that our intelligence take pleasure in its beauty. But behind the canto and the sonnet which are but the sonority of a daily act and the color of a minute, there is a universe of symbols, a rich and profound decor abiding with the spirit of the artist. This spirit has lived before the art was created and continues to live after the art has been separated from its creator. There is behind the fugue and the symphony the music of the spheres which Pythagoras heard, the music which David heard in silent nights and which he did not transpose in his psalms.

Man makes the work of man. Before passing into form or matter, it takes its birth in the intelligence of man. Once separated from the artist, the work of art will be subjected to all the vicissitudes of a material object and will be loved and judged by the intelligence of man. The too absolute phrase "invulnerability of art" may be applied simply to those works of art which reflecting something of the spiritual reality common to all men, can be comprehended by successive centuries. It has not, strictly speaking, a terminal character, but has, rather, a measure of spirituality. Poetry is not the search for God, but the harmony of a moment when the search might have been undertaken. A poem testifies to an experience, but an arrested experience and one deformed by words. The poem exists by itself, truncated from the spiritual

reality of the experience. Thus, the making of any work of art involves the danger of an immediate explanation. The permanent problem of man, in any race, in any age, is the understanding of his spiritual experience. His art, having its roots in this experience, translates it inadequately and lasts only in so far as it is fashioned upon some lines of beauty which are communicable and which give pleasure. Man's adventure is immutable; man's art is composed of varying and innumerable faces, incidents and moments of his adventure.

The modern age embracing a new faith in man and offering to the ills of humanity a man-invented cure, has relegated to an obscure place the true source of his enlightenment and joy. Potentially gifted artists have vitiated their work with a superabundance of human passion uncontrolled and unpurified by spirit. The art of Byron, Hugo, Wagner, suffers from a wanton display of ego and sensuality, from purely human colors strident with overbalance and dissolution. From the poetic voices of the 19th century one is heard today above the others. This voice of Charles Baudelaire in centuries to come may be the representative voice of our period as Dante's is for us the representative voice of the 14th century. The very title of Baudelaire's work, The Flowers of Evil, witnesses to the age of which it is a product and to its subject jealously guarded over by both the good and the bad angels.

But art is not concerned primarily with morality. Here is poetry composed as flowers whose perfume poisons. Here is a poet who is a seat of frenzy and who has entered a universe apprehended as a multiplicity of signs. His spirit, whose quality was molded by a life of thoughts, moved in an adverse world. Without man's freedom of action, Baudelaire's poetry would be inexplicable. Yet as art it owes no servitude to chance.

Beauty is the fruit of patience and of hours free to die. Baudelaire's poems are brief representations of moments filled grievously by a sinister experience. Rimbaud's poems are also elliptical syntheses of moments crammed to the exploding point. The force of Baudelaire and the exasperation of Rimbaud

cannot easily be attached to any other century than the 19th. Everything in their age had told them coldly and succinctly that they are alone and that their art will be the agony of their solitude and their misery. Baudelaire will call upon Satan for pity and Rimbaud will apostrophize Christ as the eternal thief of energies.

Baudelaire was the artist of the darkness which surrounded him, whereas Rimbaud was not only its artist but its victim as well. With Rimbaud, poetry became a language deformed wilfully, an instrument turning in all directions like a surgical knife, the cancerous question: Of what is man capable? With what is formed the vision of man? Art exists in its rigid ultimate form but the human intelligence which first conceived it, continues living either seeing clearer into man's destiny or seeing more darkly into a pyrrhonic philosophy.

In Rimbaud's poetry, we can experience a delectation in our approximate understanding of his vision (and this is all art seeks to do; namely, to cause delight in the contemplation of its beauty). But Rimbaud's experience which caused his poetry to come into existence, continued in mystery and silence after his creative instinct was arrested and this experience will always be incomprehensible to our minds. Rimbaud understood that he didn't understand. This might have been subject enough for a poet's art. It was in Baudelaire's case who modeled and strengthened the "ideas", at times with irony, at times with tenderness. But with Rimbaud there was but one treatment of darkness, its quality of black, and it ended by stifling him.

Baudelaire was the artist of despair because he coped with it in his art. Rimbaud was its victim because as an artist he abandoned it. Both Baudelaire and Rimbaud prepared the advent of Claudel who accepts the world as an obstacle to be conquered, as a bestower of dignity, as a means to an end ineffable. The majesty of the great, Dante, Shakespeare, Claudel, seems to derive from their participation in the world, from their love of the world, a love warmed by

pity and a sense of unrealized heritage. Every page of Claudel, is pervaded with the belief that what is born from a chisel or from a pen is destined to the multiple deaths of the grass and the sun. What is common to Dante, to Shakespeare, to Claudel is the primacy of man's spiritual problem. Their art is opacity of sounds and transparency of ideas. In their art is subsumed the unity belonging to man. Man insufficient and beguiled, yet capable of joy in wisdom. The art of Dante and Shakespeare depicts the manifold stages of man's despair and joy. The art of Dante and Claudel speaks of the visitation of what is called Grace, the repairer of maimed humanity.

To experience an art one must enter a climate of darkness or a climate of grace. To understand an art one must be initiated to the smile of the infant Jesus playing with a pomegranate or to the sombre destiny of a Dostoevsky character. For the spectator, in both cases, it is a question of succumbing. For the artist, in both cases, it is a question of reproducing the clear part of obscurity.

To continue and to conclude what resembles a geometrical progression: if Baudelaire is the artist of darkness and Rimbaud its victim; and if Claudel is the artist of light, there is a type of artist we can consider the victim of light. He is the contemplative, a St. John of the Cross or a St. Theresa. We have been concerned with the mind which reaches toward the inaccessible, toward the formless. In the composing of his poetry, the poet doesn't relinquish any part of his human nature. The delectation which we experience intellectually in the presence of art trains and prepares us for contemplation which from the thomistic viewpoint is the greatest of delectations. The creation of art represents a moment in man's search for the unity which the mystic apprehends in contemplation and which Plotinus describes as an accordance with partlessness. The artist sees the things of this realm; the mystic uses them as a point of departure in order to see.

In this very broad view of the validity of man's spiritual experience,

the artist's activity is only an initial stage, a prefiguration of a subsequent and greater one. If the mystic attains the ultimate delectation, art is impoverishing and contemplation is fecundating.

Man lives only in the marvellous ubiquity of his hopes. His glance is vertiginous and his heart dishabituates itself of the present. The first difficult lesson is to learn what is ourselves truly. And then we must learn that nature and man disappear or change. We must first awaken to the perpetual flow of everything in order to arrive at the vision of that which is not measured by time.

Poetry's province is the unknowing fluidity of days. The mobility of the skies is in poetry. The immobility of heaven is not in poetry.

Wallace Fowlie
Art Series: XI
Bennington College
March 1938

The Judgment of Art

The aim of most of the speakers in this series has been to present various works of art and to tell you something which will make you see or hear more clearly and understandingly. They have tried to give suggestions about how the media and techniques of the various arts can be studied, how we can understand and even agree upon what the artist was doing with his material. What the work of art is has not been left to anybody's private guess. But all the time, I dare say, we have all been busy making judgments about the values in the works. If you had asked any of the speakers to tell you whether a work was good or bad, in many cases you would have been told, "I can give you my own opinion, for myself, but I cannot make the judgment for you." It would seem as though the impersonal method followed heretofore breaks down when we come to place a value on art, and that we are thrown adrift to follow personal preferences and to expect no guidance from others. You may very well ask whether in the realm of judgment there is no procedure comparable with that which we have been following in our approach to understanding. If we throw up our hands and say we can give no guidance, there are certain aspects of our relations with each other which will be notably affected. We shall no longer be able to talk about some one's "taste" being "good" or "poor". We shall no longer take as an educational aim the development of "higher standards" of judgment. We shall pay no attention to the judgments of value in reviews of books, plays, exhibitions, and concerts. We shall no longer look up to one another in questions of judgment. We shall not be able to indulge in the delightful sport of looking down on one another. We shall be free of the temptation to pretend to like what we notice is liked by that group of people with whom we wish to be associated. Taste in art will be reduced to the level of

taste in food; there is no use in arguing about whether olives are good.

Yet the history of the arts is full of battles over the better and the worse. Artists and critics both have acted quite conspicuously as though this question were a real question and one to which answers could be given. That they have not yet been able to agree about standards is less important than the question has been fruitful in fertilizing the soil for new creation and new receptivity, and thus for the growth of civilization. Every new movement in art has been based upon judgment of the art that preceded it, and the visualization of a better art to come. Even underlying our attempts here to arrive at some impersonal understanding of the arts lurks a suspicious assurance that by certain procedures we shall create a better art than that of Rossini, Meissonier, Shelley, Dickens, or George S. Kaufman. I have observed in committee meetings that the judgment of good and bad has hidden under another verbalization of the matter; we began to talk about what was Art and what was not Art, as though we thus avoided the judgment business. Because, then, the judging of art is as ubiquitous and eternal as art itself, it might be well to examine what is involved in the process. The examination may not make us aware of elements or qualities in any single work, but it may make us more aware of the processes of appreciation. My aims are to set a little in order the relations between understanding or apprehension of a work of art and judgment of it; and to make the natural and inevitable disputing about values take on greater dignity than that of a squabble between "'Tis" and "'Tain't".

The first consideration is of the instrument by which we record the effects of the work. All education in the arts is aimed at making the instrument more sensitive. The analyses in this series have stressed the importance of training in sensuous awareness and receptivity. When an artist sets up a relationship between two dots and a third, a red and a blue, a chord and a melodic line, a word and an action, we should perceive that relationship clearly. And we can learn to perceive it with something like equal precision. Up to

this point the question of pleasure or value does not enter.

Now the psychology dealing with the effects of form, color, and sound is not yet highly developed enough to give us exact principles of procedure. There have been many attempts in aesthetics to establish principles. It has been affirmed by some that the primary geometric forms are by nature framed to the human mind so as to give the highest kind of pleasure. Theorists of color have established categories of primary and secondary colors and have tried to give definite or relative values to each in terms of human pleasure. Theorists of poetry have discussed the reasons why certain rhythmical patterns of word-sounds give greater pleasure than others. But individual artists have refused to be bound by these theories and have gone on expanding the possibilities of pleasure. One of the hopes of psychology as a new science is that more can and will be known about this relationship between the aspects of objects and the correspondent pleasure felt by the human instrument.

We need to observe, however, some of the attributes of this human instrument which will make any such scientific study difficult, if not impossible. The first is that the instrument is itself a growing, changing thing, and that its reactions change and develop. It also has memory; what it has once experienced becomes a part of the instrument itself and helps in directing its reactions in the future. It forms expectations which condition its response to new experience. Habits are formed by previous experience, and make it tend to avoid new stresses and strains upon attention. Furthermore, out of previous experience, the human mind tends to make theories about what ought to be, and these theories often stand between it and the new object of apprehension. Lastly, the human instrument has a life to live which involves far more activities than this one of response to and judgment of art, and it will cling to or resist works of art according to its sense of some active relation between the effects of these works and the life it has to lead or wishes to lead. These differences are what make the judgment of art so complicated and so

dependent upon the individual temperaments of the judges. When we have gone as far as we can towards agreement upon what the work of art is and then observe how differently we react to the common experience, we should do well to seek out patiently which of these tendencies of the human instrument has led to the placing of different values.

If you and I came to the reading of Emma as a galvanometer comes to its test of an electric current, the problem of the judgment of art would be a simple one. But we have not only read novels before; we have also heard stories from the time we first were conscious of human life and began to understand language. From the time of the second story we ever heard until now, the process of judgment by comparison has been going on. We remember the pleasure of stories we have heard. We look for equal pleasure, sometimes the same pleasure, from each new story. This is the most legitimate basis of judgment we can ever have. Here we are close to individual works of art and the experiences which they give. But here also we see the origin of fashions or conventions in the arts. The desire for "more of the same" accounts for the repetitions in patterns of vases, of textile designs, of battle episodes in Homer and Icelandic saga, of "Boy-meets-girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl" movies. A common question among theatrical critics in the early 18th century was whether the acting was "authentic", which meant whether it followed a tradition handed down from earlier actors. This is the "dead hand" of former experience. Now, our only possible judgment is that based upon what we have known before; yet that reliance upon former experience may become mere escape from the challenge of new experience. It is only through much first-hand experience that we become responsible to art at all. Yet this very training also tends to set up habit reactions which dull the ability to respond freshly to new experiences, new forms. The act of judgment requires both the previous experience and the ability to free ourselves from previous experience.

It would of course be extremely cumbersome to proceed each time to compare

the new work of art with all the works we have known before. To judge Emma we should have to work back through Farewell to Arms, Ulysses, The Fountain, Little Women, Robinson Crusoe, Anderson's fairy tales, to Mother Goose. To avoid this we have made classifications. We observe certain elements and aims which separate groups of stories from other groups. We then try to compare a new story with those of the type nearest to it. So long as we do not demand that an artist make his story like other men's stories we may use this differentiation of "kinds" as a help to understanding and to our judgment. It will at least keep us from making comparisons between things which are so remote from each other that the comparison becomes not only dangerous to just appraisal but absurd. We shall not compare Emma with Frankenstein without first observing the differences in kind which make impossible the mere measurement of one of these stories by the other.

The next step in the attempt to make this method of comparison workable is to establish principles. What are the "characteristics" of the works of art in one class or kind? We not only group a number of works together because of observed likenesses; we define those likenesses in abstract terms and give the type a name. Hence come the conceptions of epic, tragedy, novel of manners, picaresque novel, proletarian novel, and the like. Please notice that the stage of this procedure which is really valuable is that of analysis of the way the work of art is made. So long as the explainer sticks close to the individual work, he is on safe ground. This play gives pleasure, he says. This is the way it is made. Here is another play which gives somewhat similar pleasure. It is made in a way that is in many respects similar to that of the other. The leap in argument comes when the analyst then says that to make a play in this way is the right means to creating the kind of pleasure found in this sort of work. From explaining in a set of intelligible terms what the work is like which has given this particular kind of pleasure, he has gone on to suggest that this set of characteristics may be used both as a rule of work to

guide the artist and a measuring rod for the judgment of new works.

There are centuries of European literary history strewn with "epics", "tragedies", and "satires" made to the "rules" in this way, and also with judgment of critics whose only criterion was whether the works followed the rules. What could happen, for example, to such an apparently simple and sound a principle as that of unity? It would seem impossible for critics to mistake the meaning of this common term in all the arts, or to misuse it. Aristotle observed the unity of action in Greek tragedy. To his alleged followers in the Renaissance this observation became a law; but worse than that it was taken to mean a certain kind of simplicity or singleness of plot, rather than an organic principle which made a whole out of no matter how many varied parts. Now when the Elizabethan drama got under way with its multiple plots and mixtures of superficially incongruous matter, the critics came down on it with the "rule of unity". These crude plays would never do. The curious thing is that they liked Shakespeare; they knew somehow that his best plays were superior to anything that was being produced according to the rule. But as critics they had to go on declaring that Shakespeare had no "art", that he really ought to have built his plays by the rules. It took two centuries for them to quit trying to fit the work of art to the principle. When finally some men began to study the plays first, as Aristotle would have done, they discovered their old friend unity there. They hadn't known him when they saw him; they had been looking, say, for his little old hat, now discarded, not for him.

A further step in generalization follows. From establishing certain principles upon which similar works of art have been made, theorists then go on to derive statements about the proper function of art. When Aristotle suggested that the "proper function of tragedy" was "through pity and fear" to "effect a catharsis, or purgation, of these emotions", he let loose upon the world a Pandora's box of critical insects. Horace did the same when he named the function of poetry "to teach and delight"; and Matthew Arnold with his

"poetry is the criticism of life" and his demand for "high seriousness". Nowadays the most noisy partisans are those of the theory that "Art is a weapon", that art has a role to play in social action. All these phrases were based upon personal experience with individual works. They give us suggestions, at least, as to what works the critics judged as best, and what effects they got from them. They may help in the clarification of what experience in art is for us. We only get into trouble when we exalt them into criteria for judging other works and other effects from those which gave rise to them. We tend to forget that they are valid only as explanations of what has taken place in the face of certain works. They may help us to define and vaguely communicate what we find in a new work; but, on the other hand, they may be irrelevant or even obstructive to the understanding and judgment of that new work. We may find we have to "interpret", as the saying is, the dogma in order to admit a new work which seems at first outside the pale. Or we may find that the phrase after all is not a definite criterion, a useful measuring tool, but merely one of those "expressive" phrases that tell us more about the man who made them than about the work of art they are meant to describe. Though they seem to be universally valid, they can be reduced to expressions of personal preference. Judgment may define itself in such phrases of function, if the critic thinks persuasion may result; but judgment must base itself upon each fresh experience, in terms not of abstract phrases but of previous experience with individual works.

We have seen how the process of comparison, analysis, and generalization has both validity and danger in the formation of judgments. Because it is based upon personal experiences and, in its final stage, the generalization about the function of art, where it only seems to reach universal validity, returns again to personal expression, those who would like to arrive at some more impersonal measurement have turned to the formal element alone. Aren't there some tests that relate directly to the technique and the medium of each art and that can be applied by all of us without this disturbing relation to

personal experience? Cannot we limit ourselves to the consideration of such factors as unity, harmony, rhythm, balance, and the like? It has been the aim of the demonstrations and analyses of the various arts in this series to emphasize this impersonal approach to the understanding of art. Once the elements of a work have been seen and their relations understood, have we not arrived at the only evaluation of the work that it is possible to talk about or agree upon? Will not the comparison of two works on the basis of these elements lead to the only judgment of relative value which will have any validity for more than one spectator?

Suppose, for example, that we all now see what Jane Austen has created in her novel Emma. "The whole that is Emma is established", as Miss Osgood has put it. Granted--but what of it? What's it all worth? In the formal elements which analysis reveals we have something fairly tangible and communicable on which to base a judgment. In the wholeness, the proportions, the movement forward from beginning to end, the variety within the unity, the rhythmical dance of the words, the texture of human relationships, the visible control of the author's mind over these elements--in all these and other formal aspects of the work we find the pleasure that is peculiar to works of art. Unless we have interest in these aspects and feel a pleasure in the discovery and contemplation of them, we write ourselves down as uninterested in literary art and we might as well get whatever else we have got from the novel through other means of communication than that of art. So true is this that it has been pushed to the extreme in such a doctrine as Clive Bell's, the doctrine of "significant form". The doctrine postulates a separate faculty in the human mind for the appreciation of art, an "aesthetic emotion". Form becomes significant, not because through it something related to and of value to life in its other aspects has been revealed to us, but merely because we have in us some capacity to get a high pleasure out of form. We can become critics of art without reference to our religious beliefs, social theories, or moral ideas. A work of

art, under this doctrine, may be praised or disapproved solely on the grounds of its form; any effects besides the satisfaction of this interest in form are irrelevant to the judgment. Once we grant the primary importance of this formal matter, which we have not only granted in this series but have insisted upon, we are faced with the fact that something more than the pleasure in form happens to us. What that something more is is the last aspect of the problem I shall tackle.

Besides bringing to the apprehension of a work of art sensibilities trained in the appreciation of other works and especially in the formal elements in them, we also bring a host of other experiences and judgments about life itself. To return to Emma for a moment, Emma is not a living person; what we call "Emma" is a form called up through a succession of pages of words. Judgment of the novel is first of all involved in the question of the words and the completeness of the form which they call up. The first equipment of the critic is experience in the art which he is criticizing, first-hand knowledge of works of art and grasp of those elements which make up each work and repeat themselves in others. But works of art are not merely things constructed, things whose construction may be studied and judged by some merely formal consideration. They are also things which do something. The pages which produce the image of Emma and her destiny call into action a much more comprehensive judging mechanism. What Jane Austen created was not merely a unified pattern of words and images, but an effect, an effect upon us. The judgment of that effect involves more than the judgment of achievement in form.

I have doubtless gone a long way round to make the simple point that the judgment of a work of art is bound up with judgments of life itself. At any moment in our lives our actions imply judgments of value. What we do shows what we value. The things in life which move us one way or another are accepted or rejected according to some conscious or subconscious, individual or social evaluation. Even though a work of art may not attack directly any of

the problems of life, its effect is to push in some direction or other the spectator's or reader's emotional energies. Art takes its place alongside all other stimuli in conditioning our lives. A few years ago when the question of "meaning" in poetry was in the foreground, Archibald MacLeish, in reaction against the search for rational or prose correspondents to poems, wrote,

"A poem should not mean
But be."

But what a poem is, in the last analysis, is what it does. And so with other works of art. The pleasure derived from them cannot be wholly separated from the other activities of life. In the judgment of values among the conflicting stimuli we must sooner or later include the judgment of the effects of works of art. This involves a decision about the ends of life and therefore the ends of all the various activities.

I hope by now to have made it a little clear what goes on in the process of judging art. Only the most hardy souls carry through to the end of the whole process. Somewhere along the way the rest of us "make up our minds", as we say. Perhaps it is now clear why we are occasionally chagrined at finding our judgments at variance with the "experts", why our own judgments have changed from time to time, why the effects of a Mozart concerto cannot be measured with even the exactness with which the effects of Vitamin B can be measured. Judgment when all is said and done, is autobiography. The comparison of judgments, however, leads to the discovery of differences first in ability to see and hear and read; second, in previous experience in the arts; and, third, in ultimate evaluations of life itself. The training in taste must proceed along these three lines, and its method is that of finding out the sources of the differences. When the disputing about taste gets beyond the stage where the factual matter of what is there is established, it enters the stage where what is good for us in life becomes the main problem. In an age when certainty about what is good for us is lacking, uncertainty in taste as

well will reign. As the individual approaches effective living in the measure that he arrives at such certainty, so does society. Thus, finally, the criticism in an age and a society is the autobiography of that age and society.

C. Harold Gray
Art Series: XII
Bennington College
March 1938

Summary for Art Series

Even though we have not spoken specifically of the role which the audience plays in stimulating the actors in a performance we wish to acknowledge that your faithful attendance and your participation in the discussions has been felt by us and has made the whole experience of the Art Series as interesting to us as we hope it was to you.

Before organizing the Series we went over the various possibilities of procedure. We realized immediately that the field of the arts was so enormously wide-spread that we could not possibly hope to do more than scratch the surface. A number of likely approaches presented themselves: We could have talked about how the artist goes about making art. This would have been an intensely fascinating subject, but it would have had to be highly conjectural. True enough, we could have brought into play our own experiences in creative work, possibly reports from some other living artists and also some few written records on the subject. But the vast field of the past, of the cavemen, of folk artists, children and many of the great masters could only have been covered by hypothetical statements of slight validity.

We could also have spoken on the position of the artist in society now and in the past. This is, of course an exceedingly grateful subject and also an important one. But, while some of us may have some ideas about it, we frankly did not feel quite competent to handle this. It would have required the active collaboration of the entire faculty of the Sciences and Social Studies, and we felt, and most likely they did too, that after the gigantic job of the Science and Culture Series they deserved a rest.

Another possibility would have been to discuss the problem of evaluation of works of art, during the entire Series. You can see readily that we should

have had to go into the major aesthetic theories and, since we probably do not agree fully with any of them, we would have had to form one or more of our own. This would not only have landed the entire panel in a continuous wrangle, but undoubtedly the audience too.

The trouble with all these possibilities is also that they would have been fundamentally unsound because the basic materials and ideas that go into the making of the arts would not have been adequately presented. Since we considered such a presentation the initial step, and the prerequisite of all discussions on art, we decided to center our Series around this point: The basic materials of works of art.

Now, from the audience came the following question: "The Art Series, as it has revealed itself thus far, is a mosaic made up of juicy and informative tidbits from the respective arts. While each speaker has contributed instructive remarks on the specific techniques required in his field there has been no attempt to generalize about all the fields. Are the members of the Panel purposefully neglecting more general aspects, because they cannot agree, or discount the validity of such a discussion or are they unaware of the disjointed effect they are producing by the Series' lack of an integrating viewpoint?"

I should like to tell you how we wanted you to listen to this series, and what we hoped you might get out of it.

First of all, you have had a number of concrete works of art analyzed for you. These works were of interest in themselves, and we hoped in addition, that the analyses showed you what was meant by understanding in art. These works were a painting, a musical composition, a dance, a novel--examples of various different arts. As you became familiar with them, one after the other, we hoped that you perceived certain analogies between them. You heard many of the same words applied to the analysis of different arts--words like rhythm, unity, form. Does this mean we could define rhythm in a way that would do for

music and literature both? Perhaps, but in terms so general as to be almost meaningless. It would be better to say that there is an analogy between rhythm in music and rhythm in literature, and that your understanding of one will improve your understanding of the other. We invited you to perceive this kinship between the arts and on this basis to form your general ideas, and your definitions of art with a capital A, for yourselves.

We have also had in this series a few talks which were designed to help you to think about art in relation to other things. I might mention Mr. Krob's paper on the utilitarian aspects of art, Miss Wunderlich's on art as a voice of its time, and Mr. Gray's on judging art, as examples. Our intention was not to provide you with a philosophy of art but rather to show you what you would need, to make one, and these papers were designed to help you in this way. And so, having become acquainted with art through the demonstrations, we invite you to take the final step for yourselves, and relate whatever you have decided art is, to whatever other values may be dreamed of in your philosophies.

What I just read to you was the last paragraph of Mr. Fergusson's opening paper, and in the light of it, the above question proves a point Mr. Luening made first in his paper and which I should like to emphasize once more; namely, that in the pursuit of any art, even the art of listening to a series, observation and memory are the important elements, essential for the understanding of the form and the content. It is true, of course, that the physical limitations and imperfections of the instruments can, to a certain degree, blur the understanding, as was also pointed out.

We realize of course that it is exacting to look at works of art, but the necessity for that is, after all, our main point, and therefore there is some justification for returning to it in many contexts. This is the only way in which you will understand the meaning of it. Any educational process, after all is a long one and the crowning achievement of mature judgment again depends on observation and accurate memory of many objects to which any one particular

object can then be related.

In the entire artistic process which consists of creation, of the work of art, projection of it, reception and finally re-creation, we concerned ourselves mainly with projection and reception, even though Mr. Fowlie and Mr. Clarke touched on the limitations of creation and Mr. Gray, on those of re-creation. Mr. Luening elaborated the physical limitations of projection through the imperfection of the media and Mrs. Hirsch showed the spiritual limitations through the historical cliché. All of us to a greater or lesser degree devoted some of our time to the problem of the reception of the work of art and made you participate in small samples of the receptive process. It would have been desirable in each case to proceed toward a complete synthesis of all the elements and go on further to the meaning. But such a synthesis requires more time than was at our disposal because it is absolutely essential that the previous analysis deal with every one and all the elements of the work of art. Out of all these concrete facts you get one more concrete total, a unity. You can neither accept nor reject the work of art until you have seen it. Your evaluation is a purely private matter. But, as Mr. Gray said, the comparison of judgments leads to the discovery of differences in ability to see and hear and read, in previous experience in the arts, and in the ultimate evaluations of life itself. The training in taste must proceed along these three lines, and its method is that of finding out the sources of the differences.

According to Mr. Lauterer, the work of art itself has no meaning but it adds itself up to meaning in the observer. And, to quote Mr. Gray once more, the criticism, finally, in an age and a society is the autobiography of that age and that society, and this also applies to the individual.

Stefan Hirsch
Art Series:
Summary
Bennington College