THE WORKS OF CY TWOMBLY: NON-LINEAR LANGUAGE AND NON-LINEAR CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to achieve the first evaluation of Cy Twombly's (1928-) position in the discourses of Modernism and Postmodernism. As Twombly has been viewed as an 'inimitable' and independent artist, it is necessary to question the extent to which his works adhere to, or transgress, the terminologically restrictive monolithic meta-languages of late Modernism and Postmodernism. To inquire therefore into the relationship between the independent formulation of ideas and the plurality of a dominant cultural form.

Twombly's aesthetic devices of intertextuality and appropriation, subject themes of mythology and history, and dislocation of categories, arises at an early period in his work, prior to the eclecticism of Postmodern art. This has presented difficulties for critical theory in interpreting Twombly's oeuvre within a linear, developmental history of art. One central aim is to identify the context therefore from which such aesthetic and extra-aesthetic concerns arose.

This analysis will require examining Black Mountain College's synchronic and isomorphic education under the directorship of Charles Olson, for grounds of the artist's pre-postmodern interests. The education in the intellectual life of early Modernism, in particular Mallarméan and Poundian theory and practice, and the significance of early 20th century critical language debates in general, locates Twombly's work in the pluralistic cultural phenomena of early Modernism, opening a seam therefore between the monolithic paradigms of late Modernism and Post-modernism.

A wider archaeological context is examined, within which Twombly's choice of classical mythology, history and war, appropriation and intertextuality bears relevance to paradigm shifts in 20th century thought, for example, the artist's radical questioning of the significance of mythology for 20th century notions of identity.

The thesis highlights the interdisciplinary relationships within the artist's work, in particular Twombly's deconstruction of both language and pre-determined cerebral languages of mathematics and geometry. These deconstructions are relevant to contemporary researches in various disciplines, e.g. the mathematics of topology, and non-Euclidean quantum physics.

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INTRODUCTION

The American artist Cy Twombly (1928-)[1] has throughout his long career produced problems for the post-war critical tradition. How does one assess and then place an artist within that tradition, who after culminating his American education at the alternative, interdisciplinary Black Mountain College (hereafter BMC), moves in 1957 to Europe permanently. This geographical distance from American mainstream art practice was soon realized to be the lesser distance; Twombly's subject matter and pictorial methods of procedure, revealed an even greater distance from American critical theories of advanced art. Whilst Robert Rauschenberg, Twombly's close companion at BMC and life-long friend, quickly reaped honours from the critics, Twombly's works left them grasping inconclusively for descriptions, let alone definitions.

Highlighting a few of the central difficulties felt by some of the major American and European critics reflects an overall perplexity within the critical tradition itself with respect to this artist. For Pierre Restany, Twombly was a `lone wolf ...[who] owes nothing to anybody' and `accomplishes [a] ... *revolution of the sign.*' [2] Whilst the structuralist and post-structuralist theorist Roland Barthes views this artist's line as `inimitable': `graphisms' which `no longer participate in any graphic code.' [3] Gottfried Boehm sums up the situation: ` the critical reception of Twombly as a whole ... reveal[s] the extent to which conventional terms, classifications, even descriptions, are called into question.'[4] Heiner Bastian, having produced a body of writing on the artist over fifteen years, culminating in the Catalogue Raisonné of Twombly's works, highlights the dilemma, in that the works are consciously set `apart from the larger body of artistic theory of the latter half of this century', and are utterly foreign to `current semiotic fashion or recent `historical determination'.' [5] Kirk Varnedoe, in his catalogue of the 1995 Museum of Modern Art's exhibition `Cy Twombly: A Retrospective', can also make a general assertion on the critical tradition's failure. Varnedoe pinpoints

critics' inability to attach successfully a specific 'ism' to a work, or even a period, of Twombly's career. The difficulty resides, according to Varnedoe, in the fact that many 'isms' co-exist not only in the same period of Twombly's career, but often in the same work.[6]

From this selection of quotations we could fear that something in the nature of a theoretical abyss awaits us with respect to an examination of this artist's œuvre, as without doubt Twombly's choice of content, methods of procedure, and overall theoretical position cause severe consternation within the critical tradition of art history.

Twombly's œuvre, until the late 80s, was more or less cold-shouldered by the American art-historical paradigm [for three decades]. Despite his prior exclusion, there has now been, since the early 90s formidable interest in Twombly's œuvre. To many critics he is outside any theoretical position at all, or more revealingly, an 'outsider' to the dominant paradigm of American art at the beginning of his career, and its revisions since.

Viewed as an 'outsider' to both the dominant paradigm of American art and a European paradigm of art's development since mid century, Twombly in the latter case appears to occupy a singular position as an extremely early precursor (by at least twenty years), of its Neo-Expressionist and Transavant-garde schools, and various postmodern affiliations. Whilst, in the former case, Twombly transgressed the rule that an American stay within an established framework of reference. The American established framework after World War II was only prepared to recognise European influence on Abstract Expressionism (i.e. aspects of Cubism and Surrealism), after which American art was viewed as self-perpetuating in a monolithic American paradigm of linear progression, and its restriction therefore of European aesthetic and literary theories.

By the time of Jasper Johns' and Robert Rauschenberg's use of any gestural brushwork, such painterly practice was seen as a second generation reaction to Abstract Expressionism – a reaction of irony. The question arises why Twombly should ascertain

exploratory questions only answerable within the painterly medium, when other mediums were rather dictatorially in vogue. It is through this, as viewed, outmoded 'backdrop' of painterly process that Twombly allows to emerge his 'pre-postmodern' textual, mythological and appropriation strategies of engagement.

My own physical responses, when first introduced to two of Twombly's works, also resulted in perplexity, introducing me to a variety of problematic questions, apparently unanswerable within the terms of conventional art history.

In front of the painting *School of Athens* (1961) (Pl.1) I encountered something previously not experienced, unsettling any sense of spatial unity of self; that of being simultaneously drawn into an infinity of space whilst physically 'hitting' the flat surface of the canvas. How I could be in two places with such velocity, inside and outside the work, yet also, significantly, permanently in 'transit', caused perplexity. It was a question of spatially experienced relationality, which had deconstructed the distinction between subject, as observer, and object, as observed.

My response to Twombly's 'calligraphy', though not entirely reliant on spatial response, had an 'echo' of the previous experience. Rather than the phenomenal perspective of Western space being so abruptly violated, it appeared that Western grammar's sacrosanct divisional syntax of subject, verb (action) and object had been. This 'new language', epitomized in Twombly's *Untitled* (1970) (Pl.2), was the trace of action itself, the verb breaking free, perhaps, from its Western separation and subjugation. The process of relationality again appeared to be 'content'. Such physical tentative beginnings led to an awareness of Twombly's propensity towards multidimensionality and non-linear 'languages'.

On an initial examination of a wider range of the artist's œuvre, it became apparent that this 'undercurrent' of language in *Untitled* (1970) (Pl.2), revealed only one aspect of Twombly's experimentation with language-use. Quite a proportion of

works either utilized letters, fragments of words, `word-images', or quotations of poetry, often in an act of intertextuality.

From the painting *School of Athens*, a further problematic arose concerning the nature of this artist's act of `appropriation' (Raphael's *School of Athens).* During my perusal of the artist's œuvre for further `appropriations' it became apparent that the visual source of Roman and Greek mythology in general, the poetics of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in particular, were central to his practice from 1957. The question it is necessary to raise is what is the relevance of Twombly's use of mythological sources to the second half of the twentieth century.

As these acts of `intertextuality' and `appropriation' were adopted by the artist prior to the rise of postmodernist strategies, obviously there are difficulties in interpreting Twombly's œuvre within a linear, developmental history of art, and in identifying the context therefore from which such aesthetic and extra-aesthetic concerns arose.

Twombly's alleged position, outside of any didactic mainstream, makes this artist appear to have side-stepped any reduction of artworks to fashionable dogma, whereby artistic debate is somewhat foreclosed. This position, outside of any didactic mainstream, against the grain of post-war American art should make his practice more compelling for art historians. This is what makes his work so exciting a challenge to the critical tradition of intellectual analyses, because, according to Harold Rosenberg, `only artists lacking in vision and intellectual vitality will submit to being directed by the formulas of critics.'[7] Therefore, to ascertain the context for such a singular `intellectual vitality' requires the examination of a certain constellation of conditions (nevertheless one with roots).

How this challenge has been experienced by critics, and if productively, will now be examined in depth, via the series of metalanguages which constitute a historicised theoretical debate. The majority of American critical writing on the artist I

have attenuated due to its inability to steer away from a restrictive purely formalist paradigm, and as such not exploring therefore any prominent questions raised by Twombly's œuvre. The American critics' interpretations referred to in the thesis are exceptions in that they endorse a wider circumference to the American paradigm. Nevertheless, in the main they can be measured on a scale of degrees between modern formalist and biographical input. In sharp contrast, the eclectic range of European critical writing tends to reflect current philosophical, literary and semiotic theories, which abound from the 1960s onwards. For example, such methodological approaches as Manfred de la Motte's structuralist reading, Gottfried Boehm's deconstructionist interpretation, or the interpretations of Roland Barthes' apolitical `erotics', Guy Scarpetta's anal-erotic Freudianism, and Demosthenes Davvetas' `erography' which un-iconizes.

An analysis of critics' theoretical positions becomes simplified if we realize that beneath the heterogeneity of interpretations the approaches are embedded within two paradigms, i.e. Formalist and Socio-historical.

Each of the two main approaches is dominated by a basic mode of thought that springs from a given paradigm. The `pure and simple' formal position, which disconnects the artist from his extrinsic referential capacities, can tend to view the achievement of Twombly as solely the solution of a pictorial problem set previously by artists. This is still the Greenbergian doctrine at work despite its later date. This extreme emphasis on the solely art-historical influences tends to put `blinkers' on the artist, ignoring that possible state in which all the originality of a non-predetermined constellation of extra-aesthetic conditions evolves into the experiencing artist, who then seeks the perceptual and technical means to translate this `content' into art. Certain critics within the tradition steer away from such formal extremities when they adjoin a phenomenological approach (the basic descriptive level of meaning in which the body is the pre-personal fundamental contact with the world) or a psychological interpretation – paint application (often sensuous), in various ways, read in terms of bodily expression by the artist. These latter adjoinments link idea and pictorial enactment.

The socio-historical position at its most extreme veers towards Reflection theory, eliminating any serious mediation of cultural values etc. by the artist. Due to the cultural and language structures of structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction, in other words a social construct largely extrinsic to the individual, those interpretations of the artist's work also are placed under the group of 'social' interpretations. Nevertheless, when such extremities are avoided, such forms of critical inquiry outside art history, beyond the artistic field of repulsion and attraction (i.e. influences), expand the focus of study away from a narrow artistic paradigm towards wider areas of contemporary expertise, thought and questioning.

Robert Pincus-Witten's three essays (1968, 1974, 1975) reflect formalist criticism in the wake of American Modernist theory, a richly observed technical and spatial analysis of the artist's œuvre. In his extensive overview of Twombly's affiliations and rejected allegiances Pincus-Witten argues for Twombly's adherence to 'the central premises of Expressionist painting', which leads him to his early 60s work with their ' sweep of the Baroque', due to ' the abhorrence of vulgarity, a problem I believe central to the artist's psyche, and posed during the ascendancy of Pop ... '.

The mid 60s 'blackboard' paintings, for Pincus-Witten, have been 'misread and misapprehended ... as ... Conceptualist,'[8] and instead remain committed to a non-conceptual, 'expressive imagery...,'[9] because Twombly's work is 'not one of idea but of visual effect...'. In fact Pincus-Witten uses a descriptive term of 'mindlessness'. Pincus-Witten's problem is that his formalism leads him into contradiction. Firstly, by the choice of the word 'mindlessness' he implies that there could be a 'contentless' form, and, secondly, one which is 'expressive imagery'. What is missing here is intelligent inquiry with which to connect an 'expressive' technique with a subject matter, as in a 'Baroque spatial construct' to 'mythological references.'[10]

Heiner Bastian's extensive interpretation (1973-1995) is historicized via his German heritage of Expressionism's formalist essentialism (i.e. pre-linguistic seismographic registration):

> What Twombly reveals is a still more elementary substrate [than gesture] of the human behavioral structure; it is a figure contra discourse ... Discourse, speech, gesture are the figure of gradual appropriation, which begins in the moment of taking possession. With Twombly this moment fades; ... for language divagates, interrupts, draws conclusions, surrenders, betrays the unsustainable essence.[11]

Unfortunately this leads Bastian to hyperbolic evaluative judgements; art as transcendent, romantic experience, `Twombly's works ... become a semiotic for the avowals of the soul',[12] and an essentialist psychology which concentrates, repeatedly, on Twombly's `psyche'.[13] Twombly's aim, according to Bastian's somewhat `Kantian' terminology, is to:

> return to the moment of the picture's birth ... ground tones that endowed the picture with an almost noumenal power ... [14] [where] `the autonomy of pure line[15] ... finds its raison d'être in the phenomenology of its own inscribed and particular contemporaneity.[16]

This idea of the act of `Mallarméan' initiation, and form's transformation `in the context of total becoming',[17] augments, for Bastian, the further development of the palimpsest-like event in Twombly's work, `[a]s certain nascent associations dissolve others coalesce anew ... multiply one against the other till the sum of this computation becomes a new aesthetic paradigm.'[18] The text (or intertextuality) chosen in this palimpsest event is never questioned by Bastian as contributing to an interpretation. Nevertheless Bastian's technical formal analyses do not debilitate content, as they are rooted within the European formalist view of the constructive function: content as the work's material methods of construction.

Margaret Sheffield's (1979) interpretation is succinctly titled `CT: Major Changes in Space, Idea, Line', and provides a chronological examination of the function of Twombly's line, as it `acquires cognitive ... power' and becomes `a vehicle for experiencing ideas about movement or philosophical reflection on time and space.'[19] Sheffield's analysis of the late 60s `blackboard' paintings is derived from a phenomenal perception:

> white lines operate in and out of this solid plane, ... they create an astonishing space, ... [t]he background is ambiguous, both solid like a

> wall and, because of the underpainting, fluid and mobile ... The background suggests modalities of light and movement.

Sheffield's physical responses are not examined or questioned beyond the Futurist influence of a graphic velocity; `visual metaphors for ... dynamic movement and time-space relations', or Twombly's parallel interest to Leonardo da Vinci's in `the indeterminate'.[20] Therefore there is no wider context in which it is questioned why such concerns should still specifically be of relevance to a contemporary artist.

Roland Barthes' (1979) two essays - `Cy Twombly: Works on Paper' and `The Wisdom of Art' - are perfect models of post-structuralist deconstruction (radically not Derridean!). Despite their post-structuralism, at root they are phenomenologically formalist, seeking an apolitical role for the body, whilst also delving into essentialism/matter's essence. They also *appear* breathtaking analyses, but this is due, in part, to an act of `corruption' within hermeneutics - taking a theory *to* an artwork, as opposed to vice versa.

With firm knowledge of Barthes' theoretical *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), it is too coincidental that phrases and concepts are `lifted' from the 1973 work into the two essays. Also this manner of using one theory - the erotics (jouissance/bliss) of the text - is an extreme instance of reductionism; a template reducing the work of art to a particular theory of language, leaving far too much out of account in the artworks under consideration.

According to Barthes, Deconstruction is the implication of the artist's technique within the palimpsest:

> As always, life (art, gesture, work) must without despair testify to an ineluctable disappearance ... their task ... is to link in a single state what appears and what disappears ... [that] which all of human neurosis resists ... a single affect ... Life-Death, in a single thought, a single gesture.[21]

What Barthes' 1973 theory seeks to attain, and what he believes is in Twombly's works, is a redefinition of Negation (always the definition of the suppressed term, especially death). Being, Non-being/Negation, and the synthesis Becoming as the true state, show Barthes at pains to point out that the shock, disturbance of, `a satori ... [when] the subject *wakens* to a radical negativity (which is no longer a negation)', reveals non-being (stripping us of Being as an ideological, moral force). Deconstruction is not destruction/Negation, but, in Twombly (and Mallarmé), and Barthes' own erotics of the text, it is the freedom of becoming – that gap, seam, edge between culture and its destruction - that at root is to undermine any `cultural' or `political' agenda (which at root is always achieved through `languages').

As in the 1973 theory, Barthes restates the body's asocio-political role; Twombly, guided by the `hand's desire ... [and its] gaucheness ... liberates painting from ... repressive rationality',[22] undermining the `graphic code'.[23] Instead `elements of a different signification catch ... our attention (and already our desire) ... all those accidents which are not necessary to the ... graphic code and are consequently, already, surpluses.' The body's `individuality' takes on its apolitical task here:

> Twombly's line is ... neither moral nor cultural; it is a pulsion ... a certain demand of the body itself ... no political virtue can exhaust the body: there is always an extreme point where it gives itself for nothing.[24]

Barthes links the undermining of both Western rhetorical graphic `codes' and Western space and time to the `pictural fact' of Twombly's, `materia prima [when] ... matter will reveal its essence,'[25] and to the twofold:

> graphic event ..., first, the impression of being `thrown' ... second, ... a `scattered' look ... Twombly fills his rectangle according to the principle of the Rare ... of interval (In Japanese: Ma) ... and it is Twombly's art ..: it grasps nothing, it deposits, and everything is said ..., [a] negativity in the manner of ... Buddhist `truth': an empty truth, unconnected with forms and causalities... [26]

Surprisingly, as a leading post-structuralist, Barthes assumes theoretical innocence with regard to a distinct phenomenological reversion to the body.

Guy Scarpetta's (1981) own French theoretical backdrop of Bataille's eroticism and intellectual scatology, and Bachelardian `trans-subjectivity of substances',[27] historicizes his references to Artaud's `language of the body' and prior `excremental' art practices, for example, of Piero Manzoni, Otto Muhl, Gunter Brus. These references are combined within his interpretative Freudian Symbolic model which foregrounds anal-erotic tendencies and the formation to counter them. Scarpetta echoes, in one sense, Barthes' own call for an apolitical `erotic' practice, as he argues that:

> what the history of art and modern literature teaches us from Artaud to Bataille from Pasolini to de Kooning is that one must know how to plunge very deeply into regression (... the anal rhythm of rejection ... The enjoyment of kneading waste product), in order to bound straight paradoxically into its opposite of ... transcendence ... a short circuit between the gulf of repression ... the proliferation of the pre-symbolic [and] ... controlled mastery...

Scarpetta frequently refers to Barthes' writings on Twombly, which are only of interest when applying a phenomenological vocabulary to gesture:

> Our western culture (as opposed to Chinese ...) does not provide any differentiation between gestures of detailed classification ... One could make distinctions: ... between movement according to the point of articulation (the movement of the wrist, elbow, the shoulder, the whole body); there is the `expressive' gesture which comes from the subject ... the gesture articulated several times (Motherwell), the expansive gesture (Kline) and the imploding gesture (Pollock), the `wild' gesture of de Kooning ... For Twombly it would be a gesture of the wrist, expressive, imploding, and the repeated gestures, and the restrained.[28]

Scarpetta's Freudian account as a metalanguage to the works provides an interesting lineage of predecessors of transgression via the body, yet ultimately it is reductive formalism giving no possible link to subject matter.

Robert Rosenblum (1984) incorporates into his Modernist formal reading an interpretation of Twombly's pictorial language as a metalanguage of archaism, and for Rosenblum this is the Symbolic model per se of the artist's œuvre:

> The archaism of Twombly's imagination in which everything regresses to its mysterious birth pangs, ... as if ... illustrated by the very first artist of the classical world, ... [whilst] graphological phantoms ... throw us

> back to the origins of written language, ... [and also an] archetypal, pre-Euclidean geometry lesson.

Rosenblum aligns Twombly's goal with thinkers such as Freud:

> like any master, Twombly has created his own universe of forms, a language of metamorphic wisps that not only plunge us deeply into our own most primitive memories, but also into the origins of history, myth, civilization.

What is chiefly absent here is any inquiry as to why the artist should be `reconstructing the origins of calligraphy and geometry.'[29]

Harald Szeemann's (1987) utilization of art-historical affiliations - Rauschenberg and Johns, Klee, Kandinsky and Malevich on white as a symbolic non-colour, the Impressionists and Turner on light - reveals his thorough understanding of formal language and its symbolic use. His terminology however, `the innocent artist', `the chosen individual' aligned to `spiritual paths', has echoes of Romanticism and the extremities of Modernist aesthetic autonomy.

Within a limited viewpoint of art practice - `Art at its best is a concentrated essence of life, imagination and dream, and of the audacities, the weaknesses, the fears and the desires of human beings and their gods' - Szeemann finds in Twombly's work `a new freedom ... *a new tradition* ... new reality ...', allowing myth to be actualized:

> Point, line and plane are pulverized, fragmented and given a new flux. The iconology of forms ... totally undermined; the painterly élan ... the instrument of narration ... a synthesis of body, soul, heart and *eros*, ... [P]art of a living dialogue ... [the] work seems to us both primeval and innovative, like memory itself and its energies.[30]

Mel Gooding's (1988) phenomenological and existential assessment of Twombly's œuvre requires him to make a methodological stand against:

> the critical discourse - around his lines as a form of writing, his drawing as a form of language - [as] unconvincingly nebulous, generating its own intellectual excitements away from the experience the actual works offer ... their power as images rests upon their physical rootedness in existential actualities ... those hierarchies of experience that structure our common humanity.

These experiences lie in the artist's ability to reveal paint as imitations of the body's fluids - `blood, sperm, faeces', and the `scribblings, ... products of the unconscious, forms of becoming, of emergence ...'[31]

Manfred de la Motte's (1964) interpretation reflects that initial drive of Structuralism as a metalanguage to define function, `the sign is not of value in itself but by its function'. De la Motte argues therefore that Twombly's `meta-writing' prompts the act of reading as `theme'. Amongst Twombly's

> microscopic particles of form ... [there] begins in the spectator's perception an activity comparable rather to reading, ... One finds oneself in a continuum', [via] ... a free flow of ... permanent modifications.

This approach results in the belief that the artist's `particles of form' are `consciously unintelligible and open ...', which act solely to `divert the eye and attention ... towards other incidents ... on a new plastical plane ...;'[32] a spatial mode which radically alters time.

Suzanne Delehanty's (1976) methodological approach epitomizes one reaction to Greenberg's Modernism, in the sense of extending its paradigm of development to include the historical conditions of philosophy; `Twombly's concern with the moment as the only means of understanding his own existence echoes the existentialist ... affirmation of the creative moment', and poetic theories:

> Motherwell's ... thorough appreciation of symbolist poetry ... cannot be discounted as early influences on Twombly's attitudes about art ... As in French symbolist poetry, Twombly's pictorial system is a-narrative ... alogical and non-sequential, ... the machinations of Twombly's byzantine mind which creates the either/or/and readings underlying his visionary system.

Delehanty joins Twombly to the Futurists and to Duchamp, in `speculations on measurable and infinite space and space's co-efficient, time ...,' as fellow guides along a chosen path of rational inquiry. After ascertaining that `Literature [is] his constant muse,'[33] the question of the artist's selection should be pertinent to inquiry.

Marcelin Pleynet's (1976) socio-historical approach continues this spiral outwards from the purely formal Modernist paradigm, into an archeology of influence consistent with the expanse of the artist's education at BMC. Twombly's `investment in line' is unique within art history's critical tradition, according to Pleynet, because it was generated specifically from Charles Olson's poetic theories in `Projective Verse'. This extended Twombly's prior pictorial investment in line (drawn from Pollock's corporeal and Motherwell's sexual investments) towards an automatism with simultaneously three interdependent attributes: psycho-biography, our cultural memory, and a phenomenological physiology. Using as inspiration `the sound on the ear' (of rhythm, of syllable) and the bodily `breathing'[34] (an aesthetic span of line), Twombly produces heterogeneous cultural fragments which seduce us back into cultural memories within a contemporaneous synchronization. Pleynet's interpretation ignores completely the `why' of specific poets, painters etc. chosen by the artist.

Susan Larsen's (1981) socio-historical approach epitomizes a reversion to the pre-Modernist period of criticism; back to the broadening of the horizon of biographical data e.g. Twombly's attendance at BMC and his early 50s `odyssey' in North Africa, Italy and Spain. She argues for the production in Twombly's works of a

> late twentieth-century form of simultaneity ... the mind's ability to act on several levels simultaneously ... [via] evidence of his non-linear modes of thinking and behaviour ... a place where diverse impulses and images co-exist without quarrel and without the need to reconcile themselves to each other.

Larsen states that Twombly's `complex sense of time and history gave him the courage to connect images and moments from diverse periods and places,'[35] without inquiring where the artist's `complex sense of time and history' arose, and why.

Jacques Henric (1984) proposes, in Baudrillardian manner, the death of the image by the spectacle; a seduction and overload which Twombly has rejected:

> the painting faces this truth, that all image has become strictly unproposable ... [P]ainters for some decades ... none of them shows what is really taking place ... Twombly was one of those rare ones ... to have understood that the mad proliferation of images ... had

> introduced us to a realm where the visible sees its fringes being delimited, being undone, where truth loses itself in a floating liberty, without end.

Henric posits therefore Twombly's `Baroque' `mutability' of the image (as opposed to non or disfiguration), to counteract the spectacle of the image:

> [the] works of Twombly ... direct us towards something which is ... transfiguration. Trans:passage across ... in the train of becoming ... where life is installed in ... death. Keep, simply, a few traces, for memory; a few fragments of appearance.[36]

Gottfried Boehm's (1987) fashionable Deconstructionist approach highlights Twombly's `eclecticism', and the self's absence concomitant with presence; `But in every instance a subject makes itself felt: the writer of these pictures. This self is made manifest in a filtered manner ... It is not quite present ...'. This exposing of concomitant contradictions denies any unequivocal meaning in the works:

> their contradictory appearances ... the way word ... [is] presented and simultaneously withdrawn ... Whatever we clearly read merges with the nameless ... with extinguished traces ... *presentation and concealment*, expression and silence, are identical phenomena in Twombly. The one within the other ... produces the pictorial evidence.[37]

Boehm, stating that the artist is simultaneously affirming and undermining the metaphysics of presence through his use of language, erasures and traces, omits from discussion, with reference to language use, why the artist might choose certain poets and texts.

Demosthenes Davvetas' (1989) two theoretical interpretations posit an extreme reaction by Twombly, when:

> suspicious of every 'technical'/'materialist'/'technological' solution to artistic questions, [Twombly] sought ... answers in poetry, in myths, and in dialogues with various masters ... and, still more important, the participation of an erotic element and the combination of mind and body in creation.[38]

Twombly's acts of appropriation have as their cause, according to Davvetas' reading of subversion and eroticism:

> The child['s] ... impatient ... thirst for appropriation...the transformation of the already known. Twombly ... does not re-iconize (re-present) but rather un-iconizes: ... until it could not possibly become something `known', even something `recognizable' in the history of civilization.[39]

This `open-ended organism' (unlike Boehm's deconstruction theory in the `palimpsest') tends towards orgasm:

> `fuzzied' by a shadow inscription beneath, an `earlier' writing that is both a residue and an emanation of a process permanently in progress, of a spirit continually giving birth to itself and simultaneously perishing like the spirit of Eros ... This, then is the spirit of `erography ...'.[40]

Katharina Schmidt's (1987, 1990) two interpretations extend the spiral outside of internal, formalist influences, aligning Twombly's perusal of:

> the categories of space and time in connection with a great variety of artistic and *extra-artistic critiques*, ... to those artists and movements in art at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century that sought new, more adequate forms for the representation of space and movement in a changing world.[41]

Unfortunately Schmidt does not examine this `changing world' in updated contemporaneous terms.

Stephen Bann's (1989, 1992) two critical approaches are cast deeply within the prior linguistic structural system of Barthes' `writerly' period, and as such identify the way meaning is produced. Bann believes that Twombly has devised a problematic strategy:

> Yet, once these structures have been set up ... there is ample evidence of Twombly's ... tangential approach to iconography ... [which] requires the critic to ... enter the thicket of mythological references in order to extract a clear meaning which is then ... belied by the elliptical nature of the work itself.

Bann's interpretation `unearths' in his first essay three dialectical codes, all of which reach either an `equilibrium', a `fusion' or deconstructed `intersection'. The first such code rests on an elliptical:

> geopolitical logic ... [or] drag, ... the fact that Twombly performs a dialectical movement: from New York to the original metropolis, Rome, but also from Rome ... a second, alternative focus from West to East,...from Rome to the extremities of the classical world.

Bann examines such a logic nevertheless in very few works. One problem with such a reading is that `iconography' only exists, and is accepted, within a system of dialectics. The second code is a `grammar' of contrasting corporeal substances and has a phenomenological history, based as it is on Barthes' concept of the `double origin of painting':

> a duality which pervades his painterly approach at all levels ... writing ... [and] cuisine, ... seems extraordinarily appropriate to the character of the signs which Twombly employs. The pencil makes its incisive strokes ... [and] the mass of oil paint, harmonizing with the thickened lines of crayon, establishes a unified textural effect, a homogeneous surface, a phenomenon of cuisine.

The third code suggests the use of `psychoanalytic graphology' (Derrida) and the `cathexes of gesture' (Klein) to reveal a `psychological subject' at, `the intersection between mythology and biography [which] seems to me to be at the centre of Twombly's project as an artist'. Providing the example of the *Anabasis* series Bann argues:

> Twombly ... stages both the assumption of identity (Cy/Cyrus) and its loss (the scythed wheel, the death of Cyrus) ... it should be obvious that the mythic reference is being used ... [to] enact through the inscription and metamorphosis of the letter, a process of fusion between the psychological subject (the author) and the mythological subject (the `hero').[42] This Anabasis group is surely overdetermined for the artist in that it registers, not simply the signs of autobiography (date and signature), but also the mythic projection of an elided name.[43]

Bann provides a critical distance, yet one solely reliant upon a binary system of oppositions.

Kirk Varnedoe (1995), in *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective,* defines his biographical approach as `prosaic' in its attempt to understand `the vicissitudes of an individual temperament unfolding' through `the basic circumstances of time, place, and

biography'. It is Varnedoe's statement, that the works call upon, `the kind of direct response to physical presence that is resistant to verbalization and uncongenial to analysis', that underpins the three pairs of oppositions he defines at essential to Twombly's art. Firstly, opposed to the mid 60s `grey paintings' being purely Minimalist or Conceptualist, Twombly unites:

> [I]mpulsiveness and obsessive systems,[44] ... a grand subjective expression built on Minimalist reduction. Fluctuating individual energies invariably take precedence over rigorously systematic ideas ... momentary inflections of line or in hesitations and erasures concealed or not.[45]

Secondly, opposed to Neo-Expressionist myth and history there is the:

> [U]rge towards what is base and the love for lyric poetry and high Western culture[46] ... those who focus on the appeal to cultural grandeur but slight the celebration of bodily physicality, or vice versa, miss what is most distinctive about the art ... It is the living continuity between ... antiquity and the common orders of the day that forms the texture of his experience and ... his work.

Thirdly, the impossibility of any pure linguistic interpretation, as Twombly juxtaposes, `motifs of the irregular, organic, and intuitional (... and often references to the body and its processes ...) with marks connoting the systematic ... and cerebral.'[47] Varnedoe provides no overall context within which such oppositions acquire meaning for the artist.

The critics utilizing socio-historical methodologies have overlooked any serious mediation by the artist's individual reflections within a wider constellation of potent ideas. This has led to a certain muteness, epitomized in the extreme by Varnedoe; an interpretative dead end, as to how to account for the physical pictorial enactment of Twombly's formal language. In other words, it ends in recognition that any definition of the formal language is `inexpressible'.

On the other hand, the critics who leave `out of court' any extra-aesthetic conditions or concerns view Twombly's interests as reducible solely to formal dilemmas set by earlier artists, disconnecting the artist from *any* of his extrinsic

referential capacities, leading, in the extreme, to Bastian's muteness in the face of later 20th-century concerns and theory.

These interpretations reveal that the potential questions which arose through my own introduction to the artist's work have yet to be fully answered and definitively resolved. Certain persistent methodological problems still remain, leaving an inadequacy of understanding as to how the works' internal properties structure a discourse of significance to an extrinsic context. It is the possible deconstruction of this gulf – art in its `intrinsic' terms as often prophetic to the socio-historical world we inhabit – that, in part, determines my thesis.

The question of theoretically `placing' Twombly, whose career has spanned the disintegration of Greenberg's orthodox Modernism (avoiding late Modernism non-subjectivity of Post-Painterly Abstraction and, for example, Ryman's continued `purity of means'), up to the rise and prominence of the theoretical strategies which energized Postmodernism, but whose practice never veered from what appears as a central concern (the action of gesture and the physical creativity of process), those sensuous and perceptual properties of paint, has nevertheless still to be addressed.

The present research has lead to an inadequacy in identifying an alternative modernist nucleus of ideas which would account for the early formulation of Twombly's subject matter (mythology, appropriation, intertextuality) and its formal language. This pluralism, during a pre-postmodern phase of art history, appears to provide Twombly with a `unique' position within Art History. Those questions which arose from my own responses to works still remain unresolved, and therefore will structure my method of presentation.

From my aforementioned encounter with two works, and a resultant overview of Twombly's œuvre in general, I was led to allot two major sections to the thesis – the nature of both Appropriation and Language. All the chapters are treated thematically

with the hope that as the thesis develops a pattern or a common substratum of transdisciplinary interest will reveal, and clarify, itself.

Any methodology which is presently in vogue might not solve the specifics of the artwork under consideration. In this relation, Barthes' contribution is exemplary and enlightening, due to the necessary lesson of a post-structuralist being able to look outside his own paradigm when the 'glove does not fit', so to speak. Such matters are the substance of Chapter One *Methodology*. This is followed by a chapter on what I consider to be the most formative stage in Twombly's 'education' of ideas and practice – BMC. An examination of BMC is crucial. It was a hotbed of interdisciplinary and intertextual concerns, which endorsed free-thinking debate on the nature of theoretical discourse, practice and theories of artistic production.

It is impossible to understand any given work within Twombly's career, up to its present day manifestations, without examining the intellectual roots from which it sprang. Following the growth metaphor, it is quite as important to ascertain the foreign – non-American - elements contemporaneous or past, which may have been grafted onto those roots. Therefore there follows a chapter on the wider 'archaeological' context pertinent after BMC; a context within which contemporary ideas and aesthetic texts are discussed in relation to echoes of Twombly's chosen method of practice. The texts in particular were chosen with care as to their pre-eminence in America and Italy. The allocation of space to this chapter was no easy matter, being a period of variant options and intense debate on several fronts.

Chapter One: Methodology, examines therefore the question - resulting either from the limitations of critics' application of mono-methodologies, or the developmental linear paradigm of Art History, or applying theories in vogue to past art - of achieving a composite methodology relevant to the specifics of the artworks under consideration. Therefore it is necessary to apply a semiotics which covers an artist who allegedly 'revolutionises the sign' (Restany), within an alleged 'physical presence that is resistant to verbalization and uncongenial to analysis' (Varnedoe). The requirement

of a methodology therefore which is not divorced entirely from the body; one in which imagination and originality are viewed, in Bachelardian terminology, as 'transsubjective', yet relate to a form of semiotics as signs to be read.

Chapter Two: Black Mountain College, considers the intellectual roots within Twombly's 'education' of ideas and practice, and traces the possible concerns Twombly might derive from that incredibly complex interdisciplinary core of critical theories under the auspices of the Director, Charles Olson. The aim will be to inquire into the relationship between an apparent independent formulation of ideas and its background roots from a pluralistic education. Answers will be sought as to the dislocation of categories, predating the eclecticism of postmodern art, and to any symbiosis of poetry and painting. This could lead to the exploration of the 'unwritten' underside of late modernism, and its contribution to a precursor of the much later acknowledged Postmodernism. Also it is necessary to examine what, if any, were the predominant hypotheses at BMC in relation to mythological thought.

Chapter Three: The Wider Archaeological Context: Aesthetic Debates and Practices, considers the wider 'archaeological' context pertinent after BMC; a context within which contemporary ideas and 'aesthetic' texts are discussed in relation to 'echoes' of the artist's subject matter and chosen method of practice. For example, why, instead of engaging with commodity culture and mass-media derived imagery (i.e. Baudrillard's simulacra), Twombly's practice is one of appropriation of past art and poetry, and strong engagement with mythology.

Chapter Four: The Nature of Appropriation, Part I: *Metamorphosis: Spatial and Sexual Energies,* asks why does Twombly's 'new tradition' (Szeemann) require mythology? Is this answered, as suggested by Varnedoe, solely by his move to Rome? Or are these 'adoptions' yet transformations of High culture aimed at disenchantment and disestablishment? A detached and destabilising irony? A deconstruction to parody our expectations? Or is this practice a form of hybridism retraceable to early Modernism - as in Joyce, Eliot or Pound?

Part II: *War and History: Identities of Self and Other,* seeks an understanding of the artist's fascination with the metamorphosis of passions and identity central to certain historical figures, which prompted two major installations by the artist.

Part III: *Painters: Appropriation, Inspiration and the Unsheathing of the Pre-Iconic,* examines Twombly's appropriation of past art, questioning his method of pictorial analysis.

Chapter Five: Non-Linear Language and Consciousness, Part I: *Non-linear Language*, traces experimentation within language that reaches back from the Surrealists to Symbolism, Artuad and Mallarmé in France, and those early Modernists, such as Joyce, and the Americans, Eliot and Pound, up to Postmodernism. Therefore the necessary question is where, if at all, along this experimental 'path', might Twombly have felt allegiances, influences or inspiration. Twombly's 'manifesto' (1957) is also examined as a document which provides reference to the artist's concern with the symbiosis of line and Mallarméan whiteness as a form of language.

Part II, *Poets and Poetry: A Contemporary Symbiosis of Painting and Poetry*, examines Twombly's act of appropriation, often inclusive of the metamorphosis of self-identity, via paraphrase, of a poet's word as image. Often, as appropriations are multiple within a single work, the nature of intertextuality is examined.

Part III, *The Language Series and Nature: A Question of Metalanguage,* examines Twombly's frequent cycles of *Odes*, *Poems*, and *Letters* etc., to inquire what such non-discursive writing reveals outside of 'any graphic code' (Barthes), in particular the violation of the 'laws' of Western language, and also whether there is a transdisciplinary relationship to Nature's 'languages'.

The *Conclusion* to the thesis returns to the central methodological questions raised in the *Introduction*, and summarises how internal properties within Twombly's œuvre structure a discourse of significance to an extrinsic context. A resolution is also

sought to Twombly's transgression of any art historical paradigm of terminological definitions.

1 Born and raised in Lexington, Virginia, Twombly attended painting classes and lectures on 20th-century European art, given by the Spanish artist Pierre Daura, for four years from the age of fourteen. His further education consisted successively of two years attendance at Boston Museum School; one year in the art department of Washington and Lee University; one year at the Art Students League in New York City where he met Robert Rauschenberg; and finally, encouraged by Rauschenberg, spent most of the academic year 1951-1952 at Black Mountain College, North Carolina where Ben Shahn and Robert Motherwell were artists in residence. He returned to BMC during the summer semester, whilst Franz Kline and John Cage were teaching. Twombly's first exhibition in New York was arranged by Motherwell.

After travels in Europe and North Africa in 1952 to 1953, Twombly shared a studio in New York with Rauschenberg. From November 1953 to August 1954, Twombly was assigned to cryptography in the army. He then spent a year teaching in Virginia, leaving America to take up residence in Rome in the summer of 1957, returning to New York annually to exhibit at Leo Castelli's gallery.

In 1959 he married Tatiana Franchetti, and in the December his son was born, the following year the family moving to Via Monserrato. In 1960 Twombly was given his first exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York.

By 1963 and 1964 Twombly was exhibiting in Germany, Switzerland, Brussels and Amsterdam, and had completed the 9-part painting *Discourse on Commodus*, which was viewed as an achronologicism to the prevalent American paradigm of Conceptualism. From 1966 to 1972 Twombly produced the so-called 'blackboard' paintings and his collages based on Leonardo da Vinci's reproductions.

. In 1968, the first Twombly retrospective in America opened at Milwaukee Art Centre. In 1973 Twombly exhibited throughout Germany, and Heiner Bastian, in Berlin, published the first monograph of his drawings. In the following year an archive of Twombly's paintings were established in Berlin, and by 1978 the first monograph on his paintings was also published there.

In 1984 there was a large retrospective in Baden-Baden, and Twombly was awarded the *Internationaler Preis für bildende Kunst des Landes Baden-Wurttemberg*. In 1987 there was a large retrospective in Zurich, which travelled to Madrid, London, Düsseldorf, and Paris. In the same year Siegen, in Germany, awarded Twombly the *Ruben-Preis*. In this year he was also elected a member of the *American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters*. In 1989 and 1990 respectively, he was awarded the *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, and the *Skowhegan Medal for Painting*.

By 1992 the first volume of the *Catalogue Raisonné* was published, and in 1994 there was a major restrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which travelled to Houston, Los Angeles, and Berlin. This `late in the day' recognition of Twombly's international acclaim by America also lead to the 1995 inauguration of the *Cy Twombly Gallery* at Houston, designed by Renzo Piano and based on plans by Twombly.
For further biographical data see K. Varnedoe, `Inscriptions in Arcadia', in *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), pp. 53-64, and H. Bastian's volumes of *Catalogue Raisonné*. See footnotes 12-15.

2 [my italics] P. Restany, `The Revolution of the Sign', in H. Szeemann (ed.), *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987). Reprint Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris, 1988, p.25. (trans. `La révolution du signe', Galerie J. cat., Paris, 1961)

3 R. Barthes, `Cy Twombly: Works on Paper', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.170, 157. 161.
Roland Barthes' theoretical contributions to this century are wide ranging: as literary historian; structuralist – *Essais critiques* (1964) and *Le Degré Zéro de L'Ecriture* (1953); semiologist – *Eléments de sémiologie* (1964); mythologist – *Mythologies* (1957).

4 G. Boehm, `Remembering, Forgetting: Cy Twombly's Works on Paper', in G. Boehm & K. Schmidt, *Cy Twombly: Sèries sobre papier 1957-1987* (Barcelona: Centre Cultural de la Fundacio Caixa de Pensions, 1986), p.40.

5 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol. II 1961-1965* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1993), pp. 21-22.
Heiner Bastian has, amongst other exhibitions, curated the *Joseph Beuys Retrospective*, and the *Picasso – The Time after Guernica 1937-1973,* exhibitions, both in Berlin, Bastian's place of residence. He has written books on the works of Beuys, Andy Warhol, and Anselm Kiefer.

6 K. Varnedoe, `Inscriptions in Arcadia', in *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), p. 10.
Kirk Varnedoe is the Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

7 H. Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object: Art Today and its Audience* (New York: Collier Books, 1966), p. 32.

8 R. Pincus-Witten, `Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, vol. 12, no. 8, April, 1974, pp.61, 63.

9 R. Pincus-Witten, `Cy Twombly. Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia', *Artforum,* vol. 13, no. 10, June, 1975, p. 65.

10 R. Pincus-Witten, `Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, 1974, pp. 61, 63.

11 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Printed Graphic Work 1953-1984* (Munich: Schellmann, New York: New York University Press, 1985), pp. 19-21.

12 _____ *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.II 1961-1965* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1993), p. 22.

13 _____*Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.IV 1972-1995* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1995), pp. 28, 32.

14 _____ *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol I 1948-1960* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1992), pp. 25, 27.

15 _____ *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings Vol.III 1966-1971* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1994), p. 29.

16 Bastian, *CR Vol. II*, p.35.

17 Bastian, *CR Vol. I*, p. 26.

18 Bastian, *CR Vol. II*, pp. 24, 28.

19 M. Sheffield, `Cy Twombly: Major Changes in Space, Idea, Line', *Artforum*, vol. 17, no. 9, May, 1979, pp. 40, 41.

20 Sheffield, `Line', pp.43, 44.

21 Barthes, *Forms*, p. 165.

22 Barthes, *Forms*, p. 163.

23 [author's italics] Barthes, *Forms*, p. 161.

24 Barthes, *Forms*, pp. 169, 174, 175, 171.

25 Barthes, `The Wisdom of Art', *Forms*, pp. 180, 178.

26 Barthes, *Forms*, pp. 172, 181, 182, 185, 188, 193.

27 [author's italics] G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Spaces* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994): `Only phenomenology..., consideration of the *onset of the image* in an individual consciousness...can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their transsubjectivity. These subjectivities and transsubjectivities cannot be determined once and for all, for the poetic image is essentially *variational...*', p.xix.

28 G. Scarpetta, `Cy Twombly: Seismographs', *Art Press*, no. 46, March, 1981, pp.7, 8.
Guy Scarpetta is a French critic known to Roland Barthes, see P. Thody, *Roland Barthes* (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), p.185.

29 R. Rosenblum, `Cy Twombly' in: *Art of our Time: The Saatchi Collection, Vol. II* (London and New York: Lund Humphries in association with Rizzoli, 1984), pp.24, 25, 26, 27.
Robert Rosenblum is Professor of Fine Art at New York University, and the author of books on contemporary artists, such as Andy Warhol and Gilbert and George.

30 H. Szeemann, `Cy Twombly: An Appreciation', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), pp. 9, 10, 11, 12.

31 M. Gooding, `Cy Twombly: Whitmanesque Plentitude and Capacity for Self-Contradiction', *Flash Art*, no. 139, Mar/April, 1988, pp. 102, 103.

32 M. de la Motte, `Cy Twombly', *Quadrum*, no.16, 1964, pp.180, 181.

33 S. Delehanty, `The Alchemy of Mind and Hand', *Art International*, vol. 20, no. 2/3, Feb., 1976, pp.14, 15,16,19. Suzanne Delehanty is Director of The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania.

34 M. Pleynet, `Design of letters, figures and words or Painting by Ear: Cy Twombly', *Tel Quel*, vol. 67, Autumn, 1976, pp.17, 22, 23.
Marcelin Pleynet is a major French critic. Another example of his work is `Ici Et Maintenant: On a Painting which might not be a Semblance', in *Contemporary Painting*, Art & Design, Vol. 7, No.3/4, April, 1992.

35 S. Larsen, *Cy Twombly: Works on Paper 1954-1976* (California: Newport Harbour Art Museum, 1981), pp. 18, 24, 26, 30, 34.

36 J. Henric, `The Ironic Strategies of Cy Twombly', in *Cy Twombly: Oeuvres de 1973-1983* (Bordeaux: Musée d'art Contemporain, April, 1984), pp. 7, 8, 9.

37 [author's italics] Boehm, `Remembering', pp. 40, 41, 43.

38 D. Davvetas, 'The Erography of Cy Twombly', *Artforum International*, vol.27, no. 8, April, 1989, p. 130.

Demosthenes Davvetas is a writer and critic who lives in Paris. At the time of writing this article Davvetas had written the book, *Immaterial sun: paths of contemporary art.*

39 _____ 'Cy Twombly's 'Zographike', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), pp.22, 23, 24.

40 Davvetas, 'Erography', pp. 131, 132.

41 [my italics] K. Schmidt, 'The Way to Arcadia: Thoughts on Myth and Image in Cy Twombly's Painting', *Cy Twombly* (Houston: The Menil Collection Houston Fine Art Press, 1990), pp. 20, 21. Katharina Schmidt is the Director of Städtisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn.

42 S. Bann, ' "Wilder Shores of Love": Cy Twombly's Straying Signs', in *Contemporary Painting, Art & Design*, Vol. 7, no.3/4, April, 1992, pp.52, 53, 55.

43 S. Bann, *The True Vine: On Visual Representation and The Western Tradition* (New York: Cambridge New Art History and Criticism, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 200.

Stephen Bann is a British Professor of Art History

44 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p. 10.

45 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, pp. 41, 43, 45.

46 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p. 10.

47 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, pp. 33, 34, 35, 36.

CHAPTER ONE - METHODOLOGY

At the outset I wish to state that my methodological aim will be an approach that attempts to escape theoretical pendulum swings. A necessary prerequisite will be to ease the doctrinaire corset of post-structuralism by one of its own tenets; one which, I would argue, is paradoxically applied; the full frontal attack on the notion of progress in knowledge, stating quite correctly the validity of relativism (Nietzsche's `perspectival truths'), whilst refusing any previous theories of knowledge any limited value.

Because post-structuralism, in general, refuses to do so the pendulum has swung, I would argue, correctly from the extreme camp of free-will - the autonomous, constituting `pure subject', a pure philosophy of transcendental consciousness - to the extreme camp of the subject as the passive `pure object', a philosophy of materialist conditioning and behavioural determinism.

The post-structuralist theory of the subject's slippage of signifiers ad infinitum, and the saturation of language's application ideologically, removes free choice of anchorage in a self-selected meaning or resistant value position respectively, even temporarily.

This slippage of signifiers is seen as providing free will and `creativity', due to its unstoppable, non-linear thought. But creativity is fuelled by the imagination[1] (ask an inventor), and the imagination is the ground of reason (which otherwise inclines toward the `robotic'), providing the means to conceive of things other than they are. This ability scores high points in revolutionary social changes, just as it does for the artist in pictorial-perceptual changes - whether in critical imagery or disturbing perceptual `fields' of cognition. But this requires selective judgement in a two-fold mode. First, to resist things as they are, and second, to know at which signifier to *stop*, until the imagination perceives the `unsuitable' in the first again.

The terms `selection', `value' and `creativity' will be prominent in this attempt to steady the pendulum - within a state of healthy continuous tension - an attempt which draws not only on past theories of perception and knowledge, but also on a very recent model of the mind which disputes the ideology of the cybernetic, `computer' information processing model. In this latter disembodied operational mode of thinking, `rationality' undermines man's potential freedom, the ability to steer his future.

In what I would term the strict linguistic model of semiology,[2] the methodological application to art practice and art history bears a striking parallel to the computer model, a fact Victor Burgin acknowledges, `In semiology the subject is little other than an encoding/decoding machine ... all understand the messages in the same way.'[3] These univocal messages from the external, socio-political world, both for the artist or the viewer of artworks, bear no direct relation to the phenomenological, biological or emotional activated functions experienced in the material world. Both cybernetics and linguistic semiology are Behaviourisms, limited to language-use as the sole, significant activity.

Although an artist lives and works within the wider intellectual context of society, it must not be forgotten (by this aforementioned alleged `truth' of men as language-using automata, which omits self-consciousness and reflection), that he/she might have feelings pre-theorized on the nature/act of perception, language etc., or have quite modified, or even oblique, theories from those in vogue, from the predetermined rules within a `language game'. Cézanne, arguably, is a case in point. Oblique theories which cause consternation within their discipline, until, finally they are recognized as an acceptable new `language game', or verifiable mode of perception.

It is also not impossible for someone to carry two, if not more, contradictory feelings on a subject, dialectically holding them in suspension for some time. This position for an artist is one of agreement *and* disagreement in a `language game', where the supposition is that its rules are formulaically agreed by all those who enter. The `contradictory' attitude of the artist need, of course, not be restricted to `content' per se;

spatial perception has been a point raised in the context of art practice by Lyotard's discussion in *Discourse, figure* (1971). Why this is an important point, especially in relation to the *Introduction,* is because the critics discussed generally were at a loss to recognise either the new rules or the new `language game' altogether.

Though the position I am proposing would *appear* to be unsemiotic, it is within a broader complex/constellation of methodologies that the semiotic may flourish, receiving long-term attention away from the pendulum swing.

An approach entailing a complex of methodologies not only captures more fully the diversity and labyrinth of an artist's concerns, but also has the advantage over a mono-methodology of not delimiting in the `scientific' sense of a laboratory experiment. Such an `experiment' has the mode of past empirical behaviourism, a reductionism in the `laboratory' sense, extracting one stimulus (or one element of signification - language - from the artwork), from the wider context of inter-sensory experience, the dynamic bodily situation integral to experience, and then imagines it has achieved an holistic/complete explanation of a living organism/artwork. That the latter is never achievable, definitively or completely, does not override the need for a more extensive contribution to hermeneutics.

In this respect, post-structuralist exercise has often become a monologue with itself, whilst its critique of truth claims is an advancement, theoretically, in many respects, this critical attitude should not be allowed to be a cloak for dogmatism in another direction. Rather than overcoming metaphysics, post-structuralist theory has become a `monistic metaphysics'. The position on the nature of truth/meaning as `difference', rather than an absolute truth/ground or foundation is still an all-embracing position, due to the single world-constituting substance - or better the term `principle', as substantive issues are generally omitted - ordinary established language-use, is the sole `world' within which human activity is deemed meaningful, or existing at all.

Viewing artworks solely as `texts' omits the non-conceptualized inclinations that are within the very instigating nature of thought, often overturning the `inherent' rules of a language-game model. This factor makes the mechanistic rule-bound notion of language (though plausible in certain instances of everyday language-use as a non-reflective tool), implausible in the context of poetry, or imaginative `leaps' in problem solving.

Language is an abbreviation of reality, a conceptual simplification of the senses. It is the world interpreted; the world is placed within different representations as experience, and hence cognition changes, re-appropriating language use. That we cannot know the world as a thing-in-itself in an absolute sense is true. There is always mediation, of varying degrees and type, by the subject. Yet the purely linguistic argument prejudges the picture of the world in exactly this way. By the acceptance, in advance, only of what one understands of the world - ordinary language usage - a transcendental, transparent view of the world as language use emerges; an idiographic (i.e. discovery of particular scientific processes) view of language, direct contact with the thing-in-itself, unmediated by concepts themselves, is given.

If language, solely as pre-established pragmatic use-games or the computer programmed input model, preceded all forms of experience we would be locked in either a non-changing vision of the world, and human nature, or accept an authoritarian tactics of power via the efficient performativity principle of technology.

To return to the wider constellation of semiotics suggested, and to the envisioned `steady' pendulum, via both the notions of a physical, substantive `language' of meaning (rather than solely conceptual), and `creative thought', is now pertinent.

Gerald Edelman (a Nobel Prize winning biologist), has produced several publications[4] since working with an international team of specialists from interdisciplinary fields - Developmental Psychology, Mathematics, Biochemistry and Neurobiology - on a `biologically based epistemology', which reveals how:

> cognitive models of language arise as a result of the [pre-existing] mechanism of perceptual and conceptual categorizations ... [which themselves] ... depend on the formation of images as a result of sensory experience and ... kinesthetic experience – the relation of the body to space.[5]

It is a neuroscientific explanation of the embodied mind, resulting from a new selectionist theory of the brain[6]; a brain which evolved `concept areas, by recursively restimulating portions of global mappings containing previous synaptic changes, giv[ing] rise to *combinations* of relationships and categories'.[7]

These conceptual formations and categorizations `do *not* require linkage to a speech community to develop, and do *not* depend on sequential presentation' but `work through global mappings that necessarily involve our bodies and our personal history'.[8] In fact, `the important thing to grasp is ... that conceptual embodiment occurs through bodily activities *prior to language* ... language serves to convey the thoughts and feelings of individuals who already think independently of language'.[9]

This provides evidence to dispute both the orderly input/output pre-programmed instructionist `computer' model of mind , and ` the notion that a syntactical description of mental operations and representations suffices to explain the mind' as `[t]hinking occurs in terms of *synthesized* patterns, not logic, and for this reason, it may always exceed in its reach syntactical, or mechanical, relationships'.[10] Cognitive models are `abstractions':

> Axiomatic systems often *seem* to provide the right clue as to how the mind works ... But they are social constructions that are the *results* of thought ... for the mind must *preexist* to create and drive them ... We must not confuse the bases of the workings of our minds with our minds' fine intellectual constructions ...[11]

Edelman's biologically based epistemology postulates the view of the diversity of life, within the species and also within any one individual mind.[12] How `[t]he forms of embodiment that lead to [and lay permanently beneath higher-order] consciouness are unique in each individual, unique to his or her body and individual history', is

because `brains possess enormous individual structural variation at a variety of organization levels'.[13] It is a model exposing the individual's neural selection of value via goal-orientated strengthened firing patterns in the brain's neural cells:

> every action is suffused with a value ... and what this means is that even the most high-level, the most abstract kinds of human thinking, are based fundamentally on feeling, on value ... a very complete theory of mind ... because it does not view human thought just as logical. It *is* logical but it is also emotional ... in every aspect of the way we think. [14]

Edelman and his team in their findings provide a return to the notion of free will:

> The facts stand up for individuality, for the fact that you ... can't really prescribe how an individual, even with strong values, is going to behave in every single circumstance ... until the selection has been made.[15]

What this means in terms of recent quasi-scientific theories of language - those of `ideological-saturation', or linguistic freeplay without positions of individualistic value or creative originality - is important for the approach I am taking:

> When you take a selectionist perspective, one of the most important things is that each individual has its own history. Edelman's theory allows for ... creative thought ... and genuinely new ideas ... For Edelman, the brain is a generator of new behaviour. It reacts to the world in a totally unique way, motivated by its own system of values. For Edelman, *we are* our brains, and because of this, we must each construct our own version of the world. We are, in a sense, constrained to be free.[16]

This enables a methodological position in which, although our own history is not separable from history per se., it is not entirely reducible to it. Such an overcoming of the human being as `object' implicit in the deterministic, mechanical, simple cause-effect model of meaning-production, provides the subject with a level of experience - emotional and feeling values - within any conceptual system.

From the position of the `image' and art practice, within the enlarged proposal of semiotics, Ernst Cassirer's theory of `symbolic forms' (which he later termed semiotics, following Pierce), with its foundational notion of `symbolic pregnance', is also a theory of the mind comprising the subject's feelings. In Cassirer's theory also, systems of

meaning are within, and instigated from, the primary activated body's relational encounters with phenomena.

His theory of the subject achieves, significantly, no return of the pendulum to subjectivism, as it entails neither the subject as the sole organizing experience nor psychologism. This is because, according to Cassirer, `symbolic pregnance' is:

> the relation in consequence of which the sensory embraces a [non-intuitive] meaning and represents it immediately for consciousness: this pregnance can be reduced neither to mere reproductive processes nor to mediated intellectual processes - it must ultimately be recognized as an independent and autonomous determination, without which neither an object nor a subject, neither a unity of the thing nor the unity of the self would be given to us. [17]

Cassirer does not therefore limit the notion of semiotics to the cultural, conventional and arbitrary sphere of meaning-production. His enlarged theory of meaning, as opposed to the reduction of the diversity of the concrete human world to the production of conceptual and `scientific' systems of knowledge, begins with the phenomenon of the body in the world (influencing Merleau-Ponty), and this relational basis of meaning - `symbolic pregnance' - as the prototype of all symbolic relations in the world.

Even at the level of the immediately present and given sensory world the embodied subject experiences `forms' of representation - the simple presence of the phenomenon assumes a distinct meaning. What Cassirer terms our `symbolic pregnance', or semiotic principle, is this reciprocal, yet pre-divisible original energy of mind and phenomena, which provides an `origin' to following sign systems, such as language, despite the conventional and cultural nature of language as a symbolic/semiotic form.

That Linguistic Philosophy - Wittgenstein and his followers - exiles an important sphere of meaning production when experiencing the world, by the insisted primacy of ordinary common sense discourse, is highlighted by Cassirer's opposed

primacy, in language, of expressive, poetic speech due to language's early fusion with mythic thought. It is, importantly, this aspect of language as a symbolic form that Cassirer argues develops into art. Mythic thought, as `expressive meaning' in our relation to the world, is, significantly, non-Hegelian, in that it is synchronically present in all historical epochs, co-present with language and technical activity (e.g. science) - Cassirer's other two primary symbolic forms.

Language as representation is Cassirer's middle symbolic form, deriving itself from its pre-discursive, pre-linguistic (though not pre-semiotic) roots in `expressive meaning'; the phenomenal body's active experiences. Language also underlies the possibility, the basis, of purely conceptual, axiomatic systems.

As we shall see in Cassirer's example of the drawn line, its `expressive meaning' provides his definition of the term perception with neither subjectivism nor textual practice, but with a `recognition' potential missing from Norman Bryson's account of the term perception.[18] Bryson limits the semiotic within hermeneutics to the viewer's recognition of pre-established formulaic thought-patterns (his example is a mathematical system). Therefore, for Bryson, Cassirer's three symbolic forms would become interchangeable. Bryson's point is that perception is outside a hermeneutic reading as it consists solely of the viewer's/subject's own associations. Cassirer's point is that there is a more immediate core to perception, prior to, and hence underlying that further stage by the subject, to which Bryson refers.

By incorporating `expressive meaning' within semiotics the multifariousness of human experience is more fully accounted for in art practice and its reception. By recognizing the subtle differentiations of meaning production it is possible to overcome the dogmatic, monistic principle of post-structuralism. Cassirer argues against such a principle:

> Art may be defined as a symbolic language. But this leaves us only with the common genus, not the specific difference. In modern aesthetics the interest in the common genus seems to prevail to such a degree as almost to eclipse and obliterate the specific difference ... the symbols of art and

> ... linguistic terms of ordinary speech and writing. These two activities agree neither in character nor purpose; they do not employ the same means nor tend toward the same ends ... Both are representations. But a representation in medium of sensuous forms differs widely from a verbal or conceptual representation. [19]

Cassirer identifies three primary symbolic forms (e.g. myth, language and technical activity), linking them to their respective functions as dimensions of human meaning - expression, representation, and pure significance.

Expression is `mimetic' meaning in that its meaning function avoids any distinction between the symbol and what it symbolizes; understanding therefore adheres closely to the concrete sensory world of phenomena and objects in their dynamic elementary animated sense to man's activities. The `image' here as representation is both expressive meaning and symbolism, as seen simply in the example of the drawn line:

> As we immerse ourselves in the design and construct it for ourselves, we become aware of a distinct physiognomic character in it. A peculiar mood is expressed in the purely spatial determination ... a dynamic rise and fall, a psychic life and being. And here we do not read our own inner states subjectively and arbitrarily into the spatial form; rather, the form gives itself to us as an animated totality ... It may be rounded and self-contained or jagged and jerky; it may be hard or soft. [20]

Human awareness begins with the subject's bodily felt experiences; a visceral vibration which moves a basic emotionality; an active embodied engagement with phenomena prior to emotional distancing, through intellectually objectivizing the world. This awareness may have a minimum temporal nature:

> But these [physiognomic] qualities recede and vanish as soon as we take the line in another sense ... as a mathematical structure ... we now have before us a curve whose total meaning for us is ultimately exhausted in its analytical formula. [21]

The same `paradox', separation yet congruence, within the same semiotic form applies equally to the visual sustaining experience of colour, `[d]epending on whether it is taken as a simple and independent determination or as the colour of an object, it obtains a different valence.' [22]

The expressive/symbolic meaning in the spatial and temporal dimensions of phenomena derives from the primary semiotic principle:

> What is given here points to a not-here, and what is given now points backwards to a not-now; without this, the phenomenon of an intuitive world could not be understood or even described. [23]

Symbolic pregnance, as the root of symbolic formations, is prior to ascertaining the truth claims of any proposition (e.g. even the basic `Yes' or `No'); epistemological truth claims of reason, knowledge, and causality are secondary to the primary phenomenon of meaning. Expressive meaning is the first stage of perception; an active embodiment which comprises expressive symbolism; a semiotic yet pre-linguistic principle neither in the cognitio nor inferred in the world (both being theoretical), yet nevertheless saturating phenomenal events with feeling - an interaction from which the subjective and objective worlds emerge. When the world is animated at this primary expressive level nature and culture are not divorced:

> Where the `meaning' of the world is still taken as that of pure expression, every phenomenon discloses a definite `character', which is not merely deduced or inferred, but which belongs to it immediately. It is in itself gloomy, joyful, agitating or soothing [etc.] ... [24]

Without this animated basis of original, expressive meaning in the world of man's activities language would not even be necessary; language always refers back to the world's essential dynamic nature in its semiotic principle of opposition - a system derived from sensory reality.

The second symbolic form - language - functions referentially. In this respect Cassirer's use of the term `representation' is its `analogical' nature, and language as semiotic is oriented toward the activity of the subject; a subject who can seek truth or falsity within the system.

The third symbolic form is purely symbolic (Cassirer terms it `significance'), and its function is purely conceptual; its sense divorced, as in the axiomatic systems of

mathematics, geometry, and science, from the sensory reality of observable phenomenon and objects - it holds `in itself'.

The brief analysis of Edelman and Cassirer's theories are first and foremost used here as significant examples that break the aforementioned introductory straitjacket of theoretical obsession. An obsession with language itself as its own self-perpetuation; what Richard Rorty views as the false inference made from, `[w]e can't think without concepts, or talk without words' to `We can't think or talk except about what has been created by our thought and talk.' [25]

Just as we live on neither horn of the supposed dilemma - free will or determinism - nor do we reside solely in the priority of experience over language, or language over and above experience. Nevertheless, there is on occasion an `inarticulate' realm, which on its cusp to `language' can propagate, rather than limit, the thinkable, a primary indeterminate realm of fresh `structures' (a continual, dynamic gestalt) - a fact which Edelman's biological epistemology and Cassirer's semiotics highlight.

A central, but not sole, aspect of art practice (painting and sculpture) is the `medium of sensuous forms' (Cassirer), and as such it is an irreducible property in materialist, biological, and perceptual terms. A materialist practice (unlike other art forms) can disturb a solidified `given' reality via the viewer's inter-sensory body, simulating the primary felt life, a *de* and *re*-sensitivizing process to matter's `global' pulsating life force. In this sense, artworks are often complex phenomenal experiences.

Most notably, Cassirer's semiotic model, particularly its `expressive meaning', is valuable as an interpretative source for Twombly's `inimitable line' (Barthes)[26], in the mistakenly termed `blackboard' paintings. Twombly's own statement on the expressive meaning of his drawn line - a `non-descriptive line which is the event of its own inner manifestation' [27] - has the insistence on matter's own dynamic forces, its own `character', as strongly as Cassirer's.

It is because Twombly appears to `deal' so frequently, in an autochthonous manner, with the exploration of early ontogenetic stages - of perception, of culture (i.e. mythic thought), of language (i.e. poetry) – that an openness is required, via certain works, to their contemporaneous phenomenological writings (i.e. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger).

In brief, Merleau-Ponty alerts us to why `modern painting [is so often] ... without any predestined instruments of expression.' [28] According to Merleau-Ponty this is due to its desire for the pre-scientific, pre-technological orders of expression; what he terms the `first order of expression' rooted in the body's embodiment in the world prior to the `subject' and `object' dichotomies.

It is this continually renewable creative aspect of perception for the artist which is a physiognomic process of dialogue; in that things intertwine their presence into the body via `grasp' (touch), gaze (vision), and gesture (motor movement). In short, our body internally experiences echoes of the visual, tactile and motor movements of the world. It is an ontological `truth', revealing how the world `touches' us in its, `kinaesthetic unfoldings, something not known through a law, but experienced as the involvement of our body in the typical structures of the world.' [29]

These forever de and recreating `structures' of perception are entailed in the body's dynamic practical active situation, and in the gaze's successive expression in time, when experiences of light, colour, and spatiality - a `polymorphous space and time' [30] - provide an inter-sensory reciprocal expression which emerges as a world of meaning, of lived signification - a physiognomic level of perception, which is, following Cassirer, the sedimentation to analogical languages and the sciences. This fundamental, non-utilitarian, phenomenological role of perception, prior to man-made languages, is the basis to our further interpretations of the world and its objects.

This `truth', which is so in excess to both the individual and any individual instance, is interpretable in pictorial terms (analogous to `real' physical terms) only in

relation to each confrontation. Merleau-Ponty's point here is that the artist can never, in the last instance, devise a formula or become formulaic.

It is this recalcitrant nature of primary, pre-analytic `earth' (in the artwork its materials) to be never finally `fixed' once and for all time by man-made culture - the `world' and its `languages' - that Heidegger's essay `The Origin of the Work of Art' expounds.[31] In brief, Heidegger's concepts `earth' and `world' refer to substrates of indivisibles. `Earth' is Being in that it is the ground/sedimentation from which `world' arises. Being, so to speak, `beings' (as verb) itself in the `world'; in each person, object, idea, institution etc. `Being' is the paradox again of separation yet congruence - it can never be wholly `unconcealed' as it has to propagate, in historical terms, continually. For this reason it can never be dominated by `world'. In other words, the analytic can never exhaust the pre-analytic, our pre-understanding.

The never cancelled and necessary non-dominating strife between `earth' and `world' is best revealed as `truth' in the work of art, where whichever medium discloses its ineradicable, intrinsic perceptual property - light and shade of colour, heaviness of marble etc., - as never entirely subsumable under, or serviceable for, the form of expression; the object or `world' it is portraying. The work of art is a revelation of `earth' as both giving/unconcealing (qualities of material) and refusal/concealing (surplus for other `worlds' to come).

Each unique disclosure of `earth's' (the artist's materials) plenitude requires the creative aspect of form/world, but this can never separately or entirely be conceptual and calculative, as we do not so much impose form, rather earth/material gives us the possibility of forming. If works of art were just from the artist's mind then they would be productions not creations. Creation, as in Nature, discloses both the potentiality and the indeterminacy (of `earth') that instigates non-predictable future `worlds' of determinations. Creativeness, in this sense for Heidegger, is a non-predictable and unrepeatable `event'.

The postmodern view, in post-structuralist semiotic vein, is of the world as nothing more than a calculative linguistic construction, one geared to *production* of meaning rather than finding, or creating, meaning. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger's `phenomenological' writings cannot be divorced from an art practice, such as Twombly's, which insists, on occasions, on a primal marking, releasing matter's forces perceptually - rather than solely conceptually.

The use of a single momentarily fashionable intellectual tool - such as *linguistic* semiotics - would also undermine the diachronic, yet non-teleological, aspects Twombly attempts to explore in the three areas of mythic thought, language and perception. By such convergence of historical `oppositions'; of the juxtaposing of what was previously taken to be an obsolete paradigm of knowledge with a contemporary paradigm, Twombly `deconstructs' notions of progress. To cover the range of his material it is necessary to use a multiple methodological approach.

It is with reference to Barthes' writings in respect to art practice I will conclude this methodological section. Barthes, as an eminent post-structural theorist on the endless signifying chain of language - that `self' is the effect of language - has, understandably, been overlooked as an exception by the critic Peter Fuller, in his correctly applied general criticism of post-structuralism's rejection of the importance of the body's significance in art practice and reception.[32]

Barthes' essays on André Masson and Twombly [33] contain several interesting points in conjunction with the equilibrium of the pendulum I am proposing. Firstly, though not surprisingly, he attacks Western language as one of a `repressive rationality'.[34] This he juxtaposes to the Orient's ideogrammatic written language, which, still not surprisingly for Barthes, he advocates, due to its nature to combine signifiers in one `form'. But now he moves more specifically to the nature of art practice. In this Eastern `calligraphic' mode of art practice (exemplified in the West for Barthes by instances of Masson and Twombly's work); in its graphic energy of line, there is an

`origin of the chain',[35] as opposed to the Occident where `language [is] the instrument of an instrument: a chain along whose entire length it is the body which disappears.' [36]

The origin, in the Orient, is the body's non-instrumental and non-analogical gesture, in the movement of the brushstroke. Discussing Twombly's work in this respect Barthes refers to two correlating surpluses; one in the body's irreducibility to the socio-political realm, `the body always exceeds the exchange in which it is caught up'.[37] This surplus results in the artwork in what he terms an `energon'[38] - `the hand's desire [39] ... identifiable according to line not letter.'[40] In this distinction between the line's materiality and force, and the letter, Barthes is not wholly removed from Cassirer's position, or Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger's for that matter. This is more explicit when he provides the instance of an engineer's drawing, `here it is not the drawing's materiality that we see but its meaning ... [as opposed to drawing where] ... certain opaque ... elements of a different signification ... catch our attention ... the tensile quality of the strokes.'[41] In a distinctly Heideggerean vein Barthes refers to Twombly's use of `colour [which] like the *event*, is new each time ...' [42]

Cassirer does not let us forget our roots in expressive mythic thought, and his particular paradox of separation yet congruence in his enlarged semiotics has, in a sense, though in reversal, been posited by Barthes - importantly the last theorist to be accused of a theory pertaining to subjectivism:

> let us distinguish the *message*, which seeks to produce information, and the *sign* which seeks to produce an intellection, from the *gesture*, which produces all the rest (the `surplus') ...[43].

1 Gerald Edelman, *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire: On the Matter of Mind* (London: Penguin Press, 1992), [my italics] pp. 151, 152: `we do know that higher-order consciousness leads to the construction of an imaginative domain, one of feeling, emotion, thought, fantasy, self, and will. It constructs artificial objects that are mental. In culture, these acts *lead to* ... science, ... mathematics, ... logic.'

2 (one which I would argue is as inherently limited as Wittgenstein's `language games' to the birth of new thoughts - the text's undecidability or the rules within a language game, are the transcendental first cause)

3 Victor Burgin, `Something About Photography Theory', in A. L. Rees, and F. Borzello (eds.), *The New Art History* (London: Camden Press, 1986), p. 50.

4 Gerald M. Edelman, *Neural Darwinism* (1987), *Topobiology* (1988), *The Remembered Past* (1989), *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire: On the Matter of Mind* (1992). All quotations to provide a synopsis of Edelman's evolutionary morphology will come from the last publication, and the transcript of the Horizon programme, *The Man Who Made Up His Mind*, covering his work.

5 Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 160, 246, 251.

6 Edelman, *Bright Air*. In Edelman's selectionist theory of how brain functions evolve the human mind, it is not just the history of how each species adapts to their world, but significantly how each individual human being evolves through selection from the minutest system of their embodied brain and mind. p. 25:
`although the connectivity of neuronal systems in the central nervous system ... is more or less similar from individual to individual, it is not identical ... there is considerable variation ... in their connection patterns. If one were to number the branches of one neuron and to number ... the neurons it touched, the numbers would not correspond exactly in any two individuals ... [whilst] functioning neural maps ... these maps are not fixed ... major fluctuations in the borders of maps over time. Moreover, maps in each different individuals appear to be unique'.

7 [author's italics] Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 108-110: `the term concept...refer[s] to a capability...of the brain to categorize its own activities...to operate without immediate [perceptual] input...to reconstruct portions of past activities of global mapping of different types.'.

8 [author's italics] Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 108,152.

9 [author's italics] Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 243, 246, 247.

10 [author's italics] Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 147, 152.

11 [author's italics] Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 153, 218.

12 Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 108-110: 'There is great variability in the concepts representing a category; different individuals do not represent a category in the same way ...'.

13 Edelman, *Bright Air*, pp. 136, 223.

14 Horizon Programme, *The Man Who Made Up His Mind*, (BBC Education, 24th Jan, 1994), p. 12.

15 Horizon, *The Man*, p. 14.

16 [author's italics] Horizon, *The Man*, pp. 14, 15.

17 Ernst Cassirer (trans R. Manheim), *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: The Phenomenology of Knowledge* Vol.3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), p.235.

18 Norman Bryson (ed.), *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. xvii-xxvi.

19 Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944), p.168.

20 Cassirer, *Symbolic Forms* Vol.3, p.200.

21 Cassirer, *SF, Vol 3*, p.200.

22 Cassirer, *SF, Vol 3*, p.201.

23 Cassirer, *SF, Vol 3*, p.124.

24 Cassirer, *SF, Vol 3*, p.72.

25 Richard Rorty, 'Idealism and Textualism', pp.154-156, cited in Iain Wright 'History, Hermeneutics, Deconstruction', in Jeremy Hawthorn (ed.), *Criticism and Critical Theory* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1984), p.89.

26 Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.170.

27 C. Twombly, `Signs', *Esperienza Moderna*, No.2., August/September, Rome, 1957.

28 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.57.

29 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.310.

30 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures* (Evanston, 1970), pp.85-86.

31 Martin Heidegger, `The Origin of the Work of Art', in M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (London and New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp.15-88.

32 Peter Fuller, `In Defence of Art', in P. Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society Ltd.,1985), pp.249-250. These pages exemplify Fuller's criticism of Althusser, Lacan and Kristeva.

33 Barthes, *Forms*, `Masson's Semiography', pp.153-156, `Cy Twombly: Works on Paper' pp.157-176, `The Wisdom of Art', pp.177-194.

34 Barthes, *Forms*, p.163.

35 Barthes, *Forms*, p.169.

36 Barthes, *Forms*, p.155.

37 Barthes, *Forms*, p.171.

38 Barthes, *Forms*, p.170.

39 Barthes, *Forms*, p.163.

40 Barthes, *Forms*, p.154.

41 Barthes, *Forms*, p.169.

42 Barthes, *Forms*, p.166.

43 [author's italics] Barthes, *Forms*, p.160.

CHAPTER TWO - BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

PART I - CHARLES OLSON AND EZRA POUND

Ezra Pound received the prestigious Bollingen Prize in 1949 for his *Pisan Cantos*; the culmination of both his interdisciplinary poetic endeavours and the *Cantos*. Pound's influence still reigns in our ill-defined postmodern `period' – ill-defined in that the post-structuralist theory of language's indeterminacy, and the relational, non-linear process of intertextuality, are already at work in Pound's *Cantos*.[1]

In this epic poem, the `fragments of language and experience [were] drawn together by the mind's dynamic magnetisms',[2] with the potential for flashes of illuminating truth, in non-chronological correspondences, a metamorphosis of history. Paralleling the use of intertextuality, Pound foregrounds the ideogram's concentration of various forms, an act of condensed yet often alternative readings, not dissimilar to the art of the palimpsest.

Francesco Clemente, a member of the Italian Transavantgarde, expresses both the debt to Pound and the conjunction of artistic and poetic form in his statement, that `what he [Pound] did in poetry has a lot to do with what I do in my paintings.' This interconnecting element within Pound's Modernist poetic language to Clemente's artistic language is the ideogram, `my paintings are born as ideograms ... they are a field of relations that make reference to another field of relations without resorting to direct allusion.'[3] As a figure of unforgettable historical significance, Pound's sway still holds mesmerisingly in Sandro Chia's 1983 portrait *Boom: Portrait of Ezra Pound*. Pound's `inheritors' within the literary field also find their inspiration linked to recent postmodernism.[4]

At BMC, during the two summers of 1951 and 1952, and the winter of 1951, Twombly encountered as a student, in the Director Charles Olson, one of Pound's `descendants' - Olson's `Projective Verse' (1950) is primarily a resurgence of Poundian principles, and his major poem *Maximus* (1951), a tribute in its style to the *Cantos*.

In 1951 Olson wrote a draft manuscript, on his experience of Twombly's work, an experience fortified firstly by a conversation initiated by Twombly on Taoist contemplation, and secondly by a conversation between them in front of one of Twombly's paintings. The manuscript is headed by a quotation:

> `what whiteness can add to that whiteness,
> what candor?' - Mencius, translated by Pound.[5]

Further into the manuscript, making reference to Herman Melville (*Moby Dick*), Olson states, `There came a man who dealt with whiteness. And with space. He was an American ... he was not understood.' Then Olson aligns Twombly's and Melville's techniques and criteria, `Twombly ... had gone into the whiteness as that other man had ... candor is still such a ruthless reality ...' At the end of the manuscript Olson dedicates a poem to Twombly's work:

> The seed planted ... And the wood of the tree
> which grew? how shall you carve it otherwise
> than in like dimensions ... [6]

Pound had read Mead's *The Doctrine of the Subtle Body* (1919), an account of neoplatonism which saw `an intimate correspondence between man's ... sensible apparatus and the subtle nature [forces] of the universe; a germ or seed as it were of the universal tree of life.' Olson had arguably read and modified this idea to his dedicatory poem.[7]

The central aesthetic concern in the manuscript, resulting from that day's conversations, was that due to the redundancy of Renaissance perspective and the Euclidean `round', `its even possible that one has to include line as having suffered, and colour.' The prescribed cure lies in:

> The allure - the light - had better be in any painted, drawn, cut or carved thing without use or reference of any object. Any narrative too. Except one ... the way - the tao - two dimensions is now being given back the job ... How make that plane ... be all - from a point to any dimension?

Candor required in spatial terms an `inverted archeology', a digging up `live' within ourselves a non-confining space. The non-Euclidean link between Twombly's taoist reference and Pound's physics begins to surface, when `to intersect space was now the exposed principle ... man had been given his oldest job ... between the light.'[8]

From this manuscript there are two significant Olson terminologies providing insight into `what Twombly was fighting for ...'; an `inverted archeology' and a `twin methodology'. It is necessary to make cross-references to these terms in other essays by Olson to elucidate fully his meaning and the connections to Pound, particularly the *Cantos*.

In `The Present is Prologue' (1955), Olson states that, 'the work of each of us is to find out the true lineaments of ourselves by facing up to the primal features of these founders who lie buried in us.' At this juncture Olson provides the example of Hesiod. The paradox of the essay's title is due to Olson's belief that, `the new civilization of man ahead ... the post-modern, the post-humanist, the post-historic' is reliant upon the unearthing of our sedimentation:

> There are only two live pasts - your own - and one other which we don't yet have a vocabulary for, because the West has stayed so ignorant ... I can invoke it by saying the mythological ... [and] the Laws of these two pasts [are the] twin methodology.

Olson refers to himself as `an archeologist of morning. And the writing and acts which I find bear on the present job are (i) from Homer back; and (ii) from Melville ... and Lawrence ... They put men forward into the post-modern.' [9] Why such a `ruthless reality' we must ask? In his 1958 essay `Equal, That is, to the Real Itself', Olson's exposition of Melville's techniques in *Moby Dick* reveal, 'the first art of space to arise from a redefinition of the real, and in that respect free for the first time since Homer, of the rigidities of the discrete.' What Melville had sensed and made visible truth in his

linguistic spatial devices was that, `the discrete ... wasn't any longer a good enough base for discourse:... (and the sentence as poised on it, a complete thought, instead of what it had become, an exchange of force ...).'

This singular achievement in the `language' of the arts in the 19th century went almost unheeded, according to Olson, and therefore:

> still today ... the hardest thing to do [aesthetically] and believe [is] that ... the structures of the real are flexible, quanta do dissolve into vibrations, all does flow, and yet is there, to be made permanent, if the means are equal.

Melville's prose enacts the principle `that light is not only a wave but a corpuscle', by achieving `elliptical and hyperbolic spaces (he makes things stand out at once transparent and homogeneous).'

The non-Euclidean, continuous charged space of `quantum physics' is for Olson that `ruthless reality' we must find `live' within the `seed' of our own physicality, as expressible in language. We cannot claim we have a future, that `post-modern new civilization' according to Olson, because, `we are still in the business of finding out how all action, and thought, have to be refounded.' [10]

Twombly was a significant enough student in Olson's opinion to deserve a manuscript, not least because his Taoist proclivities, at that point, sought a spatial language devoid of Euclidean constructs; one in which whiteness shows `how accurate his penetration of the reality bearing on us is ...' [11]

In the world of quantum physics we have allowed the `Real', the natural world within and external to us, to become the `Other' - an energy invisible and unknown in language. Whilst the pre-Euclidean Homeric world, according to Olson, and the non-static, non-inert mythological explanation of the world in general, was devoid of spatial discrete voids. Culture, language and nature were one in their language of

transformational energies. Metamorphosis itself was enacted in the sets of relations of changing motifs.

In `The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man' (1952), Olson, this Poundian disciple, summons the `seed', `[t]he proposition is the simplest: To release the person's energy word-wise ...'[12] It is important to note at this point that `Twombly wrote and was an avid reader of poetry.' [13]

Pound's language, by the time of the writing of the *Cantos*, was rife with the unleashing of spatial energies, due in part to his `researches' into, and understanding of, Fenollosa's study of Chinese ideograms and the field forces of electromagnetism.

If there is the possibility that prior to his arrival at BMC Twombly had not encountered Pound's works, or more specifically the *Cantos*, after his arrival there is little doubt that he would soon become saturated, via Olson. In Martin Duberman's extensive documentation of this period at BMC, he cites various students' summations and reactions to Olson's teaching. The common consensus appears to be that `he taught according to the tenets of his (current) gods',[14] Pound being cited by the students as Olson's mentor far more than any other writer; as one student neatly expressed the general feeling, the `kids who read ... Pound ... [were] instantly hip.'[15]

This influence is also substantiated by the fact that Pound's edition of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1919) and his *ABC of Economics* were both on the obligatory reading list, whilst the interdisciplinary syllabus aimed at a Poundian syncretic perception.[16] The influence was far ranging according to a fellow student, noting in retrospect:

> We were reading ... Pound's *Guide to Kulchur* and the Virgil because Pound tells you to read Virgil and Fenollosa on Japanese art ... and Pausanias' *Description of Greece*. This sort of Nativist American grab-bag attitude reminds me very much of the cultural map implied in Cy's paintings.[17]

The classes covered - always in their relation to poetics and aesthetics - Archeology, Culture Morphology, Bio-Sciences (Phylogeny vs. Ontology), Psychology, Mythology and Physics. In connection with the latter discipline, Olson, `was always quoting Heisenberg's uncertainty principle'.[18] As a principle based on the recognition of process and non-duality (both wave and particle), it is not surprising therefore to hear of, `Olson's conviction that we (the students) had "to find the connection between things", that knowledge lay in the interstices.'[19]

One such `interstice' was unveiled in the `Phylogeny vs. Ontology' class - phylogeny being the aforementioned `twin methodologies' - the two `live' genealogical pasts on which the ontology of the future is in part reliant. To stress the importance, yet simplicity, of this idea Olson drew on the blackboard a diagrammatic model `with phylogeny on the one side and ontology on the other, the one labelled ' time back', and the other `time forward', and at the center (the interstice) in parentheses `You as fruit and maker react in both ways.'

In short, I believe this encapsulates Olson's whole thought and `philosophy'; you are process itself - both particle and wave; both linguistic past and future, functioning synchronically across the spaces/gaps of classically defined disciplines and diachronically, realizing the syncretic in such juxtapositioning thought - the aim is for what can be termed the `spaceless' experience of expression of self. By studying the `new sciences' horizontally/synchronically and the `old sciences' vertically/diachronically, the student was then within his or her, as Olson termed, `kinetic self' - `so that the entire horizontal of the human species may be achieved in the vertical by any man.' [20]

Olson was nevertheless insistent which predecessors in the `vertical' would provide the opening up of yourself (and hence your materials), to the new future language, due to those predecessors' comparable excavations, citing for his own new spatial voice/breath the voices of Maya, glyphs, the Sumer, Herodotus, Pound, Chinese ideograms and Homer.

The `seed' for our newly sought expressible physicality in Olson's dictum is, `to write as you breathe'; `that the human breath be the measure of the line, not any alien imposed thing'.[21] Though aimed at the literary students, this criterion can be observed as equally applicable to art practice. Martin Duberman's experience under this precept enabled him to find:

> the words coming out closer than ever before to the way I breathe ... when talking. The broken rhythms, the jets of energy, the tumbling sequences that break chronology and violate canons of orderly narrative.[22]

As for Olson, inherent within the achieved `breath' are the syncretic horizontal and vertical interstices, where there is the intensely personal in cultural traces, the possibility of interacting fragments, often quotational, as transformational content, achieving not least spatial and temporal distortions of classical chronology. The epitome of this form as content is of course Pound's *Cantos*, clearly exhibited to the students:

> this is what I learned in the poetry workshop ... that the one value a poet can have to his society ... is ... the juxtapositions that make sense... So if ... Pound comes up ... with the Federalist period of American history, the Renaissance, and the various dynasties in China ... and finds between those three certain juxtapositions which are valuable, then he has served his function.[23]

The theories of Olson and Pound, as possible stimuli to the 22-23 year old Twombly, will resonate at appropriate conjunctions in the thesis. In relation to the chapters primarily on classical history and mythology, Pound's *Cantos* can be viewed as significant. Heiner Bastian, a pre-eminent writer on Twombly's oeuvre, states:

> Pound thought of his own identity as space and time ... that throughout all history he found his own true name in Odysseus' reply to the Cyclops. That a life is the medium of things and is their changing center in all the riddles which surround them and which thread their way through this life toward one great image ...[24]

Bastian, then referring to Twombly's mythological and historical works, makes the parallel:

> Form merely an imaginary net of changing voices between anonymity and identity - citing, implying, holding fast in ever-larger fields of

> imagination. In the mirrors of history, in tradition already the hidden facets of our own time.[25]

The only reservation I have in confrontation with Bastian's exposition is his reductive statement that, `References to the great poetic form of Ezra Pound are probably the only recognizable influence in his [Twombly's] work.'[26] Pound has been possibly a fundamental, and probably lifetime influence, but any `event', such as Twombly's oeuvre, is evolved through a constellation, a labyrinth of conditions.

The Cantos

Pound had two interconnected concepts, that of `creative memory' and the `dance of the intellect': the former was the concept that things that had formed the mind metamorphosized into sets of relations in the present, and were not therefore chronologically-bound. A single word, phrase, or quotation acts within the *Cantos* as a signal to provide interacting, multifarious intellectual and emotional leaps out of chronological history and time - a palimpsest of voices and `masks' in a superimposition of fragmentary images, denying linear or sequential reading within the personae of self or culture. Pound summarizes the beauty of the experience:

> nothing matters but the quality
> of the affection -
> in the end - that has carved the trace in the mind
> where memory lives
> Canto 36(76/457)

Such an infinite intertextuality of association was the syncretic `dance of the intellect' and enacted, in Pound's `philosophy', the energies of nature - the vital forces of the universe, which were endless interacting atomic particulars (electromagnetism), not generalizations or discrete static categorizations leaving inert bodies or voids/space in syntax or thought. From Fenollosa, Pound `inherits' one modern and one ancient precept for his own use in the *Cantos*, in this correspondence between thought, language and the universal forces of nature.

Firstly Fenollosa's `continuous light bands'; the illuminations in a complex instant of time which `light up' the transference of force as in field theory physics. Pound applies this principle to another interrelated force of nature - linguistics - the interacting nuances between words/ideas.[27] Secondly, the Chinese ideogram; ideogrammic signs are often the `marriage' of oblique, juxtaposed actions transferring two or more forces into a concentrated interacting energy within the graphic form. Since there is no distinction between noun/object and verb (stasis and action) in such pictorial forms of Oriental language for Pound, they do not misrepresent nature as discrete, discontinuous events.[28] A poem should bring together and concentrate the energies of which the world is constituted, revealing the universe of transformations and metamorphoses. In this respect, both `Fenollosan "continuous light-bands" and Ovidian metamorphosis redefine syntax.'[29]

The alignment between the microcosm of ideograms and macrocosm of the overall form of the *Cantos* is clear - shattering normal materialist linear perceptions and interpretations in correspondences of attraction and reaction. For Pound, the charged interacting facets in language, delimiting boundaries, of course were applicable to forms in general. The magnetism of field-forces meant in the context of plastic form that `depth' radiated itself outwards as light; it is these magnetisms within forms that radiate light as corporeal substance in energy, as the non-void between `visibles'. The transference of forces between `objects' were more important than the objects themselves - the flows of action, this metamorphosis of forms, as in language and its syntax, meant a constant deferral of solidity, and importantly `solidity' of self. [30]

Such correspondences, as it were, or kinship of perpetual fertility in the vital universe, self and language, made the early Greek pagan cosmology, for Pound, a significant parallel for the verity of contemporary 20th century mode of being. Those energies of nature which governed our encounters, as fictional representatives (i.e. gods and goddesses) of non-static psychic experiences of layered phenomena in the human mind and body of the universe, pertained to a primary reality, which Pound termed a

`permanent basis in humanity'. As representative of fluid, transformational forces they portrayed fields of force:

> As outward symbols of an existing intimate unseen relation - human beings' and nature's characteristic liquidity - Pound could claim that "gods are eternal states of mind" ... "no apter metaphor [has] been found for certain emotional colours."[31] Paganism's psychic experience of the world, in the Greek stories, saw the world as all substance, the whole and the flowing, and the fluid forces which perpetuated the vital principle of the universe were in the correspondence to the tensile `spermatic' Dionysiac energy; "when we get into contemplation of the flowing we find sex, or some correspondence to it." [32]

Pound begins the *Cantos* with a version of Homer's description of Odysseus raising the spirits of the dead - the analogy is Pound's poetic breath. Ulysses as the archetypal man in the quest for recovery of wisdom along the coasts of the Mediterranean is the microcosm of Pound's own wanderings in the *Cantos,* which is throughout the entire history of mankind. It is a personal journey in that he not only selects the masks/personae for himself but he remains both in and outside - outside as commentator to be instructive on the power of transformation. Through a retrieval of personal and cultural history he finds analogues to self-renewal; ideas explicable to the renewal of his own epoch, hence the present will become the past updated.

This is a cultural bricolage of personal reminiscences; Confucian ethics, the Graeco-Roman world of Ovid, Homer and Virgil, the Renaissance and the Modern epochs - `voices' speaking through the poet to provide wisdom for the future of mankind. Throughout the *Cantos,* disguised Ovidean gods or goddesses are traced through many cultural layers with juxtaposed figures of history, their presence gaining conviction as eternal states of mind within human nature, providing a deeper understanding of the individual (hence society) and the natural world.

The *Cantos* overall has a didactic purpose, to build a new civilization. The *dis*corruption of language is a necessary basis, for Pound, to solve contemporary social problems. By the vitality of Chinese ideograms (things in motion and motion in things) - Pound uses transitive verbs successively as a strategy to parallel the rapid movement

of energy - there is the refounding of the contemporary mind with the lines of relations in the constituted reality in nature known to early man. Most importantly, myth and history act as recurrences, in agglutinate relationships through association, the cross-references in a palimpsest of traces/echoes, literally charging up a dynamics of energy and the notion that present history can be rewritten.

1 Pound began writing, and publishing, the *Cantos* in 1915. The final number of 117 Cantos being completed by 1969. The edition used by Kearns for reference is that published by New Directions, 1986.

2 George Kearns, *Pound: The Cantos* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.28.

3 Giancarlo Politi, 'Francesco Clemente', *Flash Art*, no.117, April, 1984, pp.16-17.

4 Kearns, *Pound*, pp. 107-109: 'the New York School, the Beat Generation, the San Francisco Renaissance, The Black Mountain Poets, or, more generally, the avant-garde ... The latest postmodern invocation of Pound as ancestor comes from some of the writers associated with the 1980s phenomenon, the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, ... in their manifestos and statements of poetics Pound at times finds himself in such odd company as Stein, Althusser, Barthes and Derrida ... Kathryne Lindberg has introduced into Pound studies (from Deleuze and Guattari), the "rhizomatic" ... Marianne Moore's ... paratactic art of quotation was influenced by Pound ...'

5 Charles Olson, 'Cy Twombly' manuscript, *Charles Olson Papers* (Storrs: University of Connecticut Library, 1951), p. 1. The revised manuscript has been published in the catalogue, *Cy Twombly: Poems to the Sea (1959)* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1988), pp. 2-6.

6 Olson, 'Cy Twombly', pp.1-4.

7 Ian Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The modernist poetics of Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), cited on p.143.

8 Olson 'Cy Twombly', pp.1-4.

9 Charles Olson, 'The Present is Prologue', in George F. Butterick (ed.), *Charles Olson, Additional Prose: A Bibliography & Other Notes & Essays* (Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1974), pp.39-40.

10 Charles Olson, 'Equal, That Is, to the Real Itself', in Donald Allen (ed.), *Charles Olson: Human Universe and Other Essays* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967), pp.117-122.

11 Olson 'Cy Twombly', pp.1-4.

12 Charles Olson, 'The Act of Writing in the context of Post-Modern Man', *Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives*, No.2, Fall, 1974, p.28.

13 Roni Feinstein, `Cy Twombly's Eloquent Voice', *Arts Magazine*, vol.59. no.5. Jan., 1985, p.92.

14 Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p.369.

15 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 344.

16 Further references to Pound's works are necessary at this point to attempt to establish his possible inspiration after Twombly left BMC in 1952. In a letter written from Rome in 1957, to Eleanor Ward, Twombly wrote, `I've been reading seriously ... Pound's essays.' Cited in Kirk Varnedoe, `Inscriptions in Arcadia', in K. Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), footnote 116, p. 62.
Pound's 1934 *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), was a recommendation of the poets and writers Pound admired; a significant number of which Twombly quotes from in his paintings and drawings, or pays homage to in dedicatory works. For example, Homer (pp.29,43), Pope (pp.73,79), Ovid (pp.45, 48), Sappho (p.48), Catullus (pp.47,48), Keats (pp.64,132), Shelley (p.132), Marlowe (p.60).

17 Francine du Plessix Gray, cited in D. Kazanjian, `The Painted Word', *Vogue*, New York, no.9, Sept, 1994, p.555.

18 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 383.

19 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 342.

20 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 373.

21 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 488.

22 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 384.

23 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 377.

24 Heiner Bastian and Suzanne Delehanty, *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Drawings, and Constructions 1951 to 1974* (Philadelphia: The Institute of Contemporary Art, Uni. of Pennsylvania, 1975), p.37.

25 Bastian and Delehanty, *Cy Twombly*, p.38.

26 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly:24 Short Pieces* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1989), p.2.

27 It is noteworthy that Pound had already sought electrical analogies in his concept of vortex: `The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I ... call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, ideas are constantly rushing.' E. Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir. Noh* (1916), p.92. Cited in Kearns, *Pound*, p.34.

28 Bell, *Critic*. Bell cites Fenollosa's poetic theories through pp.107-109: `the peculiarly active function of the ideogram, its "verbal idea of action" whereby in the Chinese conception "The eye sees noun and verb as one; things in motion and motion in things". (p.10) "Valid scientific thought consists in following as closely as may be the actual and entangled lines of force as they pulse through things" "Light, heat, gravity, chemical affinity, human will, have this in common, that they redistribute force". (p.12) "Chinese words are alive and plastic because thing and action are not formally separated."(p.17) Science thus denied grammar's abstractions, which insisted exactly on such separation; the vitality of "primitive metaphors", force upon early man by nature, was made possible by their following "objective lines of relations in nature herself", and those "lines" were "more real and more important than the things which they relate". (p.22) Pound's recognition of Fenollosa's contribution to the *forma mentis* of modernism involved ... his celebration of Fenollosa's "essay on verbs" and the revitalizing of the ideogram.' Ernest Fennollosa, (E. Pound ed.), *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1919).

29 Kearns, *Pound*, p. 50.

30 Frederick R. Karl, *Modern and Modernism; The Sovereignty of the Artist 1885-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p.377: `Pound explores myth as `echo' material ... a man who views himself as reflections ... By removing identification, Pound has created a new identity, as the echo of himself ...'. p. 385: `In that traversal of time, which is a retrieval of personal and cultural memory, Pound ... is seeking analogues to his own quest for retrieval of self and renewal.'

31 Kearns, *Pound*, pp.73, 74.

32 Bell, *Critic*, pp.40, 41.

PART II - ROBERT MOTHERWELL AND STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

> The young Motherwell vibrated like a tuning fork to the tune of the patrician Mallarmé ...[1]

> [Motherwell's] searing white grounds ... those absences that make the presences so much more weighty[2] ... recall Mallarmé's white paper awaiting the excruciating appearance of a word ...[3]

In the ambience of American artistic practice, during 1951-52, the avalanche of Greenberg's formal analysis of Abstract Expressionism - a monomethodology providing limiting access to the works - deflected from the significance of the early rigours of literary Modernists (and their avatars), held in high esteem by artists such as Robert Motherwell, the leading theorist of Abstract Expressionism, and an artist in residence during Twombly's stay at BMC.

The necessity for a critical socio-political questioning of the Greenbergian extreme formalist methodology is undoubted, but has resulted in the replacement, arguably, of another 'pendulum swing' monomethodology.[4] Such restricting approaches omit a syncretic cultural heritage; Motherwell, Flam argues:

> felt a part of something valuable that had to be conserved ... the list is long including ... Poe, Baudelaire ... and Mallarmé[5] ... to the apocalyptic thoughts of Nietzsche ... [he went to] the greatest creative minds to reshape his own.[6]

What has been defined as a post-modernist position - a free-wheeling through literary traditions, styles and mythical personages, in a montage of 'voices' - was one of the vital highpoints in disintegration techniques used by Eliot (*The Wasteland*), Pound (*Cantos*), and Joyce (*Ulysses*). Such 'odysseys' to liberate new, contemporary modes of perception and experience from within past, yet fecund philosophical, mythological, literary, pictorial and poetic practices, were as essential to Motherwell as it was to become to the younger Twombly.

The fusibility of past cultural forces and contemporary experience, igniting the necessary, sustaining mode of expression, was first perceived by Baudelaire, as exemplified in the passage:

> If in his choice of his subjects and his dramatic method Wagner approaches classical antiquity, his passionate power of expression makes him the most important representative of modernity ...[7]

Motherwell recognized Baudelaire (as did Walter Benjamin), as the first significant voyager to liberate modes of perception in language; via Baudelaire's confrontation with the depths of the unknown to purify language. That unconcealing of the poet's struggle - the act of process - in Baudelaire's poem *Le Voyage* (1859), is echoed in a dedicatory manner in Motherwell's 1949 painting *The Voyage* - his own 'odyssey'; as an unending search, substantiated in *Voyage Ten Years Later* (1961) and *The Golden Fleece* (1961).

All Mallarmé's poems are concerned with this journey into creativity, its depths and the void from which to be reborn, to give birth to form - `my ambition is to show forth ... matter as it becomes conscious of its own being'[8] - an act of transformation and metamorphosis of both the poet and language. Mallarmé had written in a letter that he was `in fear and trembling, because I am inventing a new language ... which I can define briefly as follows: Describe not the object itself, but the effect it produces.'[9]

Twombly's statement of 1957, on his own aesthetics, sought both to `break with the more general processes of painting' and to provide `[e]ach line' with `the sensation of its own realisation'. Mallarmé provides a significant backdrop:

> The reality of whiteness may exist in the duality of sensation (as the multiple anxiety of *desire and fear*) ... as the symbolic whiteness of Mallarmé.[10]

This was also the year Twombly moved to Italy and wrote in a letter to Eleanor Ward, `I've been reading seriously Mallarmé & Pound's essays ... Read Mallarmé or an introduction anyway.'[11] These declarations make an acknowledgement of Motherwell's declared Mallarméan proclivities and an examination of Mallarmé's poetics imperative,

prior to examining and understanding Twombly's cohesion of certain spatial techniques and classical and poetic subject matter in later chapters. Mallarmé's influence on Motherwell took root in the early 40's, and, when Motherwell described this affinity in his works in 1958, the Mallarméan dictum - `about describing not the object itself, but the effect it produces'[12] has become almost obligatory for him.

If Mallarmé's poetic vision is held as sound aesthetics throughout Twombly's career such aesthetic practice can in no sense be argued as retrogressive to contemporary concerns. If the past inclination has been to term Mallarmé solely as the Master of Symbolism (and therefore pre-avant-garde in modernist terminology) we may place Twombly's œuvre simultaneously in the pre-avant-garde, the Modern and the Postmodern - as Mallarmé, it is realized by some, is a primary undercurrent to the latter two 'periods'. As Philippe Sollers pinpoints the case:

> Today, the 'Mallarmé question' designates both a past and a future, or rather this point in time where the past-future distinction dissolves ... which would confront us with an absence of time, and ungraspable space.[13]

A different temporal and spatial dimension was Mallarmé's speciality, resulting from the de-creation of meaning via language's purification; a language of omissions, eliminations, and white silence, which lacked finality and the discrete linear coding. For Frederick Jameson, it is the Mallarméan `void of silence so great that for a time one wonders whether any new sentence could possibly emerge ... [which equates to] our postmodernist temporality.'[14] Mallarmé's aesthetics are of paramount concern to those thinkers termed post-structuralist.

Lyotard's own term 'figural' finds an exemplary, dominant voice in both Mallarmé's use of spatial voids, and the surplus; that incommensurate pluralism above dichotomous, discursive meanings. The 'figural' is the Other in representation and conceptualization. For Lyotard, in a non-hierarchical and co-present parallel to the Id and Ego, the figural functions as both the necessary foundation to literal/textural spaces and to logocentricism's transparent, arbitrary rules based on oppositional difference, yet

its corporeal presence; its opacity as both figural visual line against ground (as in letter) and figural space in syntax is suppressed in their service. By its desire it disrupts that suppression, revealing the fact that two different spaces are heterogeneously one - the plastic and the graphic.

Such simultaneous yet heterogeneous spatial temporalities reveal the incommensurability of what cannot be represented in purely discursive meanings and judgements. In what I would term `echoes' of Cassirer's `symbolic pregnance', Lyotard posits that Mallarmé's poetic principles function in the desire of the plastic figural, rather than predominantly in the service of the literal, linguistic signifying, and separating function:

> Mallarmé robs articulated language absolutely of its prosaic function of communication; he reveals in it a power that exceeds communication: the power to be 'seen' and not simply read or heard; the power to figure and not merely to signify.[15]

This radicality in art for Lyotard is intimately linked to his terms 'event', 'differend', and 'little narratives', all three pointing to the reality, and political possibility, of experimental, indeterminate heterogeneous judgements. Herbert Marcuse sees Mallarmé's poetic principles as the epitome of the progressively radical, political potential within Modernism's aesthetic form, in that they:

> conjure up modes of perception, imagination, gestures - a feast of sensuousness which shatters everyday experience and anticipates a different reality principle.[16]

Roland Barthes, in his own examination of Twombly's work parallels Mallarmé's deconstruction of ideological and rhetorical coding in the sentence to Twombly's `graphisms' - a writing devoid of a recognizable `graphic code'.[17]

For Kristeva, Mallarmé's predominant semiotic pulsations rupture the symbolic order of language. This jouissance, Kristeva argues, is the recognition of the fluidity of sexual identification; the pre-Oedipal stage has neither dominant male or female sexual

identity. Mallarmé's work therefore has opened, or exemplified, many aspects of recent theoretical thinking.

The central premise of Mallarmé's aesthetics is not to name, describe, delimit the object - `it is not description ... but ... suggestion'[18] - but to capture on the wing of the poet's imaginative faculty the object's suggestiveness, its effect, before the reification and impoverishment of concept/noun. For Mallarmé, descriptive language - the act of naming - is impure in relation to the lack of finality in experiencing the idea of an object, all words must yield to sensation.

Mallarmé lessens this impurity by generating a web of sensuous symbolic perceptions; a mode of perception independent of the *named* object, hence recreating the effect of suggestiveness implicit within any experience of the world - its polymorphous nature; the object in its process of becoming. Naming only absences the fullness of the life of that particular form. Motherwell's thoughts have a nuanced echo, `Naming is a primitive, inadequate ... way of identifying the ineffably complex of reality.'[19]

Mallarmé's poetics are not the inauthentic, 'dead' world of language; tired metaphors or single meanings, but rather a Nietzschean overcoming by a new world of multivalent symbols poetically distilled. For Mallarmé, a symbol is over and above a metaphor in that it contains the poet's vision of multiple meanings and indeterminate images; the flight of the imagination (like Pound's later 'dance of the intellect') which makes vast links and correspondences:

> Like long-drawn out echoes mingled far away
> Into a deep and shadowy unity. (Baudelaire *Correspondances*)[20]

The poet's role, therefore for Mallarmé, is to capture the process of the nature of creation itself, when suggestive words synthesise to give birth to the corporeal, sensuous visual presence of an object, rather than the explicit absence of an object in *naming directly*. Death of language, and hence that of the poet as poet, is this failure to perform the fluid act of metamorphosis:

> the perpetual creation of verses which never lose their fluid quality, ... continually recreated, continually different, ... and yet are always perfectly guided ... Through a sublime metamorphosis, all conditions and materials of thought are ... entirely transformed ...[21]

Mallarmé's poems enact the poet's confrontation with the silent emptiness/void of impotency which must take place before new, prior invisible images may reverberate their nuances, encircling alchemically in the poet's mind:

> Therefore, our eternal and only problem is to seize relationships and intervals ...To create is to conceive an object in its fleeting moment ... To do this we simply compare its facets and dwell lightly, negligently upon their multiplicity ... of ... evanescent, intersecting forms.[22]

The theme of the void, of the white empty page (encapsulated by Mallarmé in empty or missing objects; room, tomb, conch-shell, jar) is the waiting simultaneously in desire and fear for the moment of creation, the genesis of form.

It is both absence and presence - the void contains death and birth. Death; its vanishment prior to being put into words on the page. This is, so to speak, the Eros and Thanatos of artistic struggle. It is the language that survives the absence of all prior denotations and connotations, and its desperate presence can only exist due to that absence. Meaning is created from Mallarmé's recessive spatial voids - the void strips bare, decreates in its negation, to recreate our sense of the object's fullness in the paradoxical economy of the *reverberating* symbol, in the now positive white space of the contemplating mind.

Language, in this sense of fullness yet economy, draws parallels to the condensed hieroglyph, or ideogram. The critic Thibaudet stated of Mallarmé that, `His ideal would be to write the characters (like Chinese ideographs) in juxtaposition.'[23] Reverberating symbols parallel the multiforms within the ideogram, and also relational awareness is given as a paramount form of knowledge.

Motherwell's concern with the absolute void in Eastern metaphysics coheres with his Mallarméan proclivities. When describing the Oriental affinity to his work Motherwell states 'you start with ... empty space and the subject is that which animates the void (it takes relatively little).'[24] Barthes' references to 'satori' in Twombly's work might have some foundation if we view Motherwell's influence on the younger artist as far ranging. Yet, indirectly, Pound also could have been influential in this direction. Olson, in describing his meeting with Twombly, revealed the artist's early interest in Oriental 'contemplation' whilst reading Pound's translation of an Oriental poem:[25]

> It was Twombly, and wholly in some other reference, in fact to how a lake we know in common afforded him about what Tao Yuan-Ming's east hedge was, who gave me suddenly, as he talked of contemplation, the sense of what architecture now had to do with.[26]

In Mallarmé's own *Un Coup de Dés* the void of the page is activated, brought to life, by reverberations from the reductive, quintessential words. The poet's impotency resides in not sustaining the flight above prosaic language, and Mallarmé's poem *Le Cygne* (which Motherwell's collage *Mallarmé's Swan* (1947) honoured), presents that frustration, coalesced to the swan's petrifying situation of near-frigidity. The vast white wings beat, revealing the promise of the purity of language in its infinite suggestibility, yet the purity freezes/dies before gaining an aesthetic economic form in which to breathe its life. The symbol of the swan reverberates in the awe of its beauty. The multivalent symbol of the freezing swan circles out in the white lake - the play/flight of the signifier/swan slips deliberately to the transitoriness of beauty, to purity of language, to the poet's act of creativity.

Daniel Wheeler describes the general 'voyage' effect in Motherwell's painting:

> which carries the spectator along in his own Mallarmé-like voyage of discovery, ... by allowing the picture to evince the process of its own creation, a process that not only gave birth to areas, edges, and relationships, but also left a thousand quick, light, or violent ... corrective strokes bearing witness to myriad contradictory impulses.[27]

Motherwell's concern is with the process of art, the creating, and not the created. In works such as *The Voyage* (1949), the forms that float in a white silence become

ideographic as Motherwell's career progresses - a simple nuance upon the form and colour mercurializes content.

Twombly's own reference to Mallarméan whiteness is arguably pertinent to the synthesis of purity and multiplicity in the ideographic form, emerging through recessive painterly white voids. Such techniques - partial elimination of word or form via spatial painterly `veils' of enfoldment - reveal barely visible diminishing *`memory traces'*, and are important to bear in mind when Twombly turns his attention to the poets and mythological figures of the Graeco-Roman world.

The fleeting and fragmentary experience to capture the polymorphous still-condensing image, for Mallarmé, is the flight, soaring up from the earth. In Twombly's drawing *Bolsena* (1972) (Pl.30) he quotes the epitome of Mallarmé's poetics, in the poet's words `What wing can be held?' Mallarmé's sonnet *La Nuit* (1887) arguably has significance to Twombly's œuvre concerning poets and classical mythology, in that it contains the Styx, the River in Hades, and Mallarmé's use of the term ptyx. Ptyx's original Greek meaning is 'fold[ing]' and according to Fairlie, in Mallarmé's poetry, is symbolized by the conch-shell:

> As the shell contains the sea sound of past centuries, so it is used by the Poet to draw up water from the Styx, formed by the tears of all those who have lived and died in the imprisonment of eternity.[28]

For Mallarmé, poets must die before their language becomes fully comprehensible. These figures in Hades are the poets, and of course their mythological gods of eternity. If we recall Charles Olson's 'twin methodology' and Pound's personae/masks in relation to mythology, Fairlie significantly states that the shell (pytx) `with Mallarmé becomes the permanent personal drama, the spectre of the poet's imagination.'[29] In 1900, Henri de Regnier, lecturing on the Symbolists poets, stated that `A myth is the sonorous conch shell of one idea',[30] an enfolding of correspondences from the deepest universal instincts. For the Symbolists, `as in Dionysiac religion, mythological characters were possessed by the forces of nature; from this came more correspondences ...'.[31]

The spatial voids - recessive areas of whiteness in Twombly's paintings and drawings - as Gillo Dorfles argues `are the voids which for Twombly, have the power of colour and matter, and are, actually the 'fullest' part of the picture ... this visuality stems from Mallarmé.'[32] I believe it is the cipher - zero - 'language' of presence and absence; the Mediterranean world of antiquity always present for, and honoured by Twombly.

Mallarmé suggests the nineteenth-century poet's tasks both towards language's absence and towards language's rebirth, when:

> the Master[poet] has gone down to drain tears from the Styx
> With that sole object [the shell] which honours the void.
>
> *La Nuit*[33]

If a strong element of Motherwell's artistic practice from the early 40's on, was following, as ascertained by Flam, `the example of Mallarmé ... to evoke [in art] powerful reverberations beyond its [an object] mere physical appearance ... [via] Symbolist ... compression and condensation,'[34] then his use of colour and form, with that emphasis on relational processes, must have been for Twombly another insight into the non-discrete, non-linear possibilities within the physicalities of artistic and poetic language - the means to weave nuances/correspondences both physically and mentally. Motherwell's view of art practice was practically opposite to Greenberg's extreme formalism:

> One of the tasks that modern art set itself was to find a language that would be closer to the structure of the human mind – a language that could adequately express the complex physical and metaphysical realities that modern science and philosophy had made us aware of ... Cézanne, for example, discovered not an art that was "solid like the art of museums", but ... the opposite ... things are not solid. In so doing, he came closer to the nature of things, according to modern physics ... I never met an outstanding artist not interested in ideas ...[35]

As an `educator' into the endless possibilities within aesthetic language Motherwell must have been an exemplary figure to the younger student, when from

within his oeuvre he made `references to myth, and poetry, to politics and history, to philosophy and other art.'[36]

1 Dore Ashton, `On Motherwell', in *Robert Motherwell* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), p.47.

2 Ashton, *Motherwell*, p.40.

3 Jack D. Flam, `With Robert Motherwell', in *Robert Motherwell* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), p.11.

4 A primary example would be what I would term the socio-historical `Marxist' approach adopted by Charles Harrison and Francis Frascina (eds.), *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (London: Harper and Row, 1982), Francis Franscina, (ed.), *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (London: Harper and Row, 1985), and the Open University Course: *Modern Art and Modernism*, 1983.

5 Ashton, *Motherwell*, p.35.

6 Ashton, *Motherwell*, p.30.

7 Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres completes II* (Paris, 1931-32), p.508.

8 Bradford Cook (trans. ed.), *Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 81.

9 [my italics] Cook, *Mallarmé*, p.81.

10 [my italics] C. Twombly, `Signs', *Esperienza Moderna*, No.2., Aug.-Sept., Rome, 1957.

11 Cited in Kirk Varnedoe, `Inscriptions in Arcadia', in K. Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), footnote 116, p. 62.

12 Cited in Flam, *Motherwell*, p. 10.

13 Philippe Sollers (ed.), *Writing and the Experience of Limits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.65.

14 Fredric Jameson, `Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1989), pp.122-123.

15 Jean-François Lyotard, *Discours, figure* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), p.62.

16 Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1986), p. 19.

17 R. Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.161.

18 Cook, *Mallarmé*, p.40.

19 Cited in Flam, *Motherwell*, p.15.

20 Cited in Jean Cassou, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism* (London: Omega Books, 1988), p.173.

21 Cook, *Mallarmé*, pp. 68,69,81.

22 Cook, *Mallarmé*, pp. 48,49.

23 Cited in C. F. MacIntyre (trans.), *Stéphane Mallarmé: Selected Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p.ix.

24 Cited in Flam, *Motherwell*, p.23.

25 Ezra Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), (!st published as *Personae* in 1926), `The Unmoving Cloud' by Tao Yuan-ming, p. 142.

26 Charles Olson, `Cy Twombly' manuscript, *Charles Olson Papers* (Storrs: University of Connecticut Library, 1951), p. 3. The revised manuscript has been published in the catalogue, *Cy Twombly: Poems to the Sea (1959)* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1988), pp. 2-6.

27 Daniel Wheeler, *Art Since Mid-Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p.57.

28 A. Fairlie, et al. *Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.79.

29 Fairlie, *Mallarmé*, p.81.

30 Cassou, *Symbolism*, p.157.

31 Cassou, *Symbolism*, p.157.

32 Gillo Dorfles, `Written Images of Cy Twombly', *Metro*, no. 6, June, 1962, pp.63-71.

33 Cited in Fairlie, *Mallarmé*, p.88.

34 Flam, *Motherwell*, p.19.

35 Flam, *Motherwell*, pp.25, 26

36 Flam, *Motherwell*, p.27.

CHAPTER THREE - THE WIDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT: AESTHETIC DEBATES AND PRACTICES

> The artist can correct the sense ratios before the blow of new technology ... before numbness and subliminal groping and reaction begin ... art is precise advance knowledge of how to cope with the psychic and social consequences of the next technology.[1]

> Once we have surrendered our senses and nervous systems to the private manipulation of those who would try to benefit ... we don't really have any rights left. Leasing our eyes, ears and nerves to commercial interests is like handing over the common speech to a private corporation ...[2]

The problematics experienced by the critics in the *Introduction* to the thesis have, in part, been due to their adherence to a *manifest*, linear development from Modernism to Postmodernism. This form of historicism Twombly's works chronologically belie in their pre-postmodern mythology, appropriation, and intertextuality. In the chapter examining the education imbibed at BMC we were introduced to a *latent* discourse operating within a 1950s aesthetic education, one which revealed certain tenets of Postmodernism already within early literary Modernism, and a 'twin methodology' with an ahistoric potency to suggest a *physics* of thought.

It is now necessary to seek a wider, and archaeologically deeper, level of discourses which emerge as a field of force within, and to which the themes of Twombly's art practice bear relevance. This plurality of discourses will also extend aesthetic and poetic theories raised in Chapter One - *Methodology*. For example, why the artist subsequently found relevance in the ahistoricism of mythological and poetic 'voices', in the avoidance of mass-media, and in an adherence persistently to what might be termed a Heideggerean painterly practice whilst others practice were so insistently in vogue.

In this wider 'archaeological' context within which Twombly's concerns with classical mythology, poetics, history, and painterly practice are situated, from 1957 to

the present, central questions were raised concerning certain crises in cultural discourse – i.e. Pop art's positive or negative relation to mass media, conceptual art's de-materialization and de-aestheticization of the art object. The latter, specifically, raised the question of Hegel's prophecy, the 'death' of art.

There is an element of Foucaultian 'archaeology' within this examination of discourses; to reveal an implicit philosophy within the artist's engagement. As Foucault's formation of orders exposed episteme discontinuities, in part via changes in language; changes in perception and language also form a central core within these discourses now to be examined.

There were two 'cult' books during Twombly's early years of residence in Italy: *Understanding Media* (1964) by Marshall McLuhan (although McLuhan's analysis of advertising was already published in *The Mechanical Bride* (1951)), and Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* (1964), whose relevant component chapters referred to here were published in 1962.

The significance of *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*[3] was acknowledged by at least two members of the close-knit avant-garde group – Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, John Cage and Twombly. Twombly has become a life-time friend of Rauschenberg, whilst Rauschenberg's close relationships with Johns and Cage is established history. Cage, in his book *A Year from Monday* (1968) asserts that, 'if a book is brought to his [Johns] attention that he has reason to believe is interesting he gets it and reads it (Wittgenstein ... McLuhan).'[4] Cage's own influence by McLuhan's theories haunt his own books:

> The way these statements are presented is an effect on me of the work of Marshall McLuhan who so dramatically has turned the attention of so many to the influence of communication media on sense perceptions ...[5]

The second introductory quote exemplifies the dark, pessimistic side of McLuhan's overall celebratory analysis of the Western world's 'implosion', hence contraction, by electric technology. McLuhan's 'history' of the technological progress of mankind is in a unique sense cyclic.

Firstly, the oral, tribal, primitive means of communication; a mythic mode of multifaceted, simultaneous awareness within language, space and time. Secondly, elements become discrete/fragmented, uniform, lineal and sequential via the rise of the phonetic alphabet (its dissolution of the senses, the pre-eminence of sight, and the resultant Euclidean space and time patterns) in the sustaining rise of the mechanical, technological age. An age eventually imploding back into what McLuhan terms 'nature' - the electric media and technology's return to a unifying, total field of awareness, of simultaneous consciousness (socio-politically, hence 'global').

This instant total awareness is celebratory as `history' due to, in McLuhan's view, the prior mechanical age of technology's mistaken notion of linear 'consciousness ... as the mark of a rational being, yet there is *nothing linear or sequential* about the total field of awareness that exists in any moment of consciousness.'[6]

At this juncture it is necessary to distinguish between McLuhan's Hot and Cool media, and define his famous phrase 'the medium is the message'. Hot media (i.e. phonetic alphabet, painterly realism) are low in reader/viewer participation, whereas Cool media (hieroglyph, ideogram, painting since Cézanne) are high in depth involvement. In the latter the medium becomes content, so to speak, in that it manifests the true configuration of thought processes. The effect of discontinuous changes, yet unified in the image, is the subject matter.

The `incompletion' of a linear, sequential reading of an image is, for McLuhan, the onset of the avant-garde movement: the overcoming of the `dissociation of sensibility' (T.S. Eliot), via the unifying of the senses,[7] and simultaneous space-time – all of 'which in the arts and literature since Cézanne and ... Baudelaire has been a top priority in every programme of reform in taste and knowledge.'[8] Rather than one level of meaning there co-exists several, sometimes what would be viewed as contradictory, simultaneous meanings; paralleling 'what has happened in physics, as in painting, poetry and communication.'[9]

In McLuhan's contemporary assessment, we now wear our bodies outside ourselves: 'with the arrival of electric technology man extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system itself.'[10] This extension of our physical bodies is later taken up in its darker aspects by Baudrillard's analysis of the information and communication networks: 'this forced extroversion of all interiority', and the resultant saturation of private space and perception provides a:

> state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no more halo of private protection, not even his own body ...[11]

The cultural transition, analysed by McLuhan, of both the re-emergence of `the diverse and discontinuous life of forms'[12] (i.e. flux in pluralistic points of view and time), and the re-unifying of all the senses, is the challenge of the electric age confronted by artists since Cézanne. By re-investing the tactile sense to unify the other senses, Cézanne `recovered the plastic image by which all the senses co-exist in a unified pattern.' Such pictorial means, according to McLuhan, produced in the audience an 'anxiety [which] was a natural literary and visual response to the new non-visual technology.'[13] This challenging relationship to the arts, of depicting contemporary science, has already been evident in Pound's interest in electromagnetism. In fact, in his book, *Ezra Pound: Poetics for an Electric Age* (1973), Max Nänny brings into his discussion of Pound's `vortex, ideogram and ... "electric field" ... his reading of Marshall McLuhan ...'[14]

The intensified point of transformation which McLuhan posits as confronting the contemporary world - and here in a sense we approach the `apocalyptic' - is the final phase of the electric age in which will arise 'the technical simulation of consciousness,'[15] which he perceives in the germ of the extension of consciousness already achieved by the media due to business advertising.

In this `Dantean' hell we have placed the images of ourselves in Narcissus' mirror (the mass media), becoming as numb as servomechanisms to a `god' we have erected, and who can work on us subliminally through narcotic images. McLuhan

argues that we can avoid 'the prediction and control in the subliminal state of the Narcissus trance,'[16] which denies us the conscious awareness of 'effect' as the true message - that 'utter human docility and acquiescence'[17] - by the examples of Joyce and Baudelaire.

Joyce's method in *Ulysses* exemplifies, 'when the precise classical parallels created a true hybrid energy', and, reiterating Eliot's statement on Baudelaire,[18] McLuhan states 'by a simple adjustment of situations from one culture in hybrid form with those of another ... the hybrid principle as a technique of creative discovery.' Arguing for a contemporary solution, McLuhan continues:

> the hybrid or the meeting of two media is a moment of truth ... from which new form is born ... that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses.[19]

To summarise; for McLuhan the artist has firstly the prophetic role of revealing, and sensitizing us to, the new unknown changes in sense perception inherent in one technological age's usurpation of another. Secondly, via another sense of overcoming content as sole message, the artist's ability to juxtapose culturally hybrid media has the potential to break (McLuhan hopes in the late fifties) the one pessimistic element within his definition of the electric age's extension of consciousness - the Narcissus trance and subjugation to the mass media.

McLuhan's challenges appear to be taken up by Twombly, exemplified via his use of a contemporary aesthetic language for the classical world, and additively by the relevance of fundamental issues dealt with by classical mythology – flux, the indeterminate, and metamorphosis - to the 20th century. With reference to McLuhan's hybrid language, for an artist it states a prophetic role, aligning itself in certain respects to the 'physics' of Olson's 'twin methodology'.

Eco's *The Open Work*, before being compared to McLuhan's polemics, must be alluded to in the context of Luigi Pareyson's aesthetic theory - Eco's acknowledged mentor – an aesthetic theory which was the catalyst for Eco's ruminations in *The Open*

Work, and one which bears comparison to Twombly's own statement on form: '[a] non-descriptive line which is the event of its own inner manifestation.'[20]

Eco defines, for us, Pareyson's aesthetics of formativity: 'Pareyson calls the form towards which the artist strives 'forming form'... [which] entails a new concept of the `work' as the guide of its own empirical realization.'[21] To begin an elucidation of Eco's own notion of the 'open work', his summary of Pareyson is paramount:

> For it is the culmination of a process of figuration and the beginning of a *series* of successive interpretations [and] ... since the fact of being form opens it up to an infinity of different perspectives, the *process* which actualises itself as form also realizes itself in the continuous possibility of interpretation ....'[22] [I]n the aesthetic of formativity a work consists of the interpretative reactions it elicits, and these manifest themselves as a retracing of its inner genetic process ... which is none other than the stylistic resolution of a `historical' genetic process.[23]

In Eco's definition of the 'open work', as the only art practice appropriate to the contemporary era, there is a constellation of correspondences to McLuhan's 'the medium is the message', as for example McLuhan's term `Cool media'. Both writers, significantly, place this genesis in the Symbolist period; a period already given emphasis for the artist at BMC.

Eco's statement, that 'the theory of the open work is none other than a poetics of serial thought,'[24] is the kernel of several interlocking analyses Eco has made within the fields of contemporary physics (principles of complementarity and improbability), mathematical theory of information and series, and contemporary poetics - 'all those processes which prefer to disclose a field of possibilities instead of a univocal, necessary sequence of events.'[25] The terms which have a high level of intensity throughout Eco's work are `information' (as opposed to linear meaning), `ambiguity', `discontinuity', and `uncertainty'; interchangeable terms in all those fields, and as such make `open work' art an 'epistemological metaphor'[26] for the discontinuity of our modern experiences.

This shattering of traditional relationships by serial, polyvalent thought-processes provides open-ended relationships, and in the work is analogous to open-

structured realities activated by a high level of improbability in relation to a precise system of probability. This is what is being laboriously sketched out in open art works and is what makes them so much more informative. What gives such art its `political' edge for Eco can best be shown by his `castration' of the mass media, whose standardized, static images of stereotypes are dichotomous to the complexities, ambiguities and nuances of life

It is Eco's concept of `series' (parallel to McLuhan's configuration of thought processes), which in `open work' art provide an encyclopaedia/labyrinth of constellations - 'a field of possibilities that generates multiple choices.'[27] Finding its genesis artistically in the Symbolist use of the poetic word to establish new, unusual relationships of meaning, contemporary poetics becomes, for Eco, the history of aesthetic practice in which the constellation of constituents themselves become predominant over what those constituents represent.

Art in the `open work' definition therefore produces new knowledge and thought processes, and Eco's argument is that it is above and beyond the sciences or epistemologies mentioned in its analogies by its capacity to realise 'a compendium of reality', in a total organic sense of form which requires the element of imaginative synthesis. This is opposed to science's procedures as, 'partial definitions [of] ... knowledge of separate aspects of reality.'[28] This is why, when considering Pareyson's aesthetics of formativity, Eco can state, 'to invent formal human laws does not contradict *nature's formativity*; rather, it extends it.'[29] This last statement has an echo of Cassirer's `symbolic pregnance'.

Our last reference to Eco will be with respect to the discourse of Conceptual art's de-materialization and de-aesthetization of the art object, within the larger discourse of the Hegelian death of art, when art collapses into the pre-eminence of theory.

This presence which omits the physical is answered by Eco's second hypothesis on the question of the death, or decline, of art. The first hypothesis shows Eco working through his contemporary poetics (the self-reflexive poetics over and above poetry), and

the possible result in a 'surplus of rational self-consciousness,'[30] a decline into philosophy, when art becomes purely a prop of knowledge without the organic, imaginative synthesis into a world of form. That art should be, and could be, this equation of mind and matter is Eco's second hypothesis, because as he states, 'the work is something more than its poetics (which can be articulated also in other ways), since the very process by which a poetic model acquires a physical form adds something to our understanding.'[31]

Eco's solution, therefore, to what he views as the contemporary crisis in art - the dissociation of poetics as cultural discourse from the material world - is that without seeing intellectual ideas in their physical stimuli of action and resolution, as a physical organism activated in `forming form', our understanding and articulation is incomplete.

Eco, it can be argued here, not only looks back to Art Informel, but also influentially forwards to the Italian movement, Arte Povera, which begun in the mid 60s, through to the late 70s and the beginning of the Italian Transavant-garde. The question of material's own processes, *as in Nature, is central to both Art Informel and* Arte Povera.

In his essay `Informel and Abstraction in Italian Art of the Fifties', Maurizio Calvesi defines the Informel work as one in which, `the material does not evolve into form, but remains pure action, a sign of reality in ferment ... [and] was initiated by ... Alberto Burri, Lucio Fontana and Emilio Vedova.' [32] Art Informel was the union of `matter and process' - the material's own metamorphosis, when the artist `intervened in the organic process of the material ... as a moment wrested from flux.'[33] Works often produced lines incised into matter, resulting in form produced therefore by the absence of matter, making the substantial therefore become insubstantial. The Italian Art Informel movement ended in approximately 1957.

The everyday objects and materials used in Arte Povera works, for example, by Mario Merz, Jannis Kounellis, and Michelangelo Pistoletto, sought both to ` bring down canons of beauty ... as a political gesture, ... link[ing] ... art and social class',[34] and gain the redemptive power of nature. In fact, the works combined the conceptual

with `a post-technological return to nature',[35] aligned to the Process art of Joseph Beuys. For both Heidegger and Cassirer, all matter already potentially `speaks' the nuances of being in the world; a malleability of being upon which all culture's `languages' ground themselves. For Beuys nature, material and form were so interdependent that art enacted life directly. This notion of material's own innate being to be released was fundamental to Dubuffet, `art should be born from the materials and ... should borrow its language from it. Each material has its own language so there is no need to make it serve a language.'[36]

In 1948, according to Varnedoe, Twombly had `clipped a reproduction (which he has kept to this day) of ... [Dubuffet's] *Smoky Black (Lili)* from ... *Life* magazine ...'.[37] The inspiration of Dubuffet in the artist's work was recognised as early as 1951, by both Robert Motherwell [38] and Prudence Read.[39] Twombly's painting *Lala* of 1953 (Pl.65) still reveals such direct linear influences as Klee's *Untitled* (1938) (Pl.66) and Dubuffet's *Earthy Concretions* (1951) (Pl.67).

In Eco's assessment, `[t]he example of the *informel* ... does not proclaim the death of form; rather, it proposes a new, more flexible version of it - *form as a field of possibilities* ... [as in] Dubuffet's *Matériologies* ...'.[40] The term art informel originated from the French critic Michel Tapié, who defined it as follows:

> When form, transcended, is heavy with the possibilities of becoming, ... a new magic is being shaped, which will stand only if it is of a piece with the most advanced achievements in the other human activities of today. It is in the realm of ... *relations of uncertainty*, of stupefying *topologies*, of all the explorations of ... the Reality whose partial and restrictive appearance was all we knew for so long ...[41]

As Eco reminds us, this emphasis on matter's processes, and its relation to contemporary science, was also prevalent in French Tachism in the 1950s:

> According to [Georges]Mathieu, the evolution of forms is parallel to that of scientific concepts: " concepts concerning space, matter, parity, and gravitation, ...[and in art] notions of indeterminacy and probability, of contradiction and entropy ..." [42]

It is pertinent at this juncture to examine aspects of the Italian art milieu in 1957 - when Twombly takes up residence in Rome - as a formative sequence on the artist after BMC.

There was a constellation of Italian avant-garde artists and movements which would align both with his earlier use of 'Mallarméan' white monochrome, and his education on light as corporeal substance in energy, and field-theory physics per se. Nevertheless, it is necessary to bear in mind that *after* his move to Rome in 1957, he insisted in the same year on the importance of Pound and Mallarmé's essays to an understanding of his work,[43] whilst his August/September 1957 'manifesto' (see Chapter Five II) makes strong reference to the deployment of Mallarméan whiteness as 'the landscape of my actions ...'.

Firstly, a brief résumé of the monochrome's various symbolic, literary and literal associations, both in the history of thought and in the history of aesthetics is appropriate. McEvilley's essay 'The Monochrome Icon', covers this subject both extensively and specifically. The monochrome field was a prominent pictorial feature internationally, ranging from Malevich's fourth-dimensional, 'spiritual' icon, and Newman's essay on its pertinence to the quest for the metaphysical 'sublime' in which 'form can be formless', to those of Eastern (Zen and other Buddhist) tendencies (e.g. Tobey's 'white writing'). The latter group believed the emptiness of the canvas was the equivalent of the non-contradictory space of the mind, containing simultaneously everything and nothing - the One and the polymorphous Many. During his stay at BMC, Twombly would have known of, or attended, John Cage's course, which consisted of 'a complete reading of *The Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind.*'[44] Twombly, in 1957, would have another grounding in such thought, through his reading of Mallarmé's epiphanic thoughts on 'Nothingness' in the essays.[45] The white monochrome still held sway in 1957 when Twombly settled permanently in Rome, for example, Sam Francis' *The Whiteness of the Whale* (1957) (influenced by Zen[46] and Melville's *Moby Dick*).

In April of that year, the French and German artists Yves Klein and Heinz Mack, published the first issue of *Zero*, a title which indicated that the monochrome was ' a zone of silence and of pure possibilities for a new beginning', and if used as a colour-continuum-field of nuances, set up an optical and dynamic relationship between painting and viewer:

> The surface seen as a palpitating membrane of creation. *Purity of light* takes hold of all men with its continuous flow of rhythmic current between painting and observer, this current under certain formal conditions, *becomes a forceful pulse beat, total vibration.* [47]

White here is a palpable, hylic form - an ontology of matter which literally releases the equivalences of bodily felt light pulsations. This is an example of the symbiosis of white and light as both matter and process and will arise as further discussion in the last three chapters of the thesis.

1957 was a singular year in Italy's art-historical annals. Piero Manzoni rejected *art informel* that year and invented the `achrome'. Yves Klein, lecturing at the Sorbonne in 1957, choose as his subject `The Evolution of Art towards the Immaterial', and exhibited in Milan his eleven blue monochromes, which, according to Wheeler, were `works designed to make the ethereal seem not only real but also concrete and thus viewer-engaging.'[48] In 1958 an account of Fontana's *Spazialismo* was published, his slashes in the *concetti spazialii* (spatial concepts) canvases viewed `as if the incorporeal had the power to cut through substances.' [49]

The problematic of aesthetics in post-fascist Italy after the war, according to Benjamin Büchloh (addressing the exhibition `The Italian Metamorphosis 1943 – 1968' at the Guggenheim Museum in 1994), led to an `instant renewal of a radical ... cultural left (personified by, among many other, the communist Emilio Vedova ...)', and hence to several aesthetic reactions and art historical interpretations. Firstly, `from the mid 1950s onwards ... [n]othing could better enact the desire for a *tabula rasa* [a forgetting] ... than the reduction of painting to its degree zero in ... monochromes.' Secondly, both Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana sought also solutions to `the increasingly evident erosion of the aesthetic by the heteronomies of spectacle: fashion and design.' Fontana's slashed monochromes provided resistance via a corporeal intensity, and Manzoni undermined the spectacle via `the last site of resistance, the body's actual materialities: blood, breath, excrement.' [50]

Thirdly, according to Arnason, `[T]he real impact of post-war Italian art on the younger generation was made by ... Fontana['s] ... program of spatialism: to free art from past aesthetic preconceptions, to "abandon the acceptance of known forms ... and begin the development of an art based on the unity of time and space".' [51]

Yet this preconception of time and space existed even earlier than Fontana's spatialisms, according to Calvesi:

> the originality of Italian Informel, was ... due to the presence of the Futurist tradition. This component (which can be discerned in different forms in the individual artists) is neither immediately recognizable nor marked by explicit quotations from ... Boccioni or ... Balla, but is *part of an underlying cultural frame of reference.*[52]

It was Fontana and Vedova who specifically combined matter and physics. For example, in Vedova's early 50s art informel works the vocabulary consists of Futurism's energy fields of force lines, making the insubstantial substantial. Whilst Fontana is the perfect Italian representative of the evolution from art informel to Futurism's influence on his works still in the 1960s, to the much later 1970s Italian artists, such as Claudio Olivieri, who was `interested in modern Physics theory ... as a contribution to general knowledge ...'[53] Fontana's 1930s works revealed both his `predilection for substrata and extensions of infinite space', and `concern for the shifting density of matter, ... demonstrating its capacity for metamorphosis.'[54] From the late 1950s, Fontana's `punctured canvases, with their idea of `spatialism', were referring back to the dynamic possibilities of Futurism as evoked by the abstractions of Balla ... the slash on the surface of the canvas – like a rapid streak of light ... the play of light – that is, the passage of the immaterial – determined the viewer's experience.'[55]

By 1965, Werner Haftmann would write in his chapter `The Painting of the present day', art's alignment to science:

> painters perceived much more clearly the astonishing correspondences between contemporary intuitive and scientific experiences of the world and nature. The complex structure of matter, the concept of mass as dynamic energy, the concept of the magnetic field, the overlappings of time and space ... were now seen by the artist for what they really were:

> parallel manifestations of a more abstract experience of reality, an experience which was fully active in himself also.[56]

This aesthetic background in Italy provides a possible alternative discourse and aesthetic allegiance to that of Conceptual art, for Twombly's use of a 'formativity' of the line in the late 1960s works.

Gianni Vattimo, as Eco before him, studied philosophy with Pareyson, following his position as Professor of Aesthetics in the seventies. Vattimo makes the connection between the `death' of art and the `death' of grand narratives - those traditional metaphysical referents of immutable truths which Nietzsche had already argued as perspectival values. It is from Nietzsche that Vattimo takes his `end of modernity' position of philosophical nihilism, but it is a hermeneutics of difference in no sense `apocalyptic' due to Vattimo's grounding in Heideggerean `Being'.[57] What Vattimo replaces is `narrative' by `fictional' experience as truth, and Being in hermeneutics is weakened to `events' of universal equivalence, in the sense of value as exchange-value. Such an infinite interpretability of the world, in a distinct Heideggerean vein, means the grand narrative of technological progress can also be deconstructed as the sole possible `reality' for our times.

The `death' of art, or what Vattimo terms its decline, is due to the dismantling of the modernist autonomous realm of Art; its disenfranchisement by its hybrid contamination by the aestheticization of mass culture, weakening its authenticity in the metaphysical sense of eternal meaning. In both Vattimo's reading of the Heideggerean notion of the work of art inaugurating a world and in Kuhn's scientific, discontinuous paradigm shifts as exemplary of the history of artistic revolutions, he finds discontinuous `historicity' and time.

For Vattimo, 'the aesthetic as a domain of experience and as a dimension of existence ... assumes exemplary value as a model for thinking about historicity in general.'[58] The experience of history/time in another mode than that posited by modernity (in the sense of progressive, and Vattimo has therefore to acknowledge Joyce and Proust as postmodern) is the aesthetic experience of postmodernity, and therefore

art is exemplary `as the setting into work of truth,'[59] in that time (or history) is not a linear process. The poetic work for Heidegger is 'built to bear the traces and memory of someone across time, but *for others.*'[60]

In Vattimo's revision of Heidegger's theory of poetry, language is both absence and presence. Truth, Vattimo argues, in the postmodern, post-metaphysical experience, is the equivalence of `voices' intermittently speaking achronologically across from past traditions, as memories and traces, flickering due to truth and Being never being fully or eternally present - 'the truth of Being itself ... can ... only arise in the form of a recollection.'[61] This can be seen to extend the relevance of Heidegger, from the *Methodology* chapter, to ahistoricism – traces of `voices' from the past.

To summarise, Vattimo's optimism in the decline of modernity and its art forms is that, within the `weak thought' of nihilistic, universally equivalent exchange-values, art is capable of enduring solely because of Being as trace and memory.

The aforementioned relationship between Being, truth and time would appear to omit the work of art's `aura', yet it is in this context that I wish to argue for Twombly's adherence to the painterly medium.

As Vattimo revised Heidegger's theory of poetry, Andrew Benjamin has revised Walter Benjamin's notion of the death/decline of the `aura',[62] via a selection of `auratic' denotations from several of Benjamin's texts, concluding (in alignment with Vattimo) that 'if there is a truth content to a work of art, then the truth of art becomes its capacity to live, not to live on in [ultimate] truth, but to live on.'[63] Andrew Benjamin's argument for the ahistoricity of the aura, of what Barthes[64] (and Kristeva) calls `significance' in the work of art - an endless/infinite interpretability distinct from that which exhausts contextual historical communication - provides a way of interpreting Twombly's reinterpretations of classical mythology, classical paintings, and the physicality essential to their aura.

Denying temporal and ontological specificity, Andrew Benjamin views this `significance' as the survival of a primordial presence, an anoriginal[65] aura whose

theoretical gestation is implicit in Walter Benjamin's `On some motifs in Baudelaire', and reformulated in `The Storyteller' and `The Task of the Translator':

> looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. When this expectation is met (which, in the case of thought processes can apply equally to the look of the mind as to the glance), there is an experience of the aura to the fullest extent. [66]

The parallels to Barthes' `significance' are explicit in `The Storyteller':

> information ... lives only a moment ... A story is different ... it preserves and concentrates its strength ... The idea of life and after life in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity ... the philosopher's task consists in comprehending all of natural life through the life of history. [67]

The `after life' is both the rebirth through translation and the reinterpretation of the inexhaustible aura which is outside of each contextual history - a communication outside of limits, whether in Walter Benjamin's quote of the intersubjective Other or in his reference to works of art and Nature. Twombly appears to avoid Pop art in its Benjaminean sense of lack of authenticity – that Narcissus simulacrum. On the occasions that Twombly uses postcards of other works of art it is not in the sense of auratic elimination, rather, so to speak, the reversal; he quintessentializes, below each postcard, the released energy, movement and phenomena which each work of art had distilled and abstracted in the subservience to content.

The last cultural discourse needing exposition, with respect to Twombly's works of classical history and mythology, is his position with regard to the Italian Transavantgarde (Chia, Clemente, Cucchi and Paladino), whose postmodern images have:

> a state of awareness which links personal experience to myth, history and fantasy ... [and] evidence an outlook which has much in common with the multi-levelled intellectual-emotional sphere first explored by Twombly in the late 1950s and the 1960s.[68]

The Italian Transavantgarde's works epitomise for many critics the virulent debate on the nature of the postmodern image, which can be summarised briefly in three positions:

1. The postmodern image as the continuance of cultural codes (previously the programmed, clichéd images of pop culture), as pure simulacrum - `history', and more specifically the styles of art history, as consumable commodities; hence a paradigm of copies devoid of origin, authenticity, depth and social critique. Styles are parodied in the sense that each image is eroded of its literal meaning and context.

2. The postmodern `Classical' image as the cyclic and regressive myth of a new classicism, transgressing therefore present socio-economic alienation, fragmentation and breakdown in an ideological ruse of an `illusory totality' - 'the intricate connection between aesthetic mastery and authoritarian domination.'[69]

3. The general nature of `Appropriation art', which in its ironic re-contextualization deprives the art appropriated of its `life' 'as inspiration and catalyst'[70] for an understanding of the sensorimotor or erotic phenomenal lifeworld; its affective and existential authenticity. In other words, it is not rethought and reinterpreted to the present, only emptied of any insight that might transform the viewer. This is Donald Kuspit's position, one that laments the demise of the imaginative faculty, when the artwork is viewed solely as a textual reshuffling of other artists' work – i.e. intertextuality.

Positions 1. and 3. have affirmative, and social, relevance for many critics and artists, especially those following Baudrillard's advocacy of simulated hyperreality, neutralizing meaning and eroding expressivity for surface spectacle, or Derrida's deconstruction of the subject and language into the infinite, depthless play, beyond referents for both. The liberty of the imagination as a creative source becomes the `Satan' of a new religion. Such demythologizing strategies of the old metaphysics are laudable up to a point - the `schizophrenic' celebration of the disintegrated self and depleted historicism avoid the ideological baggage of reification. But it is this point, which when gone beyond by artists, means poststructuralist theory has been allowed by artists to become as prescriptive as Greenberg's influence has been argued, bankrupting the artist of his/her subject history. Such a robotic linguistic stance taken by the artist leads, I would argue, to Pat Steir's *The Breughel Series (A Vanitas of Style)*

(Polychrome) (1982-84), that could arguably be composed by a computer, as her subject position towards the flowers is never exposed.

Past art `languages' have become, in their slippage of interactive fragments, the field of processes most expressive of contemporary modes of discontinuous, and simultaneous experience. But as Frederick Jameson argues, denial of the individual, of `linguistic' innovation, means art is once again an art practice only about itself, and hence its own death in a new manner.[71] The inherent danger which both Twombly and the Italian Transavantgarde avoid, is in becoming, in one sense, what the post-structuralists fought - pure functionaries of language and `metaphysics' - that all truths are relative is still a position on the nature of truth. As the artist Salvo reasons, 'to me, man and nature give `more space' than any other theory. A theory can become dogma, fanaticism and blindness.'[72]

The argument, in one sense, boils down to whether a reactionary or radical position is taken by the artist when returning to, often figurative, historical styles. The reactionary position is that of nostalgia for what Hal Foster terms 'exhausted forms',[73] resulting, for example, in the `kitsch' of Carlo Maria Mariani, which therefore falls, whether intended or not, under the second argument on the nature of the postmodern image.

There are two radical positions: one subverts the acknowledged viewpoint of the past, eroding its authority; the second works in a dialectical movement, in which the present is also changed, and the conduit for that change is, I would argue, the artist's subjectivity. Why it necessarily contains the affective response of the artist can best be illustrated by Victor Burgin's statement, that 'We may "return to the past" in order to demonstrate that it is never simply past; rather, it is the locus of meanings which are lived by, and struggled over, in the present.'[74] This comment is just as appropriate to personal history.

In the pluralists' illusion of innovation, solely via eclecticism of style, nothing is changed - that the humanist sovereignty of the individual could instigate history has been imploded via deconstruction to a decontextualized imagineless void of inertia,

with no referents outside the artwork. As Foster argues: 'a polemic against pluralism is not a plea for old truths, rather it's a plea to invent new truths - to re-invent old truths radically.'[75]

With respect to Twombly and his possible influence on the Italian Transavantgarde, it is a question of whether such a synchronic ahistoricity, in paradoxically the `return to history', is pure pastiche, empty revivalism, clichés in place of the forgotten art of communication, or the return of the past as informative to the present - culture as an umbilical cord to general questions on the diverse nature of the self, the forces of life and death, and more specifically allegories on the nature of artistic struggle and inspiration.

Achille Bonito Oliva, the Italian theorist on the nature of the concerns underpinning the Transavantgarde, summarises their attitude as one that ` sees art as a process, the world is arbitrarily defrozen from its verticality and placed on a horizontal plane, on which the *imagination* of the artist is exercised *individually*.'[76] The artist, as such, is the contemporary, synchronic, experiencing `schizoid' self; a space in which discontinuous `events' proliferate images appropriate to the individual artist's sensibility and sought-for `identities' (rather than grand narratives of totality). `Events' act as non-univocal interacting intensities; epiphanic moments as intensely felt fragments of images out of historical and geographical contexts.

The 'imagination' provides the reciprocality to the past, avoiding a passive `robotic' absorptive stance. Seeking the renewal of discovery in the present, via the past, is implicit in Paladino's interest, which 'is everything mysterious, unexplored, forgotten.'[77] This dialectical movement of the non-simultaneous as simultaneous - past and present - produces the multiple chain of the unexpected, one open after the work is `completed'. When asked how he recognised a good painting, Clemente alluded, arguably, to such fecundity; 'finding something new in it each time ... Cy Twombly always brings this off ... he surprises you by outstepping his own awareness.'[78]

The point must be raised that this poststructuralist desiring drive of difference, displacement and dissemination, in a transcendence of history - shifting meanings

across boundaries - was an early Modernist revelation; that is, if the bifurcation of Modernism is traced via the Symbolist-Pound vein, the one Twombly arguably took at a younger age, hence arriving twenty years earlier than the Transavantgardists to certain aspects of their work.

The Transavantgardists draw upon the limitless sources of themes, techniques, and artists throughout the history of Eastern and Western art, sources mediated by their individual psychological needs or sensibilities, producing artworks of high expressivity. Their approach is not too dissimilar to Olson's recommended `twin methodology'.

The central components which align the Transavantgardists' work with Twombly's œuvre are the return to sensuality, at times reaching an obsession with the body's fluids; mixed media; subjectivity in a dialectical relationship to myth and history, verging at times on psychological obsessions. The differences, I would argue, derive from the intensity of the `gaze' - fascination - and the strength of the cultural umbilical cord. Twombly penetrates the classical Mediterranean world in a life-long passion, providing a unique depth of insight, whilst the Transavantgarde are, so to speak, promiscuous, combining often several myths, religions etc. in one work.

1 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), pp.65-66.

2 McLuhan, *Media*, p.68.

3 As McLuhan's work was of `cult' status (it contained 75% new material and has remained in print for over thirty years), it is difficult to imagine Twombly not having read it, but nevertheless I am acting, at least, on the supposition of it having been the subject of in-depth conversation and debate during his annual returns, particularly as it gave to artists a significant prophetic role.

4 John Cage, *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (London: Marion Boyars, 1968), p.74.

5 Cage, *Monday*, p. 36.

6 [my italics] McLuhan, *Media*, p.85.

7 This earlier programme of unifying of the senses did not lose its potency: `When we live, we see, we smell, we touch, we exercise our body every moment. We must cite McLuhan on this subject, what he says is true' (John Cage, *For the Birds*, p.166.).

8 McLuhan, *Media*, p.173.

9 McLuhan, *Media*, p.13.

10 McLuhan, *Media*, p.43.

11 Jean Baudrillard, `The Ecstasy of Communication`, in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-modern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), p.132

12 McLuhan, *Media*, p.19.

13 McLuhan, *Media*, p.148.

14 Ian Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The modernist poetics of Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p.167.

15 McLuhan, *Media*, p.3.

16 McLuhan, *Media*, p.15.

17 McLuhan, *Media*, p.57.

18 Cited, in McLuhan, *Media*, p. 55: ` "Baudelaire", said Mr Eliot, "taught us how to raise the imagery of common life to first intensity".'

19 McLuhan, *Media*, p.55.

20 C. Twombly, `Signs', *Esperienza Moderna*, No.2., Aug-Sept, Rome, 1957.

21 Umberto Eco (trans. A.Cancogni), *The Open Work* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), p.161.

22 Eco, *Work*, p.163.

23 [my italics] Eco, *Work*, p.166.

24 Eco, *Work*, p.218.

25 Eco, *Work*, p.44.

26 Eco, *Work*, p.xiv.

27 Eco, *Work*, p.220.

28 Eco, *Work*, p.175.

29 [my italics] Eco, *Work*, p.162.

30 Eco, *Work*, p.172.

31 Eco, *Work*, p.177.

32 Maurizio Calvesi, `Informel and Abstraction in Italian Art of the 50s', in E. Braun, *Italian Art in the Twentieth Century – Painting and Sculpture 1900 – 1988* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989), pp. 289, 290.

33 Calvesi, `Informel', p.290.

34 H. Cumming, `Italian Art: A Survey', *Italian Art Now*, Art & Design, vol. 5, no. 1/2, 1989, pp.42-44.

35 Cumming, `Italian', pp.42-44.

36 Cited in D. A. Anfam (ed.), *Techniques of Modern Artists* (London: New Burlington Books, 1987), pp. 122, 123.

37 K. Varnedoe, `Inscriptions in Arcadia', in *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), p. 55, footnote 41.

38 Robert Motherwell, `Cy Twombly: Seven Stairs Gallery', Oct, 1951: `works which would help in his specific expressive aims: ... the massive, decadent surface (in being only surface) of Dubuffet...' See Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p. 55, footnote 44, for the whole text.

39 Prudence Read, `Duet', *Art News*, vol.50, no. 8, Dec., 1951, p.48: who notes `the possible influence of Dubuffet ...'

40 [author's italics] Eco, *Work*, pp. 88, 103.

41 [my italics] Michel Tapié, `A New Beyond', in H. B. Chipp (ed.), *Theories of Modern Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 603-605.

42 Eco, *Work*, p. 99.

43 In a letter to Eleanor Ward written in April 1957 - approximately a month after his arrival in Rome – Twombly wrote: `I've been reading seriously Mallarmé & Pound's essays ... Read Mallarmé or an introduction anyway.'

44 M. Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 349.

45 Bradford Cook (trans. ed.), *Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. xv, 80: `I came upon ... Nothingness, which I found without any prior knowledge of Buddhism ... Nothingness which is the Truth ... the overwhelming vision. I know; we are all only empty forms of matter - empty and yet sublime. So sublime ... that my ambition is to show forth this matter as it becomes conscious of its own being ... The `real' is the One which the artist can approach or imitate only through the many ...'

46 Thomas McEvilley, *The Exile's Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 50: `Francis's work has been influenced by ... Zen ... His two monochrome periods suggest a changing and deepening perception of, and relationship to, concepts such as voidness, energy, pure space, and the union of these three.'

47 [my italics] Heinz Mack and B. Aubertin (a French artist of the *Zero* Group), both cited in McEvilley, *The Exile's Return*, pp. 34, 55.

48 Daniel Wheeler, *Art Since Mid-Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p.183.

49 Germano Celant, `From the Open Wound to the Resurrected Body: Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni', in Braun, *Italian Art*, p.296.

50 B. Büchloh, `The Italian Metamorphosis 1943–1968 at the Guggenheim in 1994', *Artforum*, vol. 33, no.5, Jan 1995, pp. 82, 83.

51 H. Arnason, *A History of Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p.586.

52 Calvesi, `Informel', pp. 289, 290.

53 L. Venturi, `Six Italian Painters', *Studio International*, 1976, p. 49.

54 Celant, `Wound', p.295.

55 Braun, *Italian Art*, p. 15, and Calvesi, `Informel', p.296.

56 W. Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century Vol II* (London: Lund Humphries, 1976), p. 325.

57 Vattimo's `adoption' of Heidegger's ontological distinction between Being and beings is less idealist, and hence paradoxical to Vattimo's Nietzschean stance, than it sounds. By ousting the humanistic dominance of the subject over the object, due to the only ontological difference being between Being and beings (beings as both subjects and objects), undermines metaphysics' analysis of truth residing in the relationship of knowing subject to unknown object, which had constituted a notion of knowledge, and hence history, as progressively one of overcoming - hence grand narratives.

58 Gianni Vattimo (trans. J.R. Snyder), *The End of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.95.

59 Vattimo, *Modernity*, p.xxxiii.

60 [author's italics] Vattimo, *Modernity*, p.73.

61 Vattimo, *Modernity*, p.86.

62 Andrew Benjamin, `The Decline of Art: Benjamin's Aura', *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde: Aspects of a philosophy of difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.143-154.

63 Benjamin, *Avant-Garde*, p.153.

64 Andrew Benjamin's essay `marries' his revision of Benjamin's `aura' to Barthes' third meaning `significance'. Barthes description of this meaning is that it denies exhaustible contextualisation to a text/work of art; there exists above and beyond information of explanatory categorisation an 'obtuse meaning [which] is discontinuous and indifferent to history.' (Benjamin, p. 145). Citation from Barthes, `Le Troisième Sens', *L'Obvie et l'obtus* (Editions du Seuil: Paris, 1982.)

65 Benjamin, *Avant-Garde*, p.150: `the primordial remains, delimiting the possibility of a future and thus of a potential transgressing of the limits imposed by any one context ... The aura is therefore anoriginal.'

66 Benjamin, *Avant-Garde*, p.147

67 Benjamin, *Avant-Garde*, p.151.

68 Susan Larsen, *Cy Twombly: Works on Paper 1954-1976* (California: Newport Harbour Art Museum, 1981), p.48.

69 Benjamin H.D. Büchloh, `Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting', *October*, No.16. Spring, 1981, p.230.

70 Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1993), p.107.

71 Frederick Jameson, in H. Foster (ed.) *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), pp.115-16.

72 Cited in Hugh Cumming, `Italian Art Today: A Survey', *Italian Art Now,* Art & Design, Vol.5. No.1/2, 1989, p.36.

73 Hal Foster, `Against Pluralism', *Recodings* (London: New Press, 1999), p.30.

74 Victor Burgin, `The Absence of Presence: Conceptualism and Postmodernism', in V. Burgin (ed.), *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1986), p.45.

75 Foster, *Recodings*, p.30.

76 [my italics] Achille Bonito Oliva, *Avanguardia Transavangurdia* (Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1982), p.147.

77 Cited in Klaus Honnef, `Irony-Travesty-Clownish Antics: Mannerism in Post-Avant-Garde Italy', in *Italian Art Now*, Art & Design, vol.5, no.1/2, 1989, p.64.

78 Cited in Giancarlo Politi, `Francesco Clemente', *Flash Art*, no. 117, April, 1984, p.20.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE NATURE OF APPROPRIATION

PART I - METAMORPHOSIS: SPATIAL AND SEXUAL ENERGIES

> I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices ... whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each individual, whether he be classified as `man', or as `woman' ... it is not impossible that desire for a sexuality without number can still protect us ...[1] (Derrida)

> "We are not *subtle* enough to perceive that probably *absolute flow of becoming*; the permanent exists only thanks to our coarse organs which reduce and lead things to shared premises of vulgarity, whereas nothing exists *in this form*. A tree is a new thing at every instant; we affirm the *form* because we do not seize the subtlety of an absolute moment" (Nietzsche).[2] (Barthes)

> Desire is ... unconscious and hence unrelated to negation [lack], indifferent to personal identities or body images and independent of linguistic expression (the core of Lacan's Symbolic order).[3] (Deleuze and Guattari)

A high proportion of Twombly's works since his move to Italy in 1957 revitalize classical mythology. In his central home in Rome, Twombly has sought to be surrounded in his habitat by classical texts and artefacts, and by the books of those writers who have dwelt in Italy. He has been termed an `overeducated bibliophiliac', [4] and acknowledges that `[h]e reads for 2 or 3 hours every day ...'

In the spring of 1994 he `agreed to teach a *philosophy* seminar at Washington and Lee ... and chose his own subject: the idea of metamorphosis.'[5] This choice identifies two facts. Firstly, that Twombly believed himself to be immersed enough philosophically in the subject of metamorphosis to lecture, and secondly, that he believed it was a subject of relevance to contemporary education.

Dodie Kazanjian pinpoints the significant differences between Twombly and his contemporaries:

> While his fellow southerners ... Rauschenberg and ... Johns were using popular imagery and mundane objects to blaze the trails that would lead to Pop and Minimal art, Twombly chose a different direction entirely. His would lead back through European art and literature to the ancient world of classical mythology ..., which in his paintings merges indistinguishably with ... *sexual imagery, and raw sensation.*[6]

This revitalization of mythology in a hybrid language, via a media which reinvests `raw sensation' – the Greek haptic sense of the tactile, *touching us* physically - recalls McLuhan.

Twombly's own educational background at BMC had readied him for a `postmodern' approach to linguistics and nature's processes in the subject matter and syntax of Ovid, and the Graeco-Roman pre-scientific era. Olson's Phylogeny and Ontology – looking back and looking forward – looking back to mankind's lost kinetic/dynamic apperception, and placed within the congruence of Field theory's arbitrary energy dynamics as a mass of juxtaposed interacting thoughts and sensations. For Olson, Field theory was a theory of the cosmos and the human psyche, a metalanguage of lines of force, of electromagnetic waves, especially light waves, Einstein's bending of light in strong gravitational fields. Pound's concern had been:

> with the verity of myth as cognition ... [and] electromagnetism was to provide myth with a recognizable public status ... [as] ... Bohr['s] ... atomic model ... of electromagnetism ... bore a significant visual relation to that of early Greek cosmology ...'.[7]

Pound had also linked such dynamics of electrical transmissions to sexual energy. All these isomorphic congruences of Twombly's education should not be understated in his choice of subject on which to lecture, or on his works concerning metamorphosis.

When Twombly therefore turns his gaze to the classical world in which he now lives he would find there knowledge within a metalanguage of energy in all its forms. By identifying his personal experience [personae on occasions] with the `gods', he also

places classical mythology within the present, contemporary world. Twombly's gaze therefore is outside the limits of parody or pastiche. As Blanchot argues, `if the gods ... appear to be the primordial powers from which all emanates, the work, at the same time that it gives them voice, says something more original than they!'[8]

In *Proteus* (1984) (Pls.3,4); two oil and crayon paintings on paper done on the same day, the white surface of the paper acts as the first discernible rudiment from which form springs - the Mallarméan 'void' - and the figure which epitomises infinite metamorphoses, in both post-Darwinian biological, and mythological terms, is the sea: Proteus. In the physical world's transformations, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* represents the natural forces at work in anthropomorphic images.

In each painting there is the thrust of sea-green paint rising from the bottom centre of the paper. In the first work (Pl.3), this merges with, and transforms into, swirls of white and purple oil paint, with fiery red crayoned lines vortically energising out from the centre, possibly instigating the next stage of growth. In the second work (Pl.4), the swirls of paint have all become purplish-red, with daubs of quickly applied 'petal' implications. The green 'stalk' is also thinner, evoking a later stage of growth.

Apart from his endless ability to change form; to enact difference, Proteus, `of course knew the whole Odyssey word for word.'[9] It is Proteus, as both prophet and anamnesis, in Book IV of the *Odyssey*, who recounts the trials of Ulysses to King Menelaus; Homer and Proteus are one at this point. The Italian post-modern novelist and writer Italo Calvino is very concerned with the nature of the *Odyssey*, as potential for the present, in that we must not forget to return to the past as it is part of the future (a Homeric refrain of great importance to Pound):

> What Ulysses preserves from the lotus, from Circe's drugs and Siren's song, is not merely the past or the future. Memory really matters - for individuals, for the collectivity, for civilization - only if it binds together the imprint of the past and the project of the future, if it enables us to act without forgetting what we wanted to do, *to become without ceasing to be, and to be without ceasing to become.* [10]

For many writers and artists, proteanism is literally enacted in their work. Twombly's ideogrammic forms of colour verge between the pre-iconic eruptive life, and the iconic form of the flower. Thomas McEvilley makes the necessary connection to the image of a flower,[11] with reference to *Protea* (1985). There is a further important connection between Proteus per se, and Virgil's account of Proteus' encounter with Aristaeus in Book 4 of *The Georgics*. A connection Twombly undoubtedly makes, as in 1973 he had already produced a small work on paper entitled *Aristaeus Mourning the Loss of His Bees.*

Virgil's story is adapted from Menelaus' consultation with Proteus in *Odyssey*, and is a combination of myth and pastoral wisdom. Bees were seen as quasi-divine because of their produce. The Greek god Aristaeus, son of Apollo and father of Actaeon, was worshipped for his husbandry, and as the first to cultivate bee-keeping. His misdemeanour was the pursual of Eurydice, who in her flight suffered a snake bite, and died. The god's punishment was the death of Aristaeus' bees. Unaware of the cause, Aristaeus, on his mother's advice, seeks Proteus:

> for as a seer he knows
> All that has been, is now, and lies in store. [12]

Flowers have two important citations in Virgil's poem, with possible reference to Twombly's chosen colour-poetics of energy in the *Proteus* works. Firstly, in one ancient hypothesis, flowers are procreators of the non-sexual bees, and significantly the bees feed:

> On garland flower and yellow crocuses. [13]

whilst, secondly, one of Aristaeus' acts of supplication to the gods, to restore his fortune, entails:

> when Dawn nine times has reappeared,
> Pay poppies of forgetfulness to Orpheus. [14]

Whereas Twombly's *Aristaeus Mourning the Loss of His Bees* does not illustrate or evoke singularly any incident within Virgil's poem, invoking instead the memory of the god's pastoral significance per se, by his written name drifting across an atmospheric passage of blue-green paint. The two *Proteus* works, produced eleven years later, reveal the force of intimate creative memory and visual metamorphic correspondence.

Another example of myth, pastoral poetry and visual pyrotechnics of colour as protean form, is Twombly's reference to Theocritus' *The Idylls,* in a series of 1976 multi-panelled collages. As in *Aristaeus Mourning the Loss of His Bees,* the name of a god, poet or 'hero', or specifically in these collages, the name of the singer 'Thyrsis', is written under, in, and above a nebulous passage of creamy white paint - swept across the work as if the fragile intimacy of the past recollection is fleetingly echoed to those who want to hear.

A name written more than once, in this manner, follows a process of birth from the 'void', capturing on the windswept white 'wing' the distillation of its suggestive meaning before white silence descends again. Significantly, Mallarmé's poetic device for `Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard' entailed that `the pagination will be its true originality. Certain words in large type will need an entire blank page ...' [15] This is a technique of shock, of the unexpected, and is not dissimilar to Barthes' recommendation for the `physics of bliss', `the word ... if it is unexpected ... explodes, detonates.'[16]

Twombly has stated that he `understood ... words ... as forms, or as allusion ... to visual forms, and as emotional symbolic images ... and that individual words ... could instigate an interactive dialogue during the painting process.'[17] The `painting process' in this instance has similarities to the palimpsest, in that the veils of paint create the impression of past and present, and near and far, simultaneously. The veils of paint, like disembodied bending light, expand and contract, creating a continually charged surface of colour changes within one colour.

Theocritus' first poem in *The Idylls* (approx.300 B.C.) is 'The Passion of Daphnis', and Twombly in four collage works[18] experiments with the expressive range of its subject matter: bucolic landscape, unrequited love, the Muses' inspiration to the poet in song, and lament and death. Daphnis, son of Hermes, derives his name from the Greek word for laurel, as appropriate to the thicket in which he was born. As a herdsman he played the syrinx, which Pan had taught him. Deprived of requited love, due to his imposed gaucheness by Aphrodite's curse, his inner grace of feeling and eroticism is transposed into the beauty of his poetic song, and music becomes his life-force. Yet, paradoxically, the beauty of the feeling eventually erodes his life force, a gnawing chagrin d'amour (sorrow of love) brings his death. He chooses death by water, and is returned by the gods to sacred Olympus. The poem's implication is that love is the 'song' of life itself, which, when not returned, ends the musical/poetical quality essential to being:

Love drags me into the darkness where
no songs sound. [19]

The first collage *Idylls* (Pl.5) refers to the singer of the poem - the shepherd Thyrsis from Etna, who sings his lament commingled with that of Daphnis' own impending grief. One of the collage's two sections, the quadripartite left section, contains two collaged, vertical rectangles on its background cream paper. The larger of these rectangles has an inset at the top, covered voluptuously in different densities of green oil paint, but strictly contained within the borders of the inset.

This fertile, 'landscape' ideogram surges with 'protoplasmic' life, yet a contradiction arises as dense black crayon seeps up from the bottom right corner, as if the ideogrammic colour combination simultaneously warns of the depth of the sea and its death potential. Underneath this 'beginning to disturb' inset, on the bottom half of the rectangle, is written the opening of the song:

I am THYRSIS
of ETNA blessed with a

Tuneful Voice.

To the right is the other vertical rectangle that echoes the inset, but now with the black frenzied curlicues submerging almost all of the green paint beneath. The smaller of the two sections of the collage is in strict contrast to the latter vertical rectangle, and is a prime example of Twombly's lyrical propensity. This small section of cream paper is lightly spread, in the bottom left corner, with pale green hachures in a rising sequence, whilst the remainder of the paper has white oil paint brushed exquisitely lightly, partly covering the green. The contrast between these two is so well done that sensations of 'bitter' and 'sweet' arise. In the small section of this collage, silence, light, and possibly the notion of rebirth, emerge as an extension of the central theme of lament.

In the collage, *Untitled (Thyrsis' Lament for Daphnis)*(1976) (Pl.6), the three paper sections diminish in size from left to right, recording both Thyrsis' and Daphnis' descent into grief. On the left panel a lightly attached square of paper acts as title page, whilst a sheet of translucent graph paper, itself attached, yet flapping loosely, half-way down this 'title page', suggests a veiled poetic truth to this fable. Concurrent with the period of the poem would have been the Platonic revelation that poetic ecstasy revealed divine truths, inspired by the Muses yet necessarily 'veiled' by the poet.

A surging cloud of black oil paint lies half-way above and half-way below Twombly's 'veil', whilst beneath the remainder of the 'veil' an unrecognisable name – Thyrsis? Daphnis? - is smeared with heavy touches of white oil paint, which tumbles out from the right side of the veil, trailing towards the bottom of the paper, as if being emptied away. This section breathes an ominous atmosphere - touches of hope dispersing in the path of grief.

Throughout the poem Thyrsis asks the Muses' help in song, often to reprimand the Nymphs for their lack of protection of Daphnis. This is neither so whimsical nor 'unphilosophic' as it might sound. Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedrus* (a work referred to by

Twombly in *Untitled* (1977) (Pl.7)), eulogises love with the help of the Muses and the Nymphs, making reference to Sappho's wisdom on the subject. Sappho was a bisexual[20] Greek poetess whom Twombly holds in `high esteem',[21] making reference to her in such works as *Catullus* (1962) (use of nomination), *Untitled* (1962) (paraphrase of Sappho's *Fragment 115*), (*Untitled Sapphic* (I-V) (1963), and *Untitled (Sappho)* (1976).

The second panel of *Untitled (Thyrsis' Lament for Daphnis)* is almost completely covered with a section of the poem; where Thyrsis quotes Daphnis' own lament, in which Daphnis makes a paradox out of what there is left to sing when life has become a living death:

> Cease MUSES, Cease my Country song,
> May violets grow on thistles,
> may they grow on thorns!
> May narcissus grow on Juniper
> the world must change
> Daphnis dies! Pears grow on pine trees
> Now the fox must chase the hounds
> and the screech owl's song sound sweeter
> than the nightingale's!

The implication is that love - Eros - governs the life force, and when omitted from life, and hence Nature, make no-[non]-sense.

In the third panel, in which flight is possibly suggested by the top three-quarters of the paper being insecurely adhered - fluting considerably - the adjoined quarter of paper at the bottom contains the black 'cloud' of the first panel, having sunk to the bottom completely, where the 'veil' would otherwise have been. Beneath this heavily emphasised, black painted frenzied condensation there is a glimpse of an ` M' and a `U' - the Muses' death?, or of music/song itself?

At this juncture it is worth speculating on the connection between the central themes of Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* - both works referred to in *Untitled* (1977)(Pl.7) - and the theme of love/eros in these present works under discussion. The

nucleus of Socrates' exposition in *Symposium*, via Plato, is that Eros functions on three hierarchical levels. The first level/impulse is sensual, and often sexual; the nobler level which follows, and is reliant on the first impulse towards physical beauty, is the 'spiritual' procreation of the soul, epitomised in the products of art - a soul 'pregnant' with creation which seeks a partner to bring the offspring to birth. The final, and third, 'lover' is that of the lover of wisdom - philosophy per se - this level is also not divorced from the first impulse entirely.

Search for Beauty, often in homosexual or 'Platonic' relationships, is directed by the mutual impulse that directs love for Truth. Truth, in fact, is only attainable through the inspiration of love - in its combined sensual, emotional and intellectual aspects. Love instigates the efforts of the soul to recapture the ideal world of Forms.

In *Phaedrus*, the eternal world of Forms from which the soul falls as soon as one is born, is related by Socrates in the form of myth - in the gods' procession across the sky they take back men's souls, those which have recaptured the world of Forms. Significantly, even the second hierarchical 'lover' is capable of growing wings to his soul to enable him to join the gods on their journey, primarily because of the poet's (artist's) propensity for 'veiled' truths. That Plato's works are of significance to Twombly is further verified by three paintings produced in 1977 – *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Republic*.

Daphnis' death is the death of a 'Muse', in that he was an inspired poet; his songs were loved by all, and prompted ecstasy, the second impulse of Eros, dependent on the first, as defined by Plato. The 'veiled' poetic truth, suggestively, of the fable is the death of music/song, or any poetic art form, when unrequited love makes impossible the pregnant poetic creation. That love of physical beauty could lead to the procreation of art is explicit in Ovid's story of Pan and the nymph from Arcadia, Syrinx:

> when Pan thought that he had at last caught hold of Syrinx, he found that
> ... he held a handful of marsh reeds. As he stood sighing, the wind blew

through the reeds ... The god was enchanted ... by the sweetness of the music. [22]

Etymologically, Pan is derived from the Greek word `pan' meaning 'whole' or 'all', which has sexual reverberations - Pan's considerable sexual energy engaged bisexuality,[23] or more specifically, the protean multiplicity of androgyny in human identity. Pan is also linked to fear, his irascibility inducing panic, as Theocritus reminds us in 'The Passion of Daphnis':

We are scared of Pan ...

Tired out from the morning's hunt. He can turn nasty. [24]

In Twombly's two collages, *Pan* (1975) (Pls.8,9), each of these two connotations are present. The collages are reminiscent of Pliny's *Natural History*, in their manner of depiction - Pliny's texts included the mythological and folkloric origins of plants' effects and remedies. Possibly, just as influential, are the mode of Encyclopedia 'plates', on which Barthes wrote an essay in 1964. [25]

Both collages follow the same format, and vary only slightly in content. In the first collage under discussion (Pl.8), a vertical rectangular sheet of paper has two separate white rectangles joined horizontally, slightly smaller than the background paper. On the top rectangle is pasted a small extract of `overlapping deep green leaves of a chilli pepper plant, taken from a French biology book.' [26] Adjoined to both the bottom of the extract and the top of the bottom white rectangle is an almost 'floating' paper extending below the background panel. This sheet contains many 'finger' smears of subtle flesh-brown intent; an intent consolidated by a larger area of deep brown earth-coloured paint directly beneath the twice written PAN. The evocation is of Twombly's own sensually physical and earthy nature in the mirror image of this god.

Pan's name is first horizontally written in the typographical manner, in well-defined black pencil, whilst above, though slightly overlapping and echoing the former, are personally expressive, passionate red letters, hovering, in that the last letter N seeks

to reach up to the extract of 'horn'-overlapping leaves; a merged sexuality implicit in the 'bisexuality' of the plant. There is a fusion between the natural world and human sexuality.

In the second collage (Pl.9), the difference is comprised of the word `PAN', being written once, diagonally towards the leaves, whilst in the bottom right corner in brackets the word 'panic' is contained. The ascending, diagonal movement of `Pan' in both collages is attributed, by Schmidt, to both `the surging tempo that his fearsomeness provokes' and `an ascending tone that will not allow that the great Pan is dead.' [27]

These collages of Pan work on two fronts, as objects of scientific information and as symbolic reverberations. In a sense, Twombly has reversed the pictorial procedure in the *Encyclopedia*, where, as Barthes informs us:

> The majority of these plates are formed of two parts; in the lower part ... (the object of demonstration), isolated from any real context, is shown in its essence; on the contrary, in the upper ... vignette, this same object ... [is] linked to other objects ... here we discover the syntagmatic dimension of the message. [28]

Twombly's top 'plate' acts as a metamorphic reduction. In Ovid's poem all the objects in the cosmos contain life and poetic meaning - are anthropomorphic. For Twombly, the syntagmatic vignette below contains the vibrations given by the symbol `PAN' - the lord of Arcadia; the earthy, part-animal, endless surge of passion; the intoxicating longing his music produced, and his love of the nymph Echo. Barthes concludes his examination by saying:

> There is a depth in the Encyclopaedia image ... which transforms the object into myth. This leads to what we must call the Poetics of the Encyclopaedic image, if we agree to define Poetics as the sphere of the infinite vibrations of meaning, at the center of which is placed the literal object. [29]

Bowler writes in 1970 that:

> There seems today to be a continuing increasing desire to resurrect the Nietzsche-killed father God in the new form of a private dionysiac

> experience celebrated through ... various means of arriving at the sense of unity ...[30]

The Symbolists,[31] and both Motherwell and Rothko, were interested in Nietzsche's works, for Rothko specifically the *Birth of Tragedy,*[32] in which Nietzsche writes of the Dionysiac condition, tending toward the shattering of the individual and his fusion with the original Oneness. Barthes relies, I would argue, on the Dionysiac thesis in *The Will to Power* in his own *The Pleasure of the Text* - the erotics of the text as jouissance/bliss:

> It is interpretation itself, a form of the will to power, which exists not as 'being' but as process, a becoming as passion (Nietzsche).[33]

In *Will to Power* artistic activity is seen by Nietzsche to be paradigmatic of creative yes-saying practices, art is seen as a stimulant to the will to power, which is a will to strength through an expansion of desire. Nietzsche's will – which in both Barthes' and Deleuze's adaptions become Desire, respectively as *jouissance* and *primary force*,[34] opposed to Lacanian 'lack' and substitution - is a formless, endlessly creative energy, it is beyond reason, and all so-called 'wisdoms' are attempts to disguise the will.

Art, for Nietzsche, is essentially 'sensuality in its disguises,[35] ... a compulsion to an orgiastic state'. [36] The Dionysiac impulse, 'overcoming', and 'will to power', provide new artistic metaphors for endless Becoming, which is the superabundance of the Dionysiac artistic impulse as the first science of being. The Dionysiac artist brings forth the multiplicity of the individual; the Dionysiac ecstasy is joy in release from individuation, a sensuous validity in which the man transcends his perspectival limitations imposed by society, and when, for Nietzsche, 'Excess revealed itself as truth'. [37]

For Barthes, jouissance/bliss emerges after the 'collapse' of institutionalised 'selfhood' via our erotic body:

> Does the text have human form ... Yes, ... it is my body of bliss I encounter ... my [erotic] body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do ... it's a drift, something both revolutionary and asocial, and it cannot be taken over by ... any ideolect ... no voice (Science, Cause, Institution) is *behind* what it is saying ... this

> extraordinary state, outside ... communication, then becomes language, and not *a* language ... [38]

Barthes substitutes a literary aesthetic for Nietzsche's Dionysiac force, quoting Nietzsche almost word for word, `conceiving a true science of becoming ...'[39]. Nietzsche, Barthes, Deleuze and Guattari, all view a `Dionysiac' will to power as that which recasts meaning, a boundless celebratory birthplace for overcoming *dead* `languages' (or metaphors).

This digression to certain Nietzschean post-structuralists is pertinent when examining Twombly's `portrait' of *Dionysus* (1975) (Pl.10). In his catalogue essay, `The Revolution of the Sign', Pierre Restany states of Twombly's work:

> He makes use of all areas of current symbolism, but at the exact moment when their significance becomes exhausted ... when an erect phallus expresses the desire of the entire world by being subjected to depersonalizing schematization.[40]

This Dionysiac desire, like Nietzsche's portrayal, unites Nature and Culture - `artistic energies that burst forth from nature itself'[41] - the life-enhancing impulse underlying nature and human beings' natural forces (as opposed to enforced laws) which proliferates, endlessly. We are back in that perpetual fertility in the vital universe, self and language known to early man, which for Pound was the primary reality, those transformational energies bearing correspondence to the tensile `spermatic' Dionysiac energy. Above his pictographic *Dionysus* (a form which was used ideogrammically in *Fifty Days at Iliam*), Twombly swiftly applies, in my terminology, a `loop-language' of energy via heavy, hortizontal crayoned lines. This loop-language becomes almost a signature to many of the artist's works, isomorphic for nature's and human energies.

In the artist's trisected collage *Bacchus* (1981) (Pl.11) (HB,IV,21), the vertical format of the 'Natural History' mode is continued in the second and third 'panels', both having the 'scientific' information of a reproduction squarely placed beneath Twombly's own vignettes. The reproductions are of a green vine leaf, a leaf with which the head of the god was crowned, and a bunch of leafed white grapes - second and third panels

respectively. In the upper sections of the three panels are Twombly's larger versions of the vine (or ivy) leaves, having left various blank margins of space between the painted leaf and its contour. On the tip of each leaf begins the word 'BACCHUS' in red capitals.

Schmidt, who has done an extended analysis of this work, relates the ivy and grape attributes of Bacchus to his synonym Dionysus, and his cult. That the first of Twombly's gesticulative leaves is green, contoured in red, the orgiastic nature of Bacchus/Dionysus is symbolically pregnant, reaching its birth/fulfilment when in the third leaf both nature and culture ripen, 'the violet and blue shades define the figure, but the right contour, drawn repeatedly in pastel and flaming upward in a dense hachure, shines in the bright red of the god's name and reminds one of a heart.' But the second version of Twombly's leaf is blood red and 'so shredded that it is difficult not to see associations with the ... threatening and deadly aspects of the cult.' [42]

In *Capitoli* (1962) and *Untitled* (1962) (Pl.12), Twombly provides a 'dictionary' of his ideogrammic language of colour and its combinations, within and above a palette-form, for both the elemental forces of Nature and mankind. This symbolic pregnance of colour as a language prior to, and on the cusp of, form enacts, often ideogrammically, the forces and passions of nature and mankind. In these two works of the artist's 'vocabulary', Dream, Cloud, Mirror, Blood, Flesh and Earth, enact, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an explicit correspondence between the microcosm of man and its derivative macrocosm.

This co-existence of Nature and Culture is continued in *Bacchus*, as is the continuance of colour in itself as ideogrammic. One such image is vibrant-red, often reaching blood-colour, which, when used in nominations, heart-contours or smeared 'streams', links love, passion and sensually orgiastic transformations. The first of the three vine leaves in *Bacchus* is filled with flesh-pink paint. If one aspect of Dionysus' legend is taken into account - 'The other gods were jealous of him ... [he] was torn to

pieces ... Athene was able to rescue the god's ... still beating heart ...'[43] – it is apparent that Twombly does not ignore the full ideogrammic potential of the vine-shaped form.

The living heart, crowned head, and means of intoxication are within one ideogrammic form, all as life-expanding forces. Twombly appears to follow in this series of three collages Homer's view of the god as born to give pleasure to mankind, or Nietzsche's exultation of the Dionysian 'Becoming' (as opposed to Apollonian 'Being'), as well as possibly the darker aspects of the cult.

Edit deAk in 1982, when reviewing Documenta 7 exhibition, reasons that if the exhibition was ' striving for the coexistence of nature and culture':

> then Cy Twombly would have been the only one who fulfilled it. He is the only Modern artist who can make one think that nature is a Modern structure. His work has always affirmed culture's deepest traces – writing and mythology – as if they were simply nature ... His work neatly side steps the overt issues of the conflict in art now: the conceptual versus the painterly, the Modernist versus the regressive.[44]

This correspondence of nature and culture, a unity of flux within reality under binary appearances, was applied in Ovid to metamorphic identity. Bacchus was seen for two reasons as epitomising non-linear identity. Firstly, his birth was associated with hybrid sexuality,[45] so the assumption of individual categories was deconstructed. Secondly, the dominance of the senses in a primordial synchronic blending (as in the Dionysiac shattering of the individual in sensual ecstasy) induced a heightened awareness of metamorphic flexibility. Fluid identity is pivotal to many of Twombly's themes.

Dionysus as a phallic master signifier in Symbolic language does not appear to be Twombly's general 'discourse' on sexuality, language and identity. Rather, there is a definite undercurrent in his mythological works which stresses androgyny, a metamorphosis of fluid sexual identity, which has a history from Plato,[46] Mallarmé[47] and the Symbolists,[48] some Surrealists,[49] to Kristeva [50] and Deleuze and Guattari.

Deleuze and Guattari, in their work, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1977), oppose Lacan's theory in which the unconscious arises from language acquisition, after Oedipal constraints, and also the concept that desire arises from *lack*. The Freudian unconscious, they argue, is a capitalist construction, an internalized set of power relations. The Oedipal construction of desire, imposed and strait-jacketed upon the individual by society and the family, pressurizes the directions of desire and language.

Their mode of analysis -'schizoanalysis' – rejects an 'oedipalized' unconscious, because for Deleuze and Guattari desire is present from birth, and, due to its pre-linguistic beginnings, is asexual and characterized by multiplicity, the breaking of boundaries and transforming of identities. Such a libido, which is not stabilized by oedipal constraints, is both fluid and 'deterritorialized'.

The 'schizo-unconscious' is persistently available to deconstruct the *politics* of desire, shifting rigidity of meaning, crossing boundaries into a world of nuance. In this manner the 'schizo-desire' dismantles the *transcendental, symbolic law* of the Oedipal system. The importance of his approach to the nature of sexual identity, through the choice of metamorphosis as a subject, highlights Twombly's early adherence to a pre-Modern (Plato) and early Modernist (Symbolists and Mallarmé) position, one which a much later branch of non-Lacanian postmodern theory of psychoanalysis also expounds. This 'regression' to androgyny is more radical a position than positions taken by feminist artists, for example Nancy Spero. As will soon become obvious, in Twombly's 1960s series of *The Birth of Venus*, he, on occasions, destabilises the female form as specular consumption to the male gaze, *imploding* linguistic and cultural constructs of sexual identity. There is far more than a *deconstruction* of sexual dichotomy in androgyny, as Derrida's wishful thinking makes clear in the first introductory footnote. In Spero's *Rebirth of Venus* (1982) 'the question ... is posed exclusively in terms of ... [r]epresenting these ... iconic images of the female body ... [as] critiques of phallologocentricism ...', nevertheless:

> If, as Spero's work seems to suggest, the inscription of the `other' necessitates a different `grammar', this `grammar' must effect the vocabulary *beyond an inversion* of the dominant terms of reference (woman as ... energetic as opposed to passive and submissive). [51]

In *(Nike) Androgyne* (1981-3) (Pl.13), a small work on paper in oils and wax crayon, Twombly makes reference to the goddess who personified Victory. In a collage of 1984, entitled *Victory* (Pl.14), we are given a once-folded paper 'wing' with frenzied crayoned 'wheels' underneath, collaged to the main cardboard panel; simplicity itself to indicate the winged goddess of flight and speed. Directly underneath the 'wing', written in blue crayon, possibly emphasising the sky, is the word `Victory', but, significantly, two words in black crayon follow:

`over'

` man'

This assertion could solely apply of course to Nike's position as messenger of the gods, or to Nike's synonym, Athena the warrior goddess, who in Homer's *Iliad* induces Hector to stand and fight, and who at the end of the *Odyssey* helped Ulysses return. But 'over man', and the fact that it is not Androgyne bracketed in the earlier work, but Nike, leads to the emphasis on a fluid sexuality; a metamorphic state which subverts a masculine-dominated world of so-called stability and rationality.

The history of Nike/Athena's attributes is limitless; she embodies the metamorphosis of human identity, in that nature is flexible matter, and unfamiliar forms of the sexual impulse reflect the natural world's aesthetic character - the power of multifarious process.

On the lower half of the paper a nucleus of undifferentiated energy exists, in which simultaneous speeds and densities of painterly action co-join as a focus of vibrant change in the 'image' of Athena/Nike; whose quicksilver nature in the *Iliad* was legendary e.g. `borrowing for her purpose the appearance and voice of Deiphobus.' [52] The symbolised flux of energy in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* for the goddess is arguably her aegis (a goatskin shield), which transforms the course of events wherever it

appears. Twombly could be capturing its vibrating presence; a presence of grey-white paint flashing in transience, with black and red pastel lines surging, as force, death and passion, outwards from the nucleus. Or we may have the poetic visual transfiguration of Diomedes' shield, which `.she made ... glow with a blaze as steady as the Star of Summer.'[53] She inspired and induced men (becoming one herself on several occasions) to different identities of themselves. As an abstraction she is both the ideal of Victory per se and victory over *one*self.

To be open to the unlimited fecundity of creation is to be in a continual state of becoming. During the years 1960-1963, Twombly's obsession with Venus as the correspondence of creative and procreative forces, as an amorous aesthetic, reaches its climax. A large proportion of the nine works through this period appear to pay `homage' to Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, as there is little variation of title.[54] These works show Venus in the full-frontal advancing position, frequently arising from a blue or white ruffled horizontal evocation of sea/foam. Such works, `in which a large form dominates the picture field, Twombly terms his `frontal pieces'.' [55]

It is through the primacy of the deepest instinctual forces working through the characters of myths that Twombly brings us back to aspects of humanity which have become our unconscious, or the alienated Other in Nature's own Heraclitean, non-Euclidean flux. He reveals the abandonment of the gods when knowledge was sensual, a world before the division between mental and physical consciousness was established, and, pertinently, before categorical sexual division. Not only was `bisexuality a condition Ovid closely connects with metamorphosis ...,' [56] but such a god as `Dionysus was also the woman-god who orgiastically changed sex and the child-god of re-emergent life.'[57]

Twombly's awareness of the nature of sexuality never allows him a simplistic divisibility. Such dichotomies as Eros/Thanatos, Birth/Death, and Femininity/Masculinity are two sides of the same coin - inseparables, in other words. Such an ambivalence in

Twombly's series of Venus is argued by the two critics, Delehanty and Larsen, who, respectively, see Venus as `formed of ambiguous male and female shapes', [58] (or more specifically) of `rounded breasts, phallic and other body forms.' [59]

Delehanty, rightly I believe, makes a connection in respect to these works, when she states that `The *Birth of Venus*, like his 1959 *Poems to the Sea*, is an analogue for elemental movement and creative drive.'[60] With respect to the series *Poems to the Sea*, I make reference to language, especially poetry, as an erotic ebb and flow, which it can be argued places it in the realm of the `chora'; that androgynous linguistic realm illuminated by Kristeva and, she argues, used, amongst others, by Mallarmé.[61]

If this proposed correspondence between an androgynous language and perpetual wave motion necessary to nascent (creative) life is taken on board, then Twombly's composite Venus series could testify to a pictorial realm of language irreducible to a symbolic law, in other words, non-Lacanian. It is worthy of note that Blistene, in reference to the *Birth of Venus* series, argues that Twombly `deliberately thinks in a wave/in waves.'[62] Such a statement from a French critic brings to mind Mallarmé's aesthetics, in which, firstly, the making of poetry is analogized to the wave, especially in *Salut*:

> Nothing, this foam, virgin verse ...
> worth the white concern of our sail. [63]

and, secondly, his poem *Petit Air* in which a girl enters, and becomes the wave [64]

> (in the wave thus made alive).[65]

In the small work on paper, *Birth of Venus* (1962) (Pl.15), in tempera, crayon, coloured pencil and pencil, Twombly's examination of this composite Venus makes its first appearance. The cream background is reductive and latent, reducible almost to the silence of the nothingness of non-colour, yet it is the pregnant context of light necessary for the visible, the emergent. There is a thematic and pictorial correspondence here between the emergent world from nothingness and the emerging pictorial image from

light. Full emptiness, or absent presence, is the degree zero of Mallarméan proclivities - the spaces of silence upon which birth of the image sensually vibrates.

Twombly's cream background is divided horizontally by a softly-pencilled, frequently overlapping line. A pencilled, yet significantly empty, rectangle exists at the top centre of the work - the unknown that arises jubilantly has yet to be named. Filling three-quarters of the bottom half of the paper are what Schmidt aptly terms the 'avalanche of seduction': [66] those pencilled breast-forms that tier out in their suspension of distance to the viewer. These bulbous forms are often nippled via small pencilled circles, and a sparingly used salmon-coloured crayon is frenziedly, even tantalisingly, applied in hachures over this entire 'frontal piece', which includes, extending beneath the 'avalanche', a form which evokes simultaneously a projecting vulva and genitalia, and extending above the 'avalanche', arising above the horizon line, two erect, incredibly slim breasts, or phalli. The latter identification of phalli is sustained by the artist's device, at their tips, of an emission of carnal-red crayon and black-pencilled, frenzied curlicues.

The identically-sized work on paper, *Birth of Venus* (1962) (Pl.16), retains both the uniform cream background and empty rectangle, but the pencilled breasts of this Venus have multiplied considerably, and they now interpenetrate with a frenzied black-crayoned loop-language, amalgamating Venus and the foam from which she arises. The red crayon has been omitted from the two 'phalluses'. Instead it has been smeared, by the artist, amongst a warm-glowing, often dense application, of the salmon-flesh-coloured crayon. It is as if passion and sunlight themselves have 'bred' an increase of breasts; an image now which, in respect to the previous work, advances further forward.

In *Venus Anadyomene* (1962) (Pl.17) (HB,II,63), Twombly has moved his obsession to the canvas to achieve an awesome mammary scale. With the use of oil paint, wax crayon and pencil, Twombly has united the white foam of the *Poems to the Sea* (1959) series with an increased passionate-red portrayal of Venus. Again the

uniform cream background, yet the pencilled rectangle now contains the pencilled word 'Venus', which an electrifyingly-applied red crayon seeks to erase. This accumulation of blood-red erasures evokes the masterpiece's carnal latent state; a carnality which is forever now and serves as the impulse for Twombly's own *Birth of Venus.*

As Venus emerges, her mammary nature, and the timeless passionate response it is to incite, is evoked by the artist outlining each of the many pencilled breasts in a vibrating-red crayon. On Venus' right-hand side her breast-forms float away and transmute into ideogrammic sperm and heart-shapes.

Bodily fluids and emotions cannot be iconographically divorced in this work. Although the white oil paint is not applied in the manner of the 'horizontal lines of foam', as in the series *Poems to the Sea,* the bottom half of this canvas is filled with white random scudding or scumbling. The correspondence with *Poems to the Sea* lies in the pencilled numbers along the foreground of the work, especially the consistent rhythmic 1 and 2, counting the rhythm of perpetual motion, in this work in red crayon. This is a highly dramatic work, in which we are possibly being reminded that Venus was not only 'born of the foam', but also from semen (which she also timelessly incites), and therefore ultimately from Desire, from our Desire now.

The work on paper, *The Birth of Venus* (1963) (Pl.18), is likely to be a 'study' *after* the painting on canvas, *Birth of Venus* (1963) (Pl.19) (HB,II,155). Twombly admits to often reversing the traditional procedure; the standard practice of 'study' prior to working on canvas. This is possibly due to his preference for working on paper.[67] In these two works the breast-forms have multiplied further, their 'avalanche' submerging the bottom three-quarters of the canvas, or paper, below a curlicue blue-crayoned line evoking the breaking sea. The cream background is divided therefore by a distant sea, and now Venus is on the 'sand', advancing rapidly towards the viewer in an overwhelming manner, due in part to the breast-forms' opulent size increasing in perspective towards the foreground.

Twombly's primal archetypal Venus is presented to the viewer in a flagrant physicality, not least in the fact that his language of energized foam undulates in the same language of sexually charged currents which provide the ideograms for Venus's salmon-pink crayoned, hastily and randomly applied, flesh tones, which themselves provide a sensation of shimmering bodily movement.

The artist's line and colour have a random, vital impact, paralleling nature in its state of constant flux, *re*-presenting the processes initiating a formed image. In these two works of 1963, the two slim phallic/breast-forms stand their `bases' on the frenzied line of blue sea. The artist's pencilled outline for the voluptuous breast-forms immediately beneath them has an ecstatic libidinal energy which amounts to sheer frenzy at moments, tightening into his energized loop-language, which itself often veers outwards from the outlines. It is as if Venus' breast-forms were endlessly capable of multiplying through the realms of history, and through the history of art's interpretations.

As a landscape of `seismographic' recordings of vibrant pictorial creation, and of procreative life, it is not surprising if the image is not contained within a procrustean female form. The androgynous eroticism (identified by Delehanty and Larsen) deconstructs any unified sexual distinction, and hence reduction. Equally, the teeming perpetual motion of Twombly's metamorphic language, plus the inside and outside areas of the breast-forms interpenetrating, constitutes a pictorial process that deconstructs `common-sense' perspective, space and time. Stephen Bann also recognizes the undercurrent of androgyny in other works by the artist. Bann, who has written extensively on Twombly's *Hero and Leandro* and *Hero and Leandro (To Christopher Marlowe)*, analyses both works in the context of Marlowe's text - specifically in Marlowe's androgynous suggestions: `the lustful Neptune' and Leander's cry `I am no woman, I'.

In his two collages of 1975, *Apollo and the Artist* (Pl.20), and *Mars and the Artist* (Pl.21), Twombly's concern appears to be with the redefinition of his own identity,

via myth's alchemic qualities, that the elixir of life is the potency of rebirth. The artist, in a sense, has always had the power of metamorphosis. He/she transforms raw materials from which the world is made, such as pigment and water, into often newly discovered images. But in so many of Twombly's mythological or historical works he also becomes the raw material, transfigured by the encounter with the visual 'identity' he is aesthetically forming - it is a relational process.

In relation to his aforementioned comments on line and its formation, that things are shaped by their own inner necessity, as a life-principle working its way out from a seed/germ, collage may be viewed, in a sense, in the same light. The idea, which might consist in one word or image, generates natural relations of growth. Rather than working on the linear-growth sequence of elements in a grammatical sentence, a continual bifurcation/branching process is at work, a form of cross-fertilisation prompted by desire. In *Mars and the Artist* the artist seeks the journey of rebirth, via the lotus flower, which in Egyptian culture was sacred and taken on the journey after life. There are three different shades of cream paper pasted onto the background of this collage; a large upper rectangle from which hangs, at its base, a smaller rectangle with a blue crayoned three petal lotus and the word 'Artist' written closely under the right hand petal. The third piece of paper is of the same width as the smaller rectangle and is aligned above it, entering the larger rectangle. What is of significance to this section is its 'whiteness' compared to the other two sections, and the Latin word 'electrum' lightly written across it; also, on its right edge, the word 'MARS' begins in large black letters.

The odyssey that Ulysses took began with the Lotus Eaters, and the fruit of the lotus was eaten to lose one's memory - and hence identity? What is significant in both collages is that the title is reversed on each top rectangle, as if the Artist/Mars, Artist/Apollo are interchangeable, or one and the same. In the collage under discussion the large top rectangle has three distinct profiles, drawn vigorously in black crayon, of Mars' shield, echoes of which continue to the right, subliminally sensed under trails of white oil paint, through which red and blue softly crayoned looped lines appear. Sky-

blue, passion-red, the warrior's symbol, all float above vivid green looped 'balls' of crayon evoking landscape.

The elemental medium or sphere for the god of war is fire and air, two of the four substances the ancients believed to be the foundation of everything - Twombly, the artist, complements this by providing the other two, earth (pigment) and water. Where the symbol of Mars and the lotus (Artist seeking rebirth) meet is on the 'bridge' between the two rectangles - the white section of 'electrum'.

Collage functions on a non-linear level rather than linear - multifarious connections are made which generate images. The electrum was an alloy of gold and silver used by the ancients, and forges the 'shield' necessary in Twombly's rebirth - an electrically charged area which protects him from the stagnancy of the imagination, a stagnancy which would be the death of the artist. One of the root meanings of the word 'mar' is 'to shine' and the light from this section, electrum, is also the denotation of minute particles charged with electricity. Twombly is possibly referring here to Pound's use of Fenollosa's 'continuous light bands' theory - an illumination in a complex instant of time which 'lights up' the transference of force, as an interacting nuance between words and ideas.

One of Mars' early attributes was fertility, and if this is coupled in Twombly's mind with the later attributes of courage and Venus' love, Twombly is forging for himself an identity in the artist's continual rebirth (necessary at the approach towards each new work), which overcomes all fears of ineptitude. Venus was the only one that loved Mars, and without the dynamic of love that she represents, any creation (recall Socrates) is impossible.

It is in this context that Davvetas discusses the collage *Apollo and the Artist.* This collage has many correspondences to *Mars and the Artist.* The two main rectangles are similarly positioned (though with a small distance between them, and no 'bridging'

third construct), with the lower containing the lotus now in heavy black crayon and the word 'Artist' is submerged, as is most of the cream paper, beneath the white and blue upward thrust of oil paint.

The name of the god, in this instance, has been placed fully within the upper rectangle, aligned above the lotus, in large blue capitals, with at least two echoes, as in a palimpsest, below, drifting through a lightly blue-tinged white cloud of oil paint. It is this transient 'echoing' device of Twombly's that Davvetas terms his `spirit of erography':

> If the name 'Apollo' ... exists as something easily recognisable, it is nevertheless `fuzzied' by a shadow inscription beneath, an `earlier' writing that is both a residue and an emanation of a process permanently in progress, of a spirit continually giving birth to itself and simultaneously perishing, like the spirit of Eros that Diotima [via Socrates] describes in Plato's *Symposium*. [68]

This process of birth, death and rebirth, activated by the creative spirit, through an almost silent whiteness has, of course, parallels to Mallarmé's poetics.

Twombly has scrawled in pencil `Delphi' and `delos' diagonally above `Apollo'; the sun god's (or god of light's) birth place and temple. A god whose multiple characteristics ranged from ripening the harvest, prophecy, and significantly for the artist, music, song and poetic inspiration, whose retinue were the Muses. Twombly has drawn a rectangle beneath `Apollo'; one of his *parole* [69] implicit for poetry, beneath which is written in pencil `Poetry Muses Arts'. The oblique angle of the lotus strives towards these three incantations from its lower position. There is less need for the transformative process in a transference of force between the god Apollo and the artist's rebirth in this collage, but what does seem explicit is the contrast between the white light from which Apollo emerges and the muddied combination of blue and white surrounding the lotus/artist, very much as if Twombly is 'earthed' in contrast to Apollo's position on Mount Parnassus. What is of interest in Apollo's legend is that his return to, and journey from. Delphi was in a chariot drawn by white swans; also he changed his son, Cycnus (to whom Twombly dedicates a sculpture *Cycnus* (1978) (Pl.22)) into this sacred bird.

It is of course not impossible that Cy Twombly feels correspondences in the naming of the Greek god's son to himself and his own son, Cyrus Alessandro. Such an act of semantic `play', highlighting the nuances of the morpheme `Cy', Bann views as one of the methods by which Twombly places himself as the `psychological subject' in the work *Anabasis* (1983):

> We see the `X' of Xenophon (author of the Greek *Anabasis*) being transformed into an inscription which is also the scythed wheel of a chariot. At the same time we know that the *Anabasis* of Xenophon ... was also the *Anabasis of Cyrus* ... Out of the inscribed `X's, there comes the death-dealing *scy*thed wheel; out of the epic account of Xenophon, the defeat and death of *Cy*rus.[70]

The flight of the white swan symbolises for Twombly, via Mallarmé, the promise of 'birth', of capturing such aesthetic treasures as the 'infinite' in form.

The words 'infinite space' are written by Twombly midway down the outside left edge of the upper rectangle. This could refer to the spatial incommensurability between the artist and the god's habitats, but the aesthetic ability to present such infinite space through 'light' has reverberations throughout Twombly's career, and Apollo, as the god of light, connotes the necessary forging of identity for such an aesthetic rebirth. In an analogy of self-renewal in past wisdom for the present, we find echoes of Pound's *Cantos*, and also Olson's co-joining of modern physics - electromagnetism - with the non-Euclidean world `from Homer back.' [71]

1 P. Kamuf (ed.), *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (New York: Harvester, 1991), pp.455, 456.

2 [author's italics] R. Barthes, The *Pleasure of the Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 60, 61. (Barthes citation is from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*)

3 R. Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 89.

4 R. Smith 'The Great Mediator', in H. Szeeman, *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), p. 15.

5 [my italics] D. Kazanjian, 'The Painted Word', *Vogue*, New York, no.9, Sept., 1994, p. 555.

6 [my italics] Kazanjian, 'Word', p. 549.

7 Ian Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The modernist poetics of Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 149.

8 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p.232.

9 Italo Calvino (trans. P. Creagh), *The Literature Machine* (London: Picador, 1989), p.136.

10 [my italics] Calvino, *Machine*, p.138.

11 Thomas McEvilley, 'Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, vol.27, Dec. 1988, p.116.

12 Virgil (trans. L. P.Wilkinson), *The Georgics* (London and New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982), p.137.

13 Virgil, *Georgics*, p.130.

14 Virgil, *Georgics*, p.143.

15 Bradford Cook (trans. ed.), *Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), p.80.

16 Barthes, *Pleasure*, p.42.

17 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.IV 1972-1995* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1995), p. 36, Footnote 7.

18 *Idylls* (1976), *Idilli* (1976), *Untitled (Thyrsis' Lament for Daphnis)* (1976),*Untitled* (1976)

19 Theocritus (trans. R Wells), *The Idylls* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1988), p.59.

20 J. Balmer (trans.), *Sappho: Poems & Fragments* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1992), p.12: `Sappho relates how she once loved ... all the ... women mentioned in her poems but now she has rejected her ... past for the love of a man.'

21 K. Schmidt, `The Way to Arcadia: Thoughts on Myth and Image in Cy Twombly's Painting', *Cy Twombly* (Houston: The Menil Collection Houston Fine Art Press, 1990), p. 25. Footnote 5.

22 Ovid (trans. E.V. Rieu), *Metamorphoses* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1975), pp.47-48.

23 P. Grimal, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 325: `Pan had considerable sexual energy; he pursued Nymphs and boys ...'

24 Theocritus, *Idylls*, p.55.

25 Roland Barthes, `The Plates of the Encyclopaedia', in S. Sontag (ed.), *Barthes: Selected Writings* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983), pp.218-235.

26 Schmidt, *Twombly*, p.25.

27 Schmidt, *Twombly*, p.25.

28 Barthes, *Writings*, p.225.

29 Barthes, *Writings*, p.230.

30 B. Bowler, *The Word as Image* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), p.11.

31 Jean Cassou, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism* (London: Omega Books, 1988), p. 30: `For Nietzsche, the artistic world...of rapture, the world of Dionysus. Thus certain Symbolists found their inspiration in [*The Birth of Tragedy*] ...'

32 Irving Sandler, 'Mark Rothko', *Mark Rothko 1903-1970* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1987), p. 19, footnotes 8 and 12: 'Mark Rothko, 'The Portrait and the Modern Artist', broadcast on 'Art in New York' Radio *WNYC (*13 Ocotober 1943) ... Rothko's reading of ... Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* stimulates interest in Greco-Roman mythology.'

33 Barthes, *Pleasure*, p. 62.

34 [my italics] Bogue, *Deleuze*, p. 89: 'the fundamental problem with psychoanalysis is its conception of desire ... as ... unfillable lack ... which proliferates in language through endless substitutions in the chain of signifiers ... In Nietzschean terms, such a negative definition of desire is symptomatic of ... slave mentality ... Deleuze and Guattrai ... replace it with ... desire [as] ... *primary force, ... an unbound, free-floating energy* which Nietzsche called *will to power*. Desire is unrelated to negation (there is no 'no' in the unconscious), indifferent to personal identities or body images (central to Lacan's imaginary order) and independent of linguistic expression or interpretation (the core of Lacan's Symbolic order).'

35 F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 808.

36 Nietzsche, *Will*, p. 798.

37 F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), III 1:36-37.

38 [author's italics] Barthes, *Pleasure*, pp. 17, 23, 30, 31, 62.

39 Barthes, *Pleasure*, p. 60.

40 P. Restany, 'The Revolution of the Sign', in Szeemann, *Cy Twombly*, p. 25.

41 Nietzsche, *Birth*, III 1: 26.

42 Schmidt, *Twombly*, p.28.

43 F. Guirand (ed.), *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (London: Hamlyn Group, 1975), p. 160.

44 Edit deAk, 'Stalling Art', *Artforum*, Sept. 1982, p. 73.

45 Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.38: `stories about his birth, all involving some wondrous form of double parturition ...'

46 Plato, *The Symposium* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1951), the argument was put forward by Aristophanes that people were once double beings, p.16: `Men are merely halves of three sexes, male, female, and hermaphrodite ...'

47 C. F. MacIntyre (trans.), *Stéphane Mallarmé: Selected Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p.138: In Mallarmé's poem *Prose*, the poet castigates intellectual man, who `has allowed only the masculine side of his mind to be important. But always there is the hope that this split can be healed.'

48 Cassou, *Symbolism*, p. 157: `the Symbolist poets were attracted to ambiguous figures: ... hermaphrodites. One and the same figure appears and disappears in the halo of multiple meanings ...'

49 Meret Oppenheim, cited in G. Pollock & R. Parker, *Old Mistresses* (London: Pandora, 1980), p. 144: `men, since creating patriarchy, that is since the devaluation of the female, projected the femininity inherent in themselves ... onto women ... They [women] are not allowed to live their masculinity. The same applies vice versa for the male.'

50 See footnote 61.

51 [my italics] D. Philippi & A. Howells, `Dark continents explored by women', in S. Hiller (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London : Routledge, 1991), pp. 254 , 255.

52 Homer (trans. E.V. Rieu), *Iliad* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), p.403.

53 Homer, *Iliad*, p.92.

54 There are two *Birth of Venus* in 1961, *Venus Anadyomene* in 1962, *Venus* in 1962, three *Birth of Venus* in 1962, *Birth of Venus* in 1963, and *The Birth of Venus* in 1963.

55 Schmidt, *Twombly*, p.18. Recorded in personal conversation with the artist in Rome, May, 1984.

56 Barkan, *Gods*, p.38.

57 C. Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p.131.

58 S. Delehanty, `The Alchemy of Mind and Hand', *Art International*, vol. 20, no. 2/3, Feb., 1976, p.17.

59 S. Larsen, *Cy Twombly: Works on Paper 1954-1976* (California: Newport Harbour Art Museum, 1981), p.28.

60 Delehanty, `Alchemy', p.18.

61 Kristeva's work on the semiotic (the pre-Oedipal Lacanian Imaginary phase) encompasses both masculinity and femininity in non-opposition as a pulsation in poetics. The use of the semiotic within symbolic language constructs is actually asexual, its fluidity, according to Kristeva was paramount in Mallarmé. Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory argues that nature asserts itself in the infant's body before any self has made its appearance, as unorganized pressures of desire, constituting what she calls `chora', a `receptacle' *of as yet undirected* experience, a space prior to the infant's entry into a sign system. Semiotic functioning depends on the chora, the private experience of bodily drives, which has a key part to play in the learning of language. The zest of experimentation, the chora disrupting the order, does not cease at some critical point at which language becomes mature, the pre-symbolic is as active as ever. In summary, for Kristeva there is a repressed, marginal mode of language - the semiotic/chora - which knows no sexual difference. It is pre-Oedipal, fluid, polymorphous, libidinal and rhythmic, and derives from a dispersed sense of bodily/sensual pleasures and energies. Significantly, it is always in *excess* both to Symbolic language and the Oedipal sexual drives. See J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp.133-147.

62 Bernard Blistene, `Experience of Uncertainty', in Szeeman, *Cy Twombly*, p.14.

63 MacIntyre, *Mallarmé*, p.3.

64 MacIntyre, *Mallarmé*, p.143.

65 MacIntyre, *Mallarmé*, p.79.

66 Schmidt, *Twombly*, p.17. Schmidt does not footnote this citation.

67 Howard Smagvla, *Currents: Contemporary Directions in the Visual Arts* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1983), p.85: `Twombly readily admits to having a special feeling for paper ...'

68 D. Davvetas, `The Erography of Cy Twombly', *Artforum International*, vol.27, no. 8, April, 1989, p.131.

69 The actual linguistic behaviour or performance of individuals, in contrast to the linguistic system of a community i.e. *langue*.

70 S. Bann, ` "Wilder Shores of Love": Cy Twombly's Straying Signs', in *Contemporary Painting*, Art & Design, vol. 7, no.3/4, April, 1992, p. 53.

71 Charles Olson, `The Present is Prologue', in George F. Butterick (ed.), *Charles Olson, Additional Prose: A Bibliography & Other Notes & Essays* (Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1974), pp.39-40.

PART II - WAR AND HISTORY: IDENTITIES OF SELF AND OTHER

'Rage, love's colour,
love, the colour of oblivion' [1]

In New York, in 1966, Dore Ashton reviewed an exhibition of American artists' work in the context of 'The Artist as dissenter' - their response specifically to the Vietnam war - in which she included Twombly's drawing, *Untitled* (1965), on the grounds of his use of, 'quotations from Garcia Lorca, a poet who cannot be dissociated from war and outrage.'[2]

Since 1959 - the painting, *The Age of Alexander*[3] (Pl.23) - Twombly has been concerned with historical heroic, and anti-heroic, figures: figures whose sense of destiny and greatness was often inclusive of war and/or outrage. Outrage when their inherited 'creative' position is abused to destruction, via a tormented psyche which exceeds the balance of reason, and hence balanced action, into atrocious acts of passion.

Whether the consequence is hero or anti-hero, the motivation is often the over-riding desire to challenge and/or 'cheat' death by unifying self and Other; a transference of the self image into the mirror image of history and historical figure. In Garcia Lorca's poem, *Death*, the desire that governs all creation is the transmutation and metamorphosis into the Other:

How hard they try!
How hard the dog tries to become a swallow!
How hard the swallow tries to become a bee! [4]

Alexander the Great carried *The Iliad* with him on his campaigns. He saw himself, in the light of Achilles and his family, as of divine descent from Apollo.[5] Thus, his 'allegiances' (rather than total *absorption* of self by Other) led, in part, to his

greatness, and to the balance of war and the arts, education etc. Commodus, the last Antonine Emperor, whom Twombly explores in a series of works, sought, eventually, sole expression of himself through a metamorphic transference into the demi-god Hercules.

Responsibility to both self and Other requires, yet rarely obtains, balanced integration. Twombly penetrates this indeterminate realm of the psyche - its creative and destructive results for the individual and history; a penetration which often ultimately results in his own `inclusion' in the works. This theme of responsibility to self and Other, in what has been termed the `Achilles-story', rears its head in the bifurcation of Achilles', arguably, uncontrolled responses; firstly on the question of self-pride, and secondly on the nature of love (via grief) for the Other.

Twombly, as early as 1962, revealed his fascination with Homer's epic poem *The Iliad*; a poem which condenses the main themes of the ten year Trojan War into fifty days of the final year - `almost the only days during the ten years when the Trojans had the better of the fighting.'[6] Homer's brilliant condensation only has to be alluded to in his first five verses of the epic - in the use of the correspondence of the `guilt' of Troy (in Paris' abduction of Helen from the Greeks which began the War) to the Greek King Agamemnon's abduction of Chryseis from her father, a priest of Apollo.

When Agamemnon refuses the father's pleas for the return of this captive `trophy', Apollo inflicts a pestilence on the Greeks, until Agamemnon is obliged to relent. To pacify his pride he seizes his commander's (Achilles) `trophy' female captive. The just and famous, or unjust and infamous, wrath of Achilles is ignited. This wrath, in the briefest summary, triggers in sequence Achilles withdrawing his forces from supporting Agamemnon and the Greeks; the Greeks near-complete defeat when driven back to their ships by the Trojan prince Hector; Patroclus' (Achilles' close companion) valiant rush to the Greeks' aid; the tables turning in their favour but at the cost of Patroclus' death by Hector; Achilles' colossal grief, in part inciting his return to the war; Achilles' `lustful'

(20.590)[7] vengeance on the Trojans, and significantly on Hector, whose death precipitates the sack of Troy, in the future.

Homer's theme is not just war, or even history, as an abstraction; rather, it is an `archaeological dig' into the psyche of man, seen in his piercing character portrayals - the psyche which prompts the causes, and tragic consequences, of a quarrel between two men, whose behavioural impulses radiate out in a series of circles to bring suffering and death to thousands upon thousands.

Homer and *The Iliad* live on; are ahistoric (i.e. not restricted to historical perspective or context), not least, as Italo Calvino stated, because of the Homeric refrain that we must not forget to return to the past as it is part of the future.[8] Homer's epic poem is not simply a tragedy, a gem of our Western culture, as say Leonardo's *The Madonna of the Rocks*. It examines questions on human nature that can never be completely answered, though Homer comes closest to there being a definitive answer. So many Greek tragedies (i.e. Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*) extracted just one human perplexity from Homer's works. Painters and poets also sought inspiration. But first and foremost for the Greeks, for a thousand years Homer's works enshrined wisdom on all matters of moral debate. This did not mean that the `Achilles-story' provides simplistic solutions - its `wisdom' lies in the fact that truth is not sole or simplistic, not least because the fundamentals of human nature (love/hate, glory/mediocrity, noble/ignoble) are more intertwined than such binaries would presuppose.

A prime example would be Achilles' noble and non-evasive approach to honesty and justice in Book 9, in which he reasons coolly through the truth of the situation, when Agamemnon sends Ulysses to entreat Achilles to a reconciliation:

> Then thus the goddess-born: Ulysses hear
> A faithful speech, that knows no art, nor fear
> See what pre-eminence our merits gain!
> My spouse alone must bless his lustful nights
> But what's the quarrel then of Greece to Troy?
> Deceived for once, I trust not kings again

Who dares think one thing, and tell another
And meditates new cheats on all his slaves
.....kings of such a kind.....
Stand but as slaves before a noble mind.

(9.406/7,441,443,445,455,412,486,494/5)

Achilles is both right and wrong - an example of Homer not taking sides, just reporting the complexity facing human beings. Achilles would have to compromise truth and justice for the larger aim of saving the Greek forces from innumerable deaths. This `means justifying the ends' debate carries on still today, not just in the realm of war. Economics is a case in point, or class; both implicitly touched upon in Achilles' speech.

This short sojourn into Homer's text, and `education' into the complexities of `truth', has been, in part, for the purpose of revealing the narrator's lack of authorial `voice'. Homer takes no sides so the listener/reader may live the complexities of the situation itself `morally'. Such an example (one of the many in the text) of a point for endless debate is one of the many reasons for the `ahistoric' fascination of the poem; a poem Twombly returns to after his two 1962 paintings, *Vengeance of Achilles* and *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus* (Pls.24,25), in the 1964 triptych *Ilium (One Morning Ten Years Later)* (Pl.26), and finally in 1976/7 to the ten-part cycle of paintings *Fifty Days at Iliam* (Pl. 27):

1. *Shield of Achilles*	192 x 170cm	Pl.43
2. *Heroes of the Achaeans*	192 x 150cm	Pl.44
3. *Vengeance of Achilles*	300 x 239cm	Pl.45
4. *Achaeans in Battle*	300 x 380cm	Pl.46
5. *The fire that consumes all before it*	300 x 192cm	Pl.47
6. *Shades of Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector*	300 x 490cm	Pl.48
7. *House of Priam*	300 x 192cm	Pl.49
8. *Ilians in Battle*	300 x 380cm	Pl.50
9. *Shades of Eternal Night*	300 x 239cm	Pl.51

10. *Heroes of the Ilians* 162 x 150cm Pl.52

We also know from Twombly's own `education' at Black Mountain College that there were other reasons for viewing Homer as `ahistoric'. He is one of the writers - those `founders who lie buried in us' - that Charles Olson recommends in the search for `the postmodern ... the posthistoric',[9] due to Homer's linguistic spatial devices providing the parallel enactment to nature's non-void, hence non-inert, vibrating and flowing transformational energies. Of course, for Pound, the gods' and goddesses' active field of forces as subject matter could provide this solely; or a single word, phrase or quotation from the creative memory inciting non-chronological parallels to other epochs and situations.

This is one reason why Twombly's `historical' works can never be ruled out of court as applicable to the personal and/or any present historical situation - why the `war' paintings may, only may, non-coincidentally follow a period of reaction and thought (conscious and/or unconscious) to the epoch of Vietnam debate, as implied by Dore Ashton. John Bernard Myers' comments would place Twombly's choice of Homer in the lineage of certain Abstract Expressionists, when he argues that the artist's citation, ` "the fire that consumes all before it", is Twombly's intimations of a possible nuclear disaster that may befall the entire world in the near future.'[10] If this is the case, the Poundian `dance of the intellect' ignites the word `fire' to interact into present thought in an atomic aftermath.

In the `global village' of communication, the proximity of others' suffering is unavoidable: certain `historical' works could be less an `escape' than imagined, and could be viewed as a search for answers in an even larger diachronic network of communication. As the critic Heiner Bastian argues in relation to Twombly's works, `In the mirrors of history, in tradition already the hidden facets of our own time.'[11]

To return to Homer and Twombly's artistic application. In a relatively unusual instance of forthcoming candor, Twombly asserted the importance of his use of Alexander Pope's translation of *The Iliad.* I quote from the exhibition catalogue; `The painting follows and reflects incidents of Homer's *Iliad* in the translation of Alexander Pope.'[12] Myers highlights Pope's 18th century adherence to the doctrine of `ut pictura poesis'; `throughout his notes on his translation of *The Iliad,* Pope draws analogies between painting and poetry.'[13] I will continue this reference by quoting from Pope's preface; a thesis in itself from which an artist of Twombly's background could draw out innumerable nuances of association, `[h]is expression is like the colouring of some great masters, which discovers itself to be laid on boldly, and executed with rapidity.'[14] H. Friedrich reminds us that `the blind bard displayed an abnormally strong and imaginative visual sense which led Voltaire to describe him as a `sublime painter'.'[15] Nevertheless, Pope's majority of references are to Homer's linguistic devices:

> What he most affected was the Ionic, which has a peculiar sweetness from its never using contractions, and from its custom of resolving diphthongs into two syllables, so as to make the *words open themselves* with a more spreading and sonorous fluency. [16]

These linguistic devices, according to Pope, provide `that unequalled fire and rapture which is so forcible in Homer'; a `poetic fire ... in Homer, and in him only' which denies the listener/reader the distance of a third person position, as `everything moves, everything lives, and is put in action'; a `fancy which grows in the progress both upon himself and others, and becomes on fire, like a chariot wheel, by its own rapidity.' [17]

This semiotic, yet pre-iconic, stage of language, residing within Homer's `fluid' linguistics, enacts the physiognomic character of his epic, physically, in the reader, and is further stressed by Pope's highlighted correspondence to a selected line of Homer's verse; `The course of his verses resembles that of the army he describes' ; citing Homer, `They pour along like a fire that sweeps the whole earth before it.'[18] Pope, in the preface, places great emphasis on the choice of Greek dialects that Homer had before him, and the consequences of the choice made.

That fire, rapture and movement may be pre-iconically expressed, and that the forces of the macrocosmic world which the gods and goddesses represent were in the microcosm of mankind's nature, were aspects of the *Iliad* which would appear to be of essential interest to Twombly. He chooses, significantly, to paraphrase the very line of Pope's specific reference to the correspondence between language use and subject matter for the title of the fifth painting in the cycle, one of the two central images in the manner of the cycle's installation.

That this work contains the largest and most vibrant, hence most dominating, `colori-poetici' in the installation reflects the artist's adherence to Pope's translation of the text; a text in which anger, love, fire and blood fill Homer's `canvas' with red. A few examples, from so many references throughout the epic's twenty four Books, will provide, prior to an examination of Twombly's cycle, an understanding of the significance he wanted to draw for the viewer from Pope's translation; of the ideogrammic portent within one `word'.

Achilles...	
Now fired by wrath	(1.250/1)
wrap her walls in fire	(2.55)
Fired with the charge...	(2.100)
As the red comet, from Saturnius sent	(2.103)
And shakes and sparkles from its blazing hair	(2.107)
all the fields are red	(4.626)
Like a red star that fires	(5.8)
Mars thunders, and the field's in flames	(5.633)
And catch from breast to breast the noble fire	(5.653)
Nor urge a soul already filled with fire	(8.356)
Thus like the rage of fire the combat burns	(18.1)
And from his fierce eye-balls living flames expire	(19.21)
And shook his javelin like a waving flame.	(20.490)

The passion/fire/red/blood correlation literally blazes the brain `ad infinitum' in the *Iliad*; a sensation of `ad infinitum' which is important not only if we are never to forget this masterpiece of Western culture but also in its more `ahistoric' sense to our natures.

The three constantly recurring images in the *Iliad* are shield, cloud and eternal shade (death). Twombly, true to form, gives the viewer a multivalent ideogrammic form within which these images may interact, creating in our consciousness the interpenetrating forces which are additive throughout the poem. In this sense, therefore, it is hard to imagine a poet he feels more `at home' with than Homer.

At this juncture I wish to state the very important difference between Twombly's use of Homer and that of the German artist Hanne Darboven. Twombly is not unaware of Darboven's work in general, as the inclusion of a reproduction of her work (on an exhibition invitation) in his collage series, *Natural History Part 1 (Mushrooms)*, 1974, testifies. Darboven's concern is additive serial numbers, or repeated hand written notations. In 1971, on fourteen panels, she reproduced in ink on paper the text from Homer's *Odyssey*. What we gain from Darboven's application of Homer's *Odyssey*, is the awareness of laborious repetition, both in the presentation and the literal sense of `copying out'. This `reductionism' is aligned to Darboven's concern with conceptual systems as content; `I do write, but I don't describe ... a visualization of the flow of Time.' [19]

Robert Hughes' critical term for Darboven's work is `autistic', [20] a term suitable for the many furlongs from the physical sensation of visual flow accumulation that we may surmise Pope would see, in another text of Homer's. In contrast, both Twombly's reductive `language' of ideograms, pictograms, and his written names of protagonists, are writ large in the painterly physicality Pope attributes to the *Iliad*.

We need, at this stage, to examine Twombly's two 1962 works, *Vengeance of Achilles* and *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus*. Firstly, for the interacting

stage the artist had already developed between word (letter), mark (*physis*/energy) and image (symbol), and secondly, for the possible early erotic significance he placed on the `beloved' friendship between Achilles and Patroclus.

The painting, *Vengeance of Achilles* (Pl.24) (HB,II,134), has a tall vertical format (300 x 175 cm), providing the possible traditional expectation of portraiture. This expectation is not entirely denied, but its mode is that of a truly original and persuasive portrait for this great and divine-born hero, and consists in the aforementioned balance of letter, physis and symbolic image. On a creamy-white oil ground, vertically nine-tenths of the canvas is filled with a light, and hastily pencilled, letter A (Achilles' initial), the horizontal bar of which is still distinctly visible beneath the red impasto which is clotted at the tip of the initial, and then brushed frenetically and smeared down the remains of the triangle at the top of the larger `portrait' of the passionate thrust of Achilles' nature.

This colossal `thrust' forward further `compiles' multivalent aspects of Achilles' vengeance. On the remaining three-quarters of the initial A - beneath the red impasto - are small fibrous pencilled lines, starting and ending at different points, `flowing' out more abundantly from the letter's edges. Totally untamed, and unruly, they veer in all directions, combining both the speed and multi-directional movement which Achilles' wrath, and aim, took (after Patroclus' death) with Twombly's symbolic image; Achilles' spear, an object which Homer gives the adjective `impetuous' to:

> Through yon wide host his arm shall scatter fear
> And as he moved his figure seemed on flame
> So shone the point of great Achilles' spear (20.413...)

This quivering and electric nature of Achilles corresponds to the physis of the essential quality of the spear; its `wind-fed' beauty even when resting in a warrior's hand, when it looks back to the time when its shaft was part of Pelion's towering ash tree on the wind-swept mountainside. The vibrations of natural phenomena; the frenzied energy in the human psyche; the vibrations of the letter (`A' has the movement of image - language and gesture are given equal `life'); and the bloodied spear as symbolic image of Achilles'

`insatiable' rage (an insatiability Homer terms `lust' - 20.590), all coalesce in one form for one subject - revenge fed by a passionate nature out of control.

In *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus* (Pl.25) (HB,II,132), with its inscription `Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus', Twombly has already absorbed the most vivid and powerful (in the sense of emotionally-motivated) scene and relationship in the *Iliad.* Whereas *Vengeance of Achilles* (Pl.24) is repeated as a title for the third painting in *Fifty Days at Ilium* (Pl.27) (HB,IV,13), this singling out of the two Greek (Achaean) heroes - Achilles and Patroclus - and the reference to grief, acknowledges the subject of love. The isolated two `angry red bursts of clotted impasto'[21] that Sheffield identifies on the canvas are, I would argue, inspired `portraits' for an intensity of emotion that links the heroes together - love and death. For Achilles, the heat of passion (love) is the motivating force that instigates his return to battle, and hence his eventual death, an even acknowledged quest for death.

Red is Twombly's ideogrammic colour-poetics for all kinds of passion, and their association (i.e. blood). What I propose in the examination of *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus* is that it is the relationship that is directly referred to, in the context of love. Twombly, as an avid reader of Greek literature, could have read Aeschylus' derivation of Homer, in which `Aeschylus would present Achilles and Patroclus as full homosexual lovers.'[22] More pertinent would be Plato's *Symposium*, which Twombly makes distinct reference to in his *Untitled*, 1977, (Pl.7), and in which it is acknowledged that `Achilles was the lover of Patroclus.'[23]

That this is not an improbable reading of the painting is clarified by several factors. Firstly, in the text of the *Iliad*, where Achilles speaks to his mother, the goddess Thetis, of the insignificance to him of the gifts from the god of fire - the newly-forged shield etc. - and by implication the insignificance to him of the fame and glory they portend:

> To this cureless grief...
> Not e'en the Thunderer's favour brings relief

Pat - Ah! (18.99-101)
Pat, loved of all my martial train
Beyond mankind, beyond myself, is slain (18.103/4)

The second factor is sexual pictorial symbolism - in the sense of Twombly's erotic pictographs - and is referred to by Marjorie Welish, though not with an explicit homosexuality in mind. Welish makes reference to an aggressive `phallic shape' in *Vengeance of Achilles*, 1962 (Pl.24), which `is made explicit in...*Achaeans in Battle*'[24] (Pl.27) (HB,IV,13). In Bastian's examination of the 1964 triptych, *Ilium (One Morning Ten Years Later)* (Pl.26) (HB,II,171) he draws attention to, `the multivalent form [which] encompasses ... human bodies ...' which he argues provides `Twombly's triptych [with a] ... deliberately eroticized apotheosis of life and death.'[25]

Without experiencing this particular continued depth of emotion, Achilles would not be able to return Hector's body to King Priam in the final scene of the epic; in which Priam's and Achilles' respective griefs are literally coupled through their tears. It is the contradictory nature of such sensibility and destructive action that interests Twombly.[26]

On the creamy-white primed canvas of *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus* (Pl.25) there is a pencilled horizontal line which divides the entire `scene' in two. In the upper section there are two frenetically-looped pencilled clusters. The horizontal line is just visible under the left cluster's thick clotted red impasto, which lessens towards the edges except at two points, as if an unravelled ball of wool. One point bespatters down beneath the horizon line whilst the second unravels, in a dimmer red, to join the second cluster, which, despite some pale red oil `coils', has pure white oil paint clogged in its centre, with `Patroclus' pencilled across the whole energized, but `fading', image as it drifts away from the horizon. This `umbilical cord', plus the use of white for cloud/death provides, a very distinctive pathos.

Another of Twombly's devices to suggest `disappearance' and longing is in play in the lower section. He has written in pencil, `Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus'

and then crossed out from the first `h' onwards. The artist's own name, directly beneath, is also crossed out/erased - a sign of both sympathy and respect, one wonders! The fact that there is a fine vertical pencilled line drawn from the horizon line dividing the uncrossed `AC' from the crossed remainder cannot help but lead to conjecture, when Twombly is so well known as a punster, or word-player per se. `AC' are both capitals, so there are several possibilities, i.e. chronologically before Christ; aircraftsman (flight upwards in other words); and alternating current (as opposed to direct current) which has a well known sexual connotation. A denotation of alternate current would be the flow both ways between two people - in this instance it could be applicable to emotional and/or sexual tension/electricity. Electricity takes us back to thoughts of Pound and Fenollosa. A more simple conjecture of course may be `AC' to ache, which in a sense would sum up the sentiment of the work.

The artist as the psychological subject reliving this encounter is not omitted, either, from *Fifty Days at Ilium* - in the fourth painting, *Achaeans in Battle,* the word `Artist' is placed bottom centre. How the creative and destructive aspects of life and art are inseparable can best be exemplified in the key image of *Fifty Days at Ilium.* Achilles' shield serves in the poem as the object which changes the course of events. Twombly takes the shield as his cycle's ideogrammic thematic and formal core. The narrative discloses itself in the cycle by the visual metamorphosis of the shield form and colour's psyche.

The Shield of Achilles has the creamy-white oil primed background concurrent with the other nine panels, as appropriate to the visual continuity necessary for the reading of the cycle as one painting/installation. Halfway down the canvas there is an oil-crayoned blood-red `fire-ball', edged to the left of centre so that its momentum to the right can be envisaged, via its soft, red-smeared lines drawing out from the bottom right. Blue crayon, in tight curlicues on the `fire-ball's' right side, loosen their frenzy to encircle the top and left sides, so that the `motion' gathers whilst black crayon streaks, starting on the outside of the blue curlicues, follow their loosened yet speeding thrust, not

completely encircling the red `fire-ball'. This colossal shield-form fills, in toto, nearly a half of the canvas. We have already seen the extent to which the text `blazed' pictorially - weaponry, emotions, fields etc. Twombly faithfully provides this sensation coupled to a more descriptive and figurative portrayal. Homer speaks approximately two hundred lines on the description of the shield's structure and pictorial embossment; a work of art which, in the poem, provides a microcosm for the universe at large:

> ... he form'd the immense and solid shield
> Rich various artifice emblazed the field;
> Its utmost verge a threefold circle bound
> A silver chain suspends the massy round
> Five ample plates the broad expanse compose
> Two cities radiant on the shield appear
> The image one of peace, and one of war
> And the whole war came out, and met the eye
> And each bold figure seemed to live or die
> A field deep-furrowed next the god designed
> Another field rose high with waving grain
> Next, ripe in yellow gold, a vineyard shines
> A figured dance succeeds
> Thus the broad shield complete the artist crown'd
> With his last hand, and pour'd the ocean round
> In living silver seem'd the waves to roll (18.551...)

In the same manner that Homer uses a work of art to portray Greek life and its juxtaposed potentialities, Twombly uses the shield form in further panels to create juxtapositions of character (i.e. nationality, colour's psyche etc.). In the top left corner of the work is written `ACHILLES SHIED' in blue pencil; its emphasis becoming distinctly lighter as the words progress. Unless Twombly actually forgot the letter `L' in shield, we have a reference here not to the moments, or after, of the shield's being forged, but the pre-situation which would result in its requirement. In other words, the opening scene of the epic; Achilles `recoiling' from Agamemnon, shied as in a sudden swerving aside from the war, and his aforementioned warily reluctant speech in Book 9 as to the truth and justice of the situation, particularly if the Greeks behaved in the same manner as that of the Trojans/Ilians which had precipitated the ten year war.

In the second painting, *Heroes of the Achaeans*, there is the compilation of the main heroes and gods backing the Greek forces. Gods' and goddesses' names, as felt presences, are, justly, pencilled in above the `horizon' area. When Twombly softly applies pressure to names, the primed canvas' weave disturbs, on occasions, the matter of the pencil, providing matter's - per se - sense of entering and leaving the scene. Directly underneath these divine forces, horizontally occupying the width of the panel, in red crayon writ large, are the `ACHAEANS'. By now one is aware that for each capital `A' Twombly writes on the canvas he is using the Greek delta form. Beneath the horizon line, which in effect is the position of the earthed, mortal `Achaeans', two dragged dashes of white oil paint (from the tube or finger?) float above two pencilled names; one being Agamemnon. It is as if the artist is viewing the two warriors as dispensable, whereas `ACHILLES', beneath, is in large red crayon almost the size of the `ACHAEANS' - he is given the size and emphasis of the major force. Beneath Achilles, written in pencil, are PATROCLUS, MENELLAUS, DIOMETES, TELAMON and AJAX.

The third painting, *Vengeance of Achilles*, draws on the 1962 painting, as if the prior character of Achilles and his spear has gained its utmost literal and sensual velocity. Almost filling the bottom half of the canvas, hastily applied, are black crayoned circles, tightening into smaller frenzied curlicues towards the top eclipse of the circle; then, jettisoning off to the right, the black crayon lines coalesce with blood red crayoned smears reaching a tip. This `form' precipitates the many `phallic' images of male passion, and more literally, spear activity in the following epic-size painting, *Achaeans in Battle* (300x380cm).

Floating above the centre of the battle scene in this fourth painting there is the heavy black phallic contour, reminiscent of the phallic *Dionysus* (1975) (Pl.10), below which is written, in light, large red crayoned letters, `ACHILLES'. This could, of course, be a very pointed comment on the inseparability of the male and war. But Eros and Thanatos are woven fine, and the cause of both the Trojan War and Achilles' return to it is passionate love.

The interwoven nature of Eros and Thanatos has been implied by Bastian in his assessment of the 1964 triptych; that `deliberately eroticized apotheosis of life and death.' In the cycle of paintings at present under discussion this interwoven and `additive' nature involves Twombly's isomorphic use of the phallic, spear, and penetration and death equations.

Entering the left edge of the canvas are two vertical half-triangles with the names `Thetis' and `ATHENA' written on each diagonal, `descending' to intervene in the scene. Directly below the triangles, and above a frenzied `ball' of loose black and brown crayoned lines, is a faintly pencilled phallus, with both a suggestion of foreskin and with flesh-coloured hazy curlicues emitting from it. The name `AGAMEMNON' is pencilled in light, small letters along the outline of the phallus. The `testicle' area of the phallus suggests, in its black and brown lines, a forceful cluster of energy, whereas there are additive variations on this suggestion filling almost the entire right vertical section of the work. `AJAX' is written above a pencilled phallic shape whose `testicles' are filled with energized motion lines and then crossed, as if a shield or wheel. To the right of AJAX, and thrusting their way out of the right edge of the canvas, are two further `phalluses'. The largest is based on a black crayoned outline, filled in with black, brown and royal blue crayoned smears and curlicues at the `testicles'. Underneath, as if seeking to protect it, is a smaller `phallic' form without outline, only red and pink frenzied lines constituting its reality. In between these two `phalluses' is written the name `PATROCLUS'.

On this epic-sized, evenly primed canvas, the left side consists of primarily outlined distinct forms, whereas on the right side, where presumably the antagonists are encountered, loops of energy `ad infinitum' are rushing towards the edge, where all the colours of an artist's palette (red, pink, peach, blue, grey and brown) intermingle, often smeared with fingers, to reach a `painterly' intensity well known in the artist's purely painterly works (i.e. *Untitled*, 1986 (Pl.28) (HB,IV,42).

In the centre of the foreground is the aforementioned `ARTIST'- the Roman alphabet here! - written in pencil above a distinct pencilled palette form. As if in homage to Homer, the aforementioned colours, which created the vibrancy of an intensified and overpowering emotion, are placed wound together on the palette. There is no other work of Twombly's which condenses all its `colour-poetics' into one place as this one. A fine tribute!

In the fifth painting, *The fire that consumes all before it*, the most lurid red of the cycle is used for the sole image, which in itself is a compilation of the `fire-ball' image of Achilles' shield, the vengeance of the blood-red spear, and a surging `eternal cloud' of death. Black lurks behind the red oil paint, breaking through in certain areas. The red oil paint, as if the very blood it taxes from the enemy, `bleeds' and splatters weakly down the bottom half of the canvas. The brightest red is on the surface, unpleasantly entering one's consciousness, and darker reds are behind it, providing an unusual density in one `form' for Twombly. Written underneath in red crayon is the title of the work; a paraphrase of Pope's citation, `a fire that sweeps the whole earth before it.' The essential difference is in the words `consume' and `all', which could possibly provide the enlarged interpretation of vengeance and love as soul-consuming creative and/or destructive forces.

In the sixth painting, *Shades of Achilles, Patroclus and Hector*, the three central protagonists and heroes of the War are given due emphasis by the size of the work in the cycle's installation. Each of the three images ideogrammically combine; firstly, the shield-form (with its `five ample plates'); secondly, this `petal-shaped' form - outlined in black crayon - is the recurring cloud, sent by the gods to hide, hence reprieve, any hero from a too early death; thirdly, the form has a black-crayoned chariot axle through it - the speed towards death?; and finally, there is the title reference, with its recurrence throughout the poem - `death's eternal shade.' (5.583)

The three `shades' are both equidistantly placed midway down the canvas and across the canvas, their scale absorbing a third of the total space. The left-hand `shade' is filled with blood-red oil paint, except in a few areas where black (of death?) tries to submerge the red, without complete success. Close above the top left side of the image is written ACHILLES. The central `shade', which is filled with blue oil paint, but with black submerging a half of the image, has PATROCLUS written in the same position. The right-hand `shade' belongs to HECTOR and it is filled with a smeared dirty-white, the black of the outline prominent, and blackish-grey paint floats away from its right-hand side as if death is not far behind.

As each of these three central protagonists has his own coloured image there would be a discrepancy in `reading' their coloured distinctions iconographically in relation to the red listings of the Achaean forces and the blue listings of the Iliam forces. There is a greater narrative after Apollo conveys Hector from the scene; `But present to his aid, Apollo shrouds, The favour's hero in a veil of cloud' (20.512/3), a point which explains why Achilles is given a `shade' in this work when we, the readers, know that Achilles does not die in the *Iliad.*

This juncture is Achilles' speech, one which verifies the colour-poetics Twombly uses, and also his earlier attraction to the major theme of Achilles and Patroclus' `love and death' relationship:

> Divine Patroclus! Death has seal'd his eyes,
> Can his dear image from my soul depart,
> If in the melancholy shades below,
> The flames of friends and lovers cease to glow
> Yet mine shall sacred last; mine undecay'd
> Burn on thro' death, and animate my shade. (22.482...)

In the seventh painting, *House of Priam,* running vertically down the entire left-hand of the work, there is a pencilled catalogue of the Trojan line, just prior to Hector's death. This pencilled list is headed by the title `HOUSE of PRIAM', and the pathos of

the work resides in Twombly's reference to the fact that these are Priam's `19 SONS by Hecuba' and `12 Daughters', many of whom are soon to be killed.

Red is omitted, and the name that forms the `horizon line', writ large in black crayon, is CASSANDRA. Cassandra, because she rejected the advances of Apollo, was doomed to see all her prophetic warnings ignored. The horror of this fact for the future of the House of Priam is depicted by the artist's manifold echo of the name Cassandra, in a non-static vibration of black crayon smeared by bluish-white oil paint. The cool light of reason went unheeded, a fact never to be forgotten, echoing down the centuries of history.

In the eighth painting, *Ilians in Battle*, the left edge corresponds to the fourth painting, in that a vertical half-triangle enters the scene. But in this `narrative' the word `PARIS' is pencilled on the base line of the half-triangle, and the word floats on a dirtied bluish-white oil film. Beneath Paris are three outlined `phalluses' varying in size, two dedicated to `TROILUS' and `POLITES'. Also on the left-side are two frenzied `chariot-forms', dedicated to `ANTIPHUS' and `PRIAM', depicted by two bluish-black crayoned circular shapes with a straight line between them. This obvious metamorphic play between the phalli and the chariot-form is what enables Bastian to argue for a `deliberately eroticized apotheosis of life and death.'

At the top centre of the work are two faintly pencilled lists of the gods and goddesses who intervene on the Trojans behalf. Just above these lists are faintly pencilled `shield-forms' - as in the sixth painting - with darker circles superimposed onto their surfaces. The work's `horizon line' consists in a row of four wedge shapes pointing to the right and outlined in black crayon. All bear the name of a god or goddess along their diagonal. Beneath them are a row of five black outlined `shield-forms' side on, advancing to the right, as in *Mars and the Artist* (1975) (Pl.21). Underneath these `shields', as if leading the battle, is `HECTOR', written in black crayon with a blue echo beneath.

The ninth painting's title, *Shades of Eternal Night*, is writ large, providing the `horizon line' to this work, a work in which the single image commands almost the top two-thirds of the canvas. The evocation of death lies in the weight and movement of the image, one which ideogrammically has the shield/cloud shape, but it is the colouring as well as the size of the image which provides the gloom and `narrative' content. The weight and movement is given in the artist's simultaneous denial of outline and the different densities (hence vibrating nature) in the voluminous yet variegated greys of the form.

The plural of `shade' could refer to the twelve captives Achilles sacrifices to the shade of Patroclus on the pyre - the smokey grey literally fills the `sky' here. But that period in question has another colour-poetics in relation to the cycle. Patroclus is dead, but there is a reprieve from `blackness' here, and the `eternal night' could be Twombly's remembrance of Achilles' long, sleepless night of suffering, relieved by the sighting of `the unbodied spectre' (23.90) of Patroclus' ghost:

> ... the shade, before his closing eyes,
> Of sad Patroclus rose,
> The form familiar hover'd o'er his head
>
> ... and with his longing arms essay
> In vain to grasp the visionary shade;
> Like a thin smoke he sees the spirit fly,
>
> The form subsists without the body's aid,
> Aerial semblance, and an empty shade! (23.79-/115-/24-5)

The tenth, and final, work in the cycle, *Heroes of the Ilians*, has at its uppermost the pencilled names of the gods and goddesses of the Trojans; names which are barely visible beneath cream-dragged oil paint. Below these disappearing presences, Twombly has writ large, in blue oil-crayon, `ILIANS' with the last three letters visibly blurred by another application of cream paint - the demise of the Trojans! The bottom half of the canvas comprises (on its left-hand side) a vertical list of the heroes in pencil. First and foremost is the name of `HECTOR', given his due emphasis by the heavily repeated

drawing of the letter `H', blackening the letter. This black is not difficult to relate to the only other remaining element in the work; an outline, in black crayon, of the shield/cloud/chariot axle ideogrammic form. This form covers the whole of the list, beginning just beneath Hector's name. This work provides the explicit link between the death of the Ilian forces by Hector's own death. But it can also be argued that, befitting the final work, this is the evocation of a war memorial.

In Rome, during the winter of 1963, Twombly had concentrated on the energetic, explosive and ambivalent nature of the psyche, in a cycle of nine `portraits' - *The Nine Discourses of Commodus (I x IX)* (Pl.29) (HB,II,156), in oil, crayon and pencil on canvas. Exhibited at the Castelli Gallery, New York, in 1964, their reception was banal.[27]

The common consensus amongst historians is that the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius' surviving son, Aurelius Commodus, was almost from birth an emotionally unstable and brutal dissipater of energy, who was also practised in dissimulating appearances. Hence, the decline of the Antonine reign has been attributed solely to Commodus', so to speak, natural and raw character traits.

What Twombly, in conversation with Suzanne Delehanty,[28] establishes as his concerns with Commodus are threefold. Firstly, the continuing aforementioned attraction `to the contradictory personalities of ... [certain] men ... of ... myth and history; he found them perfect examples of action and sensibility.' Secondly, the series on Commodus was inspired specifically and `conceived while reading Robbe-Grillet', leading him to `not only explore the variations of psyche and colour's psyche, but painting as an abstraction of time.' Thirdly, `Twombly found this emperor a hypersensitive person who, because of inherited circumstances, could not express himself artistically.' [29]

His chosen hero/anti-hero, Twombly believes, sought to some extent an equilibrium in the human psyche (as in the analogous artistic practice) between the drives

of passion (i.e. creativity, unrepressed self-expression) and the restraints of controlled and reasoned actions (i.e. formal structure).

One connection between Robbe-Grillet's contemporary literary theories and the artist's Commodus cycle resides in Robbe-Grillet's notion of the anti-hero. The non-contemporary writer who made a rare connection, and distinction, between Commodus' action and sensibility was Edward Gibbon, stating that:

> [d]uring the three, first years of his reign ... his hands were yet unstained with blood; and he had even displayed a *generosity of sentiment*; which might perhaps have ripened into solid virtue. [30]

Why `Discourses'? One suggestion, provided by Myers, is that the `conversations' are between Commodus and his dead father.[31] These nine works, all containing two joined frenzied clusters of impasto, are certainly double `portraits' transfusing into one another, as it were. Several prior 1962 works bear both the same vertical format, and what may be termed simplified `Brancusian' oval-head forms.[32] But whereas Brancusi sought universals, Twombly's `figurative heads', in their disturbing, ideogrammic range of raging and dying coils of energy, texture and colour, seek a particular physiognomic and psychic mixture. It is the accumulative causes, and the culmination, of the anti-hero's psyche, prior to, and hence producing, a bloody violent death, which is vivified in these elegiac powerful `death-masks'.

In this context Commodus' own `portrait' could be that moment prior to death, when, as we are told, our lives pass before us. In that case the other cluster `portrait' in the works could significantly be the figures of influence (his father included) throughout Commodus' reign; figures such as the ministers Perennis and Cleander whom Gibbon views as contributing to the Emperor's final delirium; that inability to distinguish reality from fantasy, and hence an insanity which required his disposal and tragic fate – assassination.

Robbe-Grillet's anti-heroes are obsessed by both the memory of `the details of a past encounter,'[33] and their imaginative fantasies of the future, and hence are dominated by an affective mechanism. The fatal flaw in these `heroes', therefore, is their inability to escape the `Pavlovian syndrome'; the conditioned, triggered response mechanism of behaviour, determined by their loves and hates from early stages in their life. Therefore, never in this sense maturing, as the associative process dominates – traps, in fact, as in a pattern.

Although Gibbon never disguises in his account `the monstrous vices' of Commodus, which `have cast a shade on the purity of the father's virtues,' [34] he does pinpoint the `trigger-response' of no return, so to speak:

> Yet Commodus was not, as he has been represented, a tiger born with an insatiate thirst of human blood and capable, from his infancy of the most inhuman actions ... A fatal incident decided his fluctuating character ... an [attempted] assassination ... [leaving] an indelible impression of fear ... against the whole ... senate ... the memory of past injuries and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to *inflame the mind* ... From such motives almost every page of history has been stained with civil blood.[35]

It is this `inflame[d] mind' that Robbe-Grillet explores, when the un-verbalized psychic life is trapped by the memory of past images, superimposed not only on the present but significantly also on a paranoid future image of the self, and the self's environment. Linearity of time and cooled reasoning are extinguished under a multiple, voluminous and highly indeterminate volatile present. Robbe-Grillet's literary achievement lies in his ability to `pierce the veil' - to cross the gap - between the invisible world of the protagonist's psychic changes and the visible world of his/her environment, at the points where its non-linear constellations are dictated by the trigger mechanisms of the psyche. This fluctuating indeterminate realm is where the objective and subjective worlds mix and `rage'. The anti-hero's state of mind - that metamorphosis of thought and emotion - is revealed in the novels by the metamorphosis of the visual images in the protagonist's path, via their scale, colour and texture. In this sense of awesome visual commentary, Robbe-Grillet's works, like Homer's, are sublime `canvases'.

The complicity with the external world which Robbe-Grillet's novels examine, as the anti-hero becomes his own slave so to speak - an accomplice to his own downfall - is a complicity which is tragic. The remaining reference to the novelist's anti-hero in the context of the Commodus cycle is his use of the device of double identity. The self fluctuates, via a dichotomous `eye' of visual representations, between the cool, detached geometric objects and their distanced environment, and the recurring, additive, often self-threatening, implications of colour, texture, and scale.

The two `portraits' throughout the Commodus cycle could, of course, be the aforementioned commentary on those influential figures whom Gibbon views as additively coalescing to inspire the paranoia, delirium and `blood-letting' from Commodus' psyche. Nevertheless, there is another aspect of double identity to Commodus' short-lived rule as emperor, one which has become infamous. In the en bal travestie (i.e. fancy dress) of Hercules he sought to resolve the question of power over the complicit self and to transcend the limits of his own manipulatory historical position.

Commodus' other archetypal, historical `selves' (there were several minor ones besides Hercules) we could term as being artistically adopted to regain credibility of strength of character.

We are dealing here with two senses of the `Other' in the context of double-identity. The absorption by the `Other' in this artistic adoption suppresses even more Commodus' *own self*-creativity of character than that suppressed via trigger responses of paranoia etc., in the presence and overall environment of his ministers and the Roman Senate. It is an artistic `Other' taking him a stage further from any stability of self into a world of fantasy, in the delusion of regaining credibility via historical and mythical archetype.

This apparent digression is necessary because Twombly is obviously concerned with what happens, in certain circumstances, to the `hypersensitive' and how `creativity'

per se may backfire on itself. For the `hypersensitive' Commodus to try to create a strong self within the manipulating circumstances led to a tragic fate, as he resorted to creating `artistically' a destructive and threatening self, one which required the complete dissimulation of his own self into archetype.

As the viewed constraints of Rome's reason and authority were often corrupting when placed in the hands of ` pernicious counsels of ... ministers',[36] denying to this youthful Commodus of `simplicity and timidity'[37] the fertile soil to develop a self-expression and creativity of his own, we could possibly place the phrase `creativity suppressed to destruction' in the analogous context of the artist's possibly feared circumstances within inherited art history and practice. If within the teleological linearity of Modernism (i.e. via the archetypal roles Greenberg prescribed), self-expression is denied its own `voice', the artist is critically manipulated into the, in other words, `anti-hero' position of triggered responses; a complicit absorption becomes destructive to creativity per se.

This possible `self-questioning of the artist's iconographic reading of the Commodus `portraits' can be argued to follow on from Delehanty's own speculative questions, `[a]re they windows on the self? Discourses on colour? An expiation of expressionism? Portraits of the trials of painting?'[38]

It would also, if Twombly viewed Commodus as his feared `double', follow Delehanty's assessment of the early series of portraits (i.e. *Death of Pompey* (1962) (Pl.30) (HB,II,129), *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus* (Pl.25) etc.) `who, like ancient alter egos join the artist on canvas.'[39] With reference to Delehanty's last question - `Portraits of the trials of painting?' - art depends on active yet controlled imaginative processes, and the anti-hero loses that control. To depict that loss of control requires both the metamorphosis of non-linear thought and emotion in colour, line, texture and scale plus its antithesis - the `rational ideal' (i.e. geometric, structure) - otherwise expressionism loses its point of radical reference and `narrative' background.

How to depict the actions and psyche of the anti-hero without descriptive commentaries requires an economy of means - content becomes the function of form. This fusion of form as content is one of the ultimate trials of the artistic process, and the fluctuations of form as content, within the colour and line of the ideogram, pinpoint the ambiguity of spatial and temporal fusions of thought and emotion in the abrupt and unannounced transitions within the psyche.

When examining the cycle of works, we may view this bifurcation of both Commodus' and Twombly's `trials' of creativity as embedded in the juxtaposition of the geometric and the gestural (often physically `explosive') nature of the brushwork and colour. It simultaneously develops both the `narrative' of Commodus' instigative Roman environment and his responsive psychic energy mutating the dramatics of identity in a passionate and erotic discourse, *and* possibly Twombly's own artistic reparation for the `content' deficiences in the heritage of Abstract Expressionism.

Abstract Expressionism instigates two paths instrumental for Twombly's oeuvre. Firstly, he uses monochrome as `blankness' full of meaning, and secondly, the gestural brushstroke as the biological bodily trace of energy and will he uses in the literal context of its life and death; the elements of content are the moments of peace, sensibility, carnality, aggression and death - in both the `life-span' of the gestural line's movements and in the emerging and sinking of colour, especially in the sense of bodily fluids.

In other words, this approach of commentary on Commodus by Twombly cannot be divorced from Twombly's own questioning of the limits of action painting - its expressionist line and `primal' mark - its own history as above and beyond the exposing of the historical past. It can be argued that the artist attempts to extend the mode of action painting in a manner here which follows, for example, Gibbon's historical picture of Commodus' reign. Bastian, in a sense, condenses the correspondences between Commodus' life, Robbe-Grillet's anti-heroes, and Twombly's practice when he writes:

> the pictures represent an analogy to psychic changes in certain patterns of behaviour, and they are simultaneously among the first works in which

> Twombly consciously establishes the connection of his painting with conceptual matters and formal problems.[40]

All nine canvases in the cycle are silver-grey; a choice that provides the white used in the images with a stronger spatial value. White is the basis (ground zero/silence) of the continual modification of raw energy for, simultaneously, both the artist's practice and Commodus' psyche.

In *Part I* the only elements of the work are contained within the top third of the canvas. There is a pencil-drawn grid; its top line incorporating a horizontal line, which, extending equidistantly from the grid, `hangs' from two, upward, vertical short lines. These verticals start at a point the artist numbers as `1' and finish, to start the possibility of the horizontal, at the number `2'. Submerged beneath the grid's pencilled lines are two white oil-painted gestural clusters which, as two irregular circling images, are linked together by a gesturally applied `umbilical cord'. Through this `channel' we may argue that the images both add to, and subtract from each other in some manner of address. Both the grid and the two cluster images undergo various transmutations in the cycle. Twombly reduces form and content to a synthesis in this metamorphosis of the geometric and the gestural - the two forms of imagery which condense a historical situation - yet through its mode of energized, often brutal, activity lives vividly in the present, giving pertinence to our emotions trans-historically.

It is only in *Part I* that the grid is fully existent, and only in this work and *Part* VI of the cycle, that the two cluster forms betray any sense of equilibrium; firstly, in the absence of colour, in that it is from white that all other colours ensue, and secondly, in the brushstrokes' absence of conflicting nodes of energy.

For many of Twombly's series, the first work provides what can be termed the `title page'. Arguably this cycle on Commodus is no exception. Myers writes, rightly in my view, that in *Part I* `the landscape is that of the Roman grid cities.' He then summarizes, without individual description, the rest of the cycle:

> The grid has burst; hegemony is in question: and order has been replaced by the strains of love, hate and paranoia. In the end Commodus is destroyed by his need to be en bal travestie [sic]. The series is the landscape of delirium. [41]

It is this lack of delirium in *Part I* and *Part VI* that gives the cycle one aspect of its narrative development. The two white `portraits' in *Part I* are suppressed under the grid - coinciding, possibly, with the first three years of Commodus' reign as co-ruler with his father - and the portend of the difference between these two `portraits' is the excessive `smearing' of the right-hand form via the artist's, presumably dampened, circular motion blurring the grid's pencilled lines in the centre of the form. It is as if Commodus seeks to surge through the bars of the `prison-house' of tradition and the too explicitly rational.

This smearing gesture has a dirtying effect - a sensual precursor of the body's corporeal engagement for both Commodus and Twombly. It also reveals white in its surging non-monochrome potentiality. Both these possibilities are heightened by a sparse finger or tube application of palest yellow oil paint within the blurred area. In Twombly's vocabulary of colour's psyche (*Untitled*,1962,Pl.12), the yellow-to-brown range provides both earth and earthiness.

Part VI contains the two white `portraits' minus the hegemonic grid - hegemony has broken by *Part* II of the cycle. The historical juncture of *Part VI* could coincide with Gibbon's recognition of the moment Commodus could have been redeemed; prior to the minister Cleander's influential and manipulative hold over Commodus:

> After the fall of Perennis the *terrors of Commodus* had, for a short time, assumed the appearance of a return to virtue. He repealed the most odious of his acts and ascribed to [Perennis] ... all the errors of his inexperienced youth.[42]

In other words, when discourse with the Other (i.e. ministers, and hence suspicion's heightened triggered-response) had ceased. To heighten this `reprieve' for Rome Twombly uses several devices; singular devices in comparison to the rest of the cycle. Firstly, there are two pencilled horizontals within which the two `portraits' are

`held'; the most significant return (within the cycle) to the basics necessary for a grid. Secondly, it is the only work in which the right-hand form's concentration of whiteness - `purity' - is greater than that of the left form. Thirdly, in *Part VI*, above these `portraits', there are three rows of precursor (for example, to the *Idilli (I am Thyrsis of Etna blessed with a tuneful voice)* (1976) (Pl.46) work) leaf-forms, some of which have white oil-paint coverjng their graphic outlines, others in various gradients of energizing pencilled hatching.

This allusion to nature has the sense of a `springtime' awakening, a rebirth in the potency of form from white and that arising energy in the artist's looped hachures. But this beginning is brought to a death-like halt in *Part VII*, where less than half of the leaf-forms are left, devoid themselves of white and hatching, and most significantly bearing X's over their now smeared dark forms.

What begins again in *Part VII* to *Part IX* is a speedier and more aggressive and threatening version of *Part II* through to *Part V*. In these first four works Twombly has immediately felt and grasped pictorially the physiognomic characteristics for a narrative via the generative ability of colour and painterly line. In following the four works through, we may view how the artist both depicts the engrossing corporeal dissipation and violent nature of Commodus, via physiognomic energy gradients and climactic ideogrammic condensation of colour's psychical nature. That the latter is not purely associative is qualified by the non-cultural nature of rising blood and temperature, as in the blush, rage and passion generally. This semiotics is exemplified by Pound's line:

From the colour the nature and by the nature the sign.[43]

In *Part II* the two white forms have slipped halfway outside of what remains of `order/rationality'. Now the geometric is diminished to the two verticals, numbered 1 to 4; 4 the point where the horizontal still exists. If Twombly acknowledges Plato's metaphysics at this juncture, the spatial correlates for the number 4 provide the first solid form. In this context, without another horizontal the analogous `solidity' of Rome begins to demoralise. Trails of white paint drain down from the right-hand form. This leak of

`purity' is counteracted in texture and density by the introduction of red oil paint on both `portrait' forms, applied more heavily on the right-hand form - Commodus' `portrait' - via the artist's fingers or directly from the tube, clotting very heavily in the centre of that form. This visceral, non-verbal explosion of emphatic colour-erotics and colour-neurotics (neurotics in the denotative sense of a hypersensitive incensed brain) can hardly be disassociated from the corporeal, and its transformations.

Barthes comments on this work, *Part II*, as a prime example of his own compilation of three gestures through which:

> (Twombly utters ... the substance of what is drawn') of:-`(2) clotting (*Commodus II*): Twombly controls his clots, shifts them around as if he intervened with his fingers; the body, then, is here, close to the canvas ... by contact ... [44]

This unmediated, literal intervention, substantiated by the artist's fingerprints, in red oil paint, in the bottom left-hand corner of *Part II*, serves more than one function in the discourse: to announce, in this `signature', that the artist is revealing both the raw material/substance of art and of self (the ground zero of the body) from which the artist and Commodus alike seek a creative, energized transformation.

On the question of materiality/matter Barthes does not discuss, as does Cassirer, the expressive qualities of matter as physiognomic form, nevertheless he does refer to the substances themselves as prior (in what I would term a Heideggerean supplement) to cultural semiotics:

> The materials are what the Alchemists called materia prima - what exist prior to the division of meaning: a tremendous paradox, since in the human order nothing comes to man that is not immediately accompanied by a meaning, the meaning which other men have given it, and so on, back to infinity. The painter's demi-urge power is that he makes the materials exist as substance; even if meaning emerges from the canvas, pencil and colour remain `things`, stubborn substances whose persistence in `being-there` nothing (no subsequent meaning) can annul.[45]

After his reference to clotting and the body, via the artist's fingers, Barthes goes on to argue, `it might be better to speak of maculae rather than `clots`; for the macula is ... the stain on the skin, but it is also the mesh of a net ...'[46]

In *Part III*, immediately above the right-hand `portrait', Twombly's fingers have dabbed `clots' of red oil paint. Then, releasing his tangible presence, he reconnects, via red oil paint, fingered `parallel' lines through the white `portrait'-form. These verticals, necessarily and significantly irregular, evoke the bloodied erosion of a net-form - the `prison-bars' turning to blood in the incensed brain of Commodus. These finger-strokes are arguably both a caress of sympathy for the rage of an incensed mind against an inherited position, and the renunciation of the perfect geometric grid - the body as passion usurping the too restrictive grid-format for behaviour and for art.

The latter context, rather than an entirely speculative assertion, has an art-historical precedent, as compendiously illustrated by Rosalind Krauss in the chapter `Grids', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*. In Krauss' thesis on the grid as a major component of the modernist medium, she asserts its paradoxical nature for the avant-garde artist:

> a stereotype that is constantly being paradoxically rediscovered ... [as] a prison in which the caged artist feels at liberty. For what is striking about the grid is that while it is most effective as a badge of freedom, it is extremely restrictive in the actual exercise of freedom ... in the service of invention ... the grid condemns ... to repetition. [47]

This paradox we may view as `creativity suppressed to destruction' - in the repetitive nature, so to speak, of an avant-garde response, one which Twombly distinctly breaks from in his use of the grid as both psychological disturbance and historical narrative.

In *Part III* the pencilled horizontal remains, albeit the two verticals subside to the number three. Both cluster `portraits' have slid, in comparison to *Part II*, almost beneath the horizontal. Red trails of paint replace those white trails seen in *Part II*. By *Part IV*

the horizontal and its verticals have disappeared, and the two `portraits' have altered considerably. Firstly, nothing joins them. Secondly, spatially projected on their white cluster `portraits' are red oil paint frenzied clusters (applied directly from the tube or the brush handle), which almost eclipse the white. Lastly, significantly, the right-hand `portrait' is larger, uncoiled aggressively and more eclipsed than that of the left, with yellow oil paint at its tip and two large black clots - as the `nucleus' of a diseased self leading to death? In this work of such painterly velocity, it is as if the baseness (`earth') and carnality (blood) have almost completed both the transfusion and transformation of identity from the left `portrait' to the right. As if the lessons learnt have become a magnified atrocity.

Twombly makes the point, only in *Part IV*, of highlighting, in detail, the causes of the grid's complete disappearance. To the right of the right-hand `portrait' there are two, small, pencilled squares enclosing yellowish-white smears of paint, with the pencilled word `detail' written beneath them. In the bottom third of the canvas further reference is made to the now deluging (rather than geometrically ordered) landscape, by a red clot of paint enclosed in the tip of a roughly drawn triangle. This `detail' echoes *Vengeance of Achilles* in its bloodied aggression. If we return to Plato's spatial correlates, the joining of 3 points - the triangle - is the first shape, prior to the solidity of the spatial correlates of the number 4. In this context, *Part IV* has regressed from the `solidity' of Roman life to a prior state of `barbarism'.

Part V provides the necessary precursor to the previously discussed *Part VI*; in, collectively, its return of the horizontal, the verticals beginning from zero, and the `casting off' of the red from the right-hand form to the left. Perennis, if we follow Gibbon, takes the blame for the atrocities and Commodus has his brief return to purer actions.

Following the `narrative' for *Part VII* to *Part IX*; Cleander's appearance as minister fostered both a greater licence of sovereign power in the realms of financial

corruption and executions of members of the Senate; not least `the execution of Arrius Antoninus, the last representative of the name and virtues of the Antonines.' Commodus' second decline into infamy was swifter, as his weak character became more prone to paranoia and even less able to withstand Cleander's influence. He finally sought refuge via total absorption in a gladiatorial image of Hercules:

> His cruelty, which at first obeyed the dictates of others, degenerated into habit, and at length became the ruling passion of his soul ... he valued nothing ... except ... his sensual appetites [and] ... the habit of slaughter in his daily amusements. [48]

In *Part VII* there is only one of the remaining horizontals left from *Part VI*, and the two joined `portraits' almost obliterate its presence. The right-hand `portrait' has its ideogrammic sensuous and aggressive qualities afresh and strengthened, via density and colour impact. White oil paint glimmers only at points beneath flesh-pink oil paint, which itself escapes at points beneath an almost obliterating luminous, bright red oil paint in irregular, uncontrolled repetitive circling motions.

These circling motions `breed', layer upon layer, a delirium in the artist which does not appear to know when to stop. The spatial value of the work resides in these layers, which are in continual interaction. The artist's extreme physical abandonment, and near-absorption in one emphatic colour `forewarns' that `creativity' is on the verge of chaos, with no apparent restraint from tradition or the self. The left-hand `portrait', smaller, and lessened in colour intensity, has been scoured by downward lines; stabbing in fact the image in a draining process. It appears as if the life of one `portrait' is achieved through the potential death of the other.

Part VIII is a threatening aesthetic explosion, not least in the fact that in this work the two `portraits' and the trails of paint bleeding down take up three-quarters of the canvas. If Twombly had wanted to provide the viewer with the physiognomic expressive sense of an atomic aftermath he could have done no better than here. The horizontal line is midway down the canvas, yet it fails to meet in the middle, and the two `portraits' now merge almost into one, pouring the contents of their natures in a deluge

down through the horizontal's gap. Twombly has given a thin, pale white echo device of circling energy to the left of each of the merging `portraits', as if they have come a long way now from their beginning. The gradually engrossing voluminous nature of the Commodus series, through sedimentary spatiotemporal layers, has an echo of Pollock's `drip imagery', if Pollock's practice is viewed as `imagery' released from the psychic layers of the mind in the form of successive cross-sections of reminiscence.

The ferocity and velocity of these converging images in *Part VIII,* one can only term repulsive and frightening. Twombly has used all his gestural devices; smearing, mostly red, and some yellow, from the tube; scouring at points, possibly with the brush's handle; impastoed clots of red and black; and uncontrolled, possibly finger-applied, frenzied circular motions in all the colours mentioned. Yet it is mainly blood-red oil paint which streams down to the bottom of the canvas. As Bastian states, `creativity heightened to the majesty of atrocity reveals its physiognomy nowhere more lucid than here.'[49]

In Part IX, the gaping horizontal is now very near the top of the canvas - all hope of the grid's rebirth appears to be lost. Beneath the gaping horizontal the two portraits are now very small, the blood red in both circular forms, lessens, barely existing in the right hand portrait, giving the appearance of having been absorbed by a now predominant portrait of earth-yellow, yet with glimpses of the canvas, revealing therefore a lack of solidity within the form. The remaining element of this cycle, below the portraits, is a penciled square emptied of any co-ordinates, ready to begin afresh. As if to guarantee `life after death', Twombly provides within the square an example of his pencilled, energized `loop-language'.

1 Cited in, Federico Garcia Lorca, *Poet in New York* (London: Penguin, 1988), p.5.

2 Dore Ashton, `The artist as dissenter', *Studio International*, vol. 171, no. 876, April, 1966, p.164.

3 It is difficult not to view the artist's execution of *The Age of Alexander* as a prime example of an achronological self and Other, painted as it was two weeks after the birth of his son Cyrus Alessandro.

4 Lorca, *Poet*, p.105.

5 J. Boardman et al (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.315.

6 Boardman, *Oxford*, p.52.

7 All citations from *The Iliad* will be from Alexander Pope's translation in, *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope* (Glasgow: Griffin and Co., 1852), referred to by Book and line number.

8 Italo Calvino (trans. P.Creagh), *The Literature Machine* (London: Picador, 1989), p.138.

9 Charles Olson, `The Present is Prologue', in George F. Butterick (ed.), *Charles Olson, Additional Prose: A Bibliography & Other Notes & Essays* (Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1974), pp.39-40.

10 B. Myers, `Marks: Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, vol. 20, no 8, April, 1982, p.57.

11 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Drawings. and Constructions 1951 to 1974* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1975), p.38.

12 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Fifty Days at Ilium – A Painting in Ten Parts* (Stuttgart: Heiner Bastian and Edition Cantz, 1990).

13 Myers, `Marks', p.55.

14 Pope, ` Preface', *Poetical Works*, p.138.

15 H. Friedrich, `Cy Twombly', *Art News*, vol. 78, March, 1979, p.183.

16 [my italics] Pope, *Poetical Works*, p.139.

17 Pope, *Poetical Works*, p.137.

18 Pope, *Poetical Works*, p.137.

19 R. Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change* (London: BBC Publications, 1980), p.388.

20 Hughes, *Shock*, p.388.

21 M. Sheffield, `Cy Twombly: Major Changes in Space, Idea, Line', *Artforum*, vol. 17, no. 9, May, 1979, p.42.

22 Boardman, *Oxford*, p.159.

23 Plato, *The Symposium* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1951), p.44.

24 M. Welish, `A Discourse on Cy Twombly', *Art in America*, vol. 67, no. 5, Sept., 1979, p.83.

25 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.II 1961-1965* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1993), p.30.

26 Twombly admitted the attraction in his work towards, `contradictory personalities of ... men ... of ... myth and history; he found them perfect examples of action and sensibility.' Delehanty's conversation with the artist, June 4th, 1974, acknowledged in, S. Delehanty, `The Alchemy of Mind and Hand', *Art International*, vol. 20, no. 2/3, Feb., 1976, footnote 8, p.75.

27 Donald Judd, `Cy Twombly at Castelli', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 38, May, 1964, p.38: `In each of these paintings there are a couple of swirls of red paint ... placed high ... There are a few drips and spatters and an occasional pencil line. There isn't anything to the paintings ... Twombly usually scribbles on a white ground ... I've never thought this more than mildly interesting, but did realize that the paintings worked well and that Twombly had something to say.'

28 Delehanty's conversation with the artist, `Alchemy', p. 75.

29 Delehanty, ` Alchemy', p.16.

30 [my italics] E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), p.48.

31 Myers, `Marks', p.53: `But why the `Discourses of Commodus ? To whom is Commodus talking? Obviously to his dead father.'

32 Works such as *Ides of March*, *Death of Pompey*, and *Catullus*.

33 B. Stoltzfus, *Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel* (U.S.A: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p.43.

34 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.46.

35 [my italics] Gibbon, *Empire*, p.47.

36 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.51.

37 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.47.

38 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.16.

39 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.16.

40 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Bilder-Paintings 1952-1976* (Berlin: Propylean Verlag, 1978), p.25.

41 Myers, 'Marks', p.53.

42 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.51.

43 E. Pound, *Rock Drill Cantos* (London, 1955), Canto XC.

44 R. Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.179.

45 Barthes, *Forms*, p.178.

46 Barthes, *Forms*, p.179.

47 R. Krauss, 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988), p.160.

48 Gibbon, *Empire*, p.47.

49 Bastian, *CR Vol II*, p. 29.

PART III – PAINTERS: APPROPRIATION, INSPIRATION AND THE UNSHEATHING OF THE PRE-ICONIC

> 'What matters is the effect ... of *inspiration*, that creative force which is, in a sense, the euphoria of chance.' [1] (Barthes)

> That the work is marks the explosive brilliance of a unique event which comprehension can then take over. Inspiration is linked to this essential anteriority ... (the artist's) imprudence of desire which forgets the law: *that is inspiration* - the unreality of the void ... art points into ... an absence ... where being ceaselessly perpetuates itself as ... endless indeterminacy ... the indeterminate milieu of fascination. Distance here is the limitless depth behind the image.[2] (Blanchot)

In a recent interview Cy Twombly asserted 'I look at a lot of artists. I'm inspired by - I suppose I shouldn't say 'inspired', but it's not really influenced. I am *inspired* ...' [3] 'Influence' is a power not necessarily sought - often detrimental - and one which may be discarded, leaving one unchanged. Whilst 'inspire', in its Latin origin, is linked to the breath; a bodily link seen as an expansive, life-giving force. The artist's ability to absorb and then expand the pictorial forces within certain masterpieces is the subject of this section.

Twombly, like precursors Pound and Picasso, uses the hybrid technique, which means positioning himself in a reciprocal relationship with masterpieces, simultaneously preserving and transcending them. His concern is with each work's subject matter, but it would be erroneous to assume that it is, on occasions, the first and foremost concern. Michael Podro's exposition of Frank Auerbach's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1971) - after Titian - illuminates what I believe to be of relevance to Twombly's own use of certain past masters' works:

> It might be thought, of the painting itself, that it has so insisted on its own procedure as to remove the subject of the painting from us...But this would be to misperceive the painting. Rather, we might say that structures within Titian's painting have been excavated, drawn out and

> made palpable. For the subject of the new painting is not the subject of Titian's painting, but Titian's painting itself ... [4]

It is this procedural device of excavating a source - unsheathing the palpability of the image or subject that distinguishes Twombly's approach from Rauschenberg's. Rauschenberg attributes his own combine-painting's device of multiplicity to Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation* (1472). In this context of inspiration and appropriation, Rauschenberg has taken what he perceived as Leonardo's non-hierarchical procedure, to inaugurate his own combine painting 'structures':

> [Leonardo's *Annunciation*] ... In that canvas the tree, the rock, the Virgin are of all equal importance. There is no gradation. It was Leonardo's *Annunciation* that provided the shock which made me paint as I do now.[5]

This hierarchical indeterminacy is always an excess foreign to the purposes of 'truth' - Nietzsche's 'perspectival values'. Nevertheless, Rauschenberg's use of what Blanchot terms 'anteriority\absence' is not sought in either the subject matter or painterly practice of individual past works, to expand the physiological life-force of that work, the ground from which those perspectival truths arise. For example, his appropriational use of reproductions; Velàquez's *Venus and Child* in *Crocus* (1962), Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* in *Rebus* (1955), although aligning with Twombly's own recurrent use of the Venus motif from this period on, has been applied as an almost unchanged element - a silk-screened photographic reproduction - within the heterogeneous collaboration of cultural elements.

In other words, Rauschenberg's device is pastiche, and leads forward to, for example, Schnabel's quotational pastiche of a figure from Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Naked Men* in *Blue Nude with Sword* (1979), whilst Twombly's use of masterpieces leads back, for example, to Otto Mueller's *The Judgement of Paris* (1910-11), or, more significantly, to an artist of likewise mythological sensibilities - Picasso. In this sense Twombly furthers a tradition. After illustrating *Metamorphoses d'Ovide* (1931), Picasso in 1934, within his general tribute to both mythology and the classical vein, devoted four works to Rembrandt as an artist. Explicit to past masters, and masterpieces, and

contemporaneous with Twombly's own `homages', are Picasso's *Women of Algiers, after Delacroix* (1954), *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe, after Manet* (series of 2) (1961), and *The Rape of the Sabines* (series of 3) (1962).

Rauschenberg's use of reproductions is, in a sense, a celebration of technology and mass media. The distinction drawn by Davvetas between Rauschenberg's and Twombly's aesthetic proclivities is summed up by his statement that Twombly is `suspicious of every `technical\materialist\technological' solution to aesthetic questions', [and hence] `sought his answers in poetry, myth, and in dialogues with various past masters.' [6]

In the instances when Twombly himself employs the use of postcard reproductions, the desire is to free the particular masterpiece from its technological petrification, as an already constituted cultural stereotype. Bastian's analysis of Twombly's forms pinpoints what I shall phrase as the simultaneous revelation and concealment of the morphic cusp necessary to any law of pictorial form (or Cassirer's `symbolic pregnance' prior to, and within, `languages'):

> Twombly has abstracted an objective form from its source in order to expand it, as if the tones and modulations of a morpheme. What remains of the motif in each image is thus a detached essence [these images are] diaphanous, fleeting transitory forms ... whose immanence and direction materialize for a moment like chimera, only to fade and disappear. [7]

Several of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings receive this treatment, for example, Leonardo's anatomy and drapery studies, and *The Deluge* drawing Twombly utilises in *Untitled* (1968) (Pl.65). In this work Twombly reduces Leonardo's drawing to the investigative nature of line's spatial form and movement.

In *Epithalamion III* (1976) (Pl.68) the artist utilizes a postcard reproduction of a Frederick Church landscape:

> Twombly disregards the subject matter ... and instead ... extracting the style from content and context alike ..., these abstract studies might be

> again abstracted to a scrawl that reads as both essence and final reduction of the formal and expressive implications of his source.[8]

Twombly therefore goes in quite the opposite direction to both the quotational appropriations of historical stereotypes, and what McLuhan termed the 'Narcissus-narcosis' of mass media. He, instead, excavates to that point of genesis that inaugurates cultural discourses, enacting the physiological process of 'forming form'.

McLuhan pinpointed the growing surge of a 'Narcissus-narcosis' and his recommended overcoming of such addiction to mass media was via the hybrid principle. Twombly's 'fascinated gaze' sought inspiration (not influence in that sense of the subliminal control of the mass media world of stereotypes), by returning to the pagan, mythological and poetic Greek world, where, significantly, both identity and sexuality were far less culturally constituted - in a positive state of indeterminacy, flux and open-endedness - than in the Western, especially American, contemporary mass media stereotyping.

Michael Newman, drawing on Blanchot's exposition of the 'fascinated artist', describes this proliferating consciousness beneath Symbolic orders when 'such an artist ... discerns in images not the perspicuity of discourse but a certain opacity which promises a sudden revelation ...'[9] The foreseen contemporary world of technological dominance was the nightmare which instigated, arguably, Heidegger's thesis on the necessary, balanced strife between 'earth' and 'world' (culture), rather than the feared, eventual subtracted 'earth' from the necessary equation; one whereby Being might always be concealed from mankind. Twombly, in the 'stripping' of the postcards, provides that sensuous plenitude, Heidegger's 'unconcealedness', underneath technology.

As such, Being is a space of source; a 'place' of *re*sources for the birth and rebirth of other values than those which have acquired an alienating and petrified stance on 'reality', or, just as significant, there are purposes within 'earth' (nature's materials)

above and beyond `truths' extracted for purposeful action. There is an analogy between Being and Dionysus, in that of Dionysus' submerged, flickering, subordination by Apollo. Dionysus as the formless, the fecund, and Apollo as mankind's `perspectival values' (Nietzsche), those rational laws under which Dionysus, as man's elemental source and *re*source, disappears.

In Chapter Three, *The Wider Archaeological Context*, I touched upon points which concern the context of past art within contemporary aesthetic practice, a practice which forgoes the dematerialization of the art object, and the theory of artistic decline within Hegelian history. The central points lay within the Heideggerean thesis of recalcitrant Being enacted in the work of art; in the display of the inseparables, disclosure and concealment. As an activating physical organism this nature of Truth, as exemplified in art practice, had, I argued via certain theorists, an anoriginal, ahistoric auratic reserve; an `obtuse' meaning (Barthes), a non-exhaustive obscurity, never finally subordinated to a historical period or world-view.

We have already encountered the palimpsest, that act of disclosure and concealment; the flickering absence and presence of achronological `voices' in Twombly's use of names/interpellation. Now his `fascinated gaze', in his adopted `earth-environment', is explored in certain masterpieces of, for example, Leonardo, Poussin and Raphael.

Blanchot's work in 1955, in its Hegelian and Heideggerean `marriage', is illuminating on the nature of a work of art's historical resonance above and beyond its own temporal position of information and subject matter. As a theorist (in a similar way to Olson) he is a prime example of a `past-progressive'. He draws from Hegel's first two categories of the dialectic - Being and Nothingness (a contradiction which inaugurates Becoming; the first triad being therefore completed), bridging this work through that of the Symbolists, significantly Mallarmé's `pregnant void', to the concept of `absence and presence' within postmodernism.

Blanchot follows Hegel in the belief that Man's purposeful action upon nature, his mastery and appropriation of the given, is the process whereby history unfolds. But, for Blanchot, there is another, just as important, desire driving mankind, one foreign to such delimiting - the desire for that which cannot be mastered: the ambiguous, an opaque profundity.

This `realm' hidden beneath the surface veil of conceivable limits has many synonyms in Blanchot's exposition: Death, Dark, Silence, Void, and Non-Being. To understand all these as positive terms within, yet transfiguring Hegel's notion of Nothingness (correspondingly, Heidegger's `concealment'; that site of withdrawal of Being), it is necessary to recall that for Hegel we can only become conscious of Being by positing its denial - non-Being. The first dialectical resolution, Becoming, is simultaneously affirmation and negation - an experience that is (what it is) and yet is not (what it will become), and has resonances with Cassirer's sedimentation of pre-cultural symbolic pregnance, on the cusp of analogical languages .

Both Non-Being/Nothingness and Being are two sides of the same coin; they are `negativity as the moving force of the dialectic', and `truth and its satisfactions cannot finish off the power of negativity.'[10] It is only man's constant proximity to death - as Non-Being/the negative - which in the first instance activates him into purposefulness. Hence, paradoxically, it (Death/Negation) is the sustainer of life and creation. Without its absent presence nothing can begin to become, as it were. It is the inextinguishable silence that gives `birth' to intermittent language.

As the inexhaustible source - the anteriority - of creativity per se, Non-Being and its synonyms are only present, for Blanchot, in Hegel's first approach to the Geist/mind - Art. Art is that preserve which reaches back to the ambiguities of the creative procedure, ` this inclination of the work to emerge and make itself visible and present not only in itself but in the experience [the struggle] from which it is born.'[11] In art this negative power is communicated as the alliance of Being and Non-Being, revealing

Silence, Void etc. as the pregnant sources, as the anteriorities to any unfolding - Becoming - of cultural forms, and thence history.

As a realm, Negation (and its synonyms) is powerless to provide satisfaction, or closure (i.e. it cannot be contained), hence its desirability, and this desirability results in what Blanchot terms the 'fascination' of the image for the viewer. Cézanne has never lost this 'fascination'; the painter who for Merleau-Ponty exemplifies the art of the pre-scientific and pre-technological orders of expression, providing, via Cézanne's doubt,[12] a primary world of expression, of lived signification.

The work demands of the artist, as creator, that he/she face - a state of simultaneous desire and fear - the absence of history, culture, language, memory etc. In other words, to renounce and efface his/her culturally constituted self in order to avoid the certainty of ideas, values (i.e. the limiting of meaning). Only thus, as both viewer and artist, can he see in the painting (or hear in the poem), 'the echo of what cannot stop talking'[13] - the immeasurable; the infinite; the inexhaustible and the timeless. Hence, surrendering 'oneself to the fascination of the absence of time',[14] and to 'the limitless depth behind the image.'[15] The 'echo', in the sense of the latter quote, is matter on its cusp - the 'explosive event' from chaos to form - the anteriority which enables both image and style to become, to appear, to be present, to have final presence at all. The artist reveals Being in its own appearance and effacement.

In terms of the ahistorical source of past masterpieces for the artist, it is the 'event', according to Blanchot, through which there 'takes place in time another time', and one that can be recaptured:

> [On] ... the question of the work and its historical duration ... scholars ... study it, its history, and the History of Art that it represents. But in this capacity it is also nothing more than an object, which finally has no value except to our achievements, whose knowledge is a mere form. And yet the work is history; it is an event, the event of history itself, and this is because its most steadfast claim is to give to the word beginning all its force...what it [the work] says is not only what it is at the moment of being born, when it begins. Always it says beginning. It is thus that

> history belongs to it and that nevertheless it escapes history ... always in excess: its the superfluity of what always lacks ... superabundance of refusal.[16] ... And its new 'now', it renews this 'now' which it seems to initiate, to render more immediate. [17]

In the masterpieces of mythology archetypal traits are neither pictorially cataplectic nor at a stage of hermeneutic termination. Rather they are polymorphically 'breathed in' by Twombly, in a cultural unfolding which returns to their Mallarméan suggestive source - that celebratory process of energy and creation itself.

Davvetas' examination of Twombly's *Venus and Mars* (1962) (Pl.31) leads him to argue that:

> Such a wish to alter the 'well-knowns'... requires an examination of the primary element that created them, ... in ... *Venus and Mars* ... those icons show up as primary dynamics of colour and gesture, as energized powers. They are un-iconized ...[18]

Botticelli's *Mars and Venus* was very possibly the inspiration for Twombly's painting, *Venus and Mars.* My supposition rests upon the paradigmatic use the artist makes of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1484-86) during the same year. As a work of an erotic encounter, it is not surprising that *Venus and Mars* has ideogrammatic echoes of Twombly's *Leda and the Swan* (1962) (Pl.32). Reversing Botticelli's compositional format, the two reclining 'figures' in Twombly's *Venus and Mars* are voluptuously actualized, in part, by his metalanguage for energy forces. In the bottom right-hand corner there is a large, lightly pencilled semicircle of opulent nippled breast-forms; protuberances from which lightly pencilled, yet tight, loops emit themselves. This topological Diana of Ephesus is partially 'fleshed' via a minimally applied and hastily streaked looping in shimmering salmon-pink crayon.

In the bottom left-hand corner of this work there is an ensemble of pencilled, semi-circular folds, containing pinkish-white tempera. This reclining 'torso-form' is extended to a full 'figure' via a contour; in Twombly's extensive use of black-pencilled energized loops, tapering towards the 'feet', a point that reaches beneath Venus. The artist has used curlicues of red crayon centering around Mars' 'heart' area. Two large

pictogrammic heart-shapes, filled partially with the identical red-crayoned curlicues, diagonally float upward from Mars' 'heart'. In a ruffled valentine-card fashion, each 'heart' is surrounded, significantly, with the same black-crayoned frenzied loops that surround, and partly imply, Mars' body. The 'ruffle', in its agitated sense, arguably, provides the ideogrammatic conjunction of Eros and Thanatos. This 'black energy' (which so often evokes strong forces, even aggression, in Twombly's oeuvre) has the proclivity of brutality, and hence the possibility of Thanatos. This threatening sensation is significantly counteracted, if not mastered, by Eros (i.e. Life) from within the 'hearts'. This 'reading' is based on colour and gesture's energy gradients, on what Davvetas terms: 'a series of brusque gestures and strokes that denote its (the subject's) energy, the energy before something congeals into a phenomenon; the process of creation itself rather than its 'graphic' result.'[19] In this painting we are given an expressive, pulsating range of sensation; from the violent to the vulnerable - by the 'black energy' being gradually discarded by Mars' pink vulnerable body, plus the furthest 'heart' from Mars (and nearest to Venus) loosens almost all its 'black energy' from one side.

There are two pencilled rectangles in the work; the one in the top centre contains the word PARIS, written in red crayon, yet almost effaced by heavy black lines; the second is immediately below Venus and contains Twombly's signature, place and date, also in red crayon. Paris was denied Venus herself, yet ' she promised to give Paris a spouse of outstanding beauty like herself.' [20] Twombly frequently places himself in this way within a rectangle (often itself representative of a poem or painting) in his oeuvre, ahistoricizing his own contemporary personae within the myth.

In 1960 Twombly painted a work entitled *Hérodiade*, scribbling on the canvas a line from Mallarmé's poem of the same name, 'I have known the nakedness of my scattered dreams.'[21] Margaret Sheffield, although perceptively stating that this inscription 'describes the unresolved quality in works of this period',[22] does not pinpoint the quotation's source, and thereby fails to illuminate Mallarmé's significant contribution to Twombly's pictorial 'language' and aesthetics.

For Mallarmé, this poem on Herodiade (the later mother of Salome, and instigator of her daughter's request for the head of John the Baptist) was catalytic to his semantic `philosophy': `I've finally begun my *Hérodiade* – in fear and trembling, because I am inventing a new language which ... I can define briefly as follows: Describe not the object itself, but the effect it produces. Therefore, ... all words must yield to sensation ...'[23]

To recall the introductory quote from Barthes on the non-linear nature of inspiration; there is a necessary equation between `creative force', `effect', and `the euphoria of chance'. Mimesis is never euphoric - well-being depends upon a sense of new, of extended, life - and inspiration derived from prior masterpieces is, arguably, instigated by the radiation of new sensations which each masterpiece emits, an experience of `unearthed' gestation prior to its reification as image (or, in Mallarmé's poetics, the reified word). Such a euphoria resides in Mallarméan suggestiveness. In Mallarmé's definition: `Suggestion ... in essence it is always new, because it is the hidden ... in things which it speaks.' [24]

At the point in Mallarmé's poem (Part II) from which Twombly quotes:

> O mirror!
> cold water frozen by ennui in your frame
> how many times and through what hours, distressed
> by dreams and searching my memories, like leaves
> under your ice in the deep hole, have I
> appeared in you like a shadow far away
> but, horror! in the dusk, in your austere pool
> I have known the nakedness of my scattered dreams!

Hérodiade is filled with horror at the prophetic glimpses of her `melting' virginity; that inert, sterile and frigid nature (Part III reveals her dream: those sensations necessary to the severing head of John the Baptist). The multifarious mirror symbol devised by Mallarmé, here used in its suggestive correspondence to a `narcissistic' pool, is not only the division between Hérodiade's conscious and unconscious desires but the analogous veil between two worlds: one the sterile, frozen world of language, that of a decadent,

didactic civilization; the other world heavy in released, rich, yet strange, indeterminate, nuanced images.

As Mallarmé defines this poetics of 'nakedness', or a 'naked self', the quintessential image is one condensed from digressions and meanderings of an iridescent jewel-faceted, perception; perception's authentic heterogeneous, polymorphic nature, one released on the reading of the poem, ' [I]t gives to an old word the illusion one is reading it for the first time.' [25] This definition of what may be termed an 'aerated-on-the-wing' perception has its echo in Blanchot's own theory of anteriority (in art the experience/struggle as part of Being); as that 'event' which is released in the image (or word) for it to remain 'now'. With reference to Twombly's specific citation from Mallarmé's poem, it is a line which pointedly echoes the poet's notion of the anterior creative process, prior to, and inclusive within, the condensed symbol/word.

In Bastian's assessment, 'Twombly's drawings ... [are] closely related to Mallarmé's poetic vision ... They evoke a cipher of fleeting signs ...' [26] Kirk Varnedoe omits this link to Mallarmé. Nevertheless, in discussing Twombly's works of this period, he highlights the 'language' of non-linear digressions and the non-reification the artist sought:

> Through the insistently episodic, uncomposed sequences of marks and signs...such fantasies of time as continuous and open-ended ... were enacted as non-stop sensation. Twombly thus resisted ... [what] would align these events with a vector that led to a resolved end point, or otherwise threatened their moment-to-moment specificity. In this regard, weight - all that would be bound together in mass, and ordered by a shared pull to earth - would connote surrender to inertia and mortality.[27]

To regain the source, the palpability and palpitation, of a masterpiece's imagery, parallels this excavation to the anterior stage of multifarious sensation - that excess always prior to historical 'truths'. It reveals the struggle/event from which we extricate the limited and historical world-view. This is one reason, I propose, why the artist goes back to a highly emotive (often contradictory) corporeal 'language'; a physicality, often

erotic, overturning society's mores. Also, this sometimes has pertinence in an ironic vein towards a masterpiece's conservative historical explication.

What would appear as a digression on my part, the discussion of *Hérodiade*, is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, the reason given by Sheffield with respect to the 'unresolved quality in works of this period'; what Bastian terms as 'the radical renunciation of all constriction of form ...'.[28] Secondly, I wish to propose that Twombly's painting *Salome* (1961) (Pl.33) (HB,II,1) of the following year to *Hérodiade* (1960) has greater likelihood of being inspired by the painting of a fellow Symbolist to Mallarmé - Gustave Moreau's *Salome Dancing* (1876) - than, for example, Filippo Lippi's or Ghirlandajo's *The Feast of Herod*, or the later erotic treatment in Gustav Klimt's *Salome* (1909). Moreau's number of works dedicated to the Greek poetess Sappho would be in itself an emphatic alignment between the two artists. Of possibly more direct relevance would be the exhibition of Moreau's works at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1961; works by Moreau whose 'abstract' qualities were assessed by Dore Ashton as prophetic to the abstract painters.[29]

It is Moreau's highly sensual, erotic and flashing, jewel-like treatment of the subject of Salome, which combines so well with Twombly's own 'erography', and his Mallarméan 'radical renunciation of all constriction of form.' The combination of these two in Twombly's *Salome* is most explicit in the sensation of the dance - a dance in Moreau's own figurative portrayal which earned Huysmans' famous attributes, 'lascivious' and 'disquieting delirium.' [30] Twombly's *Salome* unsheaths the subject's physiological and physiognomic nature, Desire and Lust, as such passions literally uncoil in expressive movement.

The large, rectangular dove-grey primed canvas provides the necessary 'narrative' scope. The sensation of Salome's dance, entering from the left perimeter, almost absorbs an entire vertical third of the canvas. Underscoring both the dance's sexuality and the resulting slaughterous act, Twombly uses blood-red crayon in a series

of superimposed scrawling, jagged lines. As distorted loops, at times veering towards the figure eight, they are paradoxically both hypnotic and nerve-wracking. The former due to the repetition; a trance-like timelessness apposite to the sensation of Desire. The latter resides in not only the artist omitting his usual frenzied loop-language of a more natural energy for one of a jarring, unnatural rhythm (one of lost control), but also in the line's variety of pressures - soft `whispers' spasmodically off-key in `loud' density of tone.

Twombly's erratic pressure and direction in his hand's movement, and hence the plethora of the line's expressive qualities as a vocabulary, becomes the dance in itself. This vocabulary provides the full `Muybridgean' seductive sequence of the dance through its nerve-wracking eternity; the invisible element beneath Moreau's seductive, yet sinister, Salome, poised - locked in time - on her toes. Colour and line become the presence of that which is absent in Moreau's work - one could say they are that Blanchotian `limitless depth behind the image'.

The remaining two-thirds of the canvas's pictorial space, as Bastian states: `constitutes itself through a reading of the scenic context of the ideographic scripture and an assessment of its heterogeneous allusion and figuration.'[31] Just as the blood-red dance reads on two spatial levels: the planar advance from left to right, and topologically as the delirious scintillation of the dancer's feet and loin movements, Twombly uses these two forms of positionality in the remaining scene, an effect which heightens the dance's sensation of vortical engulfment.

Twombly cites Moreau's inclusion of a statue of the fertility goddess Diana of Ephesus. He positions the statue's ideographic form topologically in the top left of this remaining two-thirds of the work. It comprises a lightly pencilled upright rectangle, surrounded at its front and sides by pencilled protuberances which contain circular movements of shimmering flesh-pink crayon. Two of these `breast-forms' the artist has centred with circles. The rectangle itself contains a pencilled square placed towards the

front; partly filled by a row of unbroken vertical lines in an intense cobalt `sapphire' blue crayon. It is the blue so vital to Moreau's composition. Twombly uses this particular blue also directly below Diana's statue, in an oval-gem shape slightly to the right of the `dance'. Diana's flesh-pink protuberances are also echoed in the `dance', in that two of the loops, advancing to the right, have the same colour implanted within them. One of Twombly's two most emphatic colours (one being red) comes into play over these pink-crayoned gestures - white, in both crayon and oil paint, the latter squeezed straight from the tube.

As if to provide an index to the power of these colours' sensory valency, the artist has placed at the base of the work, overlapping the `dance', a solitary small loop in pink crayon, wholly surrounded by a curlicue of white oil paint squeezed again from the tube. By implication pink as flesh and sensual life has to erupt through, and from, white as purity, virginity, frigidity and 'birth'. Recall the mother of Salome. Hérodiade's nature was to prompt this sensuous dance and bloodied act. Such an index is given greater potency in the white-crayoned outline of an oval form (placed above the `sapphire' oval form) where blood-red crayon has been layered in an intensity only twice repeated in the work.

This intensity has its repetition within the right-hand third section of the canvas. The left-hand area of this section contains, at its top, Twombly's signature and date, directly above the work's mauve-crayoned title enclosed within a rectangle. Mid-way down the canvas at this point and outlined, in red crayon, an upright oval form with `tail' swims upwards. Two or three red-crayoned vertical lines within the form heighten this impression. Significantly, this possibly `sperm' form casts off minimal shards of white crayon. Slightly below this form, and to its right, claiming the bottom right corner position in the work, is a lightly pencilled profile of Herod's throne.

The throne is simply constituted by a rectangular upright shape, mounted at its right-hand corner by an exceedingly slim pencilled rectangle of the same height; a height

measured by a series of numbers the artist lightly pencils. Here the tension of the work is held, aligning the mesmerising quality of the dance's portrayal and the aforementioned sequence of erotic red forms to Twombly's Herod - a large pencilled erect phallic form, its uppermost third drenched in hastily applied red crayon. This form's height reaches almost half-way up Twombly's measurements, and its length over-extends the throne. Small globules of white oil paint, possible flicked onto the canvas, as if finally shaken off the phallus, float down the side of the throne.

The fact that a poet, particularly Mallarmé, inspires in Twombly certain correspondences to another artist (or poet's) work is just one element in Twombly's oeuvre, which provides in itself an aesthetic paradigm of peregrinations, (this is not surprising for such an eclectic and voracious reader).[32] Both Twombly's *Hero and Leandro* (1981-1984) (Pl.34) and *Hero and Leandro (To Christopher Marlowe)* (1984-5) (Pl.35) are cases in point where such peregrinations of inspiration abound.

The artist whom Twombly acknowledges as having consistently admired, and who bears reference to these two works, is Turner. Turner's painting *The Parting of Hero and Leander - from the Greek of Musaeus* (1837) deals with the myth in sequence - on the left bank of the Hellespont the two lovers are embracing; on the right of the painting a stormy white-crested wave moves toward the rocks wherein Leander's swirling figure fights for, and loses, his life. Twombly's earlier work, *Hero and Leandro*, consists of three separate large canvases, followed to their right by a fourth smaller canvas containing the caption:

> 'He's gone
> up bubbles
> all his amorous breath.'

In the three larger canvases Twombly has subtracted, both from the narrative and Turner's painting, the physiognomic life and being of the white-crested life-devouring wave, and the psychic life of Leander's fatal experience. Both these palpable phenomena

reside in the artist's use of speed and movement of brushwork, and colour's sensory expressive function.

The three canvases are primed in creamy-white oil paint, which gives - in the tradition of Turner - an atmospheric effect; a vaporous optical dazzle and luminosity of light through the subsequent layers of colour. Reading from the right, in the first panel arises the lived sensation of a crest-rising wave; pure white oil paint rushes across the canvas via dragged brushwork, beneath which are layers of washes of smudged olive-green and dirtied cream oils with the occasional rise through of streaks of passionate pale red. The dirtied cream wash literally trickles down the canvas in its fluidity. In the second canvas all these textures are thickened, intensifying the pressure of movement across the entire work. Yet they rise up the height of the canvas to a lesser degree than in the previous canvas - the swell is prior to breaking. At the base of this second canvas there is an echo, in pure black crayon, of the rising black used by the artist in *Untitled (Thyrsis' Lament for Daphnis)* (1976) (Pl.6). The dull, smudged green has become more dominant, seething through creams and whites in the lower half of the wave, whilst the top of the wave has a soft, sparkling green oil paint worked wet-into-wet with the pure white. The pale red lingers less in this canvas, nevertheless it concentrates significantly at one point; at the tip of the swell, aligned above the sensation of arising black 'lament'.

In the third canvas, this 'prolonged breaking of a wave' climaxes 'where the soft greens give way to reds and blacks [and a substantial proportion of rich, dark green] and the wave appears to break most violently ... upon a rocky shore.'[33] The rich dark green and vivid reds are, at points, worked into each other, providing purple/madder. The pure white oil intermingles with pale red, as that amorous yet bloodied crest, which rises above the full-coloured crescendo. Twombly has written 'Leandro' in pale grey crayon across the tip of the crest, reaching, in the word's length, the right-hand edge of this canvas.

Recalling Twombly's work *Proteus* (Pl.3) of the same year, it is understandable that Szeeman states of *Hero and Leandro* that `transformed into a flux of colour ... Leander drowns [and has] changed shape, like Proteus; ... metamorphoses in gesture, equivalent for feelings.'[34] In *Hero and Leandro*, as the wave breaks at the left edge of the canvas - the implication in the caption is that of a new passion for life after death, as Bann surmises `a radical metamorphosis of the heroic body.'[35]

The colours Twombly uses in this third, final canvas could be argued to work on several, yet simultaneous, levels. The narrative level of Leander's bloodied body on black rocks, washed over by sea-green. The protean level in the purple's admixture: passion (red) for life and love, and its life-giving rebirth in green. On another level a tribute to Turner could reside in the mode of mixed colours Turner used for the lived sensation of water and the sea. A final level requires inquiry into the caption's source.

The caption has reference both too earlier works by Twombly - *Ode to Psyche* and *Hyperion (To Keats)* - and his student days at BMC. The last line of Keats' *On a Picture of Leander* (1817) reads:

He's gone; up bubbles all his amorous breath![36]

The quotations inscribed in Twombly's work *Adonais* (1975) (Pl.36) are taken, significantly, from Shelley's poem *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats.* As Smith pinpoints, the citation in Twombly's *Hero and Leandro* is `a moment of grief and elegiac lament ...',[37] one which I would argue has a significant place in the intertextual paradigm of this work: between Turner's unsurpassable achievements in light and water; the myth's tale of tragic loss; and Keats' last wish. In the Protestant cemetery in Rome is Keats' tombstone, on which is written ` the epitaph he had requested':

Here lies one whose name was writ in water.[38]

In Twombly's work the `amorous breath' rises from the water and speaks the name `Leandro'. With Twombly's thirty years of interest in, and inspiration from, Keats, it could also be Keats' metamorphosis through water that Twombly seeks. Twombly was

obviously not alone in finding inspiration from Keats' work and life, Willem de Kooning's painting of 1975 is entitled, ... *Whose Name Was Writ in Water.*

The history of art's subject matter of Hero and Leander has in Twombly's work been returned to its `Blanchotian' raw sensation in movement and colour. Both Turner and Keats were known for this quality of raw sensation as experience in their work. With respect to the aforementioned peregrinations, Bastian, when viewing this work, states:

> in the simultaneous presence of readable sign and ideogrammatic enigma, purposeful illusion and effect multiply one against the other till the sum of this computation becomes a new aesthetic paradigm ... At moments, it seems as if a multitude of textual possibilities - `texts' old and new, fiction and truth - are superimposed, simultaneously inflecting the artist's acute divination of genesis, the birth of a distinctive `thought-image' ... [39]

Mallarmé's central poetic tenet is encapsulated in his line: `What wing can be held?' [40] This citation Twombly weaves into a paradigm of peregrinations, both across his wide media range and the vast period of his career. The quote forms the title of a work in 1960; is written, with the words `flight' and `memory', near the top of the drawing *Bolsena* (1972) (Pl.37); is paraphrased on the canvas of *School of Fontainebleau* (1960) (Pl.38) near the word `swan'; and is written directly above the reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical structure of a bird's wing in the collage *Untitled* (1968) (Pl.39), and the title for *`What Wing Can Be Held?'* (1960) (Pl.40).

The latter work is Twombly's synergetic and symbiotic `marriage' of Mallarmé and Leonardo; those two `artists' whose own challenges Twombly takes up, and extends, on the pulsating and agitated nature of space and form. The inspiration gained from both Leonardo's `Deluge' theme and drapery studies leads Twombly's exploratory expressive `principle ... of pure line ...'[41] further into his own `permanent glass bead game ...'[42] - that interdisciplinary *parole* for the simultaneous physical properties of form and energies of Nature's fields of sensation.

Twombly's admiration for Leonardo first reveals itself in pictorial form via the 'dedicatory' work *To Leonardo* (1960). Twombly is not a 'regressive' in this respect by any means, as testified by Matta's painting *Leonardando Vinci* (1978), exhibited in the Royal Academy's 1981 'A New Spirit in Painting', in which Twombly also exhibited. It is without doubt Leonardo's *Leda and the Swan* (1506) which inspired Twombly's own four versions - from 1960 to 1976 - of the myth. The artist's series of prints, *Natural History, Part I* (1974), contain several reproductions of Leonardo's works, but specifically *Leda and the Swan* (1506).

The central motif linking all the prints is the mushroom family and its ancient and mythological sexual symbolism of fertility; a symbolism 'which so blatantly resembles male and female genitalia',[43] sometimes in the same individual mushroom. In the fourth print in the series two illustrations of 'male and female' mushrooms overlap two of the *Leda and the Swan* reproductions used by Twombly. Rearing its phallic neck and head, the artist has drawn a swan between these two elements of collage.

In Twombly's works, for Herrera, ' Leda's swan becomes an orgiastic linear skirmish.' [44] In examining the 1962 painting it is possible to say that the artist unsheathes this myth, and Leonardo's painting, back to the unspoken act itself: so much so that the seminal fluids are present, in what Rosenblum views as 'a fusion of the most physical sexuality with a white-winged airborne fantasy of Mallarmé-like frailty.'[45] This 'unsheathing' is arguably what Smith describes as:

> starting out in the realm of the aesthetic and moving towards life ... his art repeatedly locates the synaptic point where aesthetic experience, rarefied and insular as it can sometimes seem, becomes part of real life by virtue of its sheer emotional ... erotic force ... telling us what really happened. [46]

On the canvas of *Leda and the Swan* (1962) (Pl.32) Twombly uses oil, crayon and pencil to encapsulate the vortical moment of passion between Leda and Jupiter, whose metamorphic state is obliquely hinted at by the partial erasure of the word 'SWAN'. Jupiter's visitation is rendered by the velocity of a diagonal stream of 'heart' ideograms from top-right. These consolidate, as if progressively achieving their aim, by

ranging from faint pencil tremors, to crayon-dispersed materiality, and finally to a central near-perfect form in an ideogrammatic mixture of flesh and passion-pink with red smears; red smears which appear to have loosened themselves from the phallic/swan shapes above and to the left of this heart. These phallic/swan ideograms rotate in a dynamic vortex of passion.

Below the central phallic/swan ideogram is only one of the many transmutations of Twombly's ideogrammic 'language' - the 'heart' becomes a vulva, around and below which white paint is smeared, in erotic intent from the tube, and almost allowed to drip. This white, with the consistency of semen, is one of Twombly's many intimations of bodily secretions and excretions within his work. His direct inscription from the tube or his fingers gives an affirmation of the life of the body.

Guy Scarpetta places these secretions and excretions in Twombly's oeuvre within the overall context of 'the history of art and modern literature's ... plunge into ... regression ... [an] anal rhythm of rejection ...' With *Leda and the Swan* (1962) in mind, Scarpetta 'see[s] in the work the connotations of 'happy sexuality' in our culture (reinforced in my view of Twombly by the masturbatory jubilation which certain traces suggest perceptibly).' [47]

Varnedoe has perceived that already from 1960, 'the references to the body and its processes become even more active and insistent',[48] and especially in reference to 1961 works:

> his impulses would meet the surface sensuously, in the broad, flat engagement of the palm, or by fingertip daubs, or through varieties of clawing and caressing. That sensuality encompassed, too, the most basic and earliest life associations of primal creativity asserting itself through uninhibited play ... [49]

In the painting, although we can surmise that the climactic action occurs centrally our eye is not allowed compositional climax, or narrative sequence as such. Twombly's 'hearts' become breasts and buttocks on the left side of the work, where Leda's flesh

(like Venus') is charged with lines of motion and vibrant sensualism. Leda's ripe vulva is displayed and erupts with `yellow' virginal fluid, trailed by Twombly's use of the tube, and possible fingers - a means by which the subject stops distinguishing his own movements and desire from those of the object.

The painting is full of ejaculatory violence, not least in the piercing of the almost wet paint in parts by pencil, or the frenzied black crayon and pencil tension build-up of loops on the right-hand side. This loop tension of varying degrees is his `language' for eruptive energy veering on an inherent chaos in any form of excitation: psychic, sexual, or of Nature's elemental forces.

Twombly has sought to reveal the anteriority of the venerable depiction of this myth - in Bastian's commendation ` the virtual depiction of ... longing ... the instant of seduction ...', [50] and also the anteriority of Leonardo's handling of matter; those flesh colours etc. are imploded into the cusp of form; the timeless `event' in Blanchotian terminology, in the struggle from formlessness to form which renders more immediate, or for Eco the `forming form' which defines creativity to him. In Schmidt's praise of this painting, `Twombly [has] actualized once again',[51] whilst for Rosenblum it is `as if it [the myth] had just been ... illustrated by the very first artist of the classical world', [52] and for Bastian, Twombly `interjects a distant fable as if it had happened here and not there at that other remote and alien time.' [53]

The window form in the upper left of the painting has been referred to as either providing `a comic role',[54] `the light background the character of a wall',[55] or `the suggestion of a framed landscape setting.' [56] More apposite, I believe, in this series of conjectures, is the view that it is `a simply drawn window whose scale throws the scene even further forward within what is now clearly denoted as a contemporary space.' [57] I would add that it also dislocates our sense of customary positionality. By reversing the `window' (the equivalent of the frame) from one of looking through to one in which the viewer is being looked at, Twombly heightens the sense of the viewer becoming part of

the painting; the memory and reliving of the action. This is possibly Thomas McEvilley's point when he refers to Twombly's work in general, as:

> represent[ing] not external sense objects but the state of mind that is sensing. He draws the inside of the mind as it grapples with data that seems to be coming in from outside. And he finds this mind to be like a child's, trying to give rudimentary shape to a chaotic flow of impressions which are almost, but not quite, coagulating. [58]

Twombly calls such works as *Leda and the Swan* (1962) `frontal pieces',[59] and in this painting random and chaotic signs coagulate into a whole, where all distinctions and differentiations fuse into a single oceanic image. Within the chaotic configuration of this work the artist has created subliminally recognisable erotic fragments, in a language of graphic dispersal in which expectancy quivers in a dream-like distortion. Szeeman states that:

> Children and those in a state of arousal do automatically see things as a whole before they draw them; but what happens in Twombly's work is that the artist sets out deliberately to stimulate this way of seeing.[60]

The events in the painting are condensed into a whole momentary vortex of action, an achievement partly due to Twombly's embedding his `signs' within, behind and above layers of pigment.

This avoidance of sequential time, with its resultant superimposition of objects and their outlines blurring into a fluidity that reaches indeterminacy, has significance to the Freudian idea of the dream and the play of the unconscious. Ehrenzweig has drawn on different researches into low level imagery perceptualisation, especially subliminal vision (extending Freud's work) to argue that there is an imprint of the unconscious mind which provides a hidden order (not dissimilar to fractal theory) to spontaneous and apparent chaotic structures in a work of art. With relevance to this particular painting, an artist who uses the structural non-differentiation of low-level imagery `scatters his attention and makes his picture multi-dimensional, where inside and outside areas interpenetrate ...',[61] due `to incompatible outlines and surfaces which permeate and try to

control themselves into the same point in time.' This lack of differentiation may result, Ehrenzweig argues, from an:

> undifferentiated matrix of subliminal vision, underlying all conscious imagery ... which is from deeper mental levels than the 'order' which shapes the manifest dream and results from a different kind of spatial and temporary organization, such as non-Euclidean geometry. [62]

The ability to scan with impartial equality (especially non-differentiation between figure and ground) derives from the artist's (and viewer's) unconscious powers of vision, which place what are apparently the most complex details into an all-over non-hierarchical structure. Ehrenzweig's argument is that there is this 'double aspect of non-differentiation, conscious chaos on one hand and unconscious discipline on the other ...' [63]

If Twombly had at this time been absorbed by Ehrenzweigean thought he would not have been alone. When writing about some of Richard Serra's 1960's works, Pincus-Witten quotes the artist's intentions as parallel to 'the concerns of Anton Enrenzweig, such as 'dedifferentiation', 'scanning', 'scattering', and 'synchronistic vision'.' [64]

The link at this point, in the case of Twombly's use of space in *Leda and the Swan*, is that this 'regression' to a subliminal, child-like, primitive or libidinal mode of vision is before the efficient differentiated conscious vision, which has to be learnt and is therefore only a construct, however necessary. Twombly's indeterminacy of outline and space (which Bastian states is fascinating but permits no interpretation) provides no differentiation between figure and ground (besides the 'window') within the actual event, and paradoxically this 'regression' gives to the viewer a greater experience physically of the reality of the event as its undifferentiated structure is pushed violently upon our attention.

During a period of twenty years - from 1957 to 1977 - Twombly's oeuvre was sporadically inspired by Nicolas Poussin's works: *Arcadia* (1957-8) (Pl.41); *Woodland Glade: To Poussin* (1960); Woodland Glade (1964) (Pl.42) (HB,II,165); *Empire of*

Flora (1961) (Pl.43) (HB,II,7); *The First Part of the Return from Parnassus* (1962) (Pl.44) (HB,II,4); the series *Orion* (1968) (Pl.45) (HB,III,48); and the four-part collage series *Bacchanales* (1977).

In *Empire of Flora* (1961) both Twombly's ideograms (colour-equated-action) with their luxurious painterliness, and his space with its resonance of the sublime (in part due to a Rococo sense of sensual engulfment), have very different functions from that in *Leda and the Swan.*

First and foremost, in this licentious celebration of the goddess of flowers, Twombly goes far beyond conceptual statement, into a realm where only sensuous symbol and image can bear witness. The work's background primer of cream to pale yellow oil paint creates `veils' in places, in a `Mallarméan' fluctuating sensation of `arise and ebb'. As Bastian states of works in this period, it has a:

> luminous incitement ... Everything that `happens' in his paintings is as fragile and reticent as the experience of poetry ... [in that the forms'] evanescent materiality is inscribed with a correspondingly appropriate fleetness and elusiveness. [65]

In its flesh-pink and passion red ideograms the painting bears witness to the unhappy lovers who Ovid records as undergoing metamorphosis into flowers. Yet in this transmigration of souls; the allegory of death, rebirth and beauty, Twombly stages nature's reawakening with his fingers (or the tube) smearing the new-born flowers into life.

In Poussin's painting the colour range is predominantly cream-yellow-brown counteracted with strong blues and madder, with `Narcissus gazing at his reflection, behind him Clytia, who was transformed into a sunflower and on the right Hyacinthus with Adonis from whose blood sprang the anemone.'[66] The richness of colour range in Twombly's painting; from sunflower-yellow, hyacinth blue to brownish-purple in the foreground, provides the played vibrancy of open flowers in their immediacy of warmth

and growth. It is as if the artist has painted the shimmering protoplasm inside, rather than the 'stiffness' of external shape.

The mode of self-inscription is the positioning of the artist's signature in the 'event/narrative'. For Bann, this device of the artist's is epitomised in the second canvas of *Hero and Leandro* (1981-4), where the signature 'C.T.' 'floats elusively beneath the surface, next to a hyacinthine purple streak.' [67] In *Empire of Flora* such a device is very prominent.

Towards the top right Twombly has written his own name *around* the flesh ideogram with passion-red as its centre. It is as if the artist wished for metamorphosis too. His 'language' for the continuous wax and wane of energy - those varying degrees of graphic loose-to-tight loops - are dispersed randomly over the whole scene. Yet their ability to hold the surface is in vain as the background primer (at the very top and bottom of the painting), like a living shimmering sensual skin, pours over them.

None of Twombly's 'language' is fully anchored to the surface; like Turner's late works, his technique *de*materializes, providing a sense of 'floating'. It floats, as if projecting itself into the viewer's space, yet, at the same time, paradoxically, the light background (which Schmidt correlates with 'broad daylight')[68] evaporates the longer the marks/motifs are viewed.

Through the work's overpowering 'imagery' - a work which Welish assesses as 'his most emotionally charged and physically free, [one of] ... visual excitement'[69] - the viewer seeks escape through, for example, areas where paint drips over dispersed crayon, giving the illusion of further space behind the multiple 'veils' of nuanced cream-to-yellow oil paint. The painting's subtle devices of projection and immersion - of push and pull, as it were - deconstruct the tautology of a spatial location for the viewer 'inside' or 'outside' of the work. These spatial devices explain certain aspects of my first experience when encountering the work *School of Athens*. (See *Introduction*).

Just as Twombly had reversed the spatiality, devised by the Renaissance 'window', in *Leda and the Swan*, in *Empire of Flora* the artist provides what Bryson terms as 'spatial illegibility', [70] via eliminating any imposed spatial construct or positionality of 'here' or 'there', instead there is the 'indeterminate' - a somewhat disturbing, yet necessary revolution for our postmodern period.

This period of Twombly's oeuvre, spatially, has been attributed by Pincus-Witten to ' the sweeping planes and spaces of the Baroque construct.' [71] Just as appropriate and enlightening, if not more so, would be reference to Bryson's recent diagnosis of the Rococo, which, although centred mainly on the erotic subject matter's significant relationship to its spatiality, ' so that the image closes in on and is embraced by the viewer's own spatial zone',[72] is significant for 'sensual contemplation' per se. In the opposition Bryson perceives between structured and unstructured perspective - logos (récit) and eros (the body), 'love, within the opposition, is altogether outside the domain of language. It is transmitted through the eye, as plastic presence ... the work of récit is resistance against the body and a taming or controlling of the body ... '[73] In the Rococo examples Bryson gives:

> The space is filled, but not with substances that come from the world - hardly with substance at all ... a mysterious filler, which looks like cloud but behaves like cushioning ... through the use of amorphous substances ... [in] ... an overall strategy of removal of information which does not harmonise with the aim of erotic or sensual contemplation. [74]

Twombly's amorphous shapes and veiled, nuanced background aim, I would argue, towards the erotic/sensual appropriation and 'engulfment' of the viewer. With reference to the sensation of 'floating' his graphism provides, it is no more divorced from the subject matter than that of the Rococo to Bryson. After a conversation with the artist,[75] Varnedoe, when discussing the works of 1961, states:

> Light and lightness are essential to the look of the works, and to their meaning. Twombly has spoken of an 'irresponsibility to gravity' as central to his art, and has described his understanding of classical mythology as a realm of imagination which is not only shadowless but also without weight or constraining center. Yet this sense of floating [resists] ... weight

- all that would be bound together in mass, and ordered by the shared pull to earth - would connote surrender to inertia and mortality. [76]

1 [my italics] R. Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.181.

2 [my italics] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp.32, 173, 222, 227, 243.

3 [my italics] Cy Twombly, cited in D. Kazanjian, 'The Painted Word', *Vogue*, New York, no.9, Sept, 1994, p.555.

4 Micheal Podro, 'Depiction and The Golden Calf', (N. Bryson et al eds.), *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.178.

5 Cited in Lawrence Alloway, *Robert Rauschenberg* (Phoenix: National Collection of Fine Arts Smithsonian Institution, 1977), p.3.

8 D. Davvetas, 'The Erography of Cy Twombly', *Artforum International*, vol.27, no. 8, April, 1989, p.130.

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CHAPTER FIVE – NON-LINEAR LANGUAGE

PART I - NON-LINEAR CONSCIOUSNESS: FROM THE MALLARMÉAN AND POUNDIAN, TO THE DECONSTRUCTIONIST REALM IN CY TWOMBLY

> The phonetically written word sacrifices worlds of meaning and perception that were secured by forms like the hieroglyph and the Chinese ideogram ... Only the phonetic alphabet makes such a sharp division in experience, giving to its user an eye for an ear, and freeing him from ... resonating word magic ... consciousness is regarded as the mark of a rational being, yet there is nothing lineal or sequential about the total field of awareness that exists in any moment of consciousness. Consciousness is not a verbal process ..., phonetic writing ... translating ... the world into Euclidean lineality and visuality is automatic. [1] (McLuhan)

> To see the line in the letter is to shift to a corporeal engagement with plastic value, with a corresponding loss in readability ... [t]he figural is not another kind of representation; ... the figural is [the necessary] other to representation, the entry of the heterogeneous into representation ... poetry reveals ... the motivated space of visual figure ... Examples ... are the spatial rhythms of typography and the temporal rhythms imposed on reading. [2] (Lyotard)

> structural linguistics cannot account for ... how the system might give rise to the rhythm of a phrase.[3] (Lyotard)

These two significant writers, McLuhan and Lyotard, are aligned in one important respect; they both recognise the suppression of a heterogeneous element within the phonetic alphabetic system. McLuhan decries both the phonetic alphabet's visual dominance of the resonant, and its inability to express (hence release) the non-Euclidean consciousness of thought. Whilst Lyotard decries a Saussurean structuralist linguistics `for having "forgotten" the corporeal engagement of the body' [4] in language (i.e. the breath's temporal life-rhythms and the gestural line), and that the plastic force of line in writing has a vibratory function analogous to colour.

These two introductory figures are a necessary entrance into what may be termed the `Other' postmodern attack on language this century; an attack at a far more fundamental level than binary oppositions. In this section of the thesis an

enquiry is made into what may have inaugurated Twombly's specific selection of writers, poets and poems, and into his own aesthetic enquiry into the nature of language itself: what initiates the appearance of writing - those physical and mental processes in `a thought in its genesis and life.' [5]

Prior to the period of Conceptual art's scrutiny of linguistics, Twombly places his artistic practice (anachronistically according to the American History of Art's mainstream paradigm) within the broader context of culture - literature and poetry - and begins an examination of the supposed antitheses of word/image and language/space.

The appearance of the phonetic alphabet becomes a persistent element, one could say a sustaining force, within Twombly's oeuvre from 1957 (for example, the sporadic letters across *Arcadia*), and its variety of roles within his practice can be recognized as being as crucial as those within the work of Picasso or Schwitters.

Kirk Varnedoe posits that the impact of Twombly's oeuvre, in general, `depends so strongly on the kind of direct response to physical presence that it is resistant to verbalization and uncongenial to analysis.'[6] In this introduction to the Language chapter of the thesis I wish to propose that even within Twombly's use of the phonetic alphabet as image there is a resistance to the linear, transparent use of signifiers.

Both the Poundian `dance of the intellect' (Twombly's intertextuality of `historical voices' amidst his own), and the adherence to a Mallarméan `absence/presence', are aspects within Twombly's aesthetic practice which eclipse an early Modernism with Postmodernism. Yet there is another `route' of achronological convergence between these two `isms'; in a view of non-static language with its `ground' in gesture; a corporeality of meaning within language-use. This route, outside the dominance of the non-phenomenological, immobile eye, runs from McLuhan to aspects of Olson's, Lyotard's, Barthes' and Derrida's writings.

The opaque function of `figural' line in letter, for Lyotard, is over and above a simple phenomenological (gestural) `other' to language: it is inseparable from

language, an irreducible element, in fact, revealing an incommensurable heterogeneity within representation. Lyotard's argument in *Discourse, figure* is deconstructive; to release the `figural's' political equality, lost due to logocentricism's mode of representation. In other words, that which is not conceptually represented historically is recognised by Lyotard as a simultaneous, yet heterogeneous, temporal event, `Lyotard's version of deconstruction is an attempt to make this co-presence of radically different spaces into something more than a contradiction or an impasse.' [7]

Logocentric language is critically tied to what Lyotard views as the unveiling of the co-presence of different `political' and `ethical' events at the same point in time. Its unveiling, so to speak, requires recognition of its corporeal `other'; a corporeality exemplary in the realms of artistic and poetic practice.

Geometric `language', in the case of linear three-dimensional Euclidean perspective, also, according to Lyotard, attempts to suppress its `other'/the co-presence of difference - the eye suppresses all the other senses, especially the tactile/textural, `the successful perspectival construction is one in which the plastic force of line (its vibration - a function analogous to colour) is entirely lost ...'.

The gestural aspect of the figural within letter/language, although the sensible (often sensuous) constitutive in inscription, does not regress to the decried humanist origin of subjectivity. Instead, for Lyotard, it is an inescapable plastic corporeality, as is the `motivated' rhythmic space of poetry (as opposed to what Lyotard terms the `unmotivated' space in the tabular structure of arbitrary linguistic signifiers). For Lyotard, the figural line in space is the sediment, the trace, from which arises the possibility of any letter/language, conceptual or geometric, and recognising/reasserting this fact of sediment/trace as ground unveils an `equality' of all languages of representation (i.e. political viewpoints) which may arise from it.

The corporeal is the opaque signifier from which different, heterogeneously transparent signifiers may arise, and this grounding reminds us of this, for Lyotard, very political fact. Lyotard's analysis has echoes of Heideggers' Earth/Being which `worlds'. Yet Lyotard's critique of logocentricism cannot be accused of

metaphysics, because it in fact argues against the concept of one truth. Critically he views:

> the definitive feature of logocentrism as the identification of being with meaning. In order to identify being and meaning, all objects must be enclosed within a field of signification: their difference must be reduction to opposition [and hence one element's suppression].

Lyotard's identification of being [i.e. ground] as the corporeal [matter/body] releases `meaning' to its proliferation of perspectival truths - each with an ambiguous element, as with all perspectival conceptual or perceptual viewpoints. The importance of Lyotard's analysis of figural line within letter/language and discourse per se in the light of Twombly's own statement (later examined) on line, is that for Lyotard:

> the line has no concept, is purely plastic ... materiality as not a property of objects, but a resistance [i.e. excess/surplus] to conceptual representation ... it is the temporality of the event which conceptual representation seeks to efface by identifying being with literal description.[8]

Lyotard's analysis is very close here to Cassirer's semiotics on the drawn line, yet `updated' by a postmodern thinker. Lyotard's `event' of corporeal mobility is not pure being, or a prior stage to representation, but an example, exemplary in poetry and art, of simultaneous non-hierarchical difference (e.g. the text and the visible corporeality of the figural).

McLuhan's aforementioned objections to the phonetic alphabet's diminished involvement in the `objects' of its attention, due to its visual dominance, necessarily co-present with its Euclidean dominance, are echoed by Barthes:

> our alphabet ... most rational, ... conquests of reason and economy over the baroque scribbling of ideographic systems ... In truth, if we reject the ideogram, it is because we constantly try ... to substitute the realm of speech for that of gesture ... [9]

Barthes proposes, `one might say Twombly deconstructs writing' due to the artist's not `quite see[ing] the direction, the bearing of his gestures', allowing therefore, in a Lyotardian vein, the gesture's corporeality in `the hand's desire.' [10]
In his analysis of André Masson's `distorted citations', Barthes, in a sense, echoes Lyotard's definition of the `figural' word for word:

> identifiable to line, not letter ... it imposes upon us not the form but the figure i.e. the elliptical collision of two signifiers: ... for writing to be manifest in its truth (and not in its instrumentality) it must be illegible. [11]

By returning to his analysis of Twombly's phonetic writing, we may see that Barthes retains this simultaneous, yet heterogeneous, ellipse between two signifiers:

> confronting a writing drawn by the hand, it is still the intelligibility of signs that we consume, but certain opaque, non-signifying elements - or rather, elements of a different signification catch our attention ... the nervous turn of the letters ... [12]

In Derrida's `Of Grammatology as a Positive Science' it is the `heliocentric concept of speech' [13] he wishes to deconstruct, especially Plato's argument that it (speech) is the pre-eminent, `originary blue print' to writing:

> Writing in a narrow sense - and phonetic writing above all - is rooted in a past of non-linear writing ... the `mythogram`, a writing that spells its symbols pluri-dimensionally; there the meaning is not subjected to successivity, to the order of a logical time, or to the irreversible temporality of sound.

Derrida's argument that linear speech (phonetics) is not the origin of writing per se is followed by a diatribe equal to McLuhan's on linearity - although Derrida's argument circles out to provide a *wider political and religious* censorship:

> We have seen that the traditional concept of time, an entire organization of the world and of language, was bound up with it [the linearity of the symbol] ... This solidarity appears in the process of capitalization, ... hierarchization of the formation of ideology by the class that writes or rather commands the scribes.

This, what Derrida terms `structural solidarity' via `the repression of pluri-dimensional symbolic thought', can be subverted, though not entirely, by two modes; one of reading and one of writing:

> Not that the massive reappearance of non-linear writing interrupts this structural solidarity - quite the contrary. But it transforms its nature profoundly ... [by] beginning to write without the line[ar], one begins also to reread past writing according to a different organization of space.

For Derrida, phonetic writing has to various degrees entered all speech (hence a linearity), and is synergic within all systems of writing. Yet, according to Derrida,

the reverse also holds - it is impossible to reduce the non-phonetic; 'In fact, each graphic form may have a double value - the ideographic and phonetic.' Nevertheless, it is 'graphic poetics' - the dominance of the graphic sign - which provides the release of pluri-dimensionality and the heterogeneous; where:

> The thing is itself a collection of things or a chain of differences 'in space'... Writing in China was never felt to be a more or less faithful transference of speech, and that is why the graphic sign has retained much of it's primitive prestige.

Yet, according to Derrida, there has been a 'necessary decentering' of phonetic linear speech by the Western world:

> it was normal that the breakthrough was more secure and more penetrating on the side of literature and poetic writing. This is the meaning of the work of Fenellosa ... this irreducibly graphic poetics was, with that of Mallarmé, the first break in the most entrenched Western tradition. The fascination that the Chinese ideogram exercised on Pound's writing may thus be given all its historical significance. [14]

Derrida here proposes that pluri-dimensionality is an aspect of graphics/writing throughout history, despite being suppressed beyond recognition by phonetics at certain periods. This obvious respect for its past release by certain writers and poets aligns him with Olson's call to his students at BMC.

All the writers/thinkers discussed above, in the contexts provided, dispute the phonetic and the linear/sequential (that 'truth' of instrumental rationality), in favour of the 'truths' of a baroque, non-Euclidean, heterogeneous graphic experience of line/word.

PART II - TWOMBLY'S LINE: THE NON-LINEAR FEELING OF THINKING

That `figural' line be given the role of unfolding, indeterminate creation (as opposed to mimesis, description, representation), with its own `form of life' prior to our instigation of man-made systems of geometry or symbolic language, is, arguably, the central tenet of what may be termed Twombly's 1957 `manifesto':

> Painting determines Image
>
> The reality of whiteness may exist in the duality of sensation (as the multiple anxiety of desire and fear).
> Whiteness can be the classic state of the intellect, or a neo-romantic area of remembrance - or as the symbolic whiteness of Mallarmé.
> The exact implication may never be analyzed, but in that it persists as the landscape of my actions, it must imply more than selection.
> One is a reflection of meaning. So that the action must continually bear out the realization of existence. Therefore the act is the primary sensation.
> In painting it is the forming of the image; the compulsive action of becoming; the direct and indirect pressures brought to a climax in the acute act of forming. (By forming I don't mean formalizing - or in the general sense the organizing of a `good painting`. These problems are easily reached and solved and in many cases have produced beautiful and even important works of art).
> Since most painting then defines the image, it is therefore to a great extent illustrating the idea or feeling content.
> It is in this area that I break with the more general processes of painting.
> To paint involves a certain crisis, or at least a crucial moment of sensation or release; and by crisis it should by no means be limited to a morbid state, but could just as well be one ecstatic impulse, or in the process of a painting, run a gamut of states. One must desire the ultimate essence even if it is `contaminated`. Each line now is the actual experience with its own innate history. It does not illustrate - it is the sensation of its own realisation. The imagery is one of the private or separate indulgences rather than an abstract totality of visual perception.
> This is very difficult to describe, but it is an involvement in essence (no matter how private) into a synthesis of feeling, intellect etc. occurring without separation in the impulse of action. The idea of falling into obscurities or subjective nihilism is absurd - such ideas can only be held by a lack of reference or experience. [15]

Twombly's argument would appear to be against representation per se. Definition fixes the limits to an `image', or more often than not only reiterates those definitions already given. He seeks, instead, to use the medium itself as an organism `writing' its own `narrative' history. Nonetheless, this history is not autonomous; not

the autonomy of Greenbergian formalism, but a history of material, one which does not deny the artist's feelings or intellect.

What so often *appears* paradoxical in the artist's statement is that when 'painting determines image', it is highly personal yet elicits neither 'obscurities' nor 'subjective nihilism'. The paradox disappears if the natural laws of matter are viewed as non-contradictory to the synthesis of feeling and thought.

The onus, it appears, is to find nature/natural laws within our action of this synthesis, 'One is a reflection of meaning. So that the action must continually bear out the realization of existence.' The 'crucial moment[s] of sensation or release' *are* innate in nature's materials, *and* in human feeling, *and* in the history of the intellect. In other words, there is a congeniality between all three; the pressures of growth in 'the compulsive action of becoming'; a physiology which is simultaneously acting in the natural world, the individual world, and the historical world.

That such a resulting 'image' is neither 'subjective nihilism' (despite the potential of 'separate indulgencies' occurring) nor 'an abstract totality of visual perception' implies that Twombly had sought, and discovered, a third way - a middle path - a transfiguration between the figurative and abstract 'camps' of pictorial art.

That there is a corresponding genetic process between human feeling, the intellect, and nature's 'laws' - matter's 'forms of life' - is implicitly stated in the title of a 1983 work by the artist: *To Imagine a Language Is to Imagine a Form of Life* (Pl.47). This title paraphrases a famous statement by Wittgenstein.[16]

As in the majority of Twombly's quotations, his own thoughts and feelings change the emphasis via rewriting, if even, as in this case, there is only the substitution of one word. Alongside the potential tributary quality of this work, there is the equation again between the free-play (e.g. imagination) of formal human laws, within language, and nature's *already* innate process.

To return to the artist's `manifesto'; both line, and hence its resulting formal language, are determined by action, a compulsive becoming which denies predetermination, or the `known' linear discrete laws of causation (`run a *gamut* of states').

To place Twombly's `manifesto' in relation to Chapter Four, Part I, *Metamorphosis: Spatial and Sexual Energies* - his statement could be viewed as an argument in which nature (matter) is not necessarily in a position antithetical to culture; if in the development of its history line (e.g. matter) has a morphogenesis parallel to the first normative phase of intellectual culture - that of the Greek world of non-discrete, unlimited metamorphosis. Metamorphosis has a wide and profound significance for the artist; in 1993 `[h]e agreed to teach a *philosophy* seminar at Washington and Lee ... and chose his own subject: the idea of metamorphosis.' [17]

This notion of a germinal form concentrates on the relational process in a dialogue of reflection, even struggle, of a developing form/image. It disregards the stasis of systems for the gamut of morphic impulse. Such a free-play of unlimited becoming as `theme' was arguably the intention in the artist's non-inhibitory graphic `exercises', practised during `lights out' in his army days.[18] There is another acknowledged master of `the line', Paul Klee, with whom comparisons have been made.[19] Klee wrote in his diaries:

> the essential thing; becoming is more important than being. Graphic work as the expressive movement of the hand holding the ... pencil ... is so fundamentally different from dealing with tone and colour that one can use this technique quite well in the dark, even in the blackest night.[20]

At this juncture, I believe, several interconnecting questions on the nature of line within language need to arise. What connects those early `lights out' graphic `exercises' and the 1957 statement on line with two much later comments on writing and line made by the artist?

In 1971 Twombly said he was `still trying to learn to write.'[21] Coming after such extensive series as *Poems to the Sea* (1959) (Pl.60), *Roman Notes* (1970)

(Pl.76), and *Letters of Resignation* (1959-1967) (Pl.61), this statement suggests both consistent struggle and a near impossible aim.

In 1994 the artist termed his line `childlike but not childish ... [one] very difficult to fake: To get that quality you need to project yourself into the child's line. It has to be felt.'[22] Another emphasis here on difficulty. Regression, usually viewed as simply `slipping back', obviously has very high obstacles to be overcome. Paul Wember highlights, in reference to Twombly's `writing' , what we have left behind:

> children of two years scribble like Twombly. In this case it is to do with a sort of `*writing of the body.*' The images come to birth on the paper through rhythmic movement of the body. [23]

The `lights out' graphic `exercises', and later written or spoken statements, all imply the need the artist had to unlearn all previous uses of pictorial language and language per se - to find what is essential (`one must desire the ultimate essence') prior to our accumulated, and dominating, reflective structures and judgements as definition or illustration. In Blistene's reference to Twombly's works we have a pertinent application to the essential, `Pregnant in its emptiness, the gesture is the zero degree of painting.'[24] We should add the zero degree of written language.

This stripping back to the autochthonous is paramount also in the use of whiteness, according to Rauschenberg, writing with reference to his *White Paintings* in October, 1951:

> [I] have felt that *my head and heart* move through something quite different ... The results are a group of paintings that I consider almost an emergency ... they take you to a place in painting art has not been. Dealing with the suspense, excitement and body of an organic silence, the restriction and freedom of absence, the plastic fullness of nothing, the point a circle begins and ends. [25]

If Twombly's `manifesto' entails a list of priorities, `The reality of whiteness' is first and foremost; the `landscape' within which `the realization of existence' bears fruit. Via a brief resume of the various significances of `whiteness' by artists - the poet Mallarmé's significance in this respect has previously been analysed - it may be possible to see why, for Twombly, line and written language needed to be unlearnt, and why a previous stage needed laboriously to be recaptured.

Despite Rauschenberg's possible Zen and Mallarméan proclivities in his 1951 statement, and the reference to `head and heart' which echoes elements of Olson's lectures, earlier in that text he equated the white paintings with `(1 white as 1 God)', with creation itself in other words, in terms of God as light. During 1949-1950 Rauschenberg had used the light-exposing photographic technique of blueprinting, `so that one almost paints and draws with light.'[26] The 1951 *White Paintings* could be argued to extend this line of enquiry into light onto two dimensions, in that their uninflected surfaces literally drew ambient light and shadow upon them, as spontaneously developing `forms'.

To understand where Twombly's `writing of the body' emerges, and its difficult aim, it is necessary to understand the symbiosis between light (whiteness) and line (language) - how literally one might give birth to the other. As early as 1910, Klee's `theme' was light and its energy, `I am now trying to render light simply as unfolding energy. And when I handle energy in black on a white surface, I ought to hit the mark ... To heap up an untold quantity of energy lines.' [27]

There were of course two contemporaneous artists to Twombly - Kline and de Kooning - whose gestural abstractions used the polarized means of black and white,[28] creating a form-obliterating line, an indeterminate figure-ground relationship (with the corporeal effect for the viewer of a topological pulsation), and, last but not least, light. According to Hess and Ashbery, in *Light in Art* (1971):

> [de] Kooning creates a light of sharp, dramatically shifting `shadows', obscure hollows and sudden ... streaks of radiance which seem to come from behind the darkness as often as they *spill or float* in it. [29]

And likewise Kline (who was a resident artist at BMC during Twombly's stay)[30] created:

> black armatures in white voids, white forms in a far-reaching darkness and planes of paint overlapping in a shallow space or in *no space at all;* ... after Kline, ... no gestureal abstraction is able to produce light as well as form from this binary resource. [31]

This latter assertion by Hess and Ashbery, is, I will argue, overturned by Twombly's own use of this resource as a proposition of the new physics.

Light, space and line had become symbiotic, interwoven elements, as fundamentally synergetic as the neutron, proton and electron are to the atom. In Olson's 1951 text on Twombly, he pinpoints this interdependence, and significantly brings language, in its Western alphabetic potential (as opposed to, say, Kline's calligraphy), into the equation. Prior to citing the text it is worth bearing in mind the question as to whether Olson's lectures since 1949 (the year of Rauschenberg's enrolment at BMC) already contained some of the following thoughts:

> *two dimensions* as surface for plastic attack is once more prime. And with all perspective as aid gone ... [e]ven line ... [t]he allure - *the light* - had better be in any painted, drawn ... thing *without use or reference of any object.* Any narrative too, for that matter. *Except one ... the tao ...* Take it flatly, a plane. On it, how can a man throw his shadow, make this the illumination of his experience, *how put his weight exactly - there*? (In my business it comes out how, by alphabetic letters, such signs and their syllables, how to make them not sounds but my sounds ... my `voice' ... if it says anything; and it can only to the degree that, *like a plane, it is no plane at all).* [32]

Although Twombly derives his artistic `ancestral heritage' in the use of the black and white binary from the aforementioned artists, it is from the poetic theories of Olson that Twombly would derive concepts of light (Fenollosa's light-bands) and of the obliteration of discrete forms within both the wider context of a postmodern language and a personal `voice' within a language (and discourse). This `voice' is liberated from linear causality and coding, liberated from either/or mentality, and from the inertia of the Western syntactical sentence – the latter being the point of departure for McLuhan.[33] But that confluence of subject matter and technique, although dealing with a multidimensional space-time, as in fragmentary word/sentence juxtapositions (e.g. Pound's *Cantos*), was not solely what Olson had to say, repeatedly, to his students on the nature of line and language.

It is the congruence Olson makes between light/electromagnetic fields, quantum physics and language that aims to change language, within the same language; to make `the body of writing' express the body of the writer (in curves, points, spacing and tempo); to reveal writing's deep resources in a multidimensionality, a language which simultaneously reveals the physical body's own energy-fields and the electromagnetic field forces of energy in space-time.

Another poet, Octavio Paz (whose poetry Twombly has `illustrated')[34] best sums up the effect:

> the poem
> is air that sculpts itself and dissolves.
> At times the page breathes:
> the swarm of signs, the errant
> republic of sounds and senses
> in *magnetic* rotation
> link and scatter
> on the page. [35]

In Olson's essay `Projective Verse' (1950) he clarifies how his two recommendations of `inverted archaeology' and `twin methodology' are *corporally* within the poet's (or artist's) non-linear grasp of simultaneously his own and culture's achronological thought-exchanges. Prior to the essay's publication, Olson had reduced corporality to the essential for his students at BMC, to `the importance of *breath*',[36] highlighting its `socio-political' undermining. Olson believed `that writing traditional form makes for rhetoric. The alternative is to write as you breathe.' [37]

This continuous morphological unfolding, whether in syntactic and metric lines of verse, or the `figural' inscription of language, denies the discrete and discontinuous, in the field-forces of energy and space, and corresponds, for Olson, to a `breathing' in which the pulsations are both one's own and that of nature/matter's non-Euclidean space-time. Both `history' and `space' via language, for Olson, become topologically lived, in a non-linear and achronological writing that literally enacts the light and energy of the world.

In an assessment of Olson's `Projective Verse', one writer proposes the essence as, `that the human breath be the measure of the line, not any alien imposed thing',[38] whilst Olson's own text defines this new measure as gained via :

> the Head by way of the Ear, to the Syllable
> the Heart, by way of the Breath, to the Line

producing, according to Olson, a `composition by field' based on the relation between an `energy-discharge' and `high-energy-construct'. This theory insists `one perception must immediately and directly lead to another',[39] hence `construct',

creating what would *appear* a paradox, in that the flow of non-linear gesture and thought are structured, but non-conventionally by the body's own rhythmic energy-fields. This individual, yet objective expression of verse and line is not so radical where Mallarmé is concerned: `Every individual produces a prosody, new, attuned to his breath.'[40] Olson's essay on Melville's *Moby Dick*, `Equal That Is to the Real Itself', is an exposition of a writer whom he believes epitomises such a `prosody of the body'.

Bastian views Olson's poetic theory, as expounded in `Projective Verse', as `the function and field-effect of meta-linguistics' in which, `the intellectual content of the syllable and the emotional rhythm of the line were ... elements of a new dynamic and open verse structure.' [41] Whilst for Pleynet:

> the accidents of gesture and of thought according to their own history ... is what distinguishes Cy Twombly from his contemporaries ... [when] sounds on the ear generate the inspiration of the painting [in a] ... cultural reinvestment ... which participates like breathing out and breathing in, in the historic punctuation of the ... creations of the artist ... One could not say better about what organizes the work of Cy Twombly than how Olson defines poetic language, which would be that the objective of ... Twombly [is] ... that his ... line `by field' ... seizes in a compact writing ... an experience open to all potentialities.[42]

Olson's own `heritage' was not restricted to Pound and Fenollosa. His theory of `the importance of the breath' owes a great deal to Antonin Artaud, whose work was read at BMC by Cage, David Tudor and Mary Caroline Richards.[43] Artaud had aimed to 'introduce the presence of the ... body into what he call[ed] thought; ... a writing ... which would be a body of traits, ... mak[ing] language speak with extra-grammatical meaning' - a syntax of the body in which `anyone ... must think with his heart ... the body is supported by the breath.'[44] According to Phillipe Sollers, `Artaud's struggle was to release what Kristeva would call the unmediated genotext.'[45] This insight is quite relevant to Twombly's language `series' if we view Artaud as influential on Olson's peregrinations in the nature of language. Olson undoubtedly `regresses' to the body, man's physicality, for this `refounded language of the postmodern, new civilization.' [46]

To understand the challenge Olson asked of his students, concerning language, it is necessary to see his theory of language in action; in other words his exposition of Melville's *Moby Dick*, which although not published until 1958 was, arguably, already 'formulating' itself in his 1951-1953 lectures.

Melville's major work is quoted as one of 'Olson's sacred texts',[47] and by the time of Twombly's arrival at BMC, Olson had published two prior essays on Melville.[48] If Olson had not related Melville's use of prose to atomic theory at that point it was already a conspicuous subject within his lectures; [49] lectures that aimed to unleash 'the entire horizontal of the human species [and] vertical of Man, by art [by] the instrument of his own vertical, and poetry is man's instrument'.[50] Nevertheless, in reference to his 1951 publication - 'A Letter for Melville' - Olson's statement was, 'I consider [it] ... an attack upon the universe',[51] or more succinctly, I believe he meant, our conception of it.

What Melville achieves in the nineteenth-century prose of *Moby Dick*, according to Olson's 1958 essay, is a 'truth ... squandered by the twentieth century', when in the nineteenth century, '[a]n idea shook loose, and energy and motion became as important a structure of things as that they are plural ...' [52]

Olson actually begins the 1958 essay on Melville's *Moby Dick* with a reference to Keats' rejection of 'fact and reason' so as 'to stay in the condition of things' (Keats' famous 'Negative Capability'), and then proceeds to Melville's release of the rebirth in prose of man's topological (as in Kristeva's sense of genotext)[53] physicality, in lived sensations of atomic quantum fields:

> Nothing was now inert fact, all things were there for feeling, ... and man in the midst of it, knowing well how he was *folded in*, as well as how suddenly ... he could *extend himself*, ... without even moving, go ... the farthest - he was suddenly repossessed of a character of being, a thing among things, which I call his physicality. It made a re-entry of or to the universe.
> What is measure when the universe flips and no part is discrete from another except by the flow of creation itself, *in and out*, intensive ... and the extensive ... Rhythm, suddenly, which had been so long the captive of meter, was a *pumping* of the real so constant art had to invent measure anew. The new world of atomism offered a metrical means as well as a topos different from the discrete .... Melville trying to make prose do what his body ... and his mind ... (a man's

> physicality), trying to get a measure of language to move himself into a book. It is the *topological* ... in his writing...[which] explains Melville's unique ability to reveal the very large ... by the small. [C]ongruence ... the measure of the space a solid fills in two of its positions, became a point-by-point mapping power of such flexibility that anything which stays the same, no matter where it goes and into whatever varying conditions (it can suffer deformation), it can be followed, and, if it is art, led ... such physical quantities as velocity, force and field strength. [54]

Olson addresses how Melville achieves in language `the actual character and structure of the real itself ':

> [It is in] ... quantum physics ... that light ... or that the electron is not only a corpuscle but a wave. [T]he structures of the real are flexible, quanta do dissolve into vibrations, all does flow, and yet is there, to be made permanent, if the means are equal. [And Melville achieves these] ... elliptical and hyperbolic spaces (he makes things stand out at once transparent and homogeneous) ... [via] a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness...[T]he feeling ... of ... a position of rest, is joined to the most instant and powerful actions Melville can invent. [55]

Why mankind was in, and able to feel, the condition of things is paramount here, and is less a short-term neo-romanticism or pathetic fallacy than imagined when the 1990 symposium *Art meets Science and Spirituality in a changing Economy* is taken into account. This symposium had among its leading participants John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, David Bohm and the Dalai Lama. Bohm's following statement makes Olson's 1951 claimed `attack upon the universe' in his `A Letter for Melville', appear less pompous:

> Now I tried to get some idea what might be the process implied by the mathematics of the quantum theory, and this process is what I call `enfoldment'. The mathematics itself suggests a movement in which everything ... may ... have a field which unfolds into the whole [as the whole] enfolds ... in it ... [A] movement of waves that unfold and enfold throughout the whole of space ... each part of space contains waves from everywhere, which enfold ... the whole universe, the whole of everything. In the implicate order everything is thus internally related to everything. The suggestion is that there is something like life and mind enfolding in everything. [56]

Olson's aimed rupture of the sentence by the body - `physicality' - enacts topology and its place in the world of the electron and the new physics.

It is necessary at this point to provide an updated account, since Olson's writings, of general aspects of contemporary physics. The electromagnetic field is a unification of electricity, magnetism and light into one equation. Light is a form of electrical radiation which exhibits wave properties. Electrons orbit the nucleus in atoms and are responsible for most electrical, magnetic and chemical processes. Each electron corresponds to a particular energy level. Both the impulses which generate the electrical activity of the heart - its rhythmic contractions and expansions - and the electrical activity of the brain waves, have their own distinct wave frequencies depending on the individual.

This stimulation and responsiveness in experience provides a pattern of magnetic lines of force (an electromagnetic life-field), which each body emits, or absorbs energy from, and into, the life-fields of force of all the other forms of life - such forces act without physical contact.[57] These electromagnetic interactions, a flow of forces consisting either of like (repel) or unlike (attract) charges, are the variables in the laws of probability.

We not only enact, but are composed of the life of atoms. In the paradoxa of quantum-mechanics we are both substance/matter (particles) *and* non-substance /immaterial (waves), the passive position of absorbing /attracting energy and simultaneously traversing space in emitting waves of energy. The concepts of substance, three-dimensional space and linear causality are redundant due to the spatial life of the electron. When an atom's electrons absorb energy each electron jumps from one position to another without traversing the space between, and when they emit energy they jump back without passing through that space. It de-materializes and re-materializes, and therefore space is both transparent and homogeneous. An electron is paradoxically, both particle and wave, and both everywhere and only in one place - conceptual thinking of space-time is dissolved in an undifferentiated unity, when both near and far are equated.

The `topological' that Olson claimed Melville achieves in prose language could be viewed as being aligned to our spatial developments as children. In fact, to what the developmental psychologist Piaget, in this extract, terms `pre-operational' spatial notions:

> [Topological space] ... is merely a continuous collection of elements which may be expanded or contracted at will and conserves neither straight lines, distances, nor angles ... and do not lead to the construction of a stable system of figures, nor to fixed relations between figures. [58]

In such relations 'distance between objects is based on their proximity to one another on a *two-dimensional plane* ..., no unified global space which conserves size and distance.' [59]

1 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), pp. 83, 84, 85.

2 Jean-François Lyotard, cited in B. Readings (ed.), *Introducing Lyotard: Art & Politics* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 20, 27, 28.

3 Readings, *Introducing*, p. 17.

4 Readings, *Introducing*, p. 20.

5 Stéphane Mallarmé, cited in, W. Fowlie, *Mallarmé* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.220.

6 K. Varnedoe, `Inscriptions in Arcadia', in *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), p. 10.

7 Readings, *Introducing*, p. 22.

8 Readings, *Introducing*, pp. 19, 21, 22.

9 R. Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.155.

10 Barthes, *Forms*, pp. 161, 163.

11 Barthes, *Forms*, pp. 154, 155.

12 Barthes, *Forms*, p. 169.

13 Jacques Derrida (trans. G. C. Spivak), *of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 91.

14 Derrida, *of*, pp. 85-92.

15 C. Twombly, `Documenti di una nuova figurazione: Toti Scialoja, Gaston Novelli, Pierre Alechinsky, Achille Perilli, Cy Twombly', *L'Esperienza Moderna*, 2nd issue, Aug-Sept, 1957, p.32. Translation in Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p. 27.

16 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.8e,
`And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.'

17 [my italics] D. Kazanjian, `The Painted Word', *Vogue*, New York, no.9, Sept, 1994, p.555.

18 R. Pincus-Witten, `Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, April, 1982, p.62: `in the army, Twombly drew at night, without light ...'

19 A. Englebert, *Die Linie in der Zeichnung. Klee-Pollock-Twombly*, Essen, 1985, pp.106-200, cited in Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.II 1961-1965* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1993), pp.21-22: 1952 ... Twombly begins to dissolve simple configurations, reducing them to elementary motif-like constellations of purely linear impulse ... Twombly seems to proceed in a manner similar to Klee, whose down-to-earth concept of form provided a point of origin not to mention a general scheme for line as essentially responsive and active'.

20 F. Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p.307.

21 H. Martin, 1Milan and Turin', *Art International*, vol. 15, no. 10, Dec., 1971, p.77, `As Twombly himself has put it, he's "still trying to learn to write..."

22 H. Herrera, `Cy Twombly: A Homecoming', *Harpers Bazaar*, August, 1994, p.147.

23 [my italics] P. Wember, `Twombly', *Centroarte*, vol. 4, March, 1967, pp.37-38.

24 B. Blistene, `Cy Twombly: Fifty Days at Iliam', *Flash Art*, Mar/Apr, 1979, p.31.

25 [my italics] R. Rauschenberg's letter to Betty Parsons, cited in W. Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s* (Houston: Houston Fine Art Press, 1991), p.230.

26 Hopps, *Rauschenberg*, p.25.

27 Klee, *Diaries*, p.253.

28 For example, Willem de Kooning's 1950 work, *Excavation*.

29 [my italics] T. B. Hess & J. Ashbery (eds.), *Light in Art* (New York: Collier MacMillan Ltd., 1971), p.42.

30 Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p.358: `[the event of 1952] Kline was in the audience. He was there most of the summer, and everyone loved him.'

31 Hess & Ashbery, *Light*, pp.43-44.

32 [my italics] Charles Olson, `Cy Twombly' manuscript, *Charles Olson Papers* (Storrs: University of Connecticut Library, 1951), pp.1-4. The revised manuscript has been published in the catalogue, *Cy Twombly: Poems to the Sea (1959)* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1988).

33 Duberman, *BMC*, pp.350-351: `The 1952 event ... Olson read his poetry' `he had written a poem ... fragments of conversation', p.354: `the theory [of the event] ... the way of life itself is all those separate things ... happening simultaneously.'

34 *Octavio Paz Eight Poems: Cy Twombly Ten Drawings*, (Koln: Udo & Anette Brandhorst, 1993).

35 [my italics] E. Weinberger (ed.), `A draft of shadows', *Octavio Paz: The Collected Poems* 1957-1987 (London: Paladin, 1991), p.563.

36 Duberman, *BMC*, p.374.

37 Duberman, *BMC*, p.375.

38 Duberman, *BMC*, p.488.

39 Cited in, M. Pleynet, `Design of letters, figures and words or Painting by Ear: Cy Twombly', *Tel Quel*, vol. 67, Autumn, 1976, p.20

40 Cited in, Philippe Sollers (ed.), *Writing and the Experience of Limits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.67.

41 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.I 1948-1960* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1992), p.29, footnote 1.

42 Pleynet, `Design', pp.19-20.

43 Duberman, *BMC*, pp.350-351.

44 Sollers, *Writing*, pp.87-102.

45 Sollers, *Writing*, p. xxvii.

46 Charles Olson, `Equal, That Is, to the Real Itself', in Donald Allen (ed.), *Charles Olson: Human Universe and Other Essays* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967), pp.117-122.

47 Duberman, *BMC*, p.371

48 Duberman, *BMC*, pp.335-336: `Olson comes back to Black Mountain the summer of '51 ... with ... the earlier critical study of Melville, *Call Me Ishmael*. He referred to his most recent publication, *A Letter to Melville*, printed that summer of '51 on the Black Mountain press ... as "that wonderful thing, which ... I consider an attack upon the universe".'

49 Duberman, *BMC*, p. 342: `courses ranging from introductory chemistry to atomic physics.'

50 Duberman, *BMC*, p.373.

51 See endnote 34.

52 Olson, `Equal', p. 118.

53 J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.121: `one might say that the genotext is a matter of topology.'

54 [my italics] Olson, `Equal', pp.117-122.

55 Olson, `Equal', pp.117-122

56 Papadakis (ed.), `Interview with David Bohm', *Art Meets Science and Spirituality*, Art & Design, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p.29.

57 A. Issacs (ed.), *The MacMillan Encyclopedia* (London: MacMillan, 1981), p.403: `*Electromagnetic field.* A concept describing electric and magnetic forces that, like gravitational forces, act without physical contact (action at a distance).'

58 Cited in, S. Gablik, *Progress in Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), p.53.

59 [my italics] Gablik, *Progress*, p.43.

PART III - POETS AND POETRY: A CONTEMPORARY SYMBIOSIS OF PAINTING AND POETRY

> More than ever/ things fall away from us/ livable things/ and what crowds them out/ and replaces them/ is an event/ for which there's no image/ ... *Duino Elegies* (Rilke)[1]

> A fellowship with essence; till we shine,/ Full alchemiz'd, and free of space ... /... Fold/ A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness, /... / Then old songs awaken from enclouded tombs/ ... /Feel we these things? - that moment have we stept/ Into a sort of oneness, and our state/ Is like a floating spirit's/ ... *Endymion* (Keats)[2]

> The Image cannot/ be dispossessed of a/ prIMORdial freshness/ which IDEAS/CAN NEVER CLAIM

The third quotation above, taken from John Crowe Ransom's discussion of Imagist poetry,[3] was found on a scrap of paper very recently, by Varnedoe, in Twombly's studio; a paper on which the words were `mingled into obscuring smears and casual splatters of colour.'[4] This addition of paint in Twombly's distinct mode, plus both the personal paraphrasing and choice selection of capitals, leads to the probability that this `studio scrap' was intended by the artist as the first step towards the initiation of a work.

The full text from which Twombly creates, via spacing and emphasis, this poetic verse is worthy of examination, according to Varnedoe, because such a discussion on image `is tersely apposite for every writer about art, ...':

> It cannot be dispossessed of a primordial freshness, which idea can never claim. *An idea is derivative* and tamed. *The image* is in the natural or wild state, and it *has to be discovered there, not put there*, obeying its own law and none of ours. We think we can lay hold of the image, and take it captive, but *the docile captive is not the real image but only the idea, which is the image with its character beaten out of it.* [5]

There are echoes here of many of the writers and thinkers I have drawn upon in this thesis to help expatiate the thoughts and feelings to which Twombly's oeuvre may

bear correspondences, not least such writers as Cassirer and Blanchot. Nevertheless, the loudest echo here is of the artist's own 1957 'manifesto' on line. It could therefore, firstly, be posited that for almost 40 years the artist has had an underlying sediment to his thoughts. Secondly, as this choice of quotation is from a discussion of Imagist poetry, the significance of Pound as thought-provocator to the younger Twombly might not have lost its resonance. In conversation with Bastian, Twombly stated that he:

> understood scripture, text, quotations and words ... as forms, or as allusions ... to visual forms, and as emotional symbolic images; ... a quotation could determine, or influence the direction of a painting and that individual words or poetic quotations could instigate an interactive dialogue during the painting process.[6]

At this juncture I would state that there are three prominent formal attributes to Twombly's use of quotations. Firstly, their fragmentary, elliptical nature which emphasises and objectifies words and their materiality into an almost grammatical void. Secondly, the cultural poetic memory is modified by the artist's individual history - via paraphrase, addition, or omission - a morphological flexibility of memory connections. Thirdly, the eclectic use of texts/sources; an openness and non-linearity of intertextuality.

Finally, and of possibly greater significance to this section on Twombly's utilisation of poets in his work, the question arises as to whether the aforementioned third introductory quotation could provide a key to what attracted the artist to certain poets in particular; poets whose own fecund poetic practices were aligned in some manner with his own journey into image-making. Amongst the many works in which the artist utilises a poet's words as image there are several, which by their repetitive use of the same poet, particularly over a prolonged period, deserve to be recognised as intimate long-term 'inspirations'.

John Keats, already referred to in the analysis of *Hero and Leandro* (1981-4) (Pl.34), is such a prime example of an inspiratory poet, utilised by the artist between 1960-1984. For the students (during Twombly's sojourn) at BMC, Olson was always 'quoting Heisenberg and the uncertainty principle, and Keats' thing about negative

capabilities.'[7] As an ancestral forerunner opposed to unveiling truth via `consequitive reasoning' [sic],[8] Keats, for Olson, must have exemplified the necessary `philosophy of thought' to be found in Phylogeny for the `rebirth' of a postmodern language. Later, in 1958, Olson wrote a summary of Keats' `Negative Capability', in which he allegedly quoted Keats:

> John Keats ... thought to himself all that irritable reaching after fact and reason, it won't do. I don't believe in it. I do better *to stay in the condition of things.* No matter what it amounts to, mystery, confusion, doubt, it has a power, it is what I mean by Negative Capability. [9]

For Keats, ideas obstructed access to the indeterminate, transient and changing nature of phenomenal objects - their non-discursive `mystery'. As opposed to the closed world which Keats termed `cold philosophy',[10] he treasured the open world of process, non-duality, therefore `uncertainty',[11] as the only key with which to truly experience, and know, the character of the sensuous world.

Mallarmé, of course, aligns in this respect with Keats; in that Mallarmé sought to capture the object's suggestiveness, its effect, in that lack of finality prior to discursive meanings. Yet Keats wanted a deeper knowledge, in the respect of a non-limiting selfhood, one deconstructing the dichotomy of self and object to the extent that, `if a sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel.'[12] This empathic identification with objects (`to stay in the condition of things'); the unbounded spatial nature of self and thing, also can open the ability to non-historicity; to feel both mythological figures and ancestral poets as forces within his own psyche,[13] as `surrogates of himself'.[14]

Olson saw a conjunction between Keats' `Negative Capability' and the non-Euclidean world; stating so in a wittily phrased tribute to Keats' usurpation of Rationality:

> Keats, without setting out to, has put across the century the inch of steel to wreck Hegel, if anything could. Within five years, two geometers,

> Bolyai and Lobatschewsky, weren't any longer satisfied with Euclid's picture of the world, and they each made a new one ... [15]

Twombly's first work with direct reference to Keats' poetry is *Ode to Psyche* (1960) (Pl.48). The bottom half of this work vibrates with a huge semicircle of events; a semicircle which rests, as if seeking equilibrium, upon a row of numbers in a horizontal sequence of squares. The artist's use of numbers is one of the means, possibly, by which he juxtaposes, and therefore heightens, the sense of the erotic events in the semicircle. Barthes views them as `a discrete series of measurements ... to `break' the noble solemnity of the title.' [16] Nevertheless, they may accommodate various resonances for the artist. Being placed in the position once often reserved for titles on works of art, they could refer to the first line of Keats' *Ode to Psyche* (1819):

> O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung. [17]

The semicircle's structure consists of several arcs, some of dragged loose brush marks in a `rainbow' effect, or the luminary stages of sunrise. The final inner arc consists of the artist's regular heavily pencilled loop-language for energy and force. Set within the apex of the outer arc is a rectangle, one of Twombly's pictograms for a poem, above which is the word `SONNET', hastily crossed through with dark crayon, and above this instead floats the title of the work `Ode to Psyche'.

From the bottom left of the work, ` caressing' the semicircle as they pass alongside its structure, an arc of ideogrammic cloud contours thrust towards the title, metamorphoses into three `hearts' or `vulvas' as they drift up, past the title, out of the right-hand side of the work. The `events', set centrally within the semicircle, are exquisitely drawn ideograms of hearts and buttocks. Beneath these `events' are the two lines of verse, (hurriedly scrawled above the aforementioned numbers), which are from Keats' sonnet `*The Human Seasons*':

> On mists in idleness - to let fair things
> Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook. [18]

Almost in the top left corner of this work there is a long rectangle containing similar `events' to the semicircle, plus two lines from Keats' *`Ode to Psyche'*:

> And ready still past kisses to outnumber
> At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love. [19]

Both the ideogrammic images and `rising sun' of arcs in the artist's work are self-explanatory in relation to capturing the sensations of this verse fragment. Yet the two quotations' intertextuality juxtaposes not just seasons - Autumn and Summer respectively - but significantly *`The Human Seasons'* deal with, according to Keats `four seasons in the mind of Man.' Why did Twombly centralise man's Autumn, (a period Keats viewed as arising from letting `things/Pass by unheeded'), yet erase the title of SONNET to that of *`Ode to Psyche'*?

Passion and the relinquishment of passion are the two intensities the artist chooses to utilise here from Keats. Psyche is the Greek word for `soul', and Keats' concern for `Soul-making' (in a non-Christian sense) caused him to evolve his `philosophy' of Negative Capability. The `soul', according to Keats, grows and expands via leaving unmolested our will to `fix', to identify, and therefore to diminish things into an abstract pattern of thought:

> Things cannot to the will
> Be settled ...
> It is a flaw
> In happiness
> .....
> It spoils the singing of the nightingale.[20]

In the tale told by Apuleius, in his *Metamorphosis*, Psyche's lack of restraint, in seeking her husband's identity, results in her losing Eros. The tale holds a warning. To enter `into the condition of things' means to Keats abandonment to the present moment of sensations. Such an absorption in the physicality of nature, people and feelings, reveals the `truth' of knowledge; that everything is uncertain, fluid and impermanent. Once we enter into this experience of the world - that the simultaneous unfolding and

fading constitutes the glory of the sensuous world - even our own human transience (even death) becomes not only acceptable but a happiness.

This altered state of consciousness - as opposed to the propensity to `fix' the world by `consequitive reasoning' - is Keats' `soul-making', and the `unheeded' mind of Man's Autumn allows one to enter, sensuously, the unboundaried oneness of nature's glory of transience and process.

In Twombly's painting, *Hyperion (to Keats)* (1962) (Pl.49) (HB,11,68), there are no quotations from Keats' poem *Hyperion `A Fragment'* (1818). Instead, Twombly provides both the poem's visual catastasis ideogrammically, and a pictogrammic multiple reference to its ending (the rebirth of Apollo into a god and a poet) via Keats' own corresponding poetic powers. This work, in oil paint, wax crayon and lead pencil on canvas, is, by the artist's standards, epic in size - 260cm x 300cm. The `action' pours down from the top left corner, diagonally, covering two-thirds of the entire canvas with Twombly's almost entire repertoire of prismatic pictorial `language'; one which vibrates with the entire range of emotions. Numbers of varying sizes bombard the surface (some circled), loops of pencilled frenzy collide with geometric shapes and with pouring of red, pink and white oil paint, ideogrammic forms evoke unfurling clouds which splay out into drops. Amid all this, faint words; `A King' , `Venus' , and `Mirror' , seek to hold the surface. It is as if Twombly here has sought to superimpose two scenes from the poem. One scene from Book II in which Hyperion remains on his throne amid the bloodied aftermath, and one scene at the beginning of Book III in which Apollo appears:

> For lo! tis for the Father of all verse
> Flush everything that hath a vermeil hue,
> .....
> And let the clouds.....
> Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills [21]

On this painting's creamy-white background there is, settled centrally on the bottom of the work, a narrow horizontal pencilled rectangle, but a row of numbers - unlike those in *Ode to Psyche* enclosed within the rectangle - are `jumping' uncontrollably above it,

throwing their lighter echoes above themselves, like a wave. Such unruly measurement owes its unstable force to the large loops of dark pencilled energy with which the artist has partially covered the rectangle. Such an `echo' also is a reminder, to one who knows Keats' poem, of its theme of Nature's laws of unfolding and fading.

Where chaos and instability (as opposed to `consequitive reasoning' and progression) is most emphatic in the painting is on the work's left edge; the back of a throne's outline is formed by this edge, consuming two-thirds of it. The throne's arms are very roughly drawn in dark pencil, whilst its legs consist of exquisitely thin, wobbly lines of red oil paint. Geometrically there is another allusion to Hyperion's palace, via a double inserted square beneath the throne, a vivid red spot inside, pinpointing, in Twombly's mode of colour-poetics, blood and passion. In a Klee-like pictographic simplicity, Twombly has pencil-drawn Hyperion's feet as curves.

Myers quotes a section from Book I of the poem which ends with the phrase `hieroglyphics old', and maintains that `[f]or Twombly the operative word is hieroglyphics; a tool for recreating the Titan Hyperion. Thus the painting is more than simply a dedication to Keats.' [22] As apposite as the word is to highlight Twombly's mode of pictorial `language', Keats' poem itself is a dedication. It leads one from the birth of the world to the birth of the poet Apollo, the only person equipped to `capture' and make known the necessary truth of the world, one of change and uncertainty, its only consistency one of unfolding and fading.

In Book II Oceanus explains to the Titans their downfall in the overall context of this mode of creation. In true Keatsian vein, he expostulates:

> If ye will take comfort in its truth/ We fall by course of Nature's law ... / ... the atom universe/ From chaos ... came/ Light ... /and light, forthwith touch'd/ The whole enormous matter into life/ ... So on our heels a fresh perfection tread/ ... nor are we/ Thereby more conquered, than by us the rule/ Of shapeless Chaos ...[23]

At the end of Book II, Hyperion (Father of Helios the sun, Selene the moon, and Eos the dawn) appears. Yet at that point, at the beginning of Book III, Apollo is waiting in the wings, so to speak. This is highly significant to Twombly's painting, because in its bottom right hand corner there is a very large `uterus' pictogrammic form, which emits from its flesh-coloured vulva a high discharge of pencilled loop energy, suggestive of both the force of desire, and birth from desire.

Twombly makes explicit here, inside the uterus, the aforementioned correspondence between Keats and Apollo. Enclosed within the uterus, at the top, `Part III' is written, beneath which the artist has faintly inscribed `Endymion'. Not only is the word ` fading', but a square below it (Twombly's pictogram for poem/book) is almost disappearing due to heavy dark pencilled lines across its form. Written below this sought obliteration is `John Keats', followed by the artist's signature. This manner of allusion to Keats' first major poem evokes Keats' youth disappearing for the sake of the necessary `birth' of his maturity (*Hyperion*).

This, in a corresponding sense, is what happens to Apollo when he will `Die into life ...,'[24] from mortal to a God of verse. He faces the goddess Mnemosyne (Memory), and says:

> I can read/ A wondrous lesson in thy silent face/ Knowledge enormous make a God of me/ Names, deeds, gray legends ... / Majesties, sovran voices ... *Creations and destroyings all at once*/ Pour into the wide hollows of my brain/ And deify me. [25]

The denial of the concept of an absolute knowledge in any shape or form has been at the forefront of many disciplines recently. In this respect Blistene pinpoints a reciprocal relationship between Twombly's and Roland Barthes' oeuvres:

> the parentheses and other punctuation marks which `adorn' the work of Barthes are in literary (space) terms what the mark, the mess or the erasing are in Twombly's pictorial space. In both Barthes – Twombly ... neither can trim their uncertainty ... they allow the possible to multiply. [26]

Considering that Barthes' `zero degree' of writing depends significantly on `doubts, silences, omissions, spaces, whitenesses',[27] for the creation of meaning, it is not surprising, as Frederick Karl suggests, that Barthes was influenced by `.Mallarmé in particular, but [also by] ... Symbolism and High Modernism in general.' Those aforementioned attributes in `zero degree' writing, Karl argues, `create meaning by their juxtaposition to words ... the words become transformed, in their possibility as conveyed by tone, gesture, intimation. Even as we describe Barthes' quest, we see its linkage to Mallarmé, Rilke.' [28]

In Barthes' *`from Writing Degree Zero'* (1953), he discusses the differences at work between `classical' and `modern' poetic language use; a difference, if we relate it to Twombly's pictorial language of forms (as well as his use of words as images), exemplary of the confusion sometimes his viewers face in confrontation with some of his works:

> The classical flow is a succession of elements whose density is even ... they are due to long custom, not to individual creation [whilst in modern poetry] ... the words ... violent and unexpected abruptness, reproduce the depth and singularity of an individual experience. Fixed connections being abolished - [instead a] vertical project, like a pillar which plunges into a totality of meanings, reflexes and recollections ... [and] [f]or modern poetry ... grammar is bereft of its purpose ... this void is necessary for the density of the Word to rise out of a magic vacuum ... like `fury and mystery'... the Word shines with an infinite freedom ... innumerable, *uncertain* and possible connections. It initiates a discourse *full of gaps and full of lights, filled with absences.* [29]

Significantly, one of the analogies Barthes draws to this method of indeterminate language is to `pure matter'.[30]

This inability to claim permanence in language - of our Ideas, of any object/phenomena, due to the vertical density beneath a word radiating potential indeterminate and unknown connections - is one link between Rilke and Barthes. For Barthes, words are, `Objects ... the *vibration* of which ... strangely affect the next word',[31] whilst in Rilke's demand for a poetic language to celebrate our own and

Nature's transience, perishability, and lack of boundariness between mankind and nature, there are resonances to both Pound and Keats:

> the work of these continual conversions of the beloved visible and tangible into the invisible vibration and animation of our nature, which introduces new frequencies into the vibration spheres of the universe (since the various elements in the cosmos are merely different rates of vibration).[32]

This view of the world as a series of vibrations, constituting the `ground' or `network' within the condition of things, deconstructs, in the poets Twombly appears to be empathic to, the hierarchical dichotomy of self and object.

Keats' opposition to `fact and reason' , due to it providing no insight into the condition of things, is as adamant as Rilke's abhorrence to human beings' acquired need for `calculation', and its resulting `representation', as opposed to `image' - that immediate sensible, palpable reality of things. According to Rilke, human beings' heightened sense of consciousness (self-consciousness, time-consciousness, and death-consciousness) places them *before* the world, therefore creating boundaries, reducing it and themselves to `thought-devised product[s]'. [33]

Animals, flowers, etc., and sometimes children and lovers, are *in* the world, within an unboundaried `pure relation' to everything else:

> *We* never have/even for one single day/ that pure space before us/ that flowers can open/ endlessly into./It's always *world*/ ... / never the pure/the untended thing/you breathe/and endlessly *know*/ ... /what a child/sometimes gives himself up to/ ... /and has to be/ shaken out of./ ... /Always when we face/the creation/we see only/ a kind of reflection/of the freedom/that we ourselves have dimmed. [34]

Rilke's two major works *Duino Elegies* (1922) and *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1922) (both poems certain of Twombly's works draw upon), work through the means by which `we at last [are] open and receivers',[35] retrieved from our over-condition of consciousness, one structured via the calculations of logical time and space, resulting, in part, from fear of our own primal transience and death. The initial task falls to language,

to the poet, in this, as Heidegger aptly expresses it, `conversion of consciousness'.[36] To provide an image devoid of calculating representation, by, as Heidegger sums up Rilke's argument, `an inner recalling of the immanence of the objects of representation into the presence within the heart's space ... with the depth dimensions of our inner being.' [37]

This dissolving of boundaries opens up the poet to the primordial freshness of things, to `image', and becomes for Rilke not only an archway to Nature's felt presence but also a reciprocal relationship in temporal historic terms:

> Death is the *side of life* that is turned away from us: we must try to achieve the fullest consciousness of our existence, which is at home *in the two unseparated realms, inexhaustibly nourished by both* ... that realm which we, everywhere unboundaried, ... share with the dead and those to come ... we are incessantly flowing over and over to those who preceded us ... [38]

This lack of boundary between ourselves and the past, and those in it, is not altogether dissimilar to Pound's quest in the *Cantos*; in his palimpsest of `voices' amidst his own. And in relation to Twombly's own oeuvre it is not an overstatement to say he opens himself wide to such experiences.

Rilke is another poet of prolonged, and profound, inspiration to the artist; *Duino* (1967) (Pl.50) (HB,III,29) makes reference to Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, whilst the following are inspired by quotations; *Orpheus* (1975) (Pl.51), *Analysis of the Rose as Sentimental Despair* (1985) (Pl.52) (HB,IV,27), *Untitled* (1988)(Pl.53) (HB,IV,50), *Untitled Painting [Say Goodbye Catullus, the Shores of Asia Minor]* (1994) (Pl.54) (HB,IV,65), and *Quattro Stagioni* (1993/4) (Pls.55,57) (HB,IV,63,64).

Twombly's *Orpheus* (1975) (Pl.51) uses graphite, crayon, and paint on paper. It takes its quotation from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, at the juncture where Orpheus - the first legendary poet and musician - is beseeched to keep life open towards death, to stay in the unboundaried position twixt the two realms of life and death, so that he may not let his music/song (or words) suffer from any self/time/death-consciousness, that

heightened sense of consciousness which places human beings at a devised distance from the pure relation to Being, and from the forces of vibration which underpin all creation:

> Be ever dead in Eurydice-, mount more singingly,
> mount more praisingly back into the pure relation.
> Fine, among the waning, be, in the realm of decline,
> be a ringing glass that shivers even as it rings. [39]

Twombly has written these four lines of the poem at the bottom of this vertically placed 'portrait' (100cm height, 70.8cm width). The writing covers approximately one sixth of the work; a work whose background is roughly covered in loose brush marks of creamy-white paint, in places scumbled, dry-on-dry. Written in even smaller freehand, in the bottom left corner, is 'S.13. Part II' , providing the viewer (unusually for the artist) with the quotation's specific reference, and arguably therefore the temptation to acquire *Sonnets* and peruse the four lines. On doing so, the following two lines could also be read preceding the above four:

> Be - and at the same time know the condition
> of not-being, the infinite ground of your deep vibration, ...

No word, or phrase, in the four lines on the artist's paper is given greater emphasis than any other, yet he has modified the quotation via his sentiments, possibly not just concerning Orpheus, but, arguably, on Rilke, and the resonance of Rilke's own poetry after death, by substituting the word 'Fine' for 'Here'. This possibility is based on the artist's sentiments concerning Rilke's death - quoting Rilke's chosen epitaph[40] on two of his paintings.

Almost above the four line quotation, and to its left, Twombly has written in larger freehand the word 'Orpheus' diagonally upwards, as in the quintessential rise of vibrating joy. 'Orpheus' is underscored by a heavy, repeated, graphite line. The unfolding and fading of Orpheus' life and song is emphatic in the artist's gestural contact via graphite on this work's, in parts, scumbled background which makes the writing of 'Orpheus' at points lose contact with the unevenly applied surface.

There is a later painting on canvas, *Orpheus* (1979) (Pl.56) (HB,IV,18), with simply the name of `Orpeus' written horizontally across the surface, absorbing half the canvas's overall space. This word, which omits in its spelling the letter `h', is almost drowned by a very liquid pouring of oil-based house paint from the top of the canvas. As there is no verifiable indication of this work's inspiration deriving from Rilke's poetic work it has been omitted from discussion. Nevertheless, Bastian's comments on the work heighten an awareness of Twombly's use of liquidity, or scumbling, as a formal means to allow language to intensify its own `figural' (Lyotardian) pulsations:

> the Orpheus paraphrase becomes pure limpidity ... an identity that attempts to vanish from our experience. In the mythical singer's very name Twombly finds aniconic potency. The name reverberates like an echo, ... the painting combines the ideographic concept of evocation with a perception of the physical nature of script. [41]

Larsen discusses *Orpheus* (1975) in the context of the artist's 1957 `manifesto':

> [h]is task was not to illustrate or comment upon one [figure of Greek mythology] ... but to find its essence and to express it simply and exultantly. These drawings are almost intoxicating in their potent compression of raw psychic energy. One can feel the soaring power and joyful sound of Orpheus ... the name ... sings as it reaches into space. [42]

Yet it is to Bastian we must turn for the linkage between Rilke's and Twombly's approach to image making, `[I]n Rilke we encounter the same "essence" that Twombly produces, a longing for the substantiality of things, that cannot yet exist unless we give away something of ourselves.' [43]

This `substantiality' is paradoxically the insubstantiality of things, which we can only experience as glorious once we forfeit our need to `represent'; to `fix'; to `calculate' - all positions one remove from their *life-process* and raw sensation. In Twombly's `manifesto' the `essence' is `the realization of existence', one outside our formulaic definitions, by an endless open process (recall Eco) of `innate history', a form of life. What `we have [to] give away ... of ourselves' in Rilke's approach to life, and image, is that fear of uncertainty, impermanence and transience which place us *before* the world instead of *in* the world's actual experience of primary sensation - its true `substance'.

Twombly's *Quattro Stagioni* (1993/4) (The Four Seasons) (Pl.57) (HB,IV,64) uses acrylic, oil paint, wax crayon and lead pencil on canvas. This four panelled painting, plus its twin, the second series *Quattro Stagioni* (1993/4) (Pl.55) (HB,IV,63), were begun at Bassano, and reworked and finished by the artist at Gaeta.

The first panel of (Pl.57) - 'Primavera Part I' – is examined in its relation to Rilke's poetry, and the pictorial implication of writing as object. It is a fragment, the final lines of Rilke's *Duino Elegies,* which Twombly paraphrases, with additions and omissions (also he spatially changes the pace rhythmically) for this season of the year. Rilke's actual lines, with their italic emphasis, read:

> And we
>
> who always think
>
> of happiness *rising*
>
> would feel the emotion
>
> that almost startles us
>
> when a happy thing *falls.* [44]

The preceding lines, which are significant to the context in which Twombly uses the above, read:

> Yet if these/ endlessly dead/ awakened a simile for us/ look, they might point/ to the catkins/ hanging from empty hazel trees/ or else they might mean the rain/ that falls on the dark earth/ in spring.

The sole motif in *Primavera* (and in three of the panels in the second series of *Quattro Stagioni)* is of a vertical sequence of ferryboats, which, according to the artist, 'are like the Egyptian sun barks that carry people to the island of the dead, or like the boat in Greek mythology that takes the dead across the River Styx.' [45]

In their Chinese calligraphic simplicity of an arc for the barks, each with various quantities of downward strokes - Twombly's motif of a paddle - echo, ideogrammically,

in their juxtaposition of shapes, the significance of Rilke's lines of verse, lines which epitomise his optimistic approach to death , as the important beginning of the cycle of life again. In this sense, awareness of one's own transience is joy, a fact relating to death that Rilke expostulates elsewhere in the poem:

> To contain death/ the whole of death/ even *before* life has begun/
> to contain it so gently/ and not to be angry/ - / this is
> indescribable.[46]

In Twombly's *Primavera*, against the creamy-white background's luminosity, the ferry boat motifs are a sizzling red, and from the height of a globular form in an admixture of red and yellow at the top, centrally, of the work, pure yellow drops of oil paint drop, glistening, onto the side of each ferry boat. Why, in such a dazzling feast of spring colours, is Twombly inspired by Rilke's lines on death? Would they not be more appropriate on the panel of Winter? The answer lies in the context of Rilke's approach to death - the life process of Spring can only begin due to death. Beginning midway down the right side of the painting Twombly's own `voice' adapts Rilke's verse to:

> And you who have
> Always thought of
> happiness flowing
> would feel the
> emotion
> that almost
> overwhelms
> when
> happiness
> repeatedly
> falls.

These are the only words that are distinctly legible, partly due to the fact that the artist has written another, different text underneath his adaptation of Rilke's lines. The `earlier' writing reads:

A [shrill?] of notes
then another
and another as though she ...

Twombly provides here a perfect example of palimpsest, providing an elliptical and obscure interaction between two fragments which, possibly, have metamorphosed into each other, and remain just traces of events which moved him, lingering in the air, on this particular area of the canvas where pure white, yet almost translucent, paint has been allowed to run in rivulets, both behind and in front of some letters. Such flowing `streamers' of thinned white paint tend to cause visually both a permanent sense of fluctuation, and a heightened sense of light, the latter produced by the artist having built thinner, and yet again thinner, layers of white paint on a creamy-white background. Such an effect produces for Herrera, in this work, the sensation that `they [the ferries] float in the billowing light of the mind.' [47]

The artist's words interact as partial objects, and in each pencil stroke's different intensities through gestural `emotion', record passing vibrations in the artist's memory, and in their visual presence fluctuate a dematerialization and re-materialization of life-process. Words as palpable, material objects, in their `substantiality', reflect a world of transience and uncertainty; a unity of absence and presence. Those final lines of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* are utilized once again by Twombly, but in their accurate transcription, on the central panel of a 1994 three-panelled work entitled *Untitled Painting* (Pl.54) (HB,IV,65).

For the work's history of production we are indebted to Bastian,[48] who, with Herrera, also provides pertinent information on the work's title and subject matter. In 1972 the painting was `tentatively called *The Anatomy of Melancholy*',[49] but:

> [o]ver the course of time the iconography of the ... work changed entirely ... Upon its completion one possible title was rejected: *On Mists in Idleness (Keats ...)*. Prior to the publication of *Vol. IV*, Twombly decided to subtitle the work Say *Goodbye Catullus, to the Shores of Asia Minor.*[50]

The link here between Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1691) and Keats is very relevant, for `Robert Burton's [book] ... was a favourite book of Keats',[51] partly inspiring his poem *Ode to Melancholy*. The further link between Twombly's later proposed title, *On Mists in Idleness*, and the *Ode* is not accidental. Keats viewed melancholy as a positive force in the acceptance of transience. Used previously by the artist, in *Ode to Psyche* (1960) (Pl.48), the quotational fragment obviously has a very long-term, and non-linear, prismatic, effect in the artist's mind, acting like a jewelled-facet upon other thoughts and quotes.

The most significant link is that this fragment of Keats' was proposed as title up until the last moment, so to speak, whilst Rilke's quotation was in place on the central panel, making an intertextual interaction between the two poets in Twombly's mind, one could say, almost an inevitability. Making reference to *Untitled Painting*, Twombly states:

> I think of the painting's movement as falling. It cascades and it exits on the left. The painting is about life's fleetingness. It's a passage. It starts on the right and as you move to the left it just goes out.[52]

Written almost centrally within the `passage' of various motifs in *Untitled Painting* (1994) (Pl.54) (HB,IV,65), in small graphite freehand, Rilke's quotation acts as a catalyst both to the method of paint application, and (reading from right to left) to the pictorial transition of the composition.

The quotation's second purpose, appears to be, to set up in the artist's mind and memory, a springboard from which further quotations generate; ones which examine further the prismatic visual significance of `life's fleetingness' in the conjunctive theory of colour and a theory of life's matter. Amongst the many quotations on the canvas there is another (placed on the left panel) also from Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, from the ninth elegy:

> the most fleeting of all/once for each thing/ ... / [53]

The right panel contains, on its off-white ground, twelve globular `dissolving' forms. Placed within the context of the artist's words, these are fleeting life forms; visually `pyrotechnical' forms, which in their voluminous colour density, yet simultaneous transparent luminosity, enact, what it is not inappropriate to term them, the `colour-poem' of Rilke's quotation.

Each form is a literal blaze of colour. The four, which appear to have `entranced' centrally from the right edge of the canvas, are of a pure black (the density of velvet) oil paint, with variants of purples and reds seeping out from around this rich core of darkness. Nevertheless, this darkness never entirely eclipses the sight of the black graphite loosely drawn circles of frenzied energy behind, and from which, the forms emit themselves.

At points, thick vivid yellow oil paint pours from the forms' edges, evoking a life force of heavily laden `blossoms'. Despite their sensation of weight (via concentrated oil paint), and a somewhat ominous nature (via black), these forms are ascending towards the remaining of their number; those that verge towards, some just entering, the central panel. These remaining globular forms - only a half of which have small residues of black, whilst all have their medium thinned enough for the off-white ground to penetrate - enact the appearance of a circular dance drifting towards the top of the canvas.

There is a three-fold impression here of light, speed and uplift, as these forms omit the previously pure concentrations of oil paint, and the cascades of yellow have instead opaque densities of either yellow, red, flesh-pink or blue at their centres - cores which emit further diluted, hence lightened, (in both senses of the word), downward drags of their own colour. These latter globular forms, with their literal eruptions of exuberant, evanescent colours, appearing to derive from, yet also to float in front of, the misty white ground behind them, contain arguably art-historical resonances. Both Turner's *Petworth* interiors and his later paintings of Venice contain a sense of such `dissolving' phenomenal colour-forms, whilst those previous black core eruptions of

blazing colour at the right edge of Twombly's work are reminiscent of Whistler's *Nocturnes*, primarily in *The Falling Rocket*. Such recognitions are not fortuitous; as in 1994, amongst the art books on the artist's `worktables ... [were those of] Whistler, Turner ...'[54] Yet Twombly's forms, within the circular `dance', heighten even more the apparent paradox of Turner's pictorial technique of a simultaneously substantial and dissolving matter.

Such an effect the artist has achieved via various stages of the forms' `growth' and inherent dissolution. Firstly, either from the tube or a loaded brush, stubbing concentrated areas of colour, providing therefore a static and substantial basis to each form. Secondly, an application of thinned paint of the same colour to allow areas of semi-transparency, providing the illusion of simultaneous adherence to, and floating before, the form's stubbed areas. Thirdly, the paint is diluted still further, and allowed, from the loaded brush, to run in rivulets from the forms in translucent colour sheens. This dilution is allowed its full extremity - some rivulets appear to be solely resinous.

The third stage is closer in application to Arshile Gorky's 1944 paintings (i.e. *How My Mother's Embroidered Apron Unfolds in My Life*) than to Morris Louis' `veils' of 1954 and 1958. Twombly's `veils' are barely tinged by the colour of each form, yet just enough to eradicate any sensation of the forms as self-sufficient. In other words, they echo the luminosity of the background, as if born from, and returning to, the light itself.

There is considerable variety of texture between the different modes of application, and this provides within the forms themselves, in the sense of pictorial distance, the simultaneous effect of a nearby opaque substantiality, and an infinite distance through the veils of translucency. This simultaneous, multidimensional spatial experience was also consequently a simultaneous temporal experience - a deconstruction which pre-emptied any attempted pictorial hierarchical formulising devised by the viewer - hence providing an understanding of the disorientation and spatial complexity I had

experienced in my initial introduction to the artist's work via *School of Athens* (see *Introduction* to the thesis).

In the development of such anamorphic spatial forms (of which Lyotard has much to say in its correspondence to the figural),[55] the passage from materialization to dematerialization enacts a life-cycle - as the veils also pour diagonally to the left of the forms themselves (at the point of Rilke's quotation), giving `birth' to small areas, in the central panel, of pure white, encrusted paint.

The remaining central panel consists of a large expanse of off-white ground, the 'action of passage' limited to the bottom of the canvas, where, broken free from the veils, intermittent flicks of pure white oil paint drift, and enter the left panel in which the motif of the ferries begin. Here, a single horizontal row of black ferries travels across to the canvas' edge, pure white existing now only in rivulets, which begin on a pencilled quotation from the twentieth century Greek poet George Seferis. These rivulets pour down over some ferries, and the mix of medium means grey now softens some sense of the ferries' starkness. The Seferis quotation itself is written in freehand beneath the artist's paraphrase of Rilke's `Just once ... [etc.]' , forming therefore a slim column of words from the top of the canvas. The quotation from Seferis' poem *Automobile* reads:

> /high and light/how the dizziness/slipped away/
> like a fish/ in the sea./ [56]

This quotation was used also by the artist as the sole figural `object' on the work *Quattro Stagioni* (1993/4) (Pl.55) (HB,IV,63) for Part II: Estate - Summer. The lines are used by Seferis as the sensation of the dream realm between life and death and as an image of life returning to the sea. The latter is quite persistent in Seferis' poetry:

> / the Old sea-god said to me/ I am the place you belong to; /
> I may be nobody,/ but I can become that which you need. / [57]
> *Three Secret Poems* [58]

Such an optimistic, even cyclic, approach to death has correspondences to the central quotation on the work from Rilke - as transience in life being conceivable as a

happiness. The Seferis quotation on *Untitled Painting* (1993) (Pl.59) also, of course, has correspondences, in its optimism and imagery, to the quotation from Rilke's poem *Fortschritt* (Advance/Progress) which the artist uses as the sole written image both on his 9-part painting *Untitled* (1988) (Pl.53), and *Untitled* (1985) (Pl.58):

> / and in the ponds/ broken off from the sky / my feeling
> sinks/ as if standing on/fishes. [59]

In *Untitled Painting* another quotation (paraphrased by the artist) from *Three Secret Poems* is written, in small freehand, in the bottom right hand corner of the right panel:

> / and yet there on the other shore/ under the dark gaze/
> You over there/ the other side/ one other dawn / the other
> birth/ and yet there you were/ in the vast time. [60]

The following lines by Seferis, though not used by Twombly, are:

> /you were remade/ drop by drop/like resin/ like the
> stalactite, the stalagmite.

This particular work, in its vast intertextuality of the same poet, and of different poets - six of the approximate twelve quotations are from Seferis' and Rilke's poems - epitomises Seferis' own lines (and quest):

> /How can you gather together/ the thousand fragments/
> of each person?/ [61]

Twombly, arguably, solves this question by his extensive reading, and then pinpointing in a poet's oeuvre the quintessential process of life behind their ideas. With regard to Seferis' oeuvre, it is important to realize that his work has similarities to Twombly's, in the respect that Seferis is allegedly heavily influenced by Pound:

> in 1935, [there is] a distinct change ... the consequence of ... [Seferis] reading Eliot and Pound ... [Now] the colouring always primary and the imagery sparse. Seferis also combines the modes of everyday speech with the forms and rhythms of traditional usage in a way that creates the effect of both density and economy. [62]

As obvious as this juxtaposition of dialects is Poundian (especially the *Cantos*), Seferis is also preoccupied with the ancient Greek world of gods and heroes, and uses it

anachronistically in an imaginative combination with the modern world as a key to unlock his present reality in contemporary Greece, `what was then is now ... what is now was then.'[63] On occasions he also places phrases from an epic text amongst his own, i.e. *Erotikos Logos.*

On the nature and context of palimpsest and intertextuality Seferis writes:

> / Our words are the children of many people/ ... / So words
> retain a man's imprint/ after the man has gone./ [64]

Such cultural `children' are modified/transmuted by the next individual's personal history (that `twin methodology' of Olson's), and Twombly achieves this when on occasions he rewrites a poet's lines. Like electromagnetic interactions such rewrites react in a morphological flexibility of connections - a palimpsest of traces/echoes of both the poet's and Twombly's own `voice' in a dynamics of energy.

From 1993 onwards, Twombly becomes obsessed with his feelings towards fragments of Seferis' poetry; specifically approximately a half dozen quotations which he uses repeatedly on various canvases e.g. *Untitled* (1993) (Pl.59), *Untitled Painting* (1994) (Pl.54), *Quattro Stagioni* (1993/4)(HB,IV,63) (on all four canvases) and *Quattro Stagioni* (1993/4) (HB,IV,64). The term `obsession' is not inappropriate in the context of the artist's approach to certain poets, i.e. beneath the Rilke quotation on *Untitled* (1985) (HB,IV,28) Twombly has written `to Rilke (with obsession)'.

Returning to *Untitled Painting* (1994), Bastian is at his most verbose in his opinion of this work as the ` overwhelming achievement in Twombly's oeuvre, so far ... [with its] ... armature consisting of a sea of light and a group of apparitions, [and] with its rising and falling metaphors of colour ...' He assesses the work as:

> an unexpected contemporary parable responding to the being and appearance of reality. In the history of art of the last fifty years one is hard pressed to find a comparable translation of boundlessness realized with such bracing clarity within the language of painting ... What affects us most ... is its oceanic stillness, a universal depth that proclaims the triumph of a coming age as a myth of eternal return. Twombly's work

> finds its raison d'être in the phenomenology of its own inscribed and particular contemporaneity. There is no translation for this psychogram except the painting itself; the dominating luminosity and the artist's palette brush against one another at last achieving a single hierarchy, an `immanence of view'. A realm of memory rises from the concentrated shimmer of form, from whirls of flaming mirroring substance ... Their [the ferries] voyage leads deeper and deeper into a light that ... we can[not] describe - for we know nothing about it.[65]

What could be added to this tribute to the work is a wider analysis of light and its relation in the artist's history, to intertextuality and palimpsest (which has been emphasised in earlier chapters in the thesis). This work provides the best possible example of the similarity in such energies.

The final quotation of the `passage/voyage', placed just above the ferries on the left panel, reads:

> shining white air trembling/ white light/
> reflected in the white/ light sea./ (poet unknown)

There is the implication in these lines that matter vibrates and pulsates as white light; as if this is the `final', or even resurrectionary, state of mankind - an eternal return. In the painting *Untitled* (1993) Twombly, arguably, had already touched upon this point, via the use of two of Seferis' quotations. The first reads:

> / years ago you said:/ Fundamentally/ I am a matter of light/ [66]

The second quotation, below the first, has several lines by Seferis prior to the ones the artist writes, which are necessary for the context - these will be italicised:

> */The blood surges now/ as heat swells/the veins of the*
> *inflamed sky./ It is trying to go beyond death,/ to discover joy./*
> the light is a pulse/ continually slower and slower/
> you think it is about to stop./

Those last three lines are modified, made more personal to the artist, as the original reads:

> The light is a pulse / beating ever more slowly/
> as though about to stop./ [67]

1 Rainer Maria Rilke (trans. D. Young), *Duino Elegies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), p. 81.

2 Robert Gittings (ed.), *Selected Poems & Letters of KEATS* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1989), pp.32-33.

3 John Crowe Ransom, 'Poetry: A Note in Ontology', *The World's Body* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), p. 115, cited in K. Varnedoe, 'Inscriptions in Arcadia', in *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), p. 64, footnote 182.

4 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p.52.

5 [my italics] Ransom, 'Poetry', p.115. Cited in Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p.64.

6 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.IV 1972-1995* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1995), p. 36, footnote 7.

7 Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 383.

8 Cited in, Open University, Course A362, *Romantic Poetry: Keats*, Units 13-14 (Milton Keynes: O.U. Press, 1984), p.15.

9 [my italics] Charles Olson, 'Equal, That Is, to the Real Itself', in Donald Allen (ed.), *Charles Olson: Human Universe and Other Essays* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967), p.117.

10 Cited in, O.U., *Keats*, p.54.

11 Keats' letter to George and Thomas Keats (Sunday 21 Dec.1817) reads: 'I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties ...' cited in Gittings, *KEATS*, pp. 40-41.

12 Cited in, O.U., *Keats*, p.17.

13 O. U., *Keats*, p.14: 'what Keats means by 'fellowship with essence' ... that happiness lies ... in imaginative fellow-feeling (such as makes one project oneself back into history and the experience of human beings long dead) ...'

14 O. U., *Keats*, p.11.

15 Olson, 'Equal', p.117.

16 R. Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.187.

17 J. Keats, *Poems by John Keats* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1897), p.238.

18 Keats, *Poems*, p.330.

19 Keats, *Poems*, p.238.

20 Keats' verse letter to J. H. Reynolds, 23/3/1818, cited in, G. S. Fraser (ed.), *John Keats: Odes* (Casebook Series, MacMillan, 1968), p.32.

21 Keats, *Poems*, p. 201.

22 J. B. Myers, `Marks: Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, vol. 20, no. 8, April, 1982, p.53

23 Keats, *Poems*, p.195.

24 Keats, *Poems*, p.204.

25 [my italics] Keats, *Poems*, p.204.

26 Bernard Blistene, `Experience of Uncertainty', in H. Szeemann (ed.), *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), pp. 13-14.

27 F. Karl, *Modern and Modernism*, (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p.413.

28 Karl, *Modern*, p.413.

29 [my italics] S. Sontag (ed.), *Barthes: Selected Writings* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983), pp. 53-60.

30 Sontag, *Barthes*, p.60.

31 [my italics] Sontag, *Barthes*, pp. 59-60

32 Rilke's letter to Witold van Hulewicz, 13/11/1925, cited in R. M. Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1922), p.133.

33 M. Heidegger, `What Are Poets For?', in M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought* (London: Harper Colophon 1st ed., 1975), p. 127.

34 [author's italics] Rilke, *Duino*, pp.72,73.

35 Rilke, *Sonnets*, p.79.

36 Heidegger, *Poetry*, p.129.

37 Heidegger, *Poetry, pp.128-129.*

38 [author's italics] Rilke, *Sonnets*, pp.132-133.

39 Rilke, *Sonnets*, p.95.

40 Rilke, *Sonnets*, p. 156: ` Rose oh sheer contradiction...'

41 Bastian, *CR Vol. IV*, p. 29.

42 S. Larsen, *Cy Twombly: Works on Paper 1954-1976* (California: Newport Harbour Art Museum, 1981), pp.44-46.

43 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Das Graphische Werk 1953-1984* (Munich: Edition Schellman, 1984), p.25.

44 [my italics] Rilke, *Duino*, p.94.

45 H. Herrera, `Cy Twombly: A Homecoming', *Harpers Bazaar*, no. 3393, Aug., 1994, p.147.

46 [author's italics] Rilke, *Duino*, p.48.

47 Herrera, `Homecoming', p.144.

48 Bastian, *CR Vol. IV*, Note., p.183: The very large work *Untitled Painting* ... the centre panel was begun in Rome in 1972. In the years 1973-1981 the artist did not work on the picture. He continued to paint the centre panel in the following year and he started to work on the left and right panels in Rome. All parts of the painting were completed in Lexington, Virginia in 1994.

49 Herrera, `Homecoming', p.147.

50 Bastian, *CR Vol. IV*, footnote 16, p.37.

51 O.U., *Keats*, p.32.

52 Herrera, `Homecoming', p.147.

53 Rilke, *Duino*, p.78.

54 D. Kazanjian, `The Painted Word', *Vogue*, [New York], no. 9, Sept., 1994, p. 549.

55 B. Readings (ed.), *Introducing Lyotard: Art & Politics* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.25: `an account of the working of figurality in terms of spatial form: as poetry in language, as anamorphosis in painting ... Anamorphosis rests upon the figural clash between the quasi-motivated geometric perspective and the quasi-motivated force of curvature and diffusion in vision.'

56 E. Keeley & P. Sherrard (eds.), *George Seferis: Complete Poems* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1995), p.234.

57 Keeley, *Seferis*, p.204.

58 Seferis' *Three Secret Poems* are the poems Twombly repeatedly draws from in 1993-1995.

59 Bastian, *CR Vol. IV*, p.36, footnote 12: Rainer Maria Rilke, *Samtliche Werke, Vol. 1* (Frankfurt am Main, 1955), p.402.

60 Keeley, *Seferis*, p.205.

61 Keeley, *Seferis*, p.46.

62 Keeley, *Seferis*, pp. 210-211.

63 Keeley, *Seferis*, p. xiv.

64 Keeley, *Seferis*, pp. 204-205.

65 Bastian, *CR Vol. IV*, pp. 35-36.

66 Keeley, *Seferis*, p.200.

67 Keeley, *Seferis*, p.212.

PART IV - THE LANGUAGE SERIES AND NATURE: A QUESTION OF METALANGUAGE

> Not a language that is already accessible, codified ... but one that comes from and occupies everything, simultaneously overtaking our body and coming from ... the intersection of space and thought ...[1] (Artaud)

> If man were able to create a *plastic measure* capable of measuring ... force ... all accusations of being arbitrary would be cancelled, because one could describe them in terms of *plastic amperes, plastic hertzian waves,* etc.[2] (Carlo Carrà)

(1) *Poems to the Sea* (24 Poems)

In conversation with Bastian, in 1995, Twombly stated that in his work he `understood scripture, text, quotations and words themselves both as forms, or as allusions to visual forms, and as emotional symbolic images ...'[3] Where this statement is most difficult to apply to an interpretation of works concerning language is undoubtedly in the `series': the artist's cycles of *Odes, Poems, Letters, Pieces* etc. Both *Poems to the Sea* (Pl.60) and *Letters of Resignation* (Pl.61) were begun as early in the artist's career as 1959.

These series of works deconstruct linguistic reification to the point where it is necessary to inquire what writing reveals as `form' when its alphabetic formulation is often entirely absent. If, in these two series under examination, their `scripture' (as opposed to `quotations and words') enacts `form', the inquiry is to which discipline, or disciplines, these variations of loop-language could relate for the artist. Myers realizes that there is an interdisciplinary factor present here, when he posits that Twombly, `searches for and finds correspondences in the many layers of reality ... [when he] expands his ideas of writing into a larger rhythm with a deeper meaning ...'[4]

Undoubtedly, such a non-discursive writing accentuates the `figural'; brings to the fore the substantiality of material, placing language outside the constraints inherent in its formal linguistic laws. As Barthes states, such graphic writings `avoid the platitudes of graphic systems',[5] and are dependent upon gesture and the `sense of touch'.[6] In Sollers' summation of Artaud's theory of the body in language there is a:

> global language (whose entry point is gesture) that "aims to contain extension, in other words space ... [one which] poetically retraces the path that leads to the creation of language" ... a "poetics of thought". [7]

Pound made explicit his views on the body's engagement with the world when he wrote, `[m]y true life is the unspoken words of my body.'[8] That this belief is still contemporaneous is upheld by Clemente, `I trust all those who have `thought' with their bodies ... Ezra Pound ...'[9]

Varnedoe addresses, in his section `New Themes and Color 1960-61', the body's corporeal engagement in Twombly's works', `of cultural grandeur', during the same period as the two series:

> the celebration of bodily physicality, ... both playful and violently transgressive ...through varieties of clawing and caressing ... energies ... of debased domains ... [are made] visible. [10]

Such simultaneous, yet non-contradictory, regressions - a return to culture as based on the body's expressive energies, and the individual's primary physical creative energy (the release of the erotic) - are both energies released in the `figural language' series, *Poems to the Sea.* As Smagvla states, there is both, `a seismography of an irregular pulsation ... [and] a seismography of an undeniable eroticism.'[11]

The `figural', in both series, dispels the mere transparency of language, and the social veneer language is built upon. Duchamp believed that, `[i]f you stripped away the word and left only its pitch content you would have found that the pitch content generated an urgency that no single lexical entry ever carries.'[12] For Heidegger, matter/earth's being would reside in the pencil's light-to-dark textural tonality, whilst for Cassirer the pencil line's `physiognomic character' resides in its spatial, rhythmical, and

soft-to-hard expressiveness. Barthes uses, in relation to Twombly's line, the Platonism that the `pencil's truth is in the wobbly line.'[13] Given the equality Twombly places on the figural - a `language' which `speaks' nuances in its inflexions and modulations via the slightest touch - the artist deconstructs writing. Throughout the two series, gestural language varies its transmuted language of spatial vibration and color modulations into various forces.

Twombly's use of the body's gestural energies within a rhythmic corporeal investment of line began as early as *Untitled* (1954)(Pl.62), and served the artist as both a metalanguage *and* ideogram for human forces - psychic, erotic - and the power of natural forces. This proposition of such a metalanguage is upheld by comparing *Untitled* (1954) to a work 27 years later, *Silex Scintillans* (1981)(Pl.63). Its variations, ideogrammically, have led to critics ascribing to Twombly the founding of a school. Some examples would be Louise Chase's *Dryad* (1986) (Pl.64), a work which reflects Twombly's dark, tight and emphatic loop-language of `scrawl' into the realms of the psychic energy of metamorphoses, and Susan Hiller's *Elan* (1982), a work reflecting what I would term Twombly's chora-linguistics,[14] in, for example, his *Roman Notes* (1970) (Pl.76).

Twombly's *Untitled* (1954) is of course not autonomous from an art-historical context. The influences for *Untitled* (1954) are more readily recognised, for example, in Pollock's *Number 14* (1948)(Pl.68) and André Masson's *Composition,* or *Automatic Drawing* (1924)(Pl.69).

Masson's own investment in line - `the line which posits a being and metamorphoses it. In Masson's drawings it is rarely otherwise.' - highlights the significant links he had made between line, eroticism, metamorphosis, and the concept of the void in Zen:

> automatic drawing must appear as an unforeseen birth ... gesture, rhythm, incantation, and as a result: pure scrawl ..., line rendering visible rather than reproducing the visible. To make fast the absence of

> fixity ... lines that will be anything at all – nerves, arteries, veins, antennae, waves, fibres ... sexual organs. [15]

Masson provided one influence, amongst the Surrealists' adherents to automatic writing, on Pollock's baroque and fluid calligraphic continuum; a corporeal continuum which repossesses that primitive lost dynamic, originally joining language and the body, a non-linear energy and language.

I would also include the Taoist *Diagram of Change* (Pl.70) - representing the flow and transformation inherent in the physical world - as of interest to Twombly's figural language in *Untitled* (1954) and in relation to the two series under discussion. Olson had seen the relevance in relation to Twombly's work, that `the Tao – that two dimensions is now being given back the job. How make that plane, the two dimensions, be all - from a point to any dimension?'

Buddhism, as in the Zen tradition of the void and of, `the circle [as] ... the perfect manifestation' within it, was the force behind the 1979 exhibition in Cologne, 'Zen and Art'. Nam June Paik's 1974 *TV-Buddha*, and a later exhibition in 1990, 'Terence Donovan – Recent Works on Paper', reveals that Buddhism as a philosophy and aesthetics, for artists, is never entirely out of fashion.[16]

In 1956 Twombly visited Pollock three times,[17] a period in which Pollock's line, with its polymorphous potency, provided a continuum of energy within its overall resultant charged-field effect. Pollock was not without Einsteinian interests,[18] he was `interested in space as a void charged with particles of energy ...'.[19] In relation to the Taoist *Diagram of Change* and the Taoist concept of two dimensional, yet multi-dimensional, spatiality, it is worthy of note that `[t]here are various ways in which particle reactions can interconnect and, accordingly, one can define various categories of order. The language of *topology* ... is used to classify these categories of order.'[20] It is Blistene who pinpoints the spatial difference in Pollock's and Twombly's fields of energy when he refers to Twombly's technique of the palimpsest:

> In Pollock's art, as in that of Twombly's there is ... the celebration of the body ... Twombly['s] ... work unrolls and stratifies. He thus produces a different geography, a different *topology* distinct from the vast horizontality of Abstract Expressionism.[21]

Twombly's `different geography' is one of a paradoxical proximity, for example the sense of rhythmic pulsation for the viewer in the palimpsest's use of near and far sensed simultaneously, whilst Pollock builds his layers of rhythm horizontally.

The fluid and continuous line in Twombly's *Untitled* (1954) evolved after his `lights out' experiments during his time in the Army in 1953. Great emphasis has been placed by Varnedoe on the psychosexual forms which derived from this `blind practice'.[22] Nevertheless, this fluid, circular movement also concentrates on the simple erotic pulsations of flow and ebb within the body's syntax. This circular movement, by the late sixties, provides a different geography – a topological field effect.

This necessary detour, on the investment in line per se, permits return to the more specific discussion of *Poems to the Sea.* Georges Bataille sums up the desire to violate the laws of Western language, for that which is suppressed in its service - the body's transgressive nature:

> Always if we want to tear a thought away from the formal system that constrains us to think, we must rediscover the power of the nascent world ...The spirit of this nascent world is initially unintelligible, ... eroticism functions as a single point where the penetration and destruction of discourse takes place ... Our loss of contact with gesture...indicates the incommensurable distance separating us from the explosive nudity from which we "come" ... *a physics of the written gesture* in which the written is traced by the transgressive body itself, disappearing into its own writing ...[23]

This `global language' of the body's gesture within the figural line is not a solely personal, private language. Such an extreme subjectivity is explicitly denied in both the Heideggerean notion of material/earth, and Cassirer's `symbolic pregnance'.

In the summer of 1959, at Sperlonga, when, as Varnedoe alerts us, the artist first began using oil paint from tubes, the series of 24 works on paper, *Poems to the Sea*, was produced. It is in this series, that, in Varnedoe's terminology, `wordless writing'[24] first appears in the artist's oeuvre.

The correlation between a certain use of language and a form of life – the sea's rhythm - is explicit in *Poems to the Sea*. Rather than, as Bastian infers, `only the sea ... is present and speaks its own soliloquy',[25] the title asserts a reciprocal relationship. Twombly produced this very extensive series in oil, crayon, pastel and colored pencil on white paper; each sheet twelve and a quarter inches in width, and varying in height from twelve inches to thirteen and five eighths. All are roughly torn at the top, implying some rapidity in execution, possibly even on the beach. These sheets of whiteness, emptied of a sense of time, are triggered into life by the briefest touch of the pencil, therefore providing an example of what Barthes views as the `telos' of Twombly's work, ` `an effect'... (from the Parnassians to the Symbolists) an eminently sensual and generally visual impression.' [26]

The artist gestures a language of rhythmic intelligibility to the sea in the pencil's figural line - rhythm upon rhythm of loosely looping, horizontal lines, circling in a choric dimension of language, unfurling more extensively towards the bottom of the sheets. The eminently physical effect, according to Kalina, is one of `a restless calligraphy [which] buffets you about.' [27]

There are, of course, variants from sheet to sheet. The horizon line (approx. two inches down each sheet) varies considerably in color and pressure of touch; from varying densities of blue crayon to graphite pencil's own range of tonal depth and texture, whilst white oil paint from the tube is dragged across, or flicked over, the rhythmic `swell' of unfurling horizontal graphite lines. This method of applying white paint generates a sense of the wind obeying its own laws, in a gravity-defiant energy. Yet this representational white `foam' also serves, in a sense, as the blank page - that prerequisite for writing - renewing itself; as if to say, after each breaking of a wave (or

jouissance of desire), `begin again', repeating the erotic pulsation of in/out, and written/erased. An extract from Valéry's poetry (a poet to whom Twombly `dedicates' a painting) would have provided this heightened sense of correspondence, when:

> The vast air tosses the leaves of my book
> The wave leaps high in powder on the rocks
> Scatter in white, white bedazzled pages. [28]

Words partake of the sea's characteristics; as in the partial erasure of wave formation and the erasure of signification by Desire. Both waves and poetic language share Nature's fluidity; a flow towards deconstruction and reconstruction, concentration and dissemination. Twombly's graphite furling and unfurling of loop-energy alone achieves this effect in *Poems to the Sea*, notwithstanding the waves' dissemination via `foam'. Twombly's gestural language flows in this manner via the rhythmic muscular pulsation from the body's libidinal (in general or as of sexual origin) energy, a fluctuation of the body's mood which `speaks' those subtle sensori-motor nuances - via grasp/release, desire/fear, and either/or - upon which language grounds and initiates itself.

Delehanty, placing these works within the wider context of Twombly's career, sees `the timeless sea, [as] a theme which would reoccur in grandeur in Twombly's later work, [and] is here an emblem of elemental drive.'[29] For an analysis of this drive within language we are indebted to Kristeva's writing on the `chora' and semiotic pulsations, stating, `this presence [of fluidity] that precedes the signification of object or emotion ... is rhythm',[30] one that precedes, and flows (the Greek rhythmos = flow) through each word's final determination/articulation. Rhythm is the inchoate `undertow' - the elemental source - to wave formation, human language and consciousness. As an anterior `form of life', Twombly here provides a series of poems aptly reciprocal to the sea.

Tony Godfrey wrote, in *Drawing Today* (1990), that `there is a drive in much recent drawing to get back to the source of energy...to hylozoism'.[31] Two artists that use the correspondences of water, gesture and language as that source for drawing, are

Brice Marden and Pat Steir. In Marden's *Hydra* (1987), `coupled ideograms of Chinese poetry ... move down the page vertically, balancing and effecting each other',[32] whilst in Steir's *Christ Calming the Storm after Ensor* (1984):

> drawing ... is the tracing and tracking of the body in movement ... gestures involving her complete body. In her images of waves, water is the metaphor for drawing which can itself be seen as a metaphor for human consciousness. [33]

McEvilley reminds us, when he extensively discusses the possible significance of Steir's continuing theme of water, that `In Taoist painting theory ... a prolonged contemplation of the yin (water) element is said to have tonic effects on the personality, rendering it more fluid.'[34] Twombly's own early interest in Taoism - in conversation with Olson seven years previous to these works[35] – might still be pertinent to him, as his titled work in Sanskrit *OM MA NI PAD ME HUM* (1982)[36] suggests.

What does arise from this contemplation in *Poems to the Sea* for the artist? And for the viewer? Among the 24 semiotic (in Kristeva's sense of the word) poems, very few words emerge from Twombly's contemplation, and those that do, do so in a haunting fashion. In *Poem XIX*, as the tide comes in, Twombly questions, via the word `What?', positioned top left. This is answered by a 1-2 choric rhythm of repetition and tautology multiplied as wave-effects, whose motion the artist tabulates as they break upon the shore. There are the indications of an even more intimate dialogue when, in Poems VI and XIII, `Sappho' is written. This 5th century Greek poetess, whom Twombly favours in so many works, wrote love poetry to both men and women, poetry which survived in fragments,[37] and significantly, in relation to these poems to the sea, chose the sea for her place of suicide.

(2) *Letter of Resignation* (38 Sheets)

The series *Letter of Resignation* (1959-1967) can be placed in an overview of published `Letters', within art and literary history. Looking forward, for example, to Brice Marden's book of drawings entitled *Suicide Notes* (1974) with their singularity of

motif – a window,[38] and looking backward, for example, to Artaud's many open letters i.e. 'Letters to the Schools of Buddha' (1925). For two critics – Catherine Lampert[39] and Douglas Crimp[40] - Twombly's title has resonances of Duchamp's resignation from painting, whilst for another critic the *Letter* enacts 'the measurelessness of the verb.' [41]

In his introduction to Twombly's series *Letter of Resignation,* Bastian selects a section of the 38 drawings on paper as apposite to an acute period of the artist's exploration of form's dynamic, prismatic and plural states:

> sheets 26-32, an energetic, bundled movement of circular rhythms. In this cycle they still appear as the intricate echoes of dissolving writing (their reference, however, can be found in Leonardo's ... *Deluge* studies of tectonic cataclysms). [42]

Letter of Resignation constitutes therefore both an examination of the nature of line in its manifest relation to language and the dynamics of natural phenomena. Begun only two years after his 'manifesto' on line, this series parallels therefore, in execution, a period of extensive works termed by Pincus-Witten as 'epistemic abstraction[s].'[43]

During the mid sixties, Twombly's use of line, in the so-called 'blackboard' paintings, has been viewed as a form of speculative Conceptualism, or serial Minimalism, therefore all too conveniently slotting the artist into the American contemporary paradigm. This argument has flaws. Firstly, the artist's black and white series in 1955 - the only remaining work, *Panorama* (Pl.71) – already contained, in a white investment in line on a black ground, Twombly's attempt to phenomenologically 'tease out' his frenzied circular loop-language in *Untitled* (1954). His visits to Pollock in 1956 might have been concerned with this attempt. Also, this supposition of a Minimalist or Conceptual stance by the artist is in part due to the oversight of Twombly's early interest and works relating to language and its choric undertow (e.g. *Poems to the Sea*), and also to the fact that it relies very strongly on its materials' own (as in matter's own) fermenting energy.

Twombly ignores the grid system of Agnes Martin - except as counterpoint to psychic or erotic forces (e.g.*The Discourses of Commodus*) - and also avoids pure monochrome devoid of Mallarméan 'birth' of form (e.g. Ryman's works). His manipulation of materials never becomes secondary to idea, rather the reverse, in that the materials are the *lived* idea, in Eco's sense of realizing 'a compendium of reality'.[44]

As Barthes stated, 'pencil and colour remain as 'things', as stubborn substances (no subsequent meaning) could destroy.' The fluctuation of all matter for Twombly (even language) becomes a metamorphosis in a Birth/Death, Written/Unwritten, Visible/Invisible unified gesture of bodily, even erotic, acceptance. In other words, to be accurate, Twombly should be termed a combine matter-process-conceptual artist in relation to the late sixties black and white paintings.

Twombly's 'blackboard' paintings, Bastian rightly assesses, evolve from within the *Letter of Resignation* series of 'dissolving' writing. More relevant to these parallel 'blackboard' works, in general, is Bastian's assertion that they are 'the experimentation with the figuration of the pictorial space: the movement of form and the prismatic dissection of its multiple states.'[45] Twombly, as both Restany and Bastian suggest, has sought to deconstruct 'iconographic' and 'sign' systems. Instead, the process is the subject: an unpremeditated process, which is of its very nature indeterminate. Certain sources in Italy provide a wider understanding of the formal and pictorial resonances Twombly is art historically animating and expanding upon.

Varnedoe is the only critic who at length argues the importance of the Futurists' force-lines to Twombly's late 1960s black and white paintings, and highlights that the Futurist influence still reigned in Italy in the decade up to, and including, those works.[46]

This Futurist influence was not restricted to artists such as Fontana and Vedova (see Chapter Three). This return to the Futurists' scientific concerns with 'fields of energy that organize space ... pointing beyond natural appearances', also reached Italian designers and architects. The designer Bruno Munari, whose works

Concave,convex (1947) (Pl.72), *Meo Cat* (1952), and *Flexy* (1968) are, `very close to topology ... both solid and fluid at the same time'.[47] Twombly's interest in Futurism per se could be aligned to Haftmann's description of the Futurists' general aim:

> [the] desire to master the new experience of reality - including the non-visible – extended by the knowledge of ... the modern discoveries of natural science ... Futurist painting does not, therefore, in fact reproduce the visible, it rather renders an experience visible.[48]

More specifically, in alignment with Carrà's introductory quote - light/ electromagnetic light waves (`hertzian waves') - would be the resonance to Fenollosa's `light-bands' and the two-dimensional, curvature of space, emphasized by Olson's, `like a plane, it is no plane at all.' Twombly, in the late 1960s, unites certain elements of Futurism and the interests of Leonardo da Vinci, with an updated world of physics, and also places such interests within a sense of alignment to the movements during the 1960s concerned with light and motion; one light experimentalist winning, significantly, the 1966 Venice Biennale.[49]

It is necessary to examine the `inspiration', via Leonardo's *Deluge*, explicit within Twombly's collage *Untitled* (1968) (Pl.74), and also in other related works, for a material means of understanding why sheets of an unfurling phenomenon (e.g. water) could be viewed as conascent with this `dissolving' writing in *Letter of Resignation.* Bastian's and Barthes' terms, respectively, of `dissolving' and `unraveling', for Twombly's method of writing, can be placed in the overall context of natural systems, due in part to the way in which the artist breaks down natural phenomena in certain collages, enacting a spatial exploration in multidirectional dimensions.

By the time Twombly extends the `wave language' of *Poem XX*, and the figural, rhythmic gesture of *Letter of Resignation* to *Untitled* (1967) (Pl.73), his looped, lasso-language starts to build in layers (or palimpsests). Stops and starts, plus layered strata of eruptive energy and movement, evoke a turbulent force-field. Language and Physics begin to become analogous in the line, as they were for Olson.

In Twombly's collage of the following year *Untitled* (1968) (Pl.74) the artist has inserted at the top a reproduction of Leonardo's deluge drawing, underneath which, as if unfurling, on four roughly torn horizontal sections, is a vertical graphic sequence of the stages within one of Leonardo's swirls of water. Twombly appears to be exploring the diagrammatic breakdown of water formation via the reproduction. This also appears to be the case in other collages, such as *Untitled* (1970) (Pl.75), *Untitled* (1970) (Pl.77) and *Epithalamion III* (1976) (Pl.78), in which the lower half of the collage gives topological and atmospheric breakdowns respectively.

Few critics seem aware of the strong link between Leonardo's and Twombly's pictorial concerns, particularly concerning what may be termed 'the indeterminate'. Myers refers to the early 'lasso-writing', as for example in *Untitled* (1967) (Pl.73) as related to an American Palmer Method of writing in schools, which transforms by, 'the greater agitated *Untitled*s of 1971 ... [to] ... imply unruly forces of nature, turbulence in air and water', a transformation attributed to the influence of 'Leonardo's notations on natural phenomena.' [50]

Robert Smith recognizes Twombly's 'motion studies' as deriving from the artistic heritage of Leonardo's deluge images and that they 'diagram the action of air, water and arm ...'[51] But it is from Sheffield's insight that the essential connection is made, when 'Twombly's mind, like that of Leonardo's, seems to have been challenged to depict the indeterminate', in that 'Leonardo's studies of drapery, moving water and warfare all show ... a general fascination with ... indeterminate activity.'[52] Leonardo's studies of deluge, where swirls precede into vortices, which themselves breakdown into smaller ones, and these again break up ('scientists call such a continual branching process bifurcation')[53] was concerned with how air and water turbulence break up supposedly orderly systems. Due to Leonardo's sense of the fluidity of life between figures and their surroundings, and the psychological relationship between man and his environment, he had learnt the, 'loosening of controls in which the imagination began to play with ... irregular shapes ... this invention is contiguous with his discovery of the 'indeterminate'.' [54]

As `scientists now think that turbulence (and chaos) may soon prove as important as quantum mechanics and relativity', computers have been used to model turbulence and display the results in byzantine non-linear equations. The unpredictable pattern of water's rapidly moving surface enters into `a space of fractal dimensions ... plots of non-linear equations show breaks, loops, recursions ... all kinds of turbulence.'[55]

Twombly's work, at this period, has the presence of an oscilloscope. Also, with reference to energy and motion, light's curvature into different wave velocities, continually extinguishing, would provide possibly a pertinent reading of this, and related works, not least because where the figure dissolves into the ground, the ground suddenly becomes opaque, setting up a sensual engulfment as if expanding and contracting simultaneously. Those `waves' that do not `dissolve' float seemingly in a non-gravitational field. De Broglie's solution to Einstein's wave/particle duality in his theory of light, was that two velocities were associated with the waves:

> One is the phase velocity - the speed at which a wave crest moves - and the second is a group velocity - the speed of the reinforcement regions formed when many waves are superimposed. (This is similar to the way a *pulse* is produced by a superposition of many different frequencies).[56]

The Futurists had, `reflected on the concept of time, influenced by Bergson and by the idea of the continuum as the only true reality.'[57] On the grounds of Twombly's concern with space-time (i.e. his reference to `time-lines'),[58] the examination of the next two works will unite the inspiration derived both from Leonardo and Futurism.

In two *Untitled* works of 1968/71 (Pls.79,80), done with distemper and chalk on canvas, oblique `time-lines' remain stable in the system of flux, whilst the diagrammatic, broken and often interlocking, concentric lines indicate unstable states. Numbers count out intervals of conceptualized movement and are notation for time and its co-efficient space. The base of the vortices - or bifurcation points - are in the depths, where the time-line of dynamic simultaneous energy penetrates. These works of water turbulence of course align to air, and the energy formations in general of natural

phenomena. All energy has the frequency of a cyclic process. Both works bear a very close resemblance to Boccioni's *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913) and Balla's *Design for 'Line of Speed and Vortex'* (1913).

In *Untitled* (1969) (Pl.81) Rosenblum notes that:

> here, the rotating, oval rhythms are replaced by ... windswept memory of some archetypal, pre-Euclidean geometry lesson, a mental tornado of as yet undisciplined rectangular planes occasionally defined further by numbers and letters which, in a more rational world, would fix and measure them precisely. [59]

Untitled (1969) has an unfathomable depth due to Twombly's wash-like staining device of varying shades of grey which both pour down in front of, and behind, the rectangles. If we look back in time to *Untitled* (1967) (Pl.82), Twombly is already toying with rectangles inflecting in space; as they would appear if changing position in a curved, four-dimensional continuum of space-time - a space in which Euclidean geometry is no longer valid, a pictorial enactment of what Newman only hinted at in his *Death of Euclid* (1947).

Untitled (1967) (Pl.72) and *Untitled* (1969) (Pl.71) act as visual metaphors, with their intersecting of flat and curved rectangles, a convoluted space for the dichotomy of wave-particle electrons in quantum mechanics. Twombly is not alone; for example, Robert Morris produces work to enact 'the Heraclitean flux (a concept with which contemporary drawings seem so often entangled, its marks analogous to the oscillating atoms ...'). [60] To return to Twombly, particle-waves are caused by diffraction, in the famous 'uncertainty relations'; it is impossible to know both the momentum and the position of a particle at the same time:

> However, the wave mysteriously 'reduces' to a wave packet upon observation (scientific), and hence cannot be a reality entirely independent of the observer. Moreover, the quantum-space in which the wave-packets interact is multi-dimensional ... [61]

The fields of activity in all these works reveal heterogeneous and non-linear events, ranging from the indeterminate bifurcations of turbulence to the uncertainty principle, those that underpin our (since the Renaissance) `distancing' geometries. In other words, the artist unravels systematic geometries to their palpable `Other' - to their anarchic indeterminate natures where material/matter has a life of its own outside our imposed, yet visually-viable, systems, or as Wheeler puts the case with regards to Twombly, `he seemed to dwell on the scrambled roots of logic itself ... incapable of squaring planes that drift through space.'[62]

To return to the figural line in language that Twombly explores in the same period, it is pertinent to bear in mind the correspondences and equation Olson made between language, non-Euclidean geometries, electromagnetic fields and light waves, and his doctrine for his students to find their `own voice' via their bodies' breath and *pulsations* – all epitomised in the `topological' in *Moby Dick*.

1 Philippe Sollers (ed.), *Writing and the Experience of Limits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 91.

2 [author's italics] C. Carrà, 'From Cézanne to Us, the Futurists', 1913, cited in H. B. Chipp (ed.), *Theories of Modern Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 308.

3 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Vol.IV 1972-1995* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1995), p.36, footnote 7.

4 J. B. Myers, 'Marks: Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, vol. 20, no. 8, April, 1982, p. 53.

5 R. Barthes (trans. R. Miller), *The Responsibility of Forms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 173,174.

6 Barthes, cited in Lerner de Vecchi, 'Cy Twombly', *L'Oeil*, Vol. 375, Oct, 1986, p.81.

7 Sollers, *Writing*, p. 92, 94.

8 E. Pound, cited in F. Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul., 1971), p. 119.

9 G. Politi, 'Francesco Clemente', *Flash Art*, no. 117, April, 1984, p. 17.

10 K. Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), pp.34-35.

11 H. Smaglva, *Currents: Contemporary Directions in the Visual Arts* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1983), p. 86.

12 David Antin, 'Duchamp and Language', in *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), p 103.

13 Barthes, *Forms*, p. 180.

14 A. Howells, 'Dark continents explored by women', in S. Hiller (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London: Routledge, 1991), argues that:
' *Elan* or *Alphabets*, ... address the question of woman's relationship to language. Indecipherable scripts ... [the] marks ... relational to rather than produced in language ... experiments with automatism ... which includes registers of multiple and heterogeneous meaning ... the repression of these registers, *Elan* reveals the fallacy of the subject as always already constituted in language ...' p. 244.

15 D. Sylvester (ed.), *André Masson: Line Unleashed* (London: The South Bank Centre, 1987), notes that: `that sense of the actuality of the process of metamorphoses tends towards ... the erogenous which at the same time are the images of the undulations of the earth and cascades of water ... a Heraclitean flux where everything is turning into everything ... Eroticism from Bataille involved ... the Dionysian raptures ...'. p. 12.

16 Ian McKay, `Terence Donovan: True emptiness without characteristics', *Art Monthly*, no. 139, Sept, 1990, p. 16

17 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p.61, footnote 105: `In the summer of 1956, on Long Island, Twombly met Jackson Pollock on three occasions.'

18 William Rubin, `Pollock as Jungian Illustrator', Part I, *Art in America*, Nov. 1979, p. 110: `To illustrate his insistence that painting confront the modern world, Pollock always said "it has to deal with Einstein and Freud." Lee Krasner ... recalls, "[t]hese two names ... were always coupled in his definition of modernity".'

19 H. H. Arnason (ed.), *A History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 525.

20 [my italics] Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana, 1989), p. 351.

21 [my italics] B. Blistene, ` Experience of Uncertainty', in H. Szeemann (ed.), *Cy Twombly* (Paris: Goerges Pompidou Centre, 1988), p. 14.

22 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p.19: `a polyp...This fantasy of polymorphous physical expression, coming and going at the same time, directly anticipates the metamorphic signs and libidinal exuberance of Twombly's later work.'

23 [my italics] Bataille, cited in Sollers, *Writing*, pp. 113, 114, 117, 124.

24 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p.31.

25 Heiner Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Poems to the Sea*, (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1990), p.1.

26 Barthes, *Forms*, p. 185.

27 R. Kalina, `Cy Twombly', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 63, no. 2, Oct., 1988, p. 83.

28 P. Valéry, cited in J. Cassou (ed.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, (London: Omega Books, 1988), p.211.

29 S. Delehanty, ` The Alchemy of Mind and Hand', *Art International*, vol. 20, no. 2/3. Feb., 1976, p.15.

30 J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1992), p.31.

31 T. Godfrey, *Drawing Today: Draughtsmen in the Eighties* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1990), p.33.

32 Godfrey, *Drawing*, pp.21, 24.

33 Godfrey, *Drawing*, p.113.

34 Thomas McEvilley, *The Exile's Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.153.

35 C. Olson, `Cy Twombly' manuscript, *Charles Olson Papers*, (Storrs: University of Connecticut Library, 1951), p.2: `It was Twombly['s remark] ... about what [the poem of] Tu Fu's east hedge [suggested] ... as he talked of contemplation ...'

36 Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Living Meaningfully, Dying Joyfully: The Profound Practice of Transference of Consciousness* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1999), pp. 26, 27: `the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, OM MANI PAME HUM, ... The mantra has six letters, which are manifestations of the six Buddha families ... [The mantra] has a special power to purify the six delusions of ignorance, attachment, hatred, pride, jealousy, and miserliness, as well as to purify all living beings ... The letter OM symbolizes Avalokiteshvara's body, speech, and mind, ... MANI literally means `jewel', and in this context refers to enlightenment; and PAME means `lotus', and here refers to purity. HUM is a request to Avalokiteshvara to bestow the attainment of complete purity, enlightenment.'

37 J. Balmer (trans.), *Sappho: Poems & Fragments* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1992).

38 Godfrey, *Drawing*, p. 21: `a set of variations on the window motif was drawn with tense, trembling lines.'

39 Catherine Lampert notes: `the Duchampian title *Letter of Resignation*', `Cy Twombly', *Studio International*, Aug., 1973, p.44.

40 D. Crimp notes: `*Letter of Resignation* ... seems to refer to Duchamp's feigned resignation from art activity ...', `New York Letter', *Art International*, April, 1973, p. 57.

41 Jacques Henric, 'The Ironic Strategies of Cy Twombly', in *Cy Twombly: Oeuvres de 1973-1983* (Bordeaux: Musee d'art Contemporain, 1984), p.9.

42 H. Bastian, *Cy Twombly: Letter of Resignation* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1991), p.2.

43 R. Pincus-Witten, 'Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, April, 1982, p.53.

44 See Chapter Three, footnote 28.

45 Bastian, *Resignation*, p.2.

46 Varnedoe, *Retrospective*, p.40: 'the Futurists and that kind of time/motion imagery had been of principal importance to the Italian painters around him for more than a decade ... the younger Italian artists of the 1950s had revived early Futurism as an alternative, usable past ...'

47 F. Dagognet, *In Favour of Today's Art: From the Object of Art to the Art of the Object* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1993), pp. 122, 123.

48 W. Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century,* Vol. 2 (London: Lund Humphries, 1976), pp. 113, 114.

49 See Arnason, *Modern Art*, pp.668-672. Motion and Light groups ranged from Group T in Milan (1959), Group N in Padua (1960), Group O (Zero) in Dusseldorf: 'A leading experimentalist in light and motion is the ... geophysicist ... Malina. Dr Jenny's ... research in problems of vibration ... has also produced ... images based on a wide variety of themes from natural phenomena, with implications for the new world of movement in the arts. Of the light experimentalists ... Le Parc ... [is] aesthetically successful ...The award to him of the painting prize at the 1966 Venice Biennale ... [is] an official recognition of the new arts.'

50 J. B. Myers, 'Marks: Cy Twombly', *Artforum*, vol. 20, no. 8, April, 1982, p.53.

51 R, Smith 'The Great Mediator', in H. Szeemann (ed.), *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture* (Paris: Georges Pompidou Centre, 1987), p.18.

52 M. Sheffield, 'Cy Twombly: Major Changes in Space, Idea, Line', *Artforum*, vol. 17, no. 9, May 1979, p.44.

53 J. Briggs & F. D. Peat, *Turbulent Mirror* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p.47.

54 E. H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form: Studies in the art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1966), p.61.

55 Briggs, *Turbulent*, p.47.

56 J.P. McEvoy, *Introducing Quantum Theory* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999), p. 113.

57 E. Braun (ed.), *Italian Art in the Twentieth Century – Painting, and Sculpture 1900-88* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989), p. 12.

58 Sheffield, `Line', p.40.

59 R. Rosenblum, `Cy Twombly' in: *Art of our Time: The Saatchi Collection*, Vol. II (London: Lund Humphries in association with Rizzoli, 1984), p.27.

60 Godfrey, *Drawing*, pp.98, 99.

61 R. Thompson, *The Spirituality of Matter* (London: SPCK, 1990), p.98.

62 D. Wheeler, *Art Since Mid-Century: 1945 to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p.189.

CONCLUSION

> Our civilization is still very far from accepting the unconditional abandonment to vital forces advocated by the Zen sage ... to him everything is a confirmation of the endless, polymorphous triumph of the All. [1]

> its impossible to say that nature ends here and that man or expression starts here.[2]

> For what the gesture reveals is the being of meaning rather than the knowledge of meaning.[3]

The central methodological question still remains to be summarised - how the works' internal properties structure a discourse of significance to an extrinsic context. The deconstruction of this gulf, bridging the gap between art and life, was inaugurated by Twombly's examination of, and experimentation with, certain techniques of certain primary early modernists. Rather than placing his work outside a social matrix, as autonomous, Twombly endeavours to align an inchoate formulation of our period's holistic concerns across all central disciplines - his art, in other words, enacts a multivalency,

The previous scientific world-picture has been dismantled; those classical scientific, philosophical and linear mathematical paradigms. What are thought, feeling, language and matter have now no substantialist, predetermined signs. As Bachelard states:

> if one allows classical science ... a proof of the permanence of mental structure one finds oneself in a strangely embarrassing position ... In order that knowledge may have its full efficacy mind must be transformed ... must adapt itself to the conditions of knowing.[4]

There is a new evolving `grammar' to be `written' between ourselves and the world of Nature (e.g. turbulence, fractals, quantum physics,) full of nuance, indeterminacy, perceptual ambiguity, and general libidinal non-separation and proximity. Modern physics in particular, all too often, requires acceptance of the

non-visual and the non-demonstrable. Alfred North Whitehead, writing on the theory of relativity and electromagnetism, highlighted that:

> a fundamental shift ... was necessary if the various disciplines were to come to terms with themselves and their objects ... [T]ake energy itself, electrical energy, as prime and matter in terms of electromagnetic forces ... [T]he discovery of the electron – is the product of a field of force. The event is ... the unification within itself of a multiplicity of relationships.[5]

An awareness is required of analogies and correspondence between different disciplines' newly evolved `languages'; the mind's ability to function synchronically in isomorphisms.

In approximately 40 years of art practice there is an underlying exploration of what can be termed the `indeterminate' in Twombly's oeuvre. Forms in stages of transmutation, in shifting appearance and metamorphosis, form the keystone to Twombly's `architectonics'; a concern with an ontology of autogeny underlying every scientific construct of knowledge. That which is suppressed beneath redundant, fixed man-made scientific interpretations and systems of thought, is unconcealed, revealing its prior absence now as presence. Mankind has attempted to fix the unfixable.

To reveal techniques of language[s] which enact the, `field of force ... [and its] multiplicity of relationships', was the overall focus point of BMC's Poundian synchronic and diachronic education; the Poundian devices of appropriation (of texts, historical figures and identities), an intertextuality of fragments released relations of energy which transformed the act of reception.[6]

Twombly's own `poetics' immediately after BMC were influenced by Dubuffet's processes - those metamorphoses of matter; the in-built energies which transform material, are indeterminate and ambiguous, non-linear, open systems. Logic and matter rejected as stable or insular, the insubstantiality of substance and its transient nature within hidden forces of energy, were important aspects also of the `past poetics' Twombly sought for non-linear, anti-logic, `irrational', and erotic modes of feeling and thinking.

Rilke's, `We are the bees of the invisible', Keats' `Negative Capability', and Mallarmé's dictum, `Describe not the object itself, but the effect it produces', all preferred not the naming but the fullness of the experience of pre-naming, and pre-fixing. Not the *result* therefore of a linear system of thought but its *process* – when that multiplicity of relationships in our non-linear consciousness, the immersion in feelings, thoughts and words, interact and vibrate towards the cusp of man-made distancing of the world.

In his appropriation of mythology and other artists' works, Twombly answers both Olson's request for a rejuvenating `double-coding', and McLuhan's for a hybrid art practice – to breath new life into old forms. Twombly's formal language erupts his objects of classical myths back to life. We are given imaginative release into a vital, primal world: the old Dionysian world, when knowledge was sensual and sexual metamorphosis into another half of our self was natural. In metamorphosis there is the freedom to *become*, which is opposed to McLuhan's and Eco's fears of the fixed `narcotic trance' and `stereotypes', respectively. In metamorphosis there is the important celebration of nature's multi-dimensionality, and celebration of the body's own `language' as metamorphic, unfixed with a fluid, libidinal, meta-theoretical process.

Paralleling McLuhan's rejection of the construct of linear consciousness, and the phonetic alphabet which produces it, is Twombly's subversion of the phonetic alphabet's visual dominance via a returned involvement of gesture/the body. Both Barthes and Bataille recognise gesture as the means for the deconstruction of writing as a fixed social code; gesture's release of the suppressed individual body and its erotic vital impulse and energy as transgressions. All Twombly's languages lead to an escape from separateness via their desire and fluidity, which regains the lost balance of the senses with the intellect.

Twombly deconstructs writing, giving the `figural' (e.g. Heidegger's and Cassirer's `earth' and its `symbolic pregnance' of expression) equality, releasing it from suppression. Twombly `deconstructs' high art and Homer, to their essential foundations of endless interacting processes of human passion, and Nature's own realm of pregnant form - to the Nature beneath Culture.

Instead of the redundant `use-value' of the pre-determined systems of language and methods of thought, Twombly transgresses all that is `fixed', deconstructs to the dynamics of energy beneath, returning via the bodily gesture a vocabulary of Mallarméan myriad of changes within the ideogrammic relational form of field forces, to the pre-naming, pre-iconographic, pre-Euclidean geometrical systems.

As a `form of life' Twombly's line is interdisciplinary. Beginning in an `automatic writing', it searches for the `child-like', pre-tutored spatial and linear experience. This, in part, leads towards an *objective* bodily pulsion via ambiguous figure/ground relationships culminating in the interacting palimpsest, where optical experience disseminates in time and space. A *scattering of force fields* and choric vibrations of pulse waves and fluctuations are combined within Leonardo's influence (e.g. water, motion, turbulence), Olson's `topology', Fenollosa's importance of light as energy with Futurist concerns. Twombly unites the new optical language here to other sensations of the body.

The question of theoretically `placing' Twombly cannot justifiably be separated from Olson's strident call and theory for a language desperately necessary for the `postmodern' - a `world-picture' already established in 1952 within aspects of science, but without visual and linguistic expression.

Early modernism's spatial and temporal redefinition of experience, dissolution of expectations of time and space, and different language experimentations, were condensed in Twombly's ability to `revolutionise the sign', to `uniconize' with Poundian economic means, creating a multiple new language, a vocabulary of relational forms in ideograms, and colour inflexions – a `colour-poetics'- and his `investment in line.'

Early modernism's fecundity, in the aforementioned redefinition of experience, is still seen as full of rich potentialities by Twombly, and by post-Futurist artists, for the latter half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st- centuries.

The transgression of such restrictive terminological definitions as a monolithic Modernism by the aforementioned poets aligns to Twombly's own enquiry into the relationship between the independent formulation of ideas and a hegemonic cultural form. Such alternative streams of Modernism have raised questions, and proposed solutions, which have not been entirely absorbed or answered by the theories of post-structuralism or the aesthetics of Postmodernism., e.g. the request for a interdisciplinary language.

What Twombly's work pinpoints is both the rich potentialities still within early literary and aesthetic modernism, and that many aspects of Postmodern critical practice and theory are grounded in certain early modernist theories and practices. The central difference for Twombly is that he absorbed such theories in their prime, in their very thorough dissection, via the instigation of BMC, to find a language similar to Klee's before him, for `a remote point of original creation, where ... there is one invariable formula for man ... plant, earth, water, fire, air and all directive forces.' [7]

1 Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), p. 100.

2 M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 188.

3 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.79.

4 Bachelard, cited in M. Phillipson, *Painting, Language and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 13.

5 Whitehead, cited in J. Culler, *Saussure* (London: Fontana, 1988), p.128.

6 Olson's reading of fragments of his own poetry during the famous 1952 BMC event, would enact the multiplicity of relationships – analogous to the electron's repel and attract uncertainties in force field.

7 P. Klee, cited in W. Haftmann, in *The Mind and Work of Paul Klee* (London: University of California Press, Ltd., 1954), p.118.

LIST OF PLATES

Pl. Title

1. *School of Athens*, 1961. Oil paint, oil based house paint, wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 190.3 x 200.5 cm. Collection of the artist.

2. *Untitled*, 1970. Oil and crayon, Oil based house paint, wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 156.2 x 190.5 cm. MOMA collection.

3. *Proteus*, 1984. Oil and crayon on paper, 76 x 56.5 cm. Private collection, New York.

4. *Proteus*, 1984. Oil and crayon on paper, 76 x 36.5 cm. Collection of the artist.

5. *Idylls*, 1976. Collage, oil watercolour, crayon and pencil on paper, 134.3 x 150.3; 69 x 53 cm. Private collection.

6. *Untitled (Thyrsis' Lament for Daphnis)*, 1976. Left: Oil, wax/oil crayon, graphite, graph paper and transparent tape on two sheets of paper, 58 ¾" x 51 ½"; Center: Graphite on paper, 39 ¾ "x 27 7/8"; Right: Wax/oil crayon and graphite on paper, 31 ¾" x 23 ½". Private collection, New York.

7. *Untitled*, 1977. Wax crayon and pencil on paper. 126 x 97cm. Galerie Yvon Lambert.

8. *Pan*, 1975. Collage, watercolour and pencil on paper, 154 x 106.2 cm. Collection of the artist.

9. *Pan*, 1975. Collage, watercolour and pencil on paper, 154 x 106.2 cm. Collection of the artist.

10. *Dionysus*, 1975. Crayon, oil and pencil on paper, 99.9 x 70.4 cm. Private collection in Berlin.

11. *Bacchus* [A painting in Three Parts], 1981. Acrylic, oil paint, tempera, house paint, wax crayon, print, lead pencil on paper, 210.5 x 150.5 and 47 x 42.5, 53 x 55 cm. Owned by Aeneas Bastian, Paris.

12. *Untitled*, 1962. Oil paint, wax crayon, pencil on canvas, 130 x 150 cm. Karsten Greve, Cologne.

13. *(Nike) Androgyne*, 1981-3. Pencil, oil, and wax crayon on paper, 104 x 70 cm. Private collection.

14. *Victory*, 1984. Collage, oil, crayon and pastel on cardboard, 168 x 119 cm. Collection of the artist.

15. *Birth of Venus*, 1962. Tempera, crayon, coloured pencil and pencil on paper, 50 x 70.3 cm. Private collection.

16. *Birth of Venus*, 1962. Crayon and pencil on paper, 50 x 70 cm. Collection of the artist.

17. *Venus Anadyomene*, 1962. Oil paint, crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 170 x 200 cm. Private collection.

18. *The Birth of Venus*, 1963. Coloured pencil and graphite on paper, 13 ¼ x 14 1/8. Dia Art Foundation Collection, New York.

19. *Birth of Venus*, 1963. Lead pencil, crayon and oil paint on canvas, 200 x 200 cm. Private collection.

20. *Apollo and the Artist*, 1975. Collage, oil, crayon and pencil on paper, 142 x 127.5 cm. Owned by Alessandro Twombly.

21. *Mars and the Artist*, 1975. Collage, oil, crayon, charcoal and pencil on paper, 142 x 127.5 cm. Owned by Alessandro Twombly.

22. *Cycnus*, 1978. Painted bronze, 41 x 23.5 x 6 cm. Private collection.

23. *The Age of Alexander*, 1959-60. Oil, crayon and pencil on canvas, 300 x 500 cm. Private collection.

24. *Vengeance of Achilles*, 1962. Oil paint, lead pencil on canvas, 300 x 175 cm. Kunsthaus Collection, Zurich.

25. *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus*, 1962. Oil paint, lead pencil on canvas, 259 x 303 cm. Collection Giorgio Franchetti, Rome.

26. *Ilium (One Morning Ten Years Later) Triptych*, 1964. Part I: Oil paint, pencil, crayon on canvas, 200 x 206.3 cm. The Eli and Edythe L. Broad Collection, USA. Part II: Lead pencil, oil paint, wax crayon on canvas, 199 x 288.5 cm. Private collection. Part III: Oil paint, lead pencil, wax crayon on canvas. 199.5 x 186 cm. Private collection.

27. *Fifty Days at Iliam*, 1978. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased: The Samuel S. White, 3rd, and Vera White Collection. Part I - Shield of Achilles, Oil paint [paint stick], wax crayon, oil based house paint, lead pencil on canvas, 192 x 170 cm.

Part II - Heroes of the Achaeans. Oil paint [paint stick], lead pencil on canvas. 192 x 150 cm.

Part III - Vengeance of Achilles. Oil paint [paint stick], lead pencil, wax crayon on canvas, 300 x 239 cm.

Part IV - Achaeans in Battle. Oil paint [paint stick], wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 300 x 380 cm.

Part V - The fire that consumes all before it. Oil paint, wax crayon on canvas, 300 x 192 cm.

Part VI - Shades of Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector. Oil paint, wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas. 300 x 490 cm.

Part VII - House of Priam. Lead pencil, oil paint, charcoal on canvas, 300 x 192 cm.

Part VIII - Ilians in Battle. Oil paint [paint stick], wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 300 x 380 cm.

Part IX - Shades of Eternal Night. Oil paint, charcoal, turpentine, wax crayon on canvas, 300 x 239 cm.

Part X - Heroes of the Ilians. Oil paint [paint stick], wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 162 x 150 cm.

28. *Untitled*, 1986. Oil paint on canvas, 120.6 x 100.3 cm. C & M Arts, New York.

29. *The Nine Discourses of Commodus*, 1963. Part I. All nine discourses are produced with oil paint, lead pencil, wax crayon on canvas, and are all 204 x 132 cm. Private collection, Italy.

Part II , Part III, Part IV, Part V, Part VI, Part VII, Part VIII, Part IX

30. *Death of Pompey*, 1962. Oil paint, lead pencil on canvas, 145 x 125 cm. Private collection, Dusseldorf.

31. *Venus and Mars*, 1962. Tempera, crayon, pencil and ball-point pen on cardboard, 50 x 70.3 cm. Collection of the artist.

32. *Leda and the Swan*, 1962. Oil, crayon and pencil on canvas, 190.5 x 200 cm. Collection of the artist.

33. *Salome*, 1961. Wax crayon, oil paint, coloured pencil, lead pencil on canvas, 200 x 424 cm. Collection Giorgio Franchetti, Rome.

34. *Hero and Leandro*, 1981-4, in four parts: Part I-III, Oil paint, oil based house paint, oil paint stick; 167.6 x 200.5; 155.8 x 204.5; 156.2 x 2.4.5 cm. Part IV, lead pencil on paper, 42 x 29.5 cm. Karsten Greve, Cologne.

35. *Hero and Leandro (To Christopher Marlowe)*, 1984-5. Oil paint, oil based house paint on canvas, 202 x 254 cm. Owned by the artist.

36. *Adonais*, 1975. Collage, oil, crayon and pencil on paper, 166.2 x 119 cm. Private collection.

37. *Bolsena*, 1972. Oilstick and pencil on paper, 61 ½" x 78 ¾". Hirschl & Alder Modern.

38. *School of Fontainebleau*, 1960. Oil, crayon and pencil on canvas, 200 x 321.5 cm. Marx Collection, Berlin.

39. *Untitled*, 1968. Collage, adhesive tape, graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 98.2 x 45.7 cm. Private collection

40. *'What Wing Can Be Held?'*, 1960. Oil, wax crayon, pencil on canvas, 275 x 200 cm. Private collection.

41. *Arcadia*, 1957-8. Oil, crayon and pencil on canvas, 183 x 200 cm. Collection of Nicola Bulgari.

42. *Woodland Glade*, 1964. Oil paint, wax crayon, pencil on canvas, 206.5 x 222.5 cm. Owned by the artist.

43. *Empire of Flora*, 1961. Oil, wax crayon and pencil on canvas, 200 x 242 cm. Marx Collection in Berlin.

44. *The First Part of the Return from Parnassus*, 1962. Oil paint, lead crayon, wax crayon, coloured pencil on canvas, 240.7 x 300.7 cm. Private collection.

45. *Orion I, II, III*, 1968. Oil based house paint, wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas:172.7 x 216; 173 x 215; 172.5 x 215 cm. Respectively, Patsy Orlofsky, Marx Collection, Berlin; Collection Udo and Anette Brandhorst.

46. *Idilli (I am Thyrsis of Etna blessed with a tuneful voice)*, 1976, Triptych. Left: Oil paint, wax crayon, graphite, and transparent tape on two sheets of paper, 58 ¾ x 51 5/8. Center: oil paint and wax crayon on printed paper, 29 7/8 x 22 ¼. Right: Graphite on paper, 29 7/8 x 22 3/8. Dia Art Foundation Collection, New York.

47. *To Imagine a Language Is to Imagine a Form of Life*, 1983. Watercolour, pencil and tempera, 57.2 x 38.1 cm. Private collection.

48. *Ode to Psyche*, 1960. Wax crayon and pencil on paper, 100 x 83 cm. Private collection.

49. *Hyperion (to Keats)*, 1962. Oil paint, wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 260 x 300 cm. Private Collection.

50. *Duino*, 1967. Oil based house paint, wax crayon on canvas, 177.8 x 147.3 cm. Private Collection, Turin.

51. *Orpheus*, 1975. Graphite, crayon, and paint on paper, 100 x 70.8. cm. Private Collection.

52. *Analysis of the Rose as Sentimental Despair* (*Five parts*), 1985. Cy Twombly Gallery, Houston.

    Part I: Oil based house paint, oil paint, oil paint [paint stick], wax crayon on canvas mounted on wooden panel, 162.7 x 125.9 cm.

    Part II: Oil based house paint, oil paint [paint stick] on canvas mounted on wooden panel, 181 x 112.1 cm.

    Part III: Oil based house paint, oil paint, wax crayon on canvas mounted on wooden panel, 245.4 x 160.5 cm.

    Part IV: Oil based paint, oil paint, wax crayon on canvas mounted on wooden panel, 245.4 x 257.2 cm.

    Part V: Oil based house paint, oil paint, wax crayon on canvas mounted on wooden panel, 245.4 x 160.5 cm.

53. *Untitled, (Nine Parts)*, 1988. Part I: Acrylic, tempera, oil paint [paint stick], lead pencil on wooden panel, 191.2 x 108.6 cm. Cy Twombly Gallery, Houston.

54. *Untitled Painting [Say Goodbye Catullus, to the Shores of Asia Minor]* [A Painting in three Parts, 1994. Oil paint. Acrylic, wax crayon, oil paint [paint stick], lead pencil, coloured pencil on canvas, 400 x 1585 cm. Cy Twombly Gallery, Houston.

55. *Quattro Stagioni* (1st), 1993-4. Museum of Modern Art Collection, New York. Part I: Primerva, Acrylic, oil paint, lead pencil on canvas, 312.5 x 190 cm.

    Part II: Estate, Acrylic, coloured pencil, lead pencil on canvas, 314.5 x 201 cm.

    Part III: Autunno, Acrylic, oil paint, oil based house paint, wax crayon, oil paint [paint stick], lead pencil on canvas, 313.7 x 189.9 cm.

Part IV: Inverno, Acrylic, oil paint, paint stick, pencil on canvas, 313 x 190.1 cm.

56. *Orpheus*, 1979. Oil based house paint, oil paint [paint stick], wax crayon on canvas, 195.7 x 334.5 cm. Private Collection.

57. *Quattro Stagioni* (2nd), 1993-4. The Museum of Modern Art Collection, New York. Part I: Primavera, Acrylic, oil paint, lead pencil on canvas, 312.5 x 190 cm.

Part II: Estate, Acrylic, coloured pencil, lead pencil on canvas, 314.5 x 201 cm.

Part III: Autunno, Acrylic, oil paint, oil based house paint, wax crayon, oil paint [paint stick], lead pencil on canvas, 313.7 x189.9 cm.

Part IV: Inverno, Acrylic, oil paint [paint stick], oil paint, lead pencil on canvas, 313 x 190.1 cm.

58. *Untitled*, 1985. Acrylic, tempera, oil paint [paint stick], coloured pencil, lead pencil on paper and on wooden panel [the oval shaped form is made of paper stapled to the wooden panel], 201 x 149.7 cm. Cy Twombly Gallery, Houston.

59. *Untitled*, 1993. Acrylic, lead pencil on wooden panel, 195.5 x 152 cm. Udo and Anette Brandhorst collection.

60. *Poems to the Sea*, 1959. Dia Art Foundation Collection, New York. Poem I, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 ¾ x 12 ¼.

Poem II, Oil and graphite, 12 5/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem III, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 3/8 x 12 ¼
Poem IV, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 3/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem V, Oil and graphite on paper, 13 3/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem VI, Oil and graphite on paper, 13 ½ x 12 ¼.
Poem VII, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 ½ x 12 ¼.
Poem VIII, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 3/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem IX , Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 ¼ x 12 ¼.
Poem X, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 x 12 ¼.
Poem XI, Oil and graphite on paper, 12 7/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem XII. Oil and graphite on paper, 13 x 12 ¼.
Poem XIII, Oil and graphite on paper, 13 x 12 ¼.
Poem XIV, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 ¼ x 12 ¼.
Poem XV, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 x 12 ¼.
Poem XVI, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 3/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem XVII, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 x 12 ¼.
Poem XVIII, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 x 12 ¼.

Poem XIX, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 ¾ x 12 ¼.
Poem XX, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 13 ½ x 12 ¼.
Poem XXI, Oil and graphite on paper, 13 5/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem XXII, Oil, graphite, wax crayon on paper, 12 ¾ x 12 ¼.
Poem XXIII, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 5/8 x 12 ¼.
Poem XXIV, Oil, graphite, and wax crayon on paper, 12 5/8 x 12 ¼.

61. *Letter of Resignation*, 1959-67. Sheet I, pencil, 249 x 251 mm.
Sheet II, pencil, crayon, 254 x 252 mm.
Sheet III, pencil, 253 x 251 mm.
Sheet IV, pencil, house paint, 247 x 248 mm.
Sheet V, pencil, house paint, 250 x 249 mm.
Sheet VI, pencil, 252 x250 mm.
Sheet VII, pencil, 250 x 249 mm.
Sheet VIII, pencil, 250 x 247 mm.
Sheet IX, pencil, house paint, 248 x251 mm.
Sheet X, pencil, house paint, 247 x 250 mm.
Sheet XI, pencil, house paint, crayon, 248 x 250 mm.
Sheet XII, pencil, house paint, crayon, 246 x 250 mm.
Sheet XIII, pencil, house paint, crayon, 244 x 252 mm.
Sheet XIV, pencil, house paint, crayon, 246 x 251 mm.
Sheet XV, pencil, crayon, 251 x 252 mm.
Sheet XVI, pencil, house paint, 249 x 250 mm.
Sheet XVII, pencil, crayon, 246 x 252 mm.
Sheet XVIII, pencil, house paint, crayon, 249 x 251 mm.
Sheet XIX, pencil, house paint, crayon, 247 x 247 mm.
Sheet XX, pencil, house paint, crayon, 249 x 250 mm.
Sheet XXI, pencil, house paint, crayon, 247 x 251 mm.
Sheet XXII, pencil, crayon, 251 x 251 mm.
Sheet XXIII, pencil, crayon, 249 x 251 mm.
Sheet XXIV, pencil, crayon, 251 x 249 mm.
Sheet XXV, pencil, house paint, crayon, 249 x 249 mm.
Sheet XXVI, pencil, crayon, 248 x 249 mm.
Sheet XXVII, pencil, house paint, crayon, 246 x 250 mm.
Sheet XXVIII, pencil, crayon, 250 x 248 mm.
Sheet XXIX, pencil, crayon, 250 x 250 mm.
Sheet XXX, pencil, 250 x 250 mm.
Sheet XXXI, pencil, crayon, 252 x 245 mm.
Sheet XXXII, pencil, 240 x 250 mm.
Sheet XXXIII, pencil, 251 x 252 mm.
Sheet XXXIV, pencil, crayon, 250 x 247 mm.
Sheet XXXV, pencil, house paint, 247 x 249 mm.
Sheet XXXVI, pencil, 251 x 254 mm.
Sheet XXXVII, pencil, 251 x 253 mm.
Sheet XXXVIII, pencil, 250 x 252 mm.

62. *Untitled*, 1954. Gouache and crayon on paper, 48.3 x 63.2 cm. Collection of Robert Rauschenberg.

63. *Silex Scintillans*, (central section), 1981, oil, crayon and pencil on paper, 150.5 x 135.5 cm. Private collection.

64. Louise Chase, *Dryad*, 1986, oil on canvas, 96 x 102 inches, at Robert Miller.

65. *LaLa*, 1953, house paint and wax/oil crayon on paper, 19 ¾ x 10 x 4 in, Collection of Robert Rauschenberg

66. Paul Klee, *Untitled*, 1938.Pen drawing, 18 7/8 x 16 in, Private collection

67. Jean Dubuffet, *Earthy concretions under a blazing sun*, 1951, Oil on hardboard, 71.7 x 109.2 cm, Collection of Pierre Matisse.

68. Jackson Pollock, *Number 14, 1948: Gray*, 1948, Enamel on gesso on paper, 22 ¾ x 31 in., The Katherine Ordway Collection.

69. André Masson, *Automatic Drawing*, 1924, ink on paper, 24 x 20 cm. *Composition*, 1935, Sand on paper, 48 x 63cm, Collection of William Rubin.

70. Taoist *Diagram of Change*, representing the flow and transformation inhrent in the physical world; eleventh century; from the Tao Tsang (Taoist Canon).

71. *Panorama*, 1955. Distemper, crayon on canvas, 254 x 340.5 cm. Collection of Thomas Ammann.

72. Bruno Munari, *Concave, convex*, 1947.

73. *Untitled*, 1967. House paint and crayon on canvas, 200 x 264 cm. Collection of Jasper Johns.

74. *Untitled*, 1968. Collage and pencil on paper, 94.7 x 45.5 cm. Collection of the artist.

75. *Untitled*, 1970. Collage, crayon and pencil on paper, 62.9 x 57 cm. Private collection.

76. *Roman Notes* no.13,1970. Gouache, oil and chalk on cardboard, 71 x 88 cm. Galerie art in progress, Munich. *Roman Notes* no.18, 1970. Gouache, oil and chalk on cardboard, 71 x 88 cm. Galerie art in progress, Munich.

77. *Untitled*, 1970. Collage, watercolour, crayon and pencil on paper, 130.5 x 75.8 cm. Private collection.

78. *Epithalamion III*, 1976. Collage, watercolour and pencil on paper, 153.7 x 109.2 cm. Courtesy of the Lone Star Foundation , New York.

79. *Untitled*, 1968-71. Distemper and chalk on canvas, 200 x 239 cm. Private collection.

80. *Untitled*, 1968-71.Distemper and chalk on canvas, 199 x 248.2 cm. Private collection.

81. *Untitled*, 1969. House paint and crayon on canvas, 200 x 261.6 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

82. *Untitled*, 1967. House paint and crayon, 200 x 264 cm. Richard Baker Collection.

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