Spiritual Moderns

Twentieth-Century American Artists & Religion

Erika Doss

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Spiritual Moderns

Twentieth-Century American Artists & Religion


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Throughout his career, Andy Warhol made pictures of religious subjects. His last major body of work consisted of more than one hundred paintings and drawings based on Leonardo da Vinci's fifteenth-century mural *The Last Supper* (figure 1.1). Riffing on a reproduction of Leonardo's iconic painting, similar to the one that hung in his childhood home, Warhol rendered his pictures in Day-Glo colors, camouflage patterns, and cropped designs juxtaposing images of Christ and his disciples with logos for Dove soap, Wise potato chips, and Camel cigarettes. Some included sketches of motorcycles, bodybuilders, and price tags. One canvas featured the phrase "The Big C," referencing the "gay cancer" that AIDS was called in the mid-1980s. Painted at the height of the AIDS crisis in America, Warhol's *Last Supper* series remade Leonardo's mural on modern art terms, infusing it with a "new spiritual resonance" that implicitly questioned Catholic Church dogma.[1] A month before he died, twenty-two of Warhol's *Last Supper* paintings were exhibited in a gallery across the street from the Dominican Convent in Milan, where Leonardo's fading mural still draws big crowds.

Figure 1.1. (*facing*) Andy Warhol, *The Last Supper*, 1986. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 9 ft., 8 in. × 32 ft., 6 in. × 2 in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.356.

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Warhol is one of the best-known modern American artists of the twentieth century. Less well known is that he was an observant Catholic who carried a rosary and a pocket missal (a small book of prayers and chants) and went to church every week, sometimes more than once.[2] Raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a Byzantine or Eastern Rite Catholic, Warhol sustained his religious faith as an adult. Moving to New York in 1949, he regularly attended services at several parishes, including St. Mary's Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite near Stuyvesant Square and St. Vincent Ferrer, a Dominican congregation on the Upper East Side. He decorated his townhouse on East 66th Street with devotional paintings and sculptures, and he kept a crucifix and book of prayers by his bedside.[3] In 1980, he had an audience with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. In the last years of his life, Warhol's religious routines veered toward charitable deeds, including serving meals to the homeless on Christmas and Easter and volunteering at the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest on Fifth Avenue. Over the course of a prominent and prolific career, Warhol both pictured religious subjects and practiced his religious faith.

This book examines the significance of religion in the making and meaning of modern American art. It recognizes religion as a powerful cultural determinant that influenced how Warhol and other artists thought about and made modern art. Aiming to enrich our understandings of American modernism by considering the visual, material, and affective conditions of religious belief and experience, *Spiritual Moderns* further considers why religion was and re-

mains largely unacknowledged in the history of modern American art, especially as that history was framed in the mid-twentieth century.

It centers on four American artists who were both modern and religious. Joseph Cornell (1903–1972) was an assemblage artist who showed with the Surrealists and was a member of the Church of Christ, Scientist. Mark Tobey (1890–1976) was a pioneering figure in Abstract Expressionism and a follower of the Bahá'í faith. Agnes Pelton (1881–1961) was a Symbolist painter who embraced various metaphysical movements including New Thought, Theosophy, and Agni Yoga. And Warhol (1928–1987), one of the leading figures in Pop art, was a lifelong Catholic. Their selection is based on their stylistic and religious diversity: this book is a focused study of four different modern American artists who were religious, rather than a broad survey of the linked subjects of modern art and religion. My discussion of canonical American moderns like Tobey and Warhol highlights, in fact, how religious sources and beliefs have largely been downplayed in discussions of their art.

Although the origins of American modernism date to the nineteenth century, my emphasis is on the decades in the twentieth century when art historians, critics, and curators honed its stylistic and theoretical parameters. Recognizing that the term "America" extends to countries in North and South America, my use here references the United States of America, parsed in terms of its imagined national unity and its multiple inconsistencies. And while *Spiritual Moderns* centers on American artists, the questions it raises about the relationship of modern art and religion have global reach.

Religious interests were significant determinants for many modern American artists. In 1947, after experimenting with different strains of Social Realism and Surrealism, Mark Rothko began making large paintings featuring dazzling rectangles of color (figure 1.2). "I'm *not* an abstractionist," he insisted in a 1956 interview with critic Selden Rodman, adding: "I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on—and the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I *communicate* those basic human emotions . . . The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you . . . are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point!"[4]

The American moderns discussed in this book shared Rothko's views about art, affect, and "religious experience." Each developed modern art styles that embodied their personal religious beliefs and the felt life of faith. Each was persuaded by Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky's assertion in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912) that modern art should be a form of creative transcendence, and that modern artists should be compelled toward the "spiritual life, to which art belongs."[5] Each was drawn to the subjective, individual terms that shaped art and faith in the modern age. Struggling against the limiting conditions of materialism, whereby art was defined as either representation or decoration, and making art was reduced to commodity production, each drew on



Figure 1.2. Mark Rothko, *Orange and Yellow*, 1956. Oil on canvas, 91 × 71 in. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; gift of Seymour H. Knox Jr., 1956, K1956:8. Photograph by Tom Loonan.

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Albright-Knox Art Gallery / Art Resource, NY.

the affective cultures of religious belief to reconfigure a spiritually resonant, modern American art. As Rothko recounted in 1959, "the whole machinery for the popularization of art—universities, advertising, museums, and the Fifty-seventh Street salesman" was spiritually vacuous. He aimed to make modern art, such as the paintings created for Houston's Rothko Chapel, that refused art-market expectations and communicated emotions he associated with religious transcendence.[6]

Spiritual Moderns focuses on modern American artists who were religious, not religious artists who lived in modern times. This distinction is crucial. To be "religious" is to believe in a transcendent reality and, for some, to follow the tenets of a particular religion or religious institution. To be a "religious artist" is to illustrate, affirm, and proselytize on behalf of certain religions. One widely recognized religious artist of the twentieth century was Warner Sallman, a member of the Swedish Evangelical Covenant Church and a Chicago-based commercial illustrator, whose Nordic *Head of Christ* (1940), modeled on Hollywood headshots, is among the most reproduced images in modern history (figure 1.3). During World War II, millions of wallet-sized prayer cards featuring Sallman's picture of Jesus were distributed to American GIs.[7] Motivated by an evangelical theology of conversion, Sallman was not a modern artist.

Warhol, Cornell, Tobey, and Pelton, by contrast, appropriated religious ideas, images, and practices to create distinctive styles of modern American

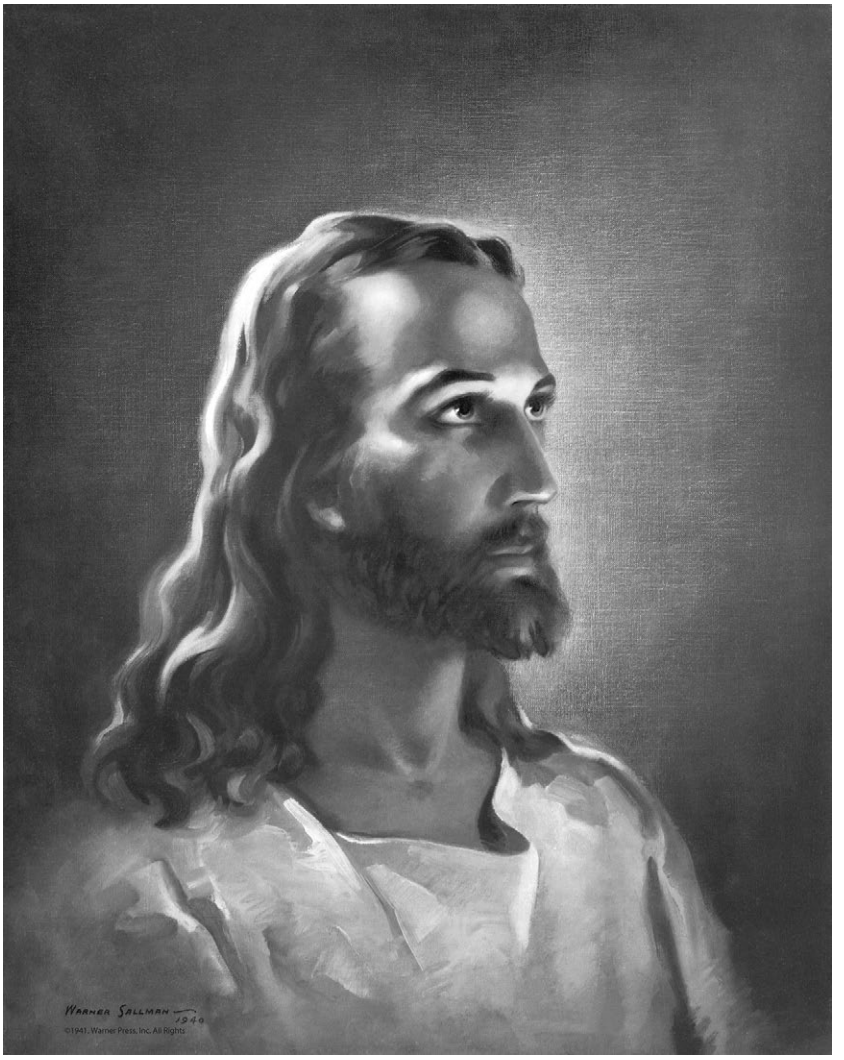


Figure 1.3. Warner E. Sallman, *Head of Christ*, 1940.

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art. They were spiritual moderns: artists whose methods and understandings of modernism were informed by their religious beliefs and experiences, who simultaneously explored and also questioned those beliefs on critical and self-conscious terms. Criticality, along with adaptability and self-interest, was a hallmark of both American habits of religious belief and American modernism. Spiritual moderns made art and reimagined their faith in ways that they deemed most efficacious to themselves.

Religion, of course, was one of many influences available to American moderns. Modern art history today readily incorporates discussions of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Yet studies of the links between modern American art and religion remain minimal. This lack stems in part from assumptions of their inherent opposition. Contextualized as an Enlightenment-era project, modern art was defined by art critics and historians as essentially

anti-religion and anti-religious. As Rosalind Krauss put it in 1979, "now we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention *art* and *spirit* in the same sentence." Or, as Tim Clark stated in 2001, "modernism turns on the impossibility of transcendence." And, as James Elkins claimed in 2004, "art that sets out to convey spiritual values goes against the grain of the history of modernism."[8]

Twentieth-century spiritual moderns, however, challenged these supposed disjunctions between modernism and religion. And today, the fields of art history and religious studies are mutually dedicated to reassessing modernism. Both are drawn to the notion of "multiple modernities," to perspectives that examine modernism's diverse, dynamic, global, interdisciplinary, and multicultural dimensions.[9] Expanding on revisionist understandings of modernism, this book argues for more efficacious approaches to the cultural work of religion, and more generous considerations of the links between art and faith in modern times. Focusing on how and why different Americans invested their art with what Rothko called "religious experience," *Spiritual Moderns* considers the intersections between religious beliefs and modern art styles, theoretical concepts, and ways of working.

Spiritual America and Spiritual Seeking

From the missionary zeal of the Southwestern Spanish padres and the "city on the hill" foundation myth of the New England Puritans, to contemporary strains of New Age spirituality and conservative Christian nationalism, religion is central to the American imaginary. "In the United States, the first secular republic," Karen Armstrong observes, "the state has always had a religious aura, a manifest destiny, and a divinely sanctioned mission."[10]

Modern Americans "value religion" and maintain "strong religious beliefs" to far greater degrees than citizens in other First World countries. Recent surveys show that 72 percent of Americans say religion is important in their lives, 87 percent believe in God, 80 percent believe in an afterlife, and 77 percent regularly pray (94 percent doing so privately).[11] While twenty-first-century Americans are "leaving organized religion in droves," many are finding faith in alternative spiritual sources. One in five Americans today identifies as "spiritual but not religious," an affirmation of belief focused on personal understandings and rituals of faith, such as meditation, solitude, and nature-centered reflection.[12] Spiritual seeking, the self-directed search for religious knowledge, has been a constant throughout American history and increasingly defines how Americans understand and practice religion today.

Americans also, Jeff Sharlet remarks, "worry over religion, argue about religion, tell stories about religion, not just because of our ambiguous First Amendment (which promises both freedom *of* and freedom *from* religion) but because American identity—and American democracy—depends on a constant renegotiation of terms."[13] These terms include *religion* itself. Religion constitutes practices and attitudes, such as rituals and beliefs, that imbue a per-

son's life with significance by linking her or him to a transcendent reality, beyond purely immanent, or secular, experience and understanding.[14] Religion is also broadly understood as an organized system or institution of belief—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, among others—that provides adherents and congregations with understandings of the nature and order of existence, the meaning and purpose of life, moral codes of behavior, sources of spiritual inspiration, and concepts of the sacred.

Sociologist Andrew Greeley defined religion as "an imaginative 'cultural system'—a collection of directing 'pictures' through which humans organize and give meaning to the phenomena that impinge on their consciousness, especially in so far as these phenomena require some explanation of the ultimate purpose of life."[15] Historian Thomas Tweed adopts spatial and geographical metaphors to argue that religions are "dynamic and relational," defined as "confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries."[16] Other scholars emphasize the critical role of emotion in religious movements and practices, arguing that wonder and mystery are "key to religious feeling and expression" and among the "defining elements of spirituality." Religion on these terms is embodied, involving multiple senses—sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste—and affective states of response.[17] Relatedly, many Americans understand religion as a system of healing, engaging attitudes and practices aimed at the treatment of illness and the attainment of good health and physical and psychic well-being.

Today the field of religious studies is especially attentive to locating religion in everyday life. Challenging Clifford Geertz's universalizing definition of religion as a cultural system of shared symbols, moods, and motivations, Talal Asad argues for interpretations that are historically specific to the power dynamics "out of which the modern world has been constructed."[18] Expanding on the concept of "lived religion" fostered by David Hall, Robert Orsi, and Nancy Ammerman, the field is more attentive to everyday religious practices and experiences. Connecting religion to material culture, for example, Colleen McDannell explains how American Christians use things—Bibles, prayer cards, medals, shrines, vials of holy water, bags of holy dirt—to construct religious meaning in their lives. Similarly focused on popular religious images, David Morgan explains how "visual piety," or the "act of looking" at Sallman's *Head of Christ*, among other pictures, "constitutes a powerful practice of belief."[19] Religion on these terms is active, fluid, and pluralistic, "a dialectical process," writes Kathryn Lofton, "by which distinctions are named, sociability is explained, and relationship to power (natural and supernatural) is managed."[20]

Characterized by mutability, invention, and self-interest, religion in America is a "constantly shifting subject" that is "constantly under construction" due to divergent needs. "Despite powerfully enduring institutions and long-durée patterns of culture," writes Michael Warner, "what counts as religiosity

changes, both in legal-political spheres of elite power and in the organization of ordinary life."[21] Beginning in the 1870s, for example, the reformist impulses of the Social Gospel movement were taken up by many mainline Protestant churches. In the 1960s, America's Catholic churches experienced the major modernizing reforms of Vatican II, from liturgical change (abandoning the Latin mass) to interreligious dialogue. In the 1970s, the Episcopal Church began ordaining women priests. In 1978, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) lifted its ban on the priesthood for men of color. In 2005, the United Church of Christ, a mainline Protestant denomination, passed a resolution affirming same-sex marriage. American religions "change and grow, live and die, through adaptation, competition, imitation, and assimilation," observes Peter Manseau.[22]

The US has also regularly invented new religions, from LDS, which originated in Palmyra, New York in the 1820s, to Jehovah's Witnesses, an evangelical Christian denomination that started in the 1870s as a branch of the Bible Student movement and is now headquartered in Warwick, New York. At the turn of the last century, the nation was awash in different religious currents: from mainline Protestant (including Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist), Catholic, and Jewish denominations to multiple new religious movements (NRMs) including Christian Science, Seventh-day Adventism, Theosophy, Universalism, Unitarianism, Pentecostalism, the African American Holiness Pentecostal movement, Reform Judaism, Bahá'í, Vedanta, Buddhism, yoga, Spiritualism, New Thought, Social Gospel, and Ethical Culture. Spiritual leaders as different as Helena Blavatsky, the co-founder of Theosophy, and Abdu'l Bahá, the head of the Bahá'í faith from 1892 to 1921, viewed the US as an especially receptive environment for their new religious movements.

Diverse, innovative, and omnipresent, religion flourishes in the US in part because of the nation's continually fluctuating demographics and democratic dynamics. Americans renegotiate religious terms, institutions, beliefs, and rituals to accommodate their faith in the modern world. Doing so can be deeply divisive: religion in America is contested "not just in terms of conflicts between or within religious institutions, communities, and people, but also conceptually, categorically, definitionally."[23]

Despite the nation's founding ideal of religious pluralism, of independent religious forces coexisting in a secular society, partisanship has been historically constant: from Protestant bias against Catholics in the nineteenth century to Christian threats against Jews and Muslims in recent decades. Insistence among some Christians today that their religion is the one true American faith threatens the nation's foundational commitment to religious pluralism and church-state separation. Insistence on unconstrained religious assembly during a pandemic, for example, which the US Supreme Court upheld in November 2020, signals a dangerous defense of religious rights at the expense of public health.

In the 1920s, the copious faith choices available to modern Americans constituted problematic evidence, one Congregationalist minister complained, of "religion run riot" in a nation full of "strange cults."[24] Worries that the United States had too many religions were fed by fears of competition, of mainstream churches emptying out as their flocks sought other spiritual paths. America's robust history of "religious liberalism" may be best understood as a smorgasbord of spiritual innovation conditioned by the nation's continually contested meditations on the meaning of faith in a democratic society.[25] During the Gilded Age, American artists such as Fred Holland Day, Thomas Eakins, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Abbott Handerson Thayer negotiated multiple religious cultures to visualize an art of spiritual consciousness. Their interests in "fine art's intimate relationship to religious belief and practice" was echoed in the twentieth-century art of spiritual moderns like Cornell, Tobey, Pelton, and Warhol.[26]

In the nineteenth century, Christian Science, New Thought, Spiritualism, and Theosophy were among new religions that emerged during a "spiritual crisis" beset by Darwinian theories of evolution and widening doubts about religious dogma (like the Genesis creation narrative). The shattering disruption of the Civil War, whose trauma generated what Frederick Law Olmsted called a "republic of suffering," fostered deep uncertainties about the existence of God and the meaning of faith.[27] New religions responded to this climate of suffering and skepticism with promises, for example, of a restorative spirituality built on divine healing (Christian Science) and "mind cure" (New Thought). In the post-Reconstruction landscape of the Jim Crow South, the African American Holiness movement offered the spiritual sustenance of "second blessing" and sanctification to thousands of former slaves and their descendants.[28] In 1894 in New York, Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda founded the Vedanta Society, promoting a "practical spirituality" of meditation, yoga, and breathing and posture exercises aimed at curing American moderns of multiple ailments, and helping them reach self-fulfillment and communion with the divine through physical and mental discipline.[29]

Vedanta and other new religious movements magnetized Americans who wanted to experience the divine on personal terms. Although mainstream denominations fretted about losing followers, new spiritual quests were also promoted as evidence of modern America's exceptionally democratic religious mindset. "The various movements of a mystical, religious nature so numerous among our people to-day," one magazine author wrote in 1909, represented a "New America" guided by "religious belief in its broadest and most essential meaning, namely the belief of man in himself and in his destiny." Unconstrained by religious "dogma or sect or creed," this "new spiritual America" was characterized especially by "optimism—the power of courageous, hopeful belief, as opposed to fear, anger or worry." Modern Americans wanted "to be shown the secret of the ages. In every state of the Union, in every city, town, and hamlet, the new spirit is awake . . . it is growing and spreading and

profoundly affecting our national character and our national destiny."[30] Interests in a "new" and explicitly self-focused spirituality were praised and encouraged as a shared national project.

Simultaneously, the meaning of religion in America, and of being religious, was renegotiated on increasingly affective and autonomous terms. Deference to church authority gave way to more individualized and liberal understandings of "seeker spirituality," and of following a religious path to self-discovery.[31] Religion, William James asserted in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), was "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men . . . in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[32] Considered the "founding text" of modern religious studies, James's influential book loosened religion from its "theological moorings" and situated it in personal numinous experience. "Feeling is the deeper source of religion," James argued, and "philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue."[33] For James, religion was neither fixed nor fundamental, and modern religious beliefs were less about church dogma than the felt life of faith, especially practices that contributed to personal well-being and social reform. The search for religious experience was seen as a significant part of modern spirituality.

Questioning limiting definitions of religion as institution, James studied a plethora of beliefs and practices—and privileged them all as "religious." Questioning reductive understandings of religion as strict doctrinal adherence, he argued for its reconsideration as individual mystical experience. Throughout *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James oscillated between the words "religion," "spirituality," "mysticism," and "the divine," thereby endorsing a fluid and subjective understanding of belief. His revisionist accommodation of religion and spirituality was a profoundly modernist sensibility. It corresponded with changed understandings of American self, society, and culture—including the emergence of modern art—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

American Modernism

Modern art is often defined on oppositional terms, as anarchist and avant-garde forms of rebellion against the status quo, an uncompromising "shock of the new." And modern American art did feature brazen works of defiance and rupture: from the portraits of underclass Americans sketched by Robert Henri and other urban realists in the early twentieth century to the Synchromist abstractions painted by Stanton MacDonald-Wright in the 1910s. But American modernism was also integrative: a blend of resistance and reconciliation aimed at articulating and accommodating new understandings of culture and experience.[34]

Keenly aspirational, American moderns of all kinds yearned to reconnect art and life: to express an intensity of experience and an expansion of

consciousness that they believed pre-modern institutions had sought to prohibit or control. Challenging Victorian and Gilded Age notions of truth and knowledge (such as unyielding natural laws, an absolute God, and biblical inerrancy), strict codes of social order and respectability, and sharply separate categories of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, American moderns sought liberation, release, and redefinition in new cultural projects that focused on authenticity, change, diversity, and synthesis.

American modernism's integrative mode was marked by a reliance on paradox (the unity of seeming opposites), ambivalence (the fusion of incongruous feelings), and dynamism (a focus on fluidity, change, and impermanence). Modern American artists employed new techniques of collage, assemblage, overlapping, frenzied pacing, spatial flattening, inconsistent light sources, spontaneity, and highly saturated colors to convey their sense of modernism's fragmented, uncertain, inconsistent, and unstable conditions. Subjects and forms were decentered, revised, and re-presented. Rules regarding perspective, shading, and color harmony were discarded. Likewise, a previous generation's preference for allegorical narratives, soothing landscapes, and genteel portraits gave way to energetic scenes of urban life and modern industry, highly personalized interpretations of nature, and multiple currents of media experimentation that embodied the interests and feelings of individual artists. Ripping apart conventional models of seeing and making art, American moderns picked up the pieces, added new ones, and reassembled them in new and different ways, proposing new and different ideas about nature, knowledge, art, and themselves.

Modernism was, of course, inherently inconsistent and uncertain. There was no single style or tone. Framed by aims of fragmentation on the one hand and fusion on the other, or by binaries of autonomy and unity, modernism's concentration on experimental and experiential concerns was countless, continual, and, importantly, unsettled. A fully accommodating cultural synthesis was both unachievable and beside the point. Flux and irresolution, not stability and closure, were the operational concepts in modernism's dynamic continuum. The consequence of full integration, if actually reached, would have been modernism's antithesis: inertia.[35] Modernism was, instead, processual, a culture of becoming rather than being. Despite the efforts of curators, critics, and historians to classify and contain it as a style, American modernism was an inconsistent and evolving sensibility.

Modern American Art and Religion

However paradoxical, the revisionist possibilities that modernism proposed for both self and society shaped and directed much of twentieth-century American art. Engaging a wide range of subjects and concerns, tireless experimentation, a commitment to openness, and the authenticity of lived experience, American moderns focused on the reformation of human conscious-

ness through intense self-examination. This soul-searching included the self-consciousness of religious belief: the scrutiny of faith and the rethinking of enlightened human relationships with the divine. Belief, Morgan observes, "is not a sunny, naïve disposition untroubled by its own internal contradictions."[36] It is often a practice accompanied by doubt. For the modern artists discussed in this book, religious belief was intrinsically linked with personal, sometimes painful, and usually private explorations of interiority. As such, their visual meditations on modern art and faith were sometimes veiled or opaque, difficult for others to understand, and subject to ridicule and skepticism. "There are many ways of mapping a religious sensibility in art," Thomas Crow observes, "and not all of them entail overt iconography."[37]

Religion itself was a visible subject in twentieth-century American art, corroborating its significance and diversity in American life and comprising an extensive body of visual art that largely remains to be surveyed and critiqued.[38] During the interwar era, for example, American artists working in multiple styles were particularly attentive to Christian subjects, documenting churches and services, depicting biblical themes, referencing the ways that different cultures and communities resisted or facilitated mainstream religions, and appropriating Christian symbols to articulate social and political concerns. John Steuart Curry and George Bellows captured the affective cultures of evangelical Christianity in sketches of holy rollers and "the sawdust trail," the path to spiritual salvation promised by pugilistic preachers like Billy Sunday. Charles Bowling, Dale Nichols, and Rockwell Kent depicted remote country churches in distinctive regional landscapes. Artists including Caroline Durieux, Joseph Delaney, William Johnson, John McCrady, and Prentiss Taylor captured Black religious life in scenes of revivals and spirituals.[39] Pueblo artists such as Tonita Peña and Awa Tsireh mediated Catholicism's colonizing dominance in modernist watercolors depicting the survivance of indigenous religious rituals and beliefs. Assuming the shared cultural meaning of Christian symbolism, in 1932 Julius Bloch depicted Black men being crucified to protest the horror of lynching. Likewise, in a series of World War II propaganda pictures painted in 1942, Thomas Hart Benton depicted the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) jointly attacking Christ at Golgotha (figure 1.4).[40]

American artists remained attentive to religious symbols and subjects after the war, especially as the nation experienced a major religious revival. Related art projects, museum shows, magazine articles, and academic seminars saw a "surge in modern religious art and thought," from Rico Lebrun's ambitious *Crucifixion* cycle, a series of two hundred works painted between 1947 and 1950, to a postwar exhibition featuring "modern depictions" of the Temptation of St. Anthony.[41] Postwar moderns like Lebrun employed religious subjects to interrogate Cold War political conditions, and to question the authority of mainstream religions. In 1953, *Art Digest* published "Symposium: Art and Religion," in which artists, architects, and critics discussed the possible use of modern art in liturgical settings. Abstract Expressionist sculptor David Smith,



Figure 1.4. Thomas Hart Benton, *Again* from *The Year of Peril*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 47 × 56 in. State Historical Society of Missouri, 1944.0002.

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri. © 2022 T.H. and R. P. Benton Trusts / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

for one, was not convinced, writing, "The truly creative art of our time cannot play an important role in organized religion because the traditions are diametrically opposed. The artist is not involved with translation."[42]

Correspondingly, postwar critical insistence on unconstrained creative freedom and abstract styles led to increasingly narrow definitions of the look and place of modern American art, which excluded the allegiances and complications of religion. Religion itself did not disappear, nor—as this book details—did American artistic interests in religion. But as the art history of twentieth-century American modernism was written, especially in the Cold War era and later, religion was largely disavowed.

That version of art history discounted how American moderns throughout the twentieth century looked to religious teachings, symbols, and rituals, including practices of contemplation and devotion, to forge distinctive styles of modern art that transcended solely secular, material, and commercial understandings. Some artists engaged religious subjects to interrogate systems of belief or critique religious institutions. Others used religious signs and symbols to assess certain cultural landscapes, especially those they found exotic or "other." Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings of New Mexico's mission churches

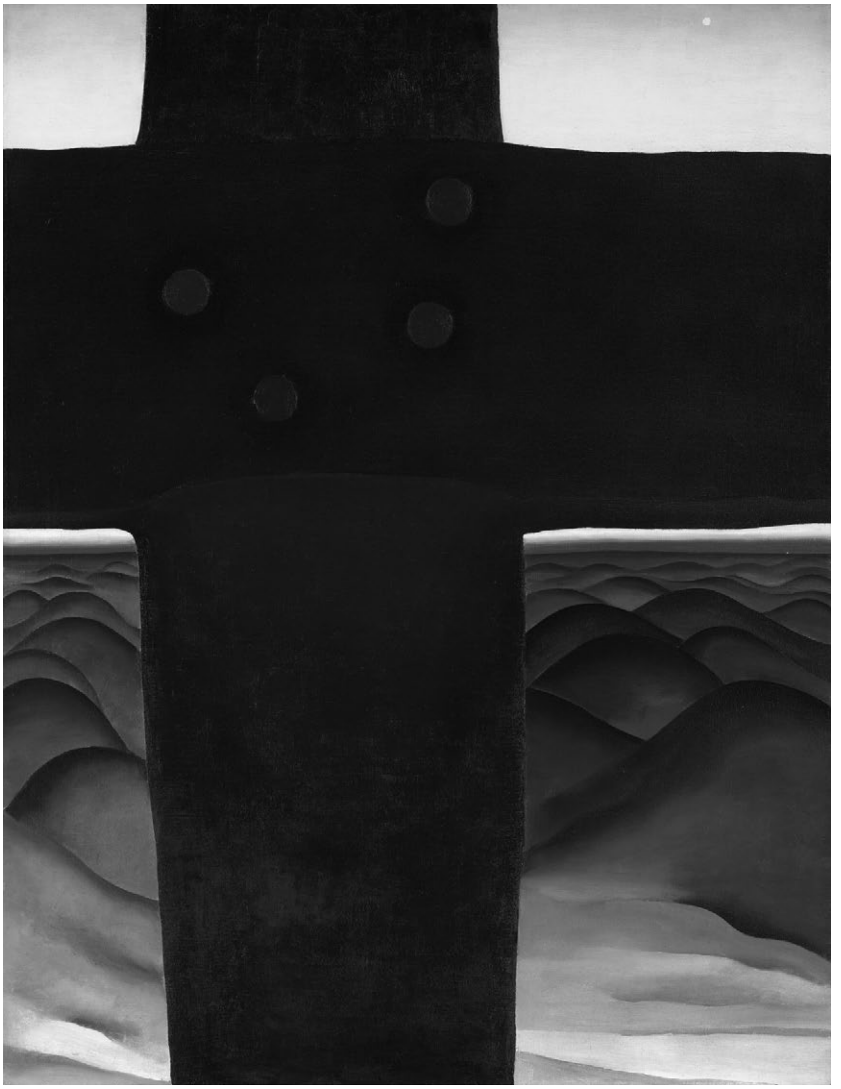


Figure 1.5. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Cross, New Mexico*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 39 × 30 in. Art Institute of Chicago, Art Institute Purchase Fund, 1943.95.

© Art Institute of Chicago. Photograph: Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY.

and Penitente crosses fall into this category (figure 1.5). In 1929, O'Keeffe spent her first of many summers in northern New Mexico, staying for several months at the estate of heiress and art patron Mabel Dodge Luhan and painting scenes of the historic San Francisco de Asis Mission Church at Ranchos de Taos. O'Keeffe also painted the rough wooden crosses that she encountered along the Rio Grande: devotional objects made by Los Hermanos Penitentes, a Franciscan Catholic brotherhood who demonstrate their faith through physical acts of penance such as self-flagellation and crucifixion.

In 1930, Alfred Stieglitz exhibited O'Keeffe's cross paintings at his New York gallery An American Place. Critical response was mixed. Edward Alden Jewell at the *New York Times* praised the "cosmic atmosphere" of O'Keeffe's New Mexico paintings, remarking on her "sharp monumental vigor" and "vi-

sion that pierces through to sheer spiritual experience."[43] In *International Studio*, however, Marty Mann pronounced "a certain unpleasant hysteria in her mystic crosses."[44] And Henry McBride, art critic at the *New York Sun*, wrote:

> Georgia O'Keeffe went to Taos, New Mexico to visit Mabel Dodge and spent the summer down there. Naturally something would come from such a contact as that. But not what you would think. Religion came of it. Georgia O'Keeffe got religion. What Mabel Dodge got I have not yet heard.[45]

McBride was a snarky critic writing in an era dominated by witty pundits like Dorothy Parker and H. L. Mencken. While many of McBride's art world contemporaries scorned O'Keeffe's work on crudely reductive sexualized terms—bluntly equating her gigantic pictures of flowers with female genitalia—he ridiculed their religious associations.[46] Writing that her paintings "will *exorcise* a considerable portion of the community," that she herself was "at times a *mystic*," and that she had achieved *"occult"* status among viewers who came "from long distances to *consult* her works," McBride mocked O'Keeffe's modernism as arcane spirituality.[47] Her pictures of Midwestern barns and New York skyscrapers were fine, McBride implied, but paintings referencing the visual and material cultures of Southwestern Catholicism seemed to suggest O'Keeffe's disturbing conversion to "religion."

Yet as O'Keeffe herself told McBride, "Anyone who doesn't feel the crosses simply doesn't get that country." And as she later related, "I saw the crosses so often—and often in unexpected places—like a thin dark veil of the Catholic Church spread over the New Mexican landscape."[48] Baptized as a girl in an Episcopal church in Madison, Wisconsin, O'Keeffe shrugged off religious commitment as an adult but was keenly interested in the power—the "spread," as she put it—of religious artifacts, shrines, and symbols in the American landscape. Her interests in New Mexico's Catholic crosses and churches paralleled her interests in the region's clouds, mesas, and bones: images and objects that embodied the space, place, and "feel" of the American Southwest. Feeling is what O'Keeffe most sought to paint. Her attention to religious subjects stemmed from her interests in the visibility, and affect, of religion in America.

O'Keeffe's attention to regional religious subjects resonated with other American moderns, including Marsden Hartley. Baptized Anglican in 1877, Hartley sought religious and spiritual connections throughout his life. In his autobiography, he described Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Essays* (1841), a compilation of notes on Transcendentalism, self-reliance, and the "over-soul," as "the holy script" that guided his "thought, feeling, and vision" as a young man. He reminisced about carrying Emerson's book "in his pocket" and "reading it on all occasions, as a priest reads his Latin breviary on all occasions." Further emulating Emerson, who started his career as a Unitarian minister, Hartley considered the priesthood and opined on the "real beauties of a spiritual life" in letters to friends.[49] In 1907, he worked at Greenacre, a spiritual summer school



Figure 1.6. Marsden Hartley, *Raptus*, ca. 1913. Oil on canvas, 39⅜ × 32 in. Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, NH; gift of Paul and Hazel Strand, in memory of Elizabeth McCausland, 1965.4.

Photograph: Eraza Collection / Alamy Stock Photo.

in Maine where "exponents of Buddhism and Brahmanism . . . come in contact with western thought, with the Concord School of Philosophy, with Christian Science, mind cure, latter day temperance teachings and sociology."[50]

Hartley's interests in multiple religious beliefs and practices shaped the course of his modern art. Writing to Stieglitz in 1913, he breathlessly detailed the inspirations shaping "the most modern tendency" of his "cosmic" Cubist-style paintings:

> The sources that have helped me to my newest means of expression are without geography—it is a universal essence—I came to it by way of James's pragmatism—slight touches of Bergson—and directly through the fragments of mysticism that I have found out of Boehme—Eckhardt, Tauler—Suso—and Ruysbroeck and the Bhagavad-Gita. This has brought me to my present means of expression . . . and here I have a series of canvases nearly fifteen 30 × 40—which those who have seen them say is the first expression of mysticism in modern art.[51]

Raptus (1913, figure 1.6) was one of Hartley's mystically informed canvases, a colorful composition evoking the stained-glass interiors of the churches he visited while living in Paris and Berlin from 1912 to 1915. In the center, he printed the word RAPTUS, which stems from the Latin for "seized" and infers

a state of overwhelming emotional excitement. It also references the apocalyptic concept of "the rapture," prophesized by evangelical Protestants as the end times, when true believers "rise up" and are transported to heaven. Citing particular affective and religious states of consciousness, Hartley asserted his visual interests in conveying not only the interior of a sacred space but the felt, or experienced, conditions of religious and spiritual belief. Years later, he related that he first encountered the word "raptus" in a copy of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* that he borrowed from Gertrude Stein. He noted that he was especially inspired by James's account of St. Teresa of Avila, a sixteenth-century Carmelite nun and Spanish mystic who described her rapturous love of God in terms of repeated, and desired, episodes of physical and spiritual pain.[52]

Hartley was a spiritual seeker. Disaffected by mainstream religion, including the faith tradition in which he was raised, Hartley sought self, serenity, and independent forms of modern art in other sacred and mystical cultures. Animated by long-standing American assumptions of spiritual democracy, seeker spirituality surged with the rise of Transcendentalism in the nineteenth century. Emerson, for example, thought of himself as an "endless seeker" and reinvented his personal spirituality by choosing beliefs from multiple religious sources. "We can never see Christianity from the catechism" he admonished in "Circles," an essay included in the book that Hartley carried with him and called his "holy script."[53] Alienated by the limitations of conventional religious institutions, seekers sought diverse spiritual experiences to supplement and strengthen their foremost goals of self-realization and psychic liberation.

For Hartley, this included extensive travel. After reading *On the Spiritual in Art*, he moved to Europe to meet Kandinsky. The "cosmic" Cubism that Hartley soon developed echoed Kandinsky's paintings in style, subject, and attitude. Visiting his studio in Paris, an American journalist and his occultist wife told Hartley, "You have no idea what you are doing—these pictures are full of Kabbalistic signs and symbols." Yet as Charles Eldredge remarks, "For Hartley the goal was not an occult cryptogram, but a suggestion of the spiritual perceived through the self."[54]

Hartley never intended to explain religious belief in his paintings. Rather, he relied on multiple religious sources to express his personal and perceptual states of being. "I have no objectified faith—no creed—no dogma—no philosophy—I have only the attitude of the mystical nature which feeds itself into this quality of things as they appear before me," he told German artist Franz Marc in 1913. Hartley employed a rich lexicon of religious iconography. His 1913 painting *Portrait of Berlin* features crosses, halos, stars, triangles (referencing the Christian trinity), the number "8" (a symbol of infinity in occult circles), and a seated Buddha (figure 1.7). But Hartley was not religious. He wanted to be, he told a niece in 1933, "but it just won't come out."[55]

Marcel Duchamp, the French-born artist who spent much of his career in the United States (becoming an American citizen in 1955), was similarly at-



Figure 1.7. Marsden Hartley, *Portrait of Berlin*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 39¼ × 39⅜ in. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT; transfer from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, gift of Mabel Dodge Luhan to the Marsden Hartley Collection, Yale Collection of American Literature, 1951.60.

tentive to, and ambivalent about, religion. Raised Roman Catholic, Duchamp referenced Catholic Church doctrine and rituals in early paintings, including scenes of First Communion pledges and the third-century Christian martyr, St. Sebastian.[56] Well-versed in mystical literature, Duchamp infused his most significant art project, *The Large Glass* (1915–1923) with allusions to alchemy, tarot, and the fourth dimension, a concept of infinity popularized by both Theosophy and physics in the late nineteenth century.[57] Like his Dada colleague the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who mounted a cast-iron plumbing trap on a wooden miter box and called it *God* (figure 1.8), Duchamp's interests in religion were mostly interrogatory, motivated by modernism's critique of conventions and limitations, its quest for authenticity and felt experience, and its insistence on thinking anew about art and faith.

Duchamp was further motivated by his disenchantment with art's diminished status, as he put it, as mere "market value." Like many modern artists, including Kandinsky, Duchamp had firsthand experience in commercial art. From 1905 to 1910, he made drawings and cartoons for several French humor magazines, such as *Le rire*. "I got ten francs for a quarter page in *Le sourire* and *Le courrier français*, which was going great guns at the time," he later recalled. Duchamp even exhibited some of his sketches at the Salon des Artistes

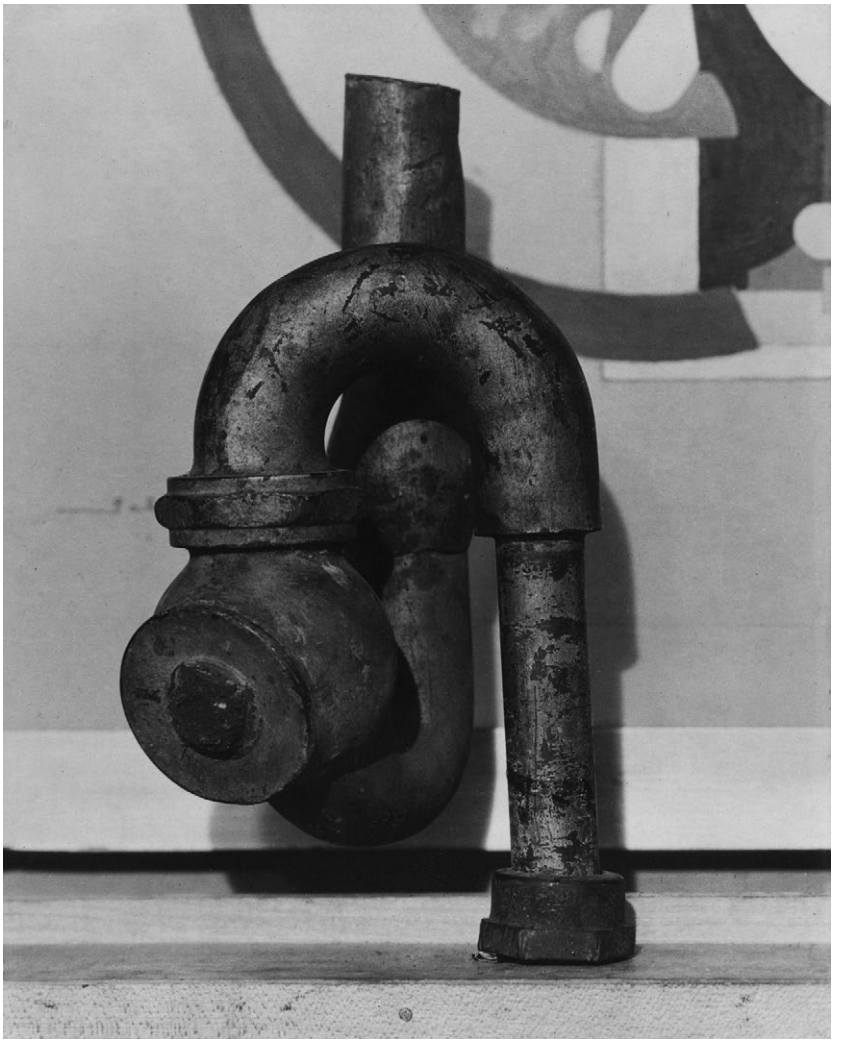


Figure 1.8. Morton Livingston Schamberg, *God*, by Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Morton Schamberg, 1917. Gelatin silver print, 9½ × 7⁹⁄₁₆ in. Museum of Modern Art, New York; Elisha Whittelsey Collection, Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1973, 1973.637.

Image © Museum of Modern Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

Humoristes in 1907 and 1908. His comic magazine drawings presaged a long career dedicated to wordplay and visual humor.[58] But commercial art was limited to market concerns, and Duchamp was interested in modern art's more conceptual and transcendent possibilities. In 1912, he translated passages of *On the Spiritual in Art* into French.[59] Three years later, he began work on *The Large Glass*.

In 1949, at the Western Round Table on Modern Art, a San Francisco symposium that featured modernist movers and shakers in fields ranging from painting and architecture to music and criticism, Duchamp suggested that modern art was an "aesthetic revelation" that "cannot be understood through the intellect, but is felt through an emotion presenting some analogy with a religious faith."[60] Shortly before he died (in 1968), Duchamp confided to writer Calvin Tomkins: "I've decided that art is a habit-forming drug. That's all it is,

for the artist, for the collector, for anybody connected with it. Art has absolutely no existence as veracity, as truth. People speak of it with great, religious reverence, but why should it be so much revered? It's a drug, that's all." Disgusted with how modern art had become a "religion" rather than religious, Duchamp added: "I'm afraid I've become an agnostic in art. I just don't believe in it with all the mystical trimmings. As a drug it's probably very useful for a number of people, very sedative, but as religion, it's not even as good as God."[61] Duchamp worked on *The Large Glass* for eight years and abandoned the project unfinished, unable to create the dynamic "aesthetic revelation" he had once believed modern art could be.

Kandinsky and American Modernism

The American moderns discussed in this book struggled with the same doubts but kept their faith, persevering in their individual efforts to generate spiritually resonant forms of modern art. Like Duchamp, they found a mentor in painter and theorist Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), who declared in *On the Spiritual in Art*: "Painting as an art is not some vague projection into space but a power, so strong and full of purpose that it serves the refinement of the soul."[62]

Intent on making modern art enlightened by personal spiritual experience, Kandinsky looked for guidance to religious currents including Theosophy, Spiritualism, numerology, metaphysics, yoga, pagan mythologies, indigenous Slavic cosmologies, and Christological symbolism. His art was also informed by a spate of apocalyptic prophecies that swept the globe in the early twentieth century. Visiting his studio in Murnau, Germany in 1912, Michael Sadler (who translated *On the Spiritual in Art* into English in 1914) observed:

> On the walls were small pictures on glass, very brightly coloured, of religious subjects mostly—some eighteenth-century Bavarian peasant work, some painted by a man in Murnau, the latter practices the old traditional art, a few (mystic and primitive-looking) by Kandinsky himself . . . He was inclined (though not at all obtrusively) to talk about religious things, & is much interested in mystical books & the lives of the saints. He has had strange experiences of healing by faith.[63]

Raised in a middle-class Russian Orthodox family, Kandinsky taught law at the University of Moscow. He also worked as a commercial artist, designing covers for chocolate boxes and overseeing sales of prints.[64] In 1896, at age thirty, he abandoned his legal career and moved to Munich to study painting. By 1908, he was synthesizing his diverse religious interests in small pictures of churches, crosses, priests, and saints. By 1910, his increasingly abstract canvases alluded to the Book of Revelation's prophetic themes of apocalypse and redemption (figure 1.9). He wrote *On the Spiritual in Art* at this time, arguing



Figure 1.9. Vasily Kandinsky, *Sketch for Composition II*, 1909–10. Oil on canvas, 38⅜ × 51⅝ in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY; Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection.

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for a spiritually infused modern art and explaining how to make it. Opening his treatise with an impassioned rant against the "nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game," Kandinsky specifically cited Theosophy as a "strong agent in the spiritual atmosphere" that "will reach into many hearts now lost in darkness and night."[65] His work as a commercial artist was a vivid reminder of the limitations of art-for-hire. Like the spiritual moderns he inspired, Kandinsky searched for alternative forms of art making in multiple religious realms.

Helena Blavatsky co-founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, proposing a new metaphysics that blended Eastern religions including Buddhism and Hinduism with occult traditions such as alchemy, Kabbalah, and Freemasonry. Theosophy introduced Americans to concepts like karma and reincarnation, and promoted a "harmonial" spirituality based on the "divine spark in man." Named after a Neoplatonic term for divine wisdom, Theosophy challenged the limitations of mainstream religions in anticipation of a new, modern age of spiritual emancipation. The fully realized "spiritual self," Blavatsky counseled, was obstructed only by "the impediments of matter."[66] By the early twentieth century, her religious movement had attracted thousands of believers around the world and forged several spiritual communities in California, including Lomaland (San Diego), Krotona (Hollywood and later Ojai), and Halcyon (Pismo Beach).

Kandinsky was attracted to Theosophy. He read Theosophical texts, attended lectures by Austrian philosopher and Theosophical leader Rudolf Steiner, and appropriated Theosophical concepts in his paintings and drawings. He was especially interested in how Theosophy might guide his intended

synthesis of modern pictorial form, spirituality, and affect. He was deeply attuned, for example, to Theosophical notions of "vibration," or the formative agent—the pure energy—in all matter. In *On the Spiritual in Art*, he argued that modern paintings created spiritual vibrations in the soul.[67]

Kandinsky was also attentive to how Theosophy connected patterns, colors, and emotions. In 1901, Theosophists Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater detailed these associations in *Thought-Forms: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigation*, a study that described—and illustrated—how the color red "indicates anger," how rosy clouds represent "pure affection," how clawlike lines intimate "selfish greed," and so on. Kandinsky appropriated these and other Theosophical concepts in *On the Spiritual in Art*, explaining, for example, how "a picture painted in yellow will always exhale a spiritual warmth" and linking compositional elements with certain feelings.[68]

Theosophy was one of many religions that Kandinsky explored as he sought to develop a spiritually engaged abstract art. Like Hartley, Kandinsky was a spiritual seeker and appropriated the religious sources that best fit his modern art agenda. His spiritual searching and integrative sensibility inspired like-minded American modernists, who viewed *On the Spiritual in Art* as a manifesto and guide. Stieglitz, a photographer, publisher, gallery owner, and one of modern art's strongest advocates in early twentieth-century America, published portions of *On the Spiritual in Art* in the July 1912 issue of his magazine *Camera Work*. After being translated by Sadler and published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin (who retitled it *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*), Kandinsky's book became an American art world bestseller. Stieglitz Circle painters including Hartley, O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, and Max Weber, all drawn to diverse forms of spirituality as inspirations for personal styles of modern art, embraced Kandinsky's exhortation to seek "the inner spirit in outer things."[69]

The American public was introduced to Kandinsky at the 1913 Armory Show in New York, where Stieglitz was so impressed with his 1912 painting *Improvisation 27 (The Garden of Love)* that he bought it for $500. Angered by scathing critiques of the Armory Show's more radical examples of modern art, much of it orchestrated by sensationalist journalists and political opportunists like Teddy Roosevelt—whose "layman's view" of the exhibit included op-eds with phrases like "lunatic fringe" and "European extremists"—Stieglitz vowed that Kandinsky's painting "should stay in America for young workers to see."[70] He told the artist, "I was so insenced [*sic*] at the stupidity of the people who visited the Exhibition, and also more than incen[sed] at the stupidity of most of those in charge of the Exhibition, in not realizing the importance of your picture that I decided to buy it. Thus I knew I might influence the people to look at the picture, which I thought of importance to themselves." In the first draft of his letter, Stieglitz more directly stated: "I knew I might influence opinion, or rather might get the people to use their own eyes."[71] As he told a Newark newspaperman, "Considering the future development of a certain

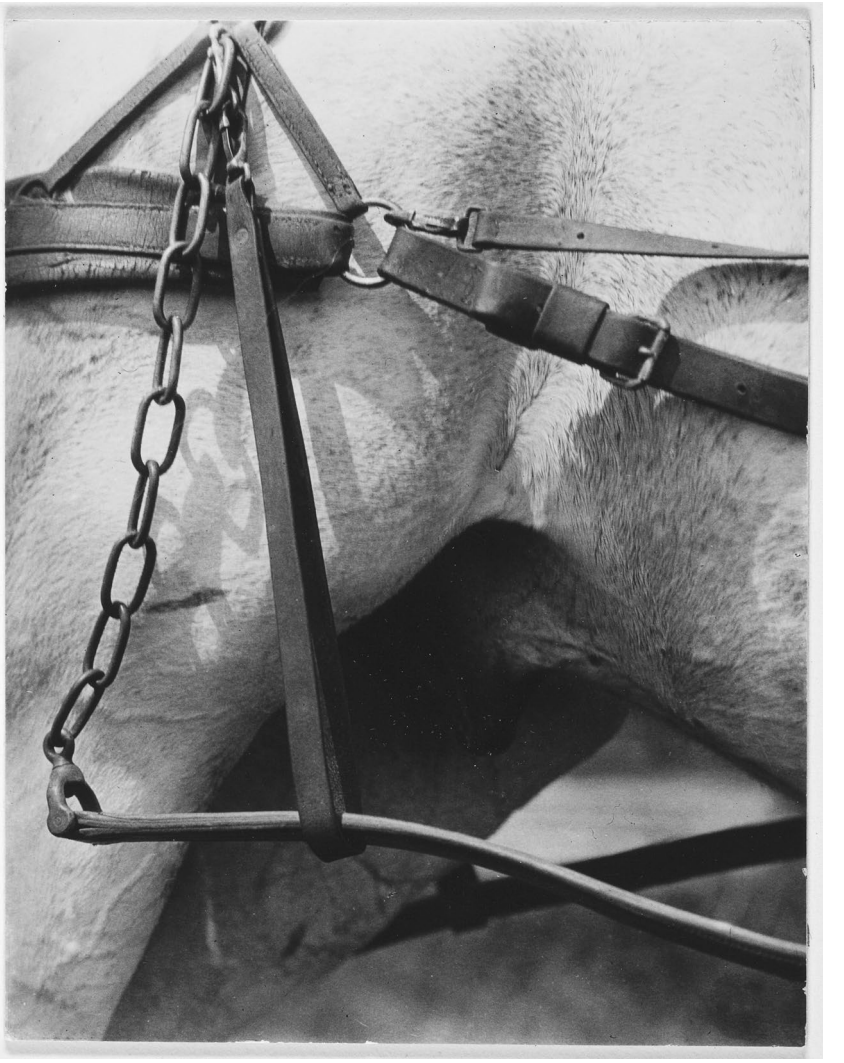


Figure 1.10. Alfred Stieglitz, *Spiritual America: Songs of the Sky A1*, 1923. Gelatin silver print, 4 45/64 × 3 19/32 in. Art Institute of Chicago; Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949.794.

phase of paintings—the Kandinsky was possibly the most important feature in the whole show."[72]

Stieglitz and Kandinsky shared a sense of crisis about Western materialism, which both men believed could only be assuaged by radically different kinds of modern art informed by intuition, experience, and spiritually engaged feeling. Stieglitz's 1923 photograph *Spiritual America*, a close-up of the rear end of a harnessed gelding (a castrated horse), cynically summarized his take on the nation's spiritual impotence (figure 1.10).[73] While he championed Kandinsky as the dominant European in a new, spiritually engaged modern art, Stieglitz expected American artists to follow—and surpass—his lead. Displaying Kandinsky's painting at 291, the modern art gallery he ran on Fifth Avenue from 1905 to 1917, Stieglitz took note of its "influence" on his stable of artists and occasional visitors. When Arthur Dove visited the gallery and re-



Figure 1.11. Alfred Stieglitz, *Equivalent*, 1925. Gelatin silver print, 4 45/64 × 19/32 in. Art Institute of Chicago; Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949.812.

marked, while looking at various drawings by O'Keeffe, "She does what Kandinsky tried to do," Stieglitz became ecstatic.[74]

Beginning in the early 1920s, Stieglitz himself drew on Kandinsky's spiritual model of modern art in dematerialized photographs of clouds that he called *Equivalents* (figure 1.11). He later wrote that he photographed clouds to "put down my philosophy of life—to show that my photographs were not due to subject matter—not to special trees, or faces, or interiors, to special privileges, clouds were there for everyone."[75] Looking at the skies on metaphysical terms and urging other Americans to see them the same way, Stieglitz proposed a spiritually attuned and democratizing approach to modern photography. His aim, he wrote critic Paul Rosenfeld in 1923, was to be "one of the leading spiritual forces of this country."[76]

At New York's Intimate Gallery, which he opened in 1925, Stieglitz spe-

cifically promoted modern American art, including paintings by Hartley and O'Keeffe and his own photographs of clouds, that exemplified a "spiritual American landscape" and a "journey of spiritual enlightenment." Commanding a chair in the corner of the gallery, Stieglitz expounded on "the abstract themes of spiritual freedom and the transcendence of materialistic reality through physical, immediate sensations."[77] During the interwar era, he and other culture brokers including Rosenfeld, Van Wyck Brooks, and Waldo Frank vigorously addressed the subjects of religion and nation, determined to advance a uniquely American "new spirit" in modern art.[78] Although spiritual modernism was motivated by the art and practices of individuals, general perceptions of the United States itself as an exceptionally innovative nation—one where multiple religions were invented, adopted, and repeatedly refashioned—encouraged these motivations.

Chicago lawyer, author, and art collector Arthur Jerome Eddy was similarly enamored with Kandinsky, and ambitious about the course of a spiritually inflected American modernism. His 1914 book *Cubists and Post-Impressionists* was the first survey of modern art written by an American, and the first to discuss Kandinsky. Echoing Kandinsky's anti-materialist philosophy, Eddy wrote that "the key-note of the modern movement in art is *expression of self*: that is, the expression of one's *inner self* as distinguished from the representation of the outer world."[79] Following Eddy's death in 1920, his substantial collection of modern paintings, including Kandinsky's 1913 *Improvisation No. 30 (Cannons)*, was bequeathed to the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1921, American modern Raymond Jonson, then working as a set designer in Chicago, noted in his diary, "I have spent the last two entire days reading and digesting Kandinsky's 'The Arts [*sic*] of Spiritual Harmony.' It is the greatest book concerning art I have ever read . . . To be able to live and actually work in the spiritual is of course a great ideal and one to hope and work for." In the 1930s, Jonson would partner with Agnes Pelton, Emil Bisttram, and Lawren Harris to form the Transcendental Painting Group (TPG) and propose an abstract art "beyond the appearance of the physical world . . . to imaginative realms that are idealistic and spiritual."[80]

During the interwar years, Kandinsky's reputation as the "lodestar for navigating Modernism" was promoted in exhibits of American and European art organized by the Société Anonyme, whose founder, Katherine Dreier, was a Theosophist.[81] Kandinsky's work was also shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Stendhal Art Galleries (Los Angeles), and the Museum of Non-Objective Painting (the precursor of New York's Guggenheim Museum), which held a memorial exhibition of his art in 1945. *On the Spiritual in Art* found a newly appreciative audience among Abstract Expressionists including Norman Lewis, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Rothko. In his 1945 essay "The Plasmic Image," Newman echoed Kandinsky when he stated that the modern artist was especially interested in "world mystery" and "metaphysical secrets." He added: "His art is concerned with the sublime. It is a religious art which through symbols will catch the basic truth of life."[82]

Some scholars contend that Kandinsky's pursuit of nonobjective modernism was prompted by new developments in science, such as Rutherford's theory of atomic disintegration (1902) and Einstein's theory of relativity (1905). Others suggest that Kandinsky was most influenced by Hegelian notions of the phenomenology of consciousness, and that he intended *On the Spiritual in Art* "as a fairly direct response" to the German philosopher's *Aesthetics* (published posthumously, in 1835). The word "Geistige" in the title of Kandinsky's book, for example, was incorrectly translated on "spiritualist" terms in the United States, stimulating a religious reading that overshadowed the Hegelian "idea of spirit" (*Geist*) at the heart of Kandinsky's early theorization of modern art.[83]

Yet Kandinsky's religious interests and references, including mentions throughout *On the Spiritual in Art* of Theosophical principles, cannot be discounted. Nor should they be. Kandinsky embraced multiple sources—philosophical, scientific, and spiritual—in his search for a kind of modern art that transcended the "nightmare of materialism" and revealed a much-desired "inner life." His grand project of nonobjective modernism was confidently inclusive and integrative. Whether or not his ideas about "spirit" were mistranslated, his intimations of the "spiritual" and of spirituality were recognized as such by multiple American moderns. In 1912, explaining his new interests in "intuitive abstraction," Hartley informed Stieglitz: "My first impulses came from the mere suggestion of Kandinsky's book [on] the spiritual in art. Naturally I cannot tell what his theories are completely but the mere title opened up the sensation for me—& from this I proceeded."[84]

The constancy of religion in the United States, and its constant renegotiation, account for Kandinsky's appeal among twentieth-century American artists. Kandinsky's buoyant summons for a spiritually engaged modern art complemented the nation's long-standing interests in spiritual seeking and religious innovation. But Hartley and other American moderns were also drawn to the utopian holism premised in Kandinsky's abstract art project. They were compelled, first, by his conviction that the materialistic, apocalyptic conditions of the modern age desperately needed to be resolved. "My only purpose," Kandinsky explained in *On the Spiritual in Art*, "is to draw attention to this great problem."[85] Second, they were convinced by Kandinsky that new forms of spiritually infused modern art portended emancipatory possibilities for both self and society. These utopian possibilities and their religious origins were downplayed and even disparaged, however, as the history of American modernism was written.

Kandinsky believed in the affective dynamics of modern art. The words "feelings" and "emotions" are numerous in *On the Spiritual in Art*, as are references to specific emotional states such as "fear," "hate," "desperation," "terror," "joy," "jealousy," and, less frequently, "joy." From his upbringing in the Russian Orthodox church and his forays among multiple religions, Kandinsky understood faith as felt experience. The modern art he imagined was spiritually affective, embodying wonder, awe, and mystery. While many Ameri-

can moderns shared these affective expectations about their art, many critics, curators, and historians hesitated to promote modern art on such speculative emotional terms—especially when modern art was routinely dismissed by journalists and politicians as the irrational output of a "lunatic fringe." As the twentieth century unfolded, America's cultural custodians shaped, instead, a different and more measured, or curbed, narrative about American modernism, one that either ignored religion or regarded it with suspicion.

Modernism vs. Religion

"In my corner of the world," theorist Bruno Latour observes, "religion has become impossible to enunciate."[86] *Spiritual Moderns* traces why religion became untenable in twentieth-century intellectual and cultural quarters, and why religious beliefs were rendered invisible in canonical histories of modern American art. As art historian Marcia Brennan asks: "Within the methodologically diverse discourses of modernist art history, with their characteristic embrace of interdisciplinary modalities, why is it that the theoretical discourses of the study of religions have largely been excluded from the conversation?"[87]

One answer is found in the changed status of the academy where art-historical discourse originates. Today, few associate Harvard or Yale or Berkeley with their Christian origins, yet Harvard was formed in 1636 to train Puritan clergy, Yale was organized in 1701 by Congregationalist ministers, and the University of California, Berkeley, was founded in the mid-1800s by New England Congregationalists. By the twentieth century, these and other academic institutions were nondenominational.[88] Conservative columnist William F. Buckley Jr., a practicing Catholic, lambasted the modern university's secular transformation in *God and Man at Yale* (1951), a scathing account of his torturous undergraduate years among Protestant secularists, liberal humanists, and Keynesian "collectivists."[89] Ironically, of course, secular agents in the art world comfortably appropriated religion's symbolic authority to legitimate their own projects. The Museum of Modern Art, for example, became known as a "temple of modernism" and certain strains of modern art, Duchamp scornfully observed, were treated with "great, religious reverence."[90]

Some religious institutions, like the Catholic Church, refused to acquiesce to modern secular rivals. In 1864, Pope Pius IX issued the *Syllabus of Errors* listing liberalism, socialism, and secular education as modern heresies. In 1907, Pope Pius X issued a similar encyclical pillorying modernism as "the synthesis of all heresies."[91] His condemnation followed a decree by the Vatican's Holy Office (basically, a doctrinal advisory board) rebuking sixty-five "propositions" that supposedly undermined Catholic Church dogma, from theories of evolution to burgeoning understandings of faith as felt experience. The Pope denounced these "modernist errors" as "pernicious" threats to Catholic authority. He further rebuked the "boundless effrontery" of modernists who dared to "pervert the eternal concepts of truth" and "destroy the

vital energy of the Church."[92] A series of reprisals were launched that included purging Catholic seminaries and instituting new rules of religious fealty, censorship, and surveillance.

Beginning in 1910, for example, Catholic priests and teachers were required to sign a compulsory "Oath Against Modernism," a practice that continued until 1967. Works by modern authors were placed on the church's "Index of Forbidden Books" and bishops were admonished "never to allow anything to be published by any of their subjects without permission from themselves." A "Council of Vigilance" was set up in Catholic dioceses to "watch most carefully for every trace and sign of Modernism" and to nip "the evil in the bud." A clandestine Vatican cabal called the Sodality of St. Pius V was organized to spy on clergy and laymen suspected of modernist sympathies, and to orchestrate their excommunication.[93]

Sacred art and architecture, on the other hand, were seemingly given more leeway. At the Vatican, galleries housing Catholic religious paintings expanded to include modern art in the mid-1950s. Today, the Vatican's Collection of Modern Religious Art occupies fifty-five rooms in its sprawling museum complex. Likewise, modernist church architecture, such as Le Corbusier's Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France (consecrated in 1955), and Marcel Breuer's Saint John's Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota (1961), steadily gained currency among Catholic worshippers.[94] "Modern art should be given free scope in the due and reverent service of the church and the sacred rites," Pope Pius XII proclaimed in 1947. But, he cautioned, if modern art was a "shock" to "Christian taste, modesty and devotion," it "must be entirely excluded and banished."[95] Catholic antagonism toward modernism remained so pronounced that in 1951 one Dominican priest remarked: "Modern art will have had three enemies: Hitler, Stalin, and the Pope."[96]

Catholic anti-modernism was alarming on multiple levels. It emptied the Catholic Church of critical voices that might have challenged its tolerance for twentieth-century totalitarian regimes and its repugnant denial of clerical sexual abuse. It further codified assumptions that religion and modernism were incompatible. Modernism became increasingly defined in the twentieth century on secular terms: to be modern meant renouncing religion and religious beliefs; to be religious was to be anti-modern. Catholics, in particular, were perceived as anti-moderns.

Assumptions of irreconcilability informed the secularization thesis of modernity, which explained modernism's rise in terms of religion's fall. Following a developmental model of Western civilization, secularization theorists posited religion as immature, irrational, emotional, and primitive—and distinguished modernism as its opposite, the end result of evolutionary progress. Sociologist Max Weber rather woefully conceded in 1918: "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above, all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.'" Modernism, he said, was marked by "the knowledge or belief that . . . there are no mysterious incalculable forces

that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation."[97]

Secularization paradigms of modernity were, of course, more prescriptive than descriptive. Religion did not disappear in modern America and sociological narratives about secularization, including those proposed by Weber, Karl Marx, and Emile Durkheim, came with "certain historical and religious strings."[98] The secularization thesis, Charles Taylor argues, ignored how religion in modern Western and predominantly Christian societies was actually reconfigured, relocated, and "re-enchanted." Updating William James's account of the individual terms of modern religious experience, Taylor considers how religious belief in modern times became a matter of personal choice and self-inquiry. Secularism did not erase or undo religion so much as it transformed the "conditions of belief" and the "experience and search" for the spiritual, both focused on modern concepts of selfhood grounded in freedom and individuality.[99]

Today, in the deconstructionist mindset of multiple modernities and more fully contextualized histories of modernism, the secularization thesis is broadly discredited. But throughout the twentieth century it prevailed among cultural critics who perceived a deep divide between religion and modernism.[100] Generally skeptical about religious institutions and beliefs, modern critics routinely denounced religion as fraudulent, repressive, and violent. Religion was repeatedly cited, for instance, as the root cause and "unreasonable force" motivating the massacres of human history, from prehistoric times to the Holocaust.[101] Modernism, by contrast, was seen as an authenticating form of emancipation from religion's false and destructive control. Henry McBride's critique of O'Keeffe's paintings of Catholic missions and "mystic crosses" was based on these biases. McBride saw O'Keeffe's depiction of regional religious subjects as evidence of her unthinking submission to "religion," and hence her rejection of the personal agency, calculated rationalism, and freedom of expression that he associated with modernism and modern art.

Assumptions of the dissonance or opposition between religion and modernism were prevalent. When T. S. Eliot chose to be baptized in the Church of England in 1927 (thereby abandoning the religion of his father and grandfather, both Unitarian ministers), some members of his modernist cohort were horrified. Virginia Woolf, for example, wrote to a friend:

> I have just had a most shameful and distressing interview with dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic believer in God and immortality, and goes to Church. I was shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there's something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God.[102]

Abstract painter Richard Pousette-Dart, whose canvases aimed to "express the spiritual nature of the universe," recalled that a critic's use of the

word "spiritual" in the late 1930s and 1940s was "near-heresy and dangerous to an artist's career." In 1967, Barnett Newman similarly remarked how spirituality had "become a dirty word." Poet John Giorno, Warhol's lover in the early 1960s, observed that "in New York at that time, being religious was worse than being a fag."[103]

Secular power struggles and Catholic anti-modernism contributed to an anti-religion backlash in modern art criticism. But religious disdain was also pervasive in the mainstream press. Newspapers and "smart" magazines like the *American Mercury*, the *Nation*, and the *New Yorker* mutually exposed religious scandals and shortcomings in the 1920s. These included the 1925 Scopes "monkey trial," which pitted science against biblical infallibility and found a high-school biology teacher guilty for teaching evolution. Newspaper columnist H. L. Mencken described the trial as a "religious orgy" and called the Tennessee town where it took place "a universal joke."[104] A year later, in 1926, Sister Aimee Semple McPherson, an outspoken critic of evolution and hugely popular Pentecostal preacher, mysteriously vanished from a Southern California beach. Journalists uncovered the details and gleefully published stories about how Sister Aimee had staged her own five-week "disappearance-vacation" in Mexico.[105]

Embroiled in scandal, skepticism, and sanctimonious declarations of anti-modernism, religion invited ridicule in the interwar era. McBride's comment about O'Keeffe "getting" religion, like getting a venereal disease, coincided with other cultural observations about religious chicanery—such as *Elmer Gantry* (1927), Sinclair Lewis's best-selling novel about a huckster preacher. Modeled on real-life evangelicals Billy Sunday, a professional baseball player turned Christian crusader, and Sister Aimee, whose Foursquare Gospel ministry drew thousands to her Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, *Elmer Gantry*'s account of religious hypocrisy was hailed by critics for its "almost too literal truth."[106] Picked as the main selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, denounced by religious conservatives, and banned in Boston, Lewis's satirical revelation of "the dangers of the Methodist tyranny," as Mencken put it in the *American Mercury*, exemplified a cultural skepticism about religion that was similarly espoused by modern art critics from McBride to Clement Greenberg.[107]

Greenberg vs. Religion

Beginning with his 1939 *Partisan Review* essay on avant-garde art and the problem of kitsch, Greenberg prescribed both the stylistic and historical parameters of American modernism on deeply secular terms. Like Kandinsky and Stieglitz, Greenberg believed that modern art was in crisis: especially corrupted, he wrote, by the "gigantic apparition" and "enormous profits" of kitsch, an "ersatz culture" of popular middlebrow and commercial media. Kitsch was banal and sentimental, the absolute antithesis of what Greenberg considered the "true culture" of art. Worse, kitsch was politically manipulative. Its "encour-

agement," he wrote, was "merely another of the inexpensive ways in which totalitarian regimes seek to ingratiate themselves with their subjects."[108] Unlike Kandinsky and Stieglitz, however, Greenberg responded to this crisis by developing a reductive model of modernism informed by secularization theories, formalism, and American exceptionalism.

Greenberg's ideal modern art was autonomous and pure: untainted by popular, folk, or mass cultures, "uninflated," he insisted in 1949, by "illegitimate content—no religion or mysticism or political certainties."[109] He was the critical heir of "art for art's sake," the rallying cry of a nineteenth-century European avant-garde that challenged the authority of church and state by demanding aesthetic autonomy and artistic independence. Greenberg insisted that the value and meaning of modern art was located wholly in its form: in compositional elements such as color, line, size, and shape for painting, and mass, scale, and volume for sculpture. Authentic modern art, he argued, was inherently self-absorbed and self-critical. It was also progressively abstract. Following Hegelian notions of historical or evolutionary development, Greenberg's trajectory of modern art extended from an infancy of naturalistic realism to a maturation represented by nonobjective styles such as Abstract Expressionism, which he especially promoted.

He especially backed modern American painting that was turbulent and big: beefy, large-scale canvases filled "all-over" with sweeping brushstrokes and freewheeling splotches, from Jackson Pollock's drips to Willem de Kooning's slashes. In 1965, Robert Motherwell commented on the effect of his own monumentally scaled canvases:

> The large format, at one blow, changed the century-long tendency of the French to domesticize modern painting, to make it intimate . . . someday, when we no longer threaten our contemporaries, someone will write our Iliad with empathy. One of the great images, like Achilles' shield, should be the housepainter's brush, in the employ of a grand vision.[110]

Abstract Expressionism's immense size and potent, vigorous gestures, in other words, claimed specifically American—and especially masculine—cultural authority, aggressively challenging the postwar legitimacy of a "domesticized" European avant-garde.

Greenberg's ideal modern art was also exceptionally American. In essay after essay, he took issue with European moderns and championed a mid-twentieth-century American avant-garde. As he declared: "The closed-form canon—the canon of the profiled, circumscribed shape—as established by Matisse, Picasso, Mondrian, and Miró—seems less and less able to incorporate contemporary feeling."[111] Greenberg heralded instead the freedom of movement implied in the open lines, spontaneous brushwork, and poured colors of American moderns such as Motherwell, Pollock, Rothko, and Morris Louis. In 1948, he asserted: "The level of American art has risen in the last

five years, with the emergence of new talents so full of energy and content as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, David Smith . . . the main premises of western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power."[112]

These assertions were attached to assumptions of exceptional American character traits such as individualism, freedom, and self-expression. During the Cold War, these venerated attributes were repeatedly contrasted with their opposites in postwar Communist countries, and also with the previous political cultures of New Deal liberalism and Popular Front radicalism.[113] Greenberg's myopic view of modern American art actually paralleled mainstream beliefs about postwar America's economic and political supremacy.

His disdain for religion was related. Born in the Bronx (in 1909), the eldest son of Lithuanian-Polish Jews, Greenberg struggled with expectations of cultural and national assimilation. Anti-Semitism was pervasive in mid-twentieth-century America. Jews were denied full access to higher education (Ivy League quotas restricting Jewish admissions existed through the 1940s), barred from certain jobs, and discriminated against in housing (restrictive real-estate covenants were protected by law until 1948). They were also widely disliked: a 1938 Gallup poll found that 50 percent of Americans held a "low-opinion" of Jews.[114] In a modern American art world directed by the upper echelons of mostly WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) society, Greenberg was an outlier. Desires to assimilate yielded a kind of art criticism that marginalized ethnic, racial, and religious differences in deference to a heterogeneous modernism established in the media experimentation and "signature style" of its individual makers. The fact that this heterogeneity was aligned, of course, with dominant or mainstream cultural and political interests—and with various avant-garde art forms like Abstract Expressionism—was the subtext of Greenberg's assimilative "America First" version of modernism.[115]

He did not entirely evade Jewish subjectivity. As an editor at *Commentary*, a monthly magazine published by the American Jewish Committee, Greenberg repeatedly judged Jewishness. He wrote articles on literary Jews like Kafka and reviewed books on Yiddish humor. His critical position on kitsch, Thierry de Duve suggests, was grounded in the threat it posed to "otherness," including his own Jewishness. But Greenberg minimized and even chastised Judaism, cautioning that "Jewish chauvinism" and "Jewish separatism" threatened the "self-realization" that he privileged in postwar American modernism.[116] In a 1946 review of "mystical" modern Hyman Bloom, a Boston-based artist "attracted to Jewish motifs," Greenberg rebuked the "superficial execution and gratuitous flourishes" of his paintings and declared, "I do not think that Bloom's expressionism offers great possibilities for the future."[117] He advised other American moderns such as Rothko and Morris Louis to suppress references to Jewish experience in their Abstract Expressionist paintings. Fears of anti-Semitism led some artists to distance themselves from their Jewish heritage: Rothko changed his name from Marcus Yakovlevich Rothkovitz in 1938;

Philip Guston changed his name from Goldstein in 1935; Larry Rivers changed his name from Yitzroch Loiza Grossberg in 1940.[118]

Greenberg's secular defense of postwar American modernism also stemmed from how modern art was typically savaged in popular culture. In 1949, *Life* described Pollock's painting style as "doodling"; in 1956, *Time* nicknamed him "Jack the Dripper."[119] Modern art was further ridiculed on religious terms. In his best-selling book *Mona Lisa's Mustache* (1947), mid-century tastemaker Terence H. Robsjohn-Gibbings identified a sinister conspiracy in which modernism was the "by-product of astral manifestation as revealed by Theosophy, spiritualism, and occultism." Robsjohn-Gibbings also alleged that the odious politics of the Third Reich were derived in part from Hitler's belief in mysticism, astrology, and the occult.[120] In a withering review in the *Nation* titled "Calling All Philistines," Greenberg skewered *Mona Lisa's Mustache*, denouncing its "banal simple-mindedness," "mumbo-jumbo," and "total vulgarity." He granted, however, that there was a "twisted bit of half-truth" to Robsjohn-Gibbings's claim that certain kinds of modern art, especially the modern art of Europeans such as Kandinsky, were aligned with "magic, dictatorship, and Madame Blavatsky."[121]

In his critical construction of a pure, self-engaged, and explicitly *American* modern art, Greenberg rendered religion—from Judaism and Theosophy to occultism and Buddhism—irrelevant "mumbo-jumbo." He was not alone: art critics including Meyer Schapiro also decried postwar America's "recurrent interest in religion," arguing that "as long as most men are subject to authority and fear, the religious ideas will continue to exercise a strong attraction and will also be used as an instrument of power." Although postwar American moderns including Isamu Noguchi, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Sam Francis, and Ad Reinhardt were interested in and in some cases followers of different religions, critics downplayed or dismissed religion as any kind of influence on their art.[122]

American Moderns and Religion

Some mid-century moderns challenged this critical reduction of their art. In 1943, Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb sent a letter to the *New York Times* complaining that the "easy program notes" of formalist art criticism obscured the "aesthetic beliefs" of modern painters like themselves, beliefs that included "adventure into an unknown world," attention to "tragic and timeless" subjects, and "spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art." Barnett Newman similarly observed: "Art critics and aestheticians have been constantly concerned with the plastic elements in painting the sculpture. This attitude . . . treats pictures and sculpture as if they were objects. The spiritual content of a work of art . . . has been ignored."[123] While formalism dominated postwar cultural criticism, many American moderns were drawn to religious issues, influences, experiences, and needs. In the 1950s, for instance, Gottlieb designed

a Torah ark curtain for Congregation B'nai Israel in Milburn, New Jersey, and stained-glass windows for an Orthodox synagogue in Brooklyn. "One of the most puzzling paradoxes of twentieth-century cultural interpretation," writes Mark Taylor, "is that, while theologians, philosophers of religion, and art critics deny or suppress the religious significance of the visual arts, many of the leading modern artists insist that their work cannot be understood apart from religious questions and spiritual issues."[124]

Spiritual Moderns recovers these religious questions and issues and contextualizes their omission in the history of twentieth-century modern American art. Theorizing the subjects of modern art and religion begins with discarding limiting assumptions about both, especially assumptions regarding their opposition. This study focuses on more germane considerations of the material and visual dimensions of religious belief, the felt life of faith, and the affective dynamics of art.[125] Working with biographical materials, social history methods, theories about affect, and the iconographic and structural tools of art history, it traces the relationships between religious belief and American modernism. Considering a stylistic range of modern American artists who were religious, it looks at the religious institutions that shaped their faiths, including the churches they grew up in and the beliefs they developed as adults. Examining the tenets of their faiths as expressed in their art and in their writing, including journals, diaries, letters, and essays, *Spiritual Moderns* asks: What did religion mean to Warhol, Cornell, Tobey, and Pelton? How and why does religion matter in the history of American modernism?

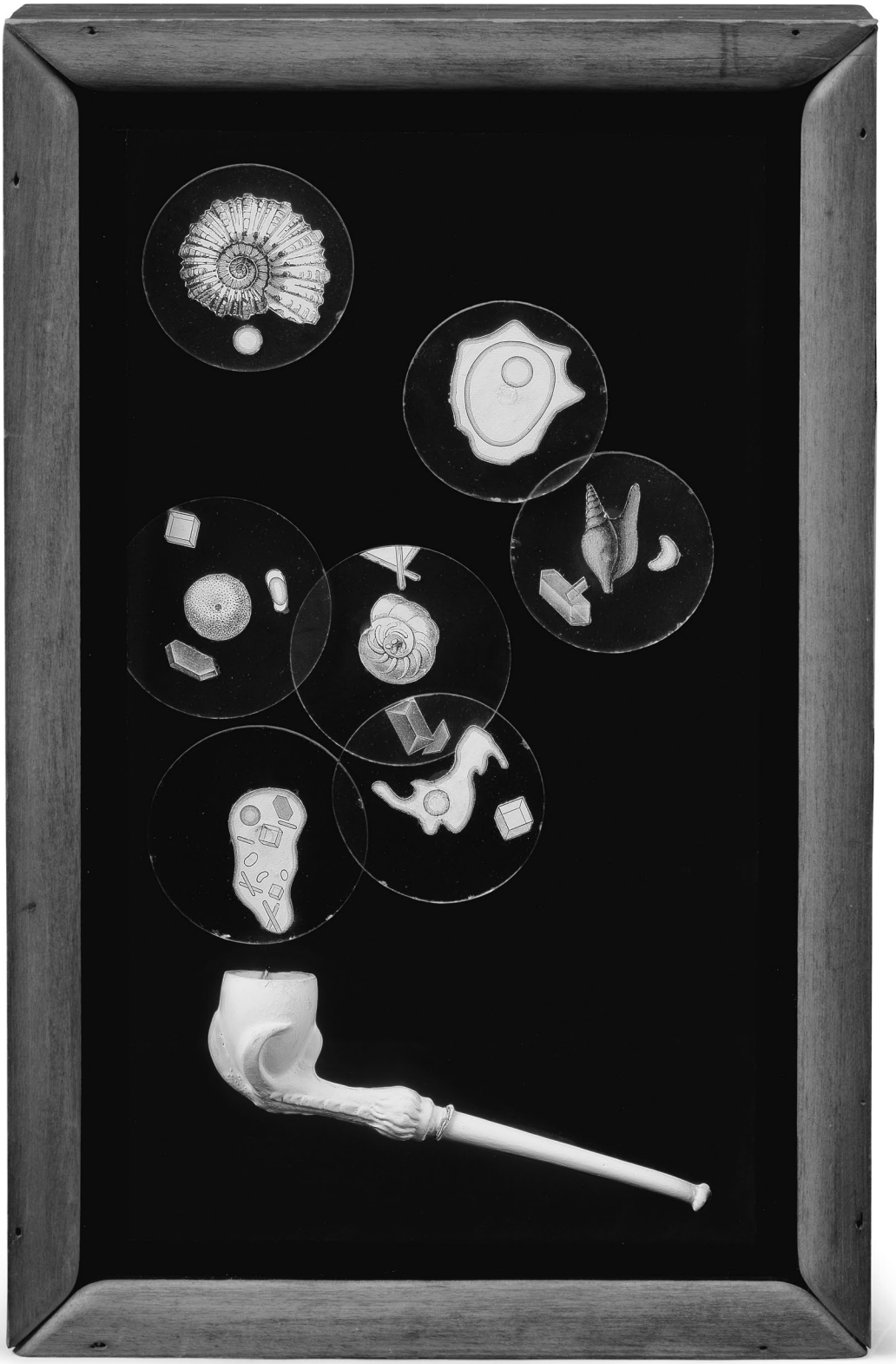
"We tend to oversecularize the avant-garde," Debora Silverman observes in her study of the religious sources that influenced Van Gogh and Gauguin. "In broadening the historical field to include religion as part of a social analysis of modernist art," she adds, "we begin to encounter phenomena missed by the secular model of the avant-garde."[126] Reckoning with religion yields new and different insights about modern American art: how Joseph Cornell's conceptual art affirmed the reality of spirit in Christian Science, how Mark Tobey's "white writing" echoed the "revelation writing" of nineteenth-century Bahá'í calligraphers, how Agnes Pelton's canvases mediated her interests in New Thought and occulture, and how Andy Warhol's Pop portraits were inspired by Byzantine Catholic icons and critiqued Catholic Church intolerance.

Appreciating these insights requires a certain degree of cultural and intellectual openness to competing understandings of American modernism. Including religion in a discussion of modern American art does not imply religious commitment. *Spiritual Moderns* is neither a work of religious apologetics nor a brief about the re-enchantment of art.[127] Rather, it proposes a revised consideration of modernism that focuses on American moderns who were religious. It begins with Joseph Cornell, whose religious interests and beliefs were constituted in enigmatic boxes and collages that corresponded with the "unfoldment" of spiritualized consciousness in Christian Science.

2

Joseph Cornell & Christian Science

"White Magic" Modernism & the Metaphysics of Ephemera



American modern Joseph Cornell (1903–1972) is well known for his idiosyncratic boxes: small sculptural assemblages holding assorted odds and ends. *Soap Bubble Set* (1939), a shallow, velvet-lined wooden box about fourteen inches tall, features a clay pipe emitting seven peculiar bubbles: small, flat circles of glass containing tiny pictures snipped from scientific illustrations (figure 2.1). What might be mistaken as pipe dreams, the fanciful visions of opium smokers, Cornell's bubbles include two sets of collaged images: pictures of amoeba (tiny single-celled organisms with irregular shapes), and pictures of fossil foraminifera (minute ancient species whose calcified shells make up a large core of the earth's biomass). Inside several bubbles, Cornell added small images of geometric prisms similar to the blood crystals illustrated in Otto Funke's *Atlas of Physiological Chemistry* (1853).

Crystalline forms consist of atoms, ions, and molecules and are among the building blocks of matter, the basic units of the natural world. These things can only be seen with a microscope. Arranging highly magnified images on glass disks resembling Petri dishes, Cornell invited viewers to see the contents of the seven bubbles as if looking through the lens of a microscope. Doing so, he called attention to the tools of modern scientific visualization and their presumptions of "mechanical objectivity," or the ways in which science strategizes to record and represent the things of the world with empirical reliability.[1]

Placing things inside bubbles, however, Cornell alluded to their impermanence, their lack of substance. Bubbles are thin spheres of liquid that enclose air or gas. On metaphoric terms, bubbles are all-encompassing habitats and obsessions, places and beliefs that defy or deny reality and eventually pop, or burst. Collaging shape-shifting forms of cellular life with dead stuff—situating the organelle of an amoeba next to a nautilus-type fossil, for example—and displaying both things inside bubbles, Cornell called into question the reliability of our vision, and of scientifically "objective" interpretations of the physical world. Identifying the errors of sensory perception and the ephemerality of matter, he revealed his metaphysical beliefs. Exchanging "the objects of sense for the ideas of Soul" and translating "things into thoughts," he offered a concept of reality based on spiritual perception.[2] Cornell offered, in other words, a visual template of Christian Science.

Featuring disparate and altered images, challenging how we look and what we see, and inviting new ways of thinking about biology, geology, mortality, and the nature of existence, *Soap Bubble Set* epitomizes Cornell's spiritual modernism. Cornell's modern art was especially informed by two sources: Surrealism, a cultural movement that held enormous sway from the 1920s

Figure 2.1. (*facing*) Joseph Cornell, *Soap Bubble Set*, 1939. Wood box construction with wood, clay pipe, printed paper collage, glass, and velvet, 14⅛ × 9 × 2¼ in. Private collection.

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Figure 2.2. Lee Miller, *Object by Joseph Cornell, New York, 1933*, 1933. Gelatin silver print, 8 1/16 × 6 1/8 in. Private collection.

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through the 1940s, and Christian Science, a religion founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879. In 1926, when he was in his early twenties, Cornell joined the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Great Neck, New York. He remained a committed Scientist until his death in 1972, at age sixty-nine.

In 1931, Cornell made his first art: collages of images cut out of nineteenth-century books and journals, including scientific atlases like Funke's. He began showing his work at the Julien Levy Gallery, which represented artists such as Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Mina Loy, Dora Maar, and Man Ray. Cornell's 1939 *Soap Bubble Set* bears some resemblance to Man Ray's *What We All Lack*, a Surrealist sculpture (first made in 1927) that featured a glass ball balanced on the bowl of a clay pipe and the words "what we all lack" ("Ce qui manque à nous tous") handwritten on its stem, referencing a quote by Friedrich Engels on the importance of dialectical analysis.[3] In 1932, Cornell's first solo show at Levy's gallery featured bell jars (glass vitrines used in science experiments to create a vacuum), which he stuffed with mannequin hands, dolls' heads, needles and thread, paper roses, mirrors, and wine glasses (figure 2.2).[4]

Cornell soon became a familiar figure in certain New York art circles. In 1933, Levy hired Lee Miller to take professional studio photographs of Cornell's bell jars, and Cornell gifted some of the photographs to Duchamp and to



Figure 2.3. Lee Miller, *Joseph Cornell—New York, 1933*, 1933. Black and white photograph (posthumous print), 15 35/64 × 11 47/64 in., paper, image size 11 31/32 × 10 in. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh; purchased with help from the Patrons of the National Galleries of Scotland, 2007, GMA 4982.

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Surrealist father figure André Breton.[5] Miller also photographed Cornell in a series of Surrealist portraits, posing him with a toy sailboat featuring a disk of butterflies pinned to its mast and a mainsail made from a mane of long blonde hair (figure 2.3). Turning his head to the side so that the "mane cascading from the mast" seemed to be his own, Miller hinted at the "gender uncertainty" that Cornell evoked. With his gaunt build and quiet manner, his infatuation with female ballerinas, actresses, and opera stars—realized in multiple art projects from the 1930s through the 1960s—and his "firm friendships in New York's homosexual artistic community," Cornell's sexual identity did not readily conform to the heteronormative standards of the day.[6]

In 1936, now also making box constructions, Cornell was included in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, a landmark exhibition that was organized by New York's Museum of Modern Art and that traveled to six other institutions. His first *Soap Bubble Set* was illustrated in the show's exhibition catalogue alongside two paintings by Dalí, Surrealism's best-known artist.[7] In the 1940s, Cornell was affiliated with Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery on West 57th Street. Featured in both group and solo shows throughout the 1950s and 1960s at the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Walker Art Center, Cornell's visibility and reputation as an American modern increased.[8]

Cornell never went to art school and had no particular facility for drawing or painting; when his friend the artist Roberto Matta, whom he first met in

1942, offered to give him drawing lessons, he refused.[9] He was not untalented, however, nor was he an artistic recluse. During the 1930s, he worked at a commercial textile studio owned and operated by Ethel Traphagen, an illustrator and designer who ran New York's leading fashion institute during the interwar era. During the 1940s and 1950s, Cornell worked as a layout artist for both glossy mainstream magazines like *Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle, Town and Country*, and *Vogue*, and more avant-garde periodicals including *Dance Index* and *View*. Cornell translated his commercial skills into a modern art of collage and assemblage, fabricating two- and three-dimensional pictures and objects out of found, or already made, materials. Working in the basement of a modest suburban house on Utopia Parkway in Queens, Cornell made art out of things he collected—books, magazines, maps, engravings, photographs, reels of film, sheet music, driftwood, sand, seashells, leaves, pipes, glass bottles, dolls, marbles, cork balls, metal rings. He reassembled them in serial projects focused on select subjects including soap bubbles, movie stars, ballerinas, children, opera, hotels, pharmacies, night skies, and aviaries.

Over a span of four decades, drawing on Surrealism's creative impulses and conceptualizing Christian Science's credo of spiritualized consciousness, Cornell made hundreds of works in media ranging from collage to film. This chapter considers the paradoxical nature of Cornell's modern art, particularly given his religion's dictum that matter is an illusion of mortal perception, and the only true reality is spiritual reality. Made from things he gleaned in junk stores and antique shops, box constructions like *Soap Bubble Set* mediated the tenets—and tensions—of Cornell's religion, from its metaphysical injunctions against matter to its profession of divine healing.

Christian Science

Christian Science is based on the spiritual ideas that Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) developed after a near-fatal fall on an icy sidewalk in Lynn, Massachusetts. Bedridden and in severe pain, her suffering unalleviated by medical treatment, Eddy turned to a passage in the New Testament describing the healing miracles of Jesus Christ and experienced, she recounted, a complete physical recovery and profound sense of spiritual purpose. "In the year 1866," she later wrote, "I discovered the Christ Science or divine laws of Life, Truth, and named my discovery Christian Science. God had been graciously preparing me during many years for the reception of this final revelation of the absolute divine Principle of scientific mental healing." Focused on Christ's healing ministry, which she believed was Christianity's originating purpose, Eddy explained that her new religion paved "the way of man's salvation from sickness and death."[10]

As opposed to scientific materialism, or the belief that reality is manifest in physical matter, Christian Science asserts that reality is constituted by "divine Mind," which is God, or Spirit. As Eddy wrote: "Spirit diversifies, classifies,

and individualizes all thoughts, which are as eternal as the Mind conceiving them . . . God creates all forms of reality. His thoughts are spiritual realities."[11] Spirit—one of seven Christian Science synonyms for God, along with Principle, Mind, Soul, Life, Truth, and Love, always capitalized—is omnipotent and invisible. God, an androgynous figure referred to as "Father-Mother," is omnipresent, entirely good, and wholly immaterial. Humans are God's perfect spiritual reflection. Matter, sin, disease, and death are considered deviations from the perfection of divine Mind. Matter is not nothing—Christian Science is not a kind of nihilism—but a distortion of reality, a mental misapprehension of the nature of the world. Matter to the Christian Scientist is less about the things of the world than how they are seen.

"There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter . . . matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal," Eddy declared in the "Scientific Statement of Being," a standard repeated at the close of every Christian Science church service. She expounded: "Divine Science, rising above physical theories, excludes matter, resolves *things* into *thoughts*, and replaces the objects of material sense with spiritual ideas."[12] Christian Science religious practice centers on identifying and correcting the imperfect errors of matter in order to reach the spiritual consciousness or "unfoldment" that Eddy described as "boundless bliss." Repeatedly referencing this affective state in his diaries and personal notes, Cornell also aspired to reveal it in his modern art. Based in sensory perception and mechanical objectivity, the bubbles in *Soap Bubble Set* illustrate the distortion of reality, the misconception of matter, that Christian Scientists aim to correct. Rendering them tangible but transitory, Cornell alluded to the reality of spirit that framed the way he saw the world.

Eddy's use of the term "science" was consistent with its general meaning in the nineteenth century as an observable, understandable, and unified system of knowledge. In the specifically "Christian" science she devised, however, that system was divinely inspired. "Science is an emanation of divine Mind," she declared, adding: "It has a spiritual, and not a material origin." While attuned to the scientific paradigms of her age, including theories of evolution, Eddy insisted on their Christian religious origins. Responding to Darwin, for example, she stated: "The true theory of the universe, including man, is not in material history but in spiritual development."[13] Cornell's scientific references in *Soap Bubble Set* and other box sculptures stemmed from the spiritual imperatives at the core of Eddy's "Grand Design of Being."[14]

"Discovery" is also fundamental to Christian Science. Appropriating the word's nineteenth-century association with scientific explorations (such as Darwin's geological surveys), Eddy defined her revelations as religious discoveries and encouraged followers to chart their own spiritual journeys. Cornell took these directives to heart, describing his modern art as an "ecstatic 'voyaging' through endless encounters with old engravings, photographs, books, Baedekers, varia, etc. . . . of enduring significance."[15] He called the dozens of

dossiers, folders, and portfolios that he assembled on select subjects "explorations" and spent an enormous amount of time, sometimes years, curating them.[16] Like Marsden Hartley, Cornell was a spiritual seeker—but his seeking was confined to the metaphysical tenets of Christian Science.

In 1875, Eddy codified her religious teachings in the textbook *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In 1879, she founded the Church of Christ, Scientist. In 1895, the religion's headquarters and Mother Church, a huge building with auditorium seating for eleven hundred people, was officially dedicated in Boston.[17] Christian Science became one of the most successful new religious movements of the era, swelling from a few dozen followers in 1880 to 202,000 members by 1926 (when Cornell joined) and perhaps as many as 350,000 members by 1932.[18] Christian Science churches, many located in prime urban locations, similarly multiplied in number: from 440 in 1901 to 1,624 in 1953. Ranging in style from classical revival and Georgian Colonial to Romanesque and modern, they included some of the more impressive examples of sacred architecture built in the first half of the twentieth century. Unlike other religions discussed in *Spiritual Moderns*, Christian Science is not especially engaged in theological symbolism. Paul Ivey explains, however, that the number seven, referencing Eddy's seven synonyms for God, was appropriated in some churches in the form of seven-pronged candlesticks and seven-pointed stars.[19] Cornell's designation of seven ephemeral bubbles in *Soap Bubble Set* may have been intended as a similar demonstration of the meaning of spirit in his religion.

Church historian Stephen Gottschalk explained that Christian Science satisfied a "longing, expressed in different ways, for religious experience which was vital, immediate, and comprehensible in practical terms . . . which offered demonstration instead of doctrine."[20] Its "boundless bliss" drew many educated, middle-class, and well-heeled Americans including politicians, businessmen, judges, bankers, socialites, artists, and entertainers, for whom its focus on self-improvement seemingly affirmed personal aspirations of upward mobility and professional achievement. Rolf Swensen details that on the West Coast, the church also drew a large contingent of working-class Americans.[21] Centered on healing and redemption, Christian Science was less engaged in issues of social and political reform than other religious movements at the turn of the last century (like the Social Gospel movement of Protestant Christianity). Launched in the "spiritual crisis" of the post–Civil War era, Christian Science's success stemmed from the priority it placed on internalized spiritual discovery and the self-restorative dimensions of belief.

Its popular appeal similarly related to its "process view of deity." As Martin Marty observes, "There is something dynamic, progressive, unfolding about her [Eddy's] concept of 'Father-Mother' God. She makes constant reference to Christ, but not with any static sense that he was a finished being who belonged to history."[22] While Eddy described Christian Science as "the final revelation" of divine healing, it was up to believers to activate their faith and

fulfill her church's curative objectives. Although, like all religions, Christian Science affirmed certain guiding beliefs and values, its teachings were subject to the interpretations of followers. Its integrative and processual terms, and its emphasis on subjective spiritual experience, neatly segued with the similarly evolving and inherently flexible conditions of early twentieth-century American modernism.

Significantly, Christian Science was founded by an American woman at a moment of intense cultural and political debate over gender, autonomy, and power. Eddy, who was raised a Congregationalist, played an important role in promoting women's empowerment and "enlarging the place of women in what was ideologically construed as the male-dominated 'public' sector.'"[23] There are no priests or clergy in Christian Science; reading and prayer are the church's primary devotional practices. Sunday services are conducted by elected members of the church who read aloud from *Science and Health* and the Bible. Wednesday meetings focus on the healing insights of church members. Christian Science offered women leadership positions as practitioners, authorized church professionals who provide spiritual treatment through prayer. Not surprisingly, women were attracted to Christian Science in great numbers. When Cornell joined in the mid-1920s, the church's US membership was more than 87 percent female.[24] Although Eddy was hardly a radical feminist, she believed in gender parity. Underlying her theology was her insistence, she wrote in the 1890s, that men and women were both entitled by "right and birthright to be an heir with Christ and joint heir with Jesus." Her interests in rights were measured against the salvific terms of her revisionist religious movement: Eddy believed that it was through Christian Science that activists and reformers "could find the personal salvation that would allow them to transform and save society as a whole."[25]

The religion she founded considers itself Christian and regards the Bible as sacred scriptural authority. Distinct from mainline Protestantism, however, Christian Science argues that heaven and hell are not literal and that reality springs from the moral and spiritual force of divine Mind. Christian Science, in other words, is a metaphysical religion. Catherine Albanese identifies three major currents of American religion: evangelical Christian, which directs converts to become "born again" and promote the "good news" of their salvation through Christ; liturgical, the "formal, symbolic practice" of mainstream denominations from Catholic to Methodist; and metaphysical, which "turns on an individual's experience of 'mind' (instead of 'heart,' as in evangelicalism)" as the core of their faith.[26] Eddy described Christian Science as "Divine metaphysics" and shaped it as a theology that "enables the learner to demonstrate the divine Principle, upon which Jesus' healing was based, and the sacred rules for its present application to the cure of disease."[27]

Eddy was careful to distinguish "her" metaphysics from others, arguing that the materialist focus of modern mainstream Christianity thwarted what she believed were its original restorative intentions and, by extension, the full

sovereignty of God. "The cardinal point of the difference in my metaphysical system," she wrote, is "that *by knowing the unreality of disease, sin, and death*, you demonstrate the allness of God."[28] Her denial of the reality of matter was not a metaphysical variant on, for example, Hindu cosmology, in which only mind and spirit are real and the tangible world is illusory. Rather, it was an articulation of the implicitly spiritual meaning that Eddy believed she had rediscovered in the Bible and wanted to share with others through the healing ministry of Christian Science.

To its detractors, Christian Science was a cult of "false religious excitement," a "form of insanity," warned Methodist pastor Frank Crane, marked by a "tiresome jumble of involved sentences and cheap platitudes." Mark Twain satirized Eddy's halting prose, with its tortured syntax and strong reliance on metaphor, analogy, ambiguity, and repetition, as "Eddygush" and "Eddymush."[29] Eddy worked on seven revisions of *Science and Health* from 1878 to 1906, and admitted her "difficulty in conveying the teachings of divine Science accurately to human thought" with the "inadequate" tools of language.[30] Devising a religious exposition with intended practical applications, she reconstituted the Calvinism of her religious upbringing in a modern metaphysical gospel of healing. As she told followers in 1901:

> As Christian Scientists you seek to define God to your own consciousness by feeling and applying the nature and practical possibilities of divine Love: to gain the absolute and supreme certainty that Christianity is now what Christ Jesus taught and demonstrated—health, holiness, immortality.[31]

Cornell and Christian Science

The curative appeal of Eddy's holistic new religion was immense: like an estimated 70 percent of those who joined the church in New York in the early twentieth century, Joseph Cornell turned to Christian Science for its promises of healing.[32] Born and raised in Nyack, New York, a small town about thirty miles north of Manhattan, Cornell was baptized Presbyterian. He grew up in a comfortably middle-class, close-knit, well-educated, and culture-friendly family. When his sister Betty showed a talent for drawing, she took classes from Nyack local Edward Hopper. When Cornell was thirteen, however, his father died of a rare blood disease, leaving him, his mother, and his three younger siblings in dire financial straits and forcing their move from Nyack to Queens. In 1921, at age seventeen, Cornell became the family's primary breadwinner, working as a salesman for the William Whitman Company, a wholesale textile firm with offices in Manhattan. He hated the job and was often sick with headaches, stomachaches, insomnia, anxiety attacks, and depression. A co-worker encouraged him to seek relief in Christian Science and after having a "significant healing experience," Cornell joined the church.[33]

Many new religious movements of the era, such as New Thought, similarly

promised to improve health and well-being. But Cornell chose Christian Science. He may have felt welcomed when he discovered his name in *Science and Health*'s glossary, where Eddy identified "Joseph" as "A corporeal mortal; a higher sense of Truth rebuking mortal belief, or error, and showing the immortality and supremacy of Truth; pure affection blessing its enemies."[34] He may have been drawn to Christian Science's female founder and mostly female membership. Tellingly, Cornell did not join a more "manly" Christian church in the 1920s, when best-selling books like *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (1924), written by advertising executive Bruce Barton, promoted "muscular Christianity" and championed Jesus as a hard-charging businessman.[35] Rather, Cornell chose Christian Science. He followed it his entire adult life and applied its theological directives—including the search for "a higher sense of Truth" and the demonstration of "pure affection"—to how he felt, thought, and worked as an artist.

His conversion narrative was typical: Christian Science's early ranks included thousands of aspirational middle-class businessmen—white-collar workers like Cornell—who suffered from various physical and nervous ailments. Many were gripped by the "nationwide, gastrointestinal epidemic" of dyspepsia, known in the early twentieth century as an especially "American Disease" aggravated by poor food, unhealthy eating habits, and the "anxiety and anger" of modern life.[36] Focused on liberating the self from the corporeal bondage of disease and suffering, and on aligning believers with divine Mind, Christian Science offered relief. Thousands of testimonials—illness and restitution narratives—were collected by the church and published in the *Christian Science Journal* (a monthly in-house organ) and in revised editions of *Science and Health* (in a section titled "Fruitage"), providing accounts of the religion's healing efficacy. A week before he died, Cornell testified during a mid-week service that he was "grateful for Christian Science and for membership in our church." In his diary the next day, on December 21, 1972, he wrote, "Thank you Mrs. Eddy."[37]

While Cornell engaged Christian Science's curative theology for his own needs, he was also motivated by the needs of his younger brother Robert, who was born with cerebral palsy in 1910. Physically disabled and confined to a wheelchair, Robert was clever and good natured, educated by tutors at home and adored by his siblings, especially his older brother. Cornell, who never married, was Robert's primary caretaker and lived with him (and their mother) for most of his adult life. He believed, one biographer recounts, that it was his "mission" to watch over his younger brother. Both Robert and Cornell's sister Betty, who worked as a secretary, also became Christian Scientists in the 1920s. Their mother did not.[38]

In 1975, in a memo titled "ERRATA" aimed at correcting a posthumous essay on her brother discussing his religion, Betty wrote: "Christian Science was *not* a 'spiritual strategy' to Joseph—that is a slick phrase but completely meaningless in connection with Joseph. He had an authentic and wonderful physical healing in Christian Science. It was his religion—his basic reality. He

was *never* self-deluded by *any* kind of 'strategy.'"[39] Betty also objected to Dore Ashton's description of Eddy's religious tenets as "fantasies," writing: "The great Christian Science religion was not founded on 'indulgence' in 'fantasies.' Joseph's love of Christian Science was fundamental not fantastic."[40] For Cornell and his siblings, Christian Science was a comprehensive belief system that determined their way of life. Because its beliefs were different from other Christian religions, and were habitually disparaged, its followers often went on the defensive.

Cornell's commitment to his religion was considerable. He attended church services every week, taught Sunday-school classes, worked in several Christian Science reading rooms, and distributed church literature in banks, train stations, and other public venues. In 1952, he co-founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Bayside, New York. He often carried a copy of *Science and Health* with him, made notes in books such as *Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy* (first published in 1945), and mail-ordered a copy of *Legal Rights and Obligations of Christian Scientists under the Laws of the State of New York*.[41] He tracked his religious activities in his diaries, detailing both their ecstatic and more mundane effects. This journal entry from December 1948 is typical:

> finished chores and rested in Grand Central waiting room until church time—elation at looking up at the celestial blue heavens and golden constellations on the ceiling—thought of the Milky Way star dust and scattering of bread crumbs in the morning for the birds at home . . . church service better than average, stayed awake most of the time although did not respond fully.[42]

He read *Science and Health* and the Bible often, absorbing pre-assigned church lessons and praying. On occasion, Cornell also sought Christian Science practitioners.[43] Christian Scientists believe that God alone heals; practitioners are not considered faith healers. Nor is prayer considered a form of praise to or pleading with God. Rather, prayer is how believers demonstrate their "enlightened understanding" of spiritualized consciousness—what Cornell's sister called his "basic reality."[44] Informed by concepts of discovery and correction, Christian Science prayer centers on overcoming "mortal error" and bringing mortal mind into accord with divine Principle: with clearing away confusion, chaos, and discord and discovering, or uncovering, "right mind" (Cornell's phrase) and the path to divine healing.[45]

As a medium of personal spiritual discovery, prayer in Christian Science is typically private and internalized, practiced quietly and alone. As Eddy explained in *Science and Health*, which opens with a seventeen-page chapter on prayer: "To enter into the heart of prayer, the door of the erring senses must be closed. Lips must be mute and materialism silent, that man may have audience with Spirit, the divine Principle, Love, which destroys all error."[46] Although music plays a role in Christian Science church services, silent prayer—or "spiritualizing thought"—is the primary means of communion with divine Mind.

By extension, Christian Science prayer frequently focuses on "watching and working," not as acts of seeing or labor but as metaphorical allusions to "watching out" for negative forces such as sin, suffering, and disease, any of which might upset or reverse spiritual clarity. Prayer, then, is both a meditative mode of transcendence and a demanding practice of vigilance for Christian Scientists. Believers are constantly keeping watch, or looking out, for aberrations and errors, for indications of "deception and mental poisoning."[47] "WATCH WATCH WATCH" Cornell cautioned himself in one 1953 diary entry, a personal plea to stay alert and observant.[48]

Joining Christian Science for its promises of healing, Cornell parsed its tenets of quiet revelation and focused watchfulness in his art and his writing. Cornell wrote constantly on whatever came handy, from old receipts and used envelopes to gallery invitations, letters, and church bulletins. His journals and notes, as well as correspondence with poets and literati including Mina Loy, Marianne Moore, and Charles Henri Ford, are dotted with references to discovery, correction, unfoldment, right mind, "clearing," and "working through," as well as to specific passages from *Science and Health*, the Bible, and "CS" (Christian Science) lectures he attended. In a typical entry from 1947, he quoted Eddy—"From beginning to end, whatever is mortal is composed of material"—and underneath the reference in *Science and Health* added his own words, "antidote to *endless* procession of mortal claims."[49]

While he frequently recorded his physical and mental health in his journals, Cornell seldom dwelled on "troubling moods or free associations which might have revealed origins in current relationships or family history."[50] He rarely explained *why* his head hurt or his stomach ached, or what might be causing his recurrent feelings of anxiety and depression. Given Christian Science's dictate that illness and pain are illusory, he may not have known how to name, or own, these feelings. Instead, Cornell channeled his dreams, daily activities, and general state of being into his religion's focus on prayer, reading, vigilance, and spiritual vision. As he wrote in 1945: "Decided to go out back alone and do some mental work to know the unreality of the claim of pressure at back of head." And in 1947: "A day of mixed strains—familiar depression & exasperation relieved by definite periods of 'clearing' with encouraging feeling of progress."[51] And again in 1948: "Corrected / healed thought about past in the morning light," and "Persistent tenseness relieved fully for the moment with the realization of the significance of Christian Science in its supreme power to meet any human need."[52]

Cornell repeatedly connected his religious sensibilities with his art making. He observed in 1947, for example: "Yesterday worked thru bitter feelings of reversal & got into shape with satisfied sense of accomplishment. Cabinet with music box & lemon crested Cockatoo." And in 1950: "unexpected burst of working with clear thoughts after having shaped up Dovecote #2 with satisfactory results . . . the renewal of yesterday today's progress & the larger aspects of *relating this feeling more in regard to undeveloped pieces like the portfolios*

of Ondine, Crystal Tower, etc. . . . sense of freshness, renewal, creativeness."[53] And in 1957: "reading at church as inspiration to treat HUMEUR VAGABONDE more soundly healthier."[54]

Cornell's commitment to Christian Science has not gone unnoticed by biographers and art historians.[55] Sandra Leonard Starr asserts that Cornell's faith "was the single most important force not only in his life but in his work." Likewise, Charles Simic calls Cornell a "religious artist" who made "holy icons."[56] Such statements overreach. Cornell was first and foremost a modern artist. His religious beliefs, including the reality of spirit and the promise of divine healing, guided his choice of subjects and the media he worked with, the methods he developed, and the modern art he made. Christian Science's emphasis on clarity, on "reversing" errors and restoring order, motivated Cornell's creative self-confidence. It guided his understanding of modern art as both a system of discovery and a practice of correction, whereby he continually reworked his boxes, assemblages, and collages through "countless discardings [and] rearrangements" in order to reach, he wrote, a "satisfactory state."[57] But it was only after he wandered into Julien Levy's gallery in Manhattan in 1931 and saw various examples of Surrealism that Cornell became a modern artist.

Cornell and Surrealism

Cornell was a Christian Scientist for several years before he started to make art. He spent his twenties walking all over New York as a textile samples salesman, at the same time exploring the city's galleries, museums, and theaters and collecting things he discovered in secondhand stores and antique shops in Greenwich Village and Times Square. One early purchase was Marsden Hartley's *Adventures in the Arts* (1921), a book of essays on modern artists and writers that Cornell later recalled the reading of as "a transcendent experience." Although his formal education ended with high school, Cornell read widely in subjects ranging from astronomy and French Symbolist poetry to philosophy, American history, and world religions. During the 1930s, he continued to wander around Manhattan—a kind of rambling that he called "voyaging" and "pilgrimmage" [*sic*] in his diaries—after he, like millions of other Americans, lost his job in the wake of the Great Depression.[58]

In November 1931, Cornell found himself at Julien Levy's recently opened gallery at 602 Madison Avenue. Modeled on Stieglitz's 291, Levy's gallery specialized in modern photography and avant-garde art, especially Surrealism, which Levy had become enamored with while living in Paris in the 1920s. Philip Johnson, his classmate at Harvard, recalled that Levy's New York gallery established itself as "a home for Surrealism in America" and contributed to Surrealism's critical and popular appeal during the 1930s and 1940s. Levy became one of Surrealism's most preeminent dealers, mentoring the artists he represented and arranging lucrative public commissions—like Dalí's *Dream*

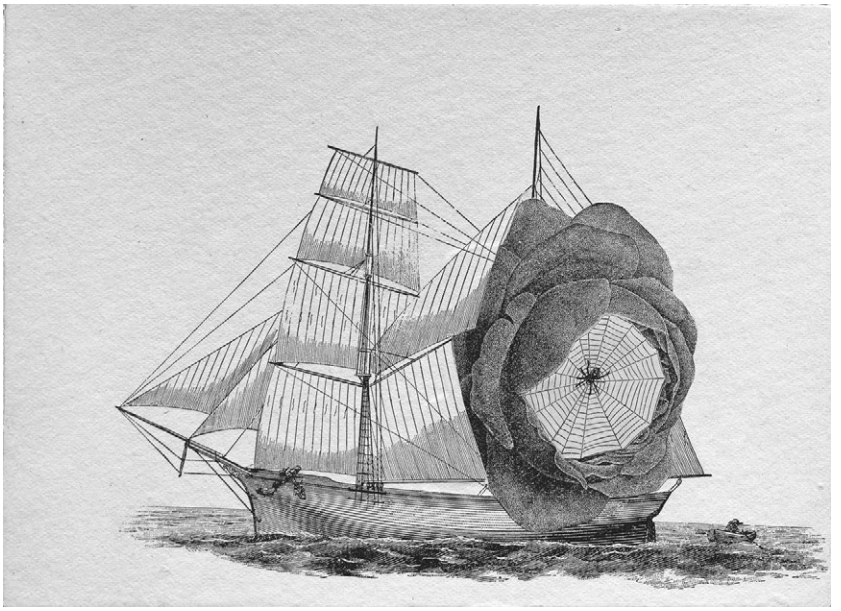


Figure 2.4. Joseph Cornell, *Untitled (Schooner)*, 1931. Photomechanical reproductions on paperboard mounted to paperboard, 4¼ × 5¹³⁄₁₆ in. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest Fund and partial gift from the daughter of June W. Schuster in honor of her mother, 2003. 01.17.

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of Venus pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair.[59] His expansive tastes extended to representing experimental media (showing films by Luis Buñuel, Dalí, and Cornell) and organizing exhibits of commercial art (from film posters to lamp shades), animation cels, costumes, and set designs. The son of a Manhattan real-estate mogul, Levy had the money, property, and art world connections that allowed for such a risky business venture during the Great Depression. When Cornell walked in his door, he was in the throes of organizing the first major shows of Surrealism in America.[60]

Cornell was apparently quite taken with several collages by Max Ernst that Levy had in store. A few weeks later, he returned to the gallery with a few of his own pieces modeled on Ernst's cut-and-paste appropriations of nineteenth-century engravings.[61] One picture featured a two-masted schooner at sea: its mainsail surmounted by a gigantic flower, its petals and pistil (female reproductive organ) commandeered by a spider perched on an enormous web (figure 2.4). A figure in a small dory is seen rowing away on the right.

Levy was impressed and included Cornell's work in his January 1932 show *Surréalisme*, a comprehensive survey that featured all of the movement's major players and showcased one of its eventual icons: Dalí's *Persistence of Memory* (1931). Recognizing Cornell's graphic design skills, Levy asked him to make the cover for the show's announcement. Modifying a picture by French illustrator Louis Poyet that he found in a children's book on science experiments, he produced an offbeat image of a boy blowing the letters to the word "Surréalisme" through what looks like a cake decorating tube (figures 2.5 and 2.6).[62] Cornell's career as a modern artist had begun.

Originating as a literary movement and led by André Breton, Surrealism first found expression in automatic writing and then in mixed-media projects

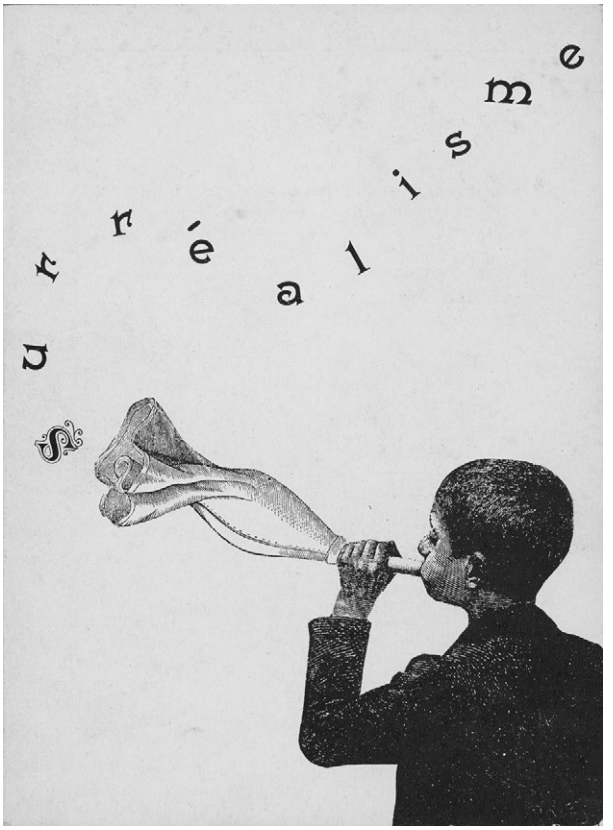


Figure 2.5. Joseph Cornell, design of announcement for *Surréalisme* exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York, January 9–29, 1932. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives, Philadelphia, PA; Julien Levy Gallery records.

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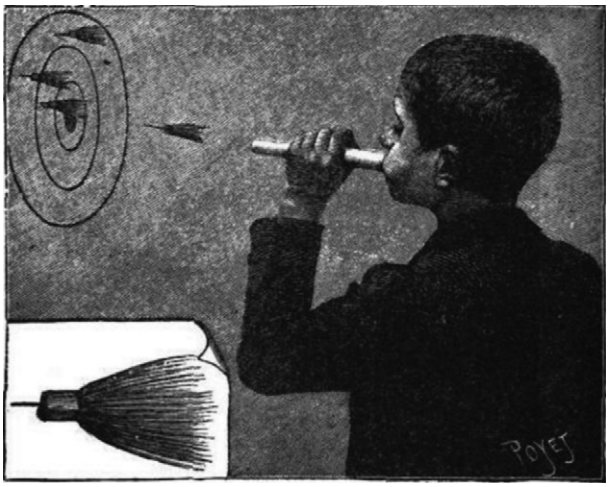


Figure 2.6. Louis Poyet, illustration for "Tir à la sarbacane," in Tom Tit, *La science amusante: Cent nouvelles expériences par Tom Tit*, 8 19/64 × 5 7/10 in. (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1892): 83.

that embraced chance, accident, taboo subjects (like sex, death, and religion), and the arbitrary apposition of materials and media. The Surrealists revered the short-lived poet Isidore Ducasse (1846–1870), who went by the pseudonym Comte de Lautréamont and wrote enigmatic phrases like "the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table," a simile

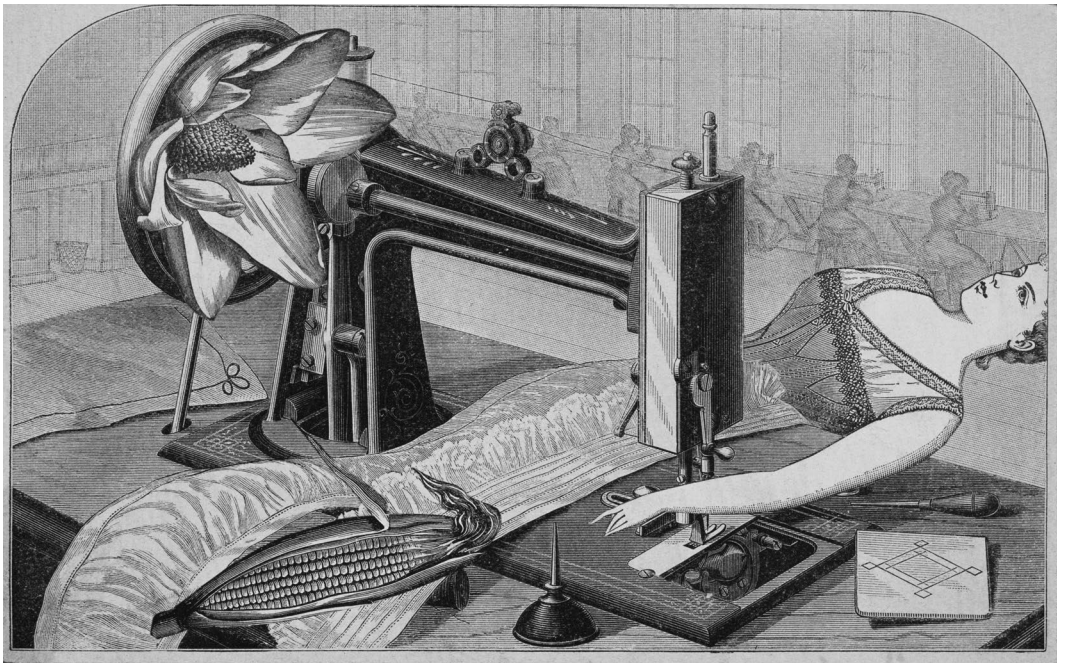


Figure 2.7. Joseph Cornell, *Untitled (Woman and Sewing Machine)*, ca. 1931. Collage on paperboard, 5¼ × 8⅛ in. Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan.

Image: Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka / DNPartcom. © 2022 The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

that ignited their own juxtapositions of unexpected and sometimes disturbing images, objects, and words. Dalí, Ernst, Magritte, Man Ray, Matta, Kurt Seligmann, and Yves Tanguy were among modernists who paid homage to Ducasse in various art projects. Likewise, several of Cornell's early collages featuring random images of sewing machines, corn cobs, flowers, and reclining female figures similarly suggest the inspiration of Surrealism's symbolic godfather (figure 2.7). In 1938, Cornell told his class agent at Phillips Academy (where he had attended high school) that he was "working in the Surrealist vein."[63]

Yet Cornell's modern art sharply deviated from interwar Surrealism's general misogyny and particular fascination (and fetishization) with acts of sexual transgression and psychosexual deviance. Unlike many in the Surrealist cohort, Cornell was largely disinterested in sex and seems a likely member of the "celibate modernism" that, Benjamin Kahan writes, also circulated in twentieth-century American social and cultural life.[64] Cornell adored certain women, especially female performers, and he dedicated many boxes to the movie stars, opera singers, and ballerinas he most revered, including Lauren Bacall, Maria Malibran, and Fanny Cerrito. Whether or not he sublimated sexual desire in his modern art, Cornell's romanticized images of women were platonic, not erotic.[65]

His 1931 collage of a corn cob, a sunflower, and a fully clothed woman laid out under the arm of a sewing machine (and not under its foot, which contains the needle) playfully suggests metaphors of "sowing" and "sewing" more than penetration and mutilation. Having worked as a fabric salesman, Cornell rec-

ognized the sewing machine as "an instrument of fabrication and fantasy," as a constructive and transformative tool of production and consumption.[66] He also recognized the labor of creation, and, in the background of his picture, included an assembly line of female seamstresses attending to their factory sewing machines. In 1937, Cornell included two of his Surrealist sewing-machine-themed collages in the design layout for a *Harper's Bazaar* article titled "The Pulse of Fashion."[67]

Even his untitled collage of a schooner's mainsail supplanted by a flower and a spider web was not an especially ominous Surrealist picture, especially if viewed as an allegory on the errors of "Mortal mind" and "material knowledge." As such, it recalls Eddy's discussion of "the gossamer web of mortal illusion" in *Science and Health*.[68] Gilbert Carpenter, who was Eddy's secretary at one point and an authorized Christian Science practitioner, seems to literally describe Cornell's collage in *500 Watching Points*, a series of metaphysical insights based on Eddy's own words:

> WATCH lest, when you see a spider's web woven over beautiful flowers, you believe the flowers are responsible for the web, or that they have been harmed by it. Error is the spider that man permits to weave a web of falsity in his consciousness, so that false suggestions seem to become part of him.[69]

Surrealism might seem an odd choice of art style for a Christian Scientist. But Cornell was no doubt attracted to the movement's challenge to sensory perception—Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1928–1929), subtitled *This Is Not a Pipe*, comes to mind—and its alternative ideas about reality, both mainstays of his metaphysical belief system. Responding to the chaos and slaughter of World War I, which Breton described as "a cesspool of blood, mud and idiocy," Surrealism critiqued modernity's unchecked attachment to progress, rationalism, and the machine, and counseled a radically different state of being.[70] As Breton proclaimed in 1924: "Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life."[71]

Focused on metaphysical concerns and informed by a deep sense of curative or restorative purpose, Breton exhibited a revelatory zeal akin to that of Mary Baker Eddy. He proposed a new kind of "absolute reality, a surreality" that tapped into dreams, memories, and visions to liberate the mind from both the prohibitive constraints and potentially damaging consequences of modernist fixations on rational thought and materialism.[72] Not surprisingly, Surrealism's intended subversion of social, political, and cultural norms resonated strongly among many disaffected interwar moderns.

Emboldened by his inclusion in Levy's Surrealist stable and enthused by

Breton's declarations about "false" objects and images, Cornell sent Breton one of the photographs that Lee Miller took of his bell jar sculptures (figure 2.2). The photograph depicted the head of a baby doll placed inside a brass cup balanced on the rim of a wine glass. The doll's face is pierced by three needles: one in the forehead, two in the cheeks, each threaded with white string dangling down the sides of the glass.[73] Following Eddy's admonitions regarding the errors of matter and mortal sense—in one passage in *Science and Health* she suggested that "needle-thrusts will not hurt" the mortal who is spiritually awake—Cornell's bell jar was a perfect Surrealist visualization of Christian Science's faith in mind over matter.[74]

Circulating in New York's Surrealist orbit, Cornell gained modern art skills and insights, associates, and income. Much as Ernst's meticulous collages prompted his earliest pictures, the technical finesse of Surrealist pieces like Meret Oppenheim's *Object* (1936), an assemblage featuring a fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon, and similarly fastidious work by Duchamp and Man Ray, probably stimulated Cornell's own glass-paned box constructions, which he started making in 1936. Likewise, Surrealism's reworking of found materials and its overdetermined attention to the synchronicity of chance encounters and coincidences paralleled both Cornell's collecting practices and his strong interest in making modern art that "recaptured," as he emphasized in his writing, "countless elusive fleeting moments."[75]

Cornell's association with Levy's gallery facilitated friendships with other moderns including Duchamp (whom he first met in 1933 at the opening of a Brancusi exhibition), Matta, and Robert Motherwell, with painters Pavel Tchelitchew, Walter Murch, and Dorothea Tanning, critic Parker Tyler, and poet Charles Henri Ford. Levy priced Cornell's collages at $15 to $25 each and sold his first *Soap Bubble Set* to the Wadsworth Athenaeum for $60 in 1938.[76] Sales were modest, further hindered by Cornell's reluctance to part with pieces that he considered in flux and unfinished. To make ends meet, he worked part time selling refrigerators, potting plants in a nursery, and researching and marketing fashion design at Traphagen Commercial Textile Studio, where he was employed from 1934 to 1940.[77] Cornell also designed book covers, including Ford's *ABC's* (1940), worked with innovative graphic designers like Alexander Liberman at *Vogue*, and freelanced for magazines including *View* (1940–1947) and *Dance Index* (1942–1948).[78]

Cornell's proximity to contemporary currents in industrial design and interwar publishing introduced him to techniques that infused his spiritual modernism. Working at Traphagen, he was no doubt familiar with the era's leading "design bible": Alfred Tolmer's how-to manual *Mise en Page: The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out* (1931). An influential primer on modern graphic design, *Mise en Page* (the French term for layout) featured illustrated lessons on photomontage, typography, and collage.[79] Working in commercial illustration, Cornell applied these lessons in innovative ways, brokering a Surrealist style—

conveyed, for instance, in his announcement for Levy's 1932 *Surréalisme* show—that subverted visual and textual conventions and disrupted viewer expectations.

Early twentieth-century advertising, Jackson Lears observes, "refashioned commercial reality by recognizing the open-ended role of imagination in manipulating appearances, winning confidence, and creating values." Consumer desires were "dematerialized," aligned more with symbolic tropes of fantasy and escape, and with intangible and illusive feelings, than with simple (or straightforward) product specifics and their effects.[80] Commercial artists employed multiple pictorial strategies to create "emotional congruity" between products and consumers, from "fade-away" compositions that merged figure and ground to ample use of "blank" spaces that invited viewers to personally imagine the spaces' content and meaning.[81] Mixing type styles and sizes, superimposing copy and image, and depicting disconnected things floating in dreamlike spaces, illustrators freely appropriated Surrealist visual strategies in interwar advertising. Cornell expanded on these strategies in the commercial collages he designed in the 1940s; indeed, Donald Windham, an American novelist who worked with him at *Dance Index*, recalled Cornell as "an experienced professional of the high-powered magazine world."[82]

For *View*'s January 1943 "Americana Fantastica" issue, Cornell defied conventional magazine templates and designed a wraparound cover. Using scraps from his personal "archive of ephemera," he collaged a panoramic photograph of Niagara Falls with smaller pictures of high-wire and trapeze artists, King Kong atop the Empire State Building, Native American chiefs, and a detail from Theodor De Bry's 1596 map of the New World showing Italian explorer Francisco Pizzaro standing on an anchor (figure 2.8).[83] Next to Pizzaro, Cornell inserted an image of vaudeville comedienne Fanny Ward in a short dress and white leather boots, sitting in front of an antique map of the world inscribed with the word "circumferential," a favorite Surrealist term denoting both spatial and geographical outskirts and circuitous ways of speaking.

Along with poems, articles, and art by Ford, Parker Tyler, Kay Sage, Florine Stettheimer, George Platt Lynes, and Helen Levitt, this issue of *View* included a musical score by Virgil Thomson and Cornell's portfolio *The Crystal Cage (Portrait of Berenice)*, a seven-page word-and-image dossier of an imaginary girl scientist and time traveler. It also featured Cornell's *Spent Meteor, Night of Feb. 10, 1843 (For E. A. Poe)*, a photograph of a "reworked" or "corrected" book, propped open on a desk, carved up, and littered with shards of glass, clumps of sand and dirt, and spilled ink (figure 2.9). A quill pen droops off the edge of the book on the right, and the entire tableau is lit by a flickering candle. *Spent Meteor*'s assigned date alludes to Baptist preacher William Miller's prediction that the world would end in 1843. Its title and its contents reference Edgar Allan Poe, the American Gothic poet whom Breton lionized as a "Surrealist in adventure." Cornell's set-up of the cosmic forces seemingly ruining the nineteenth-century writer's desk echoed the apocalyptic stories



Figure 2.8. Joseph Cornell, *View* magazine cover, January 1943. Joseph Cornell Study Center, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

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that Poe wrote following the appearance of several great comets in the 1830s and 1840s, as well as Poe's views on "The Material and Spiritual Universe" in his 1848 prose poem *Eureka*.[84] Although short-lived, *View* is credited with introducing Surrealist themes and subjects to a larger American public. It was an ideal venue for Cornell's expositions on exploration and discovery, and his visualization of the "unreality" of disaster, destruction, and death as premised in Christian Science.

Surrealism was not, of course, Christian, and on several occasions, Cornell expressed his reservations about what he considered its more troubling aspects. As he related to Ford, "I never liked the kind of black magic that Dalí, Breton, etc. go in for—it's always seemed cheap to me."[85] Cornell's goal, he told Levy and reiterated in his personal writing, was to make a modern art of "white magic."[86] As he explained to Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) curator Alfred Barr in a 1936 letter: "I do not share in the subconscious and dream theories of the surrealists . . . I believe that surrealism has healthier possibilities than have been developed."[87] At the time, Barr was putting the finishing touches on *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, which opened at MoMA in December, and Cornell may have believed that the museum director might be particularly receptive to his own religiously informed insights about modern

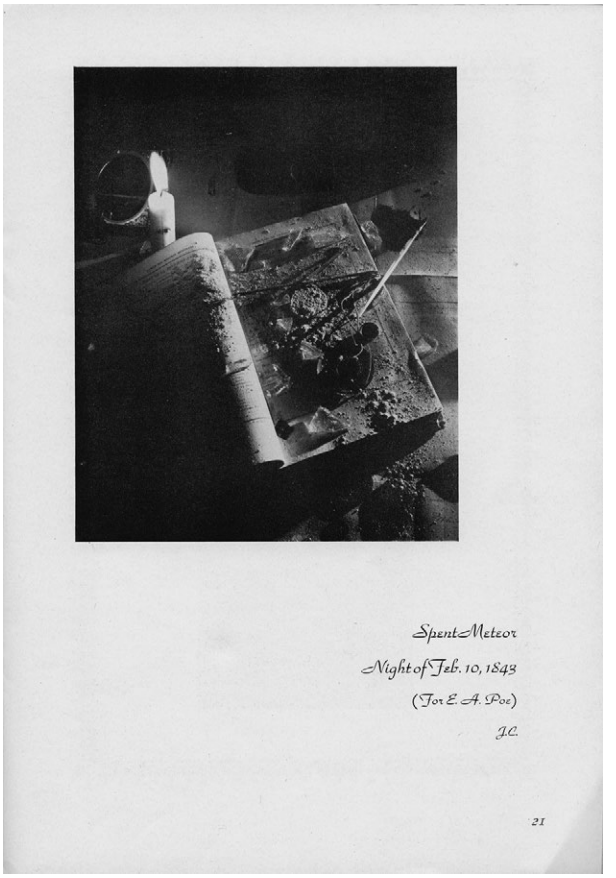


Figure 2.9. Joseph Cornell, *2.14 Spent Meteor, Night of Feb. 10, 1843 (For E. A. Poe)*, *View* magazine, January 1943, p. 21. Joseph Cornell Study Center, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

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art. Barr, the son of a Presbyterian minister, was curator at MoMA for over forty years and sustained interests in the relationships of modern and contemporary art, architecture, and religion throughout his career. His advocacy for modernism was, one biographer suggests, practically evangelical.[88]

Cornell's use of the word "healthier" in his letter to Barr was intentionally self-revealing: he was pointedly alerting Barr that *his* version of Surrealist art was based on the restorative directives of Christian Science—and that it offered a corrective ("possibilities") to what he considered Surrealism's more disturbing manifestations and "false suggestions." Cornell's reference to "white magic" was also telling. Distancing himself from magic's more malevolent associations with witchcraft or sorcery, Cornell's specific reference to "white" magic intimated his interests in the good or positive effects of metaphysical forces, and in making a kind of modern art that was similarly aligned. In the racially coded rhetoric of the day, "whiteness" was considered synonymous in Western culture with "goodness and all that is benign and nonthreatening."[89] Cornell took this understanding of whiteness for granted and never questioned it, or his own racial privilege.

Cornell "may be unique among modern artists," one author remarks, "for

affirming, rather than attacking, a Christian church. His art would have been impossible without a belief-system more comprehensible than the rebellious ideology of Surrealism."[90] Indeed, Cornell's Christian Science beliefs informed two interrelated types of "white magic" modernism: boxes like *Soap Bubble Set* that addressed the errors of matter and mortal senses, and projects like *GC 44* (1944–1970), a vast portfolio of ephemera that aimed to capture the beauty, bliss, grace, and godliness of "spiritualized thought."

Cornell and Mina Loy

Cornell's desire to make a "healthier" kind of Surrealism was shared by another avant-garde artist who was a lifelong follower of Christian Science: the poet-painter Mina Loy (1882–1966). Levy recounted that when Cornell first introduced himself in his gallery in 1931, he announced, "I am a Christian Scientist." Levy responded that this was "quite all right," since his wife Joella Haweis and his mother-in-law, Mina Loy, were also followers of Christian Science.[91] Born in London, the daughter of a Jewish father and an evangelical Christian mother, Loy suffered from frequent illness and devastating personal loss. Her first daughter, Oda, died in 1905 (at age one) of meningitis. In 1909, when Joella was afflicted by polio and was restored to health by a Christian Science practitioner, Loy converted.[92] Like Cornell, Loy embraced Christian Science as a curative theology and drew on her faith throughout her creative practice. Her poem "There Is No Life or Death," published in *Camera Work* in 1914, disclosed her commitment to the religion. In the 1930s, she became one of Cornell's most valued intimates and a modernist role model.[93]

If mostly recognized today as a literary modern, Loy was also a visual artist and produced a substantial body of drawings, paintings, collages, and sculptures. Refusing conventional categories of media, style, or meter, Loy exhibited Symbolist watercolors at the Salon d'Automne, composed free verse with the Futurists, associated with Gertrude Stein and Mabel Dodge in Paris and Florence, mingled in Louise and Walter Arensberg's salon on West 67th Street (befriending Duchamp, Man Ray, and William Carlos Williams, and marrying Dada writer-boxer Arthur Cravan), published her poetry collection *Lunar Baedeker* in 1923, designed lampshades in a French art studio financed by Peggy Guggenheim, and worked on an illustrated novel (*Insel*) for twenty years. While living in the Bowery in the 1940s, she produced a radical body of assemblages made from rags, bottles, egg cartons, food scraps, and other detritus.[94] As Levy's Paris agent, Loy scouted for Surrealist art to show in her son-in-law's gallery and scoured the city's flea markets for things that she and Cornell used in their respective art projects.

In addition to sharing mixed-media sensibilities, Loy and Cornell exchanged letters, gifts, and coded Christian Science insights about modern art. Reflecting on the course of his career in 1946, for example, Cornell confided to Loy, "My Science and healthy thoughts about the unconscious in Surreal-



Figure 2.10. Mina Loy, *Moons I*, 1932. Gouache and tempera on panel, 21 19/64 × 29 19/64 in. Collection of Marie Difilippantonio, Newtown, CT.

Courtesy of Roger L. Conover.

ism (about which I knew nothing) combined to give me extraordinary emotions." In 1950, inspired by an exhibit of Cornell's aviaries (boxes about birds), Loy wrote an essay praising his defiance of Surrealism's "ingenuity of Evil." Expressly referencing Christian Science's metaphysical tenets, she explained: "Cornell, while theoretically adhering to surrealist formula alone has raised it *above* reality, having achieved an incipience of the sublime solidified."[95]

Earlier, Loy had sought to "draw forth incipient form" in a series of paintings depicting ethereal beings floating in cerulean cloudscapes, their hands raised in gestures of awe and gratitude (figures 2.10 and 2.11). Years after seeing them at Levy's gallery, where she had a solo show in early 1933, Cornell reminisced with Loy about the "indelible impressions" of "the sky-blue of your paintings."[96] Sitting in his backyard in Queens one night in 1951, Cornell wrote to Loy: "I could not help but think of you, looking up at the moon, when the first rays of the sun turn its gold into silver. A long time ago, you may remember, you told me that your destiny was ravelled up somehow with the lunar globe."[97]

Cornell appropriated the azure palette of Loy's paintings in various assemblages dating to the later 1930s, including several "daguerreotype objects" featuring a photograph of Loy in a top hat taken by Man Ray around 1920 (figure 2.12).[98] In each of these shallow boxes, Cornell cut out the photo of Loy and posed her likeness against a postcard-like backdrop of starry skies. He then arranged movable shards of colored glass around her body and outside the frame of the box. Seemingly breaking the cover glass that originally sealed and protected daguerreotypes in their small, hinged cases, Cornell fashioned a spiritual portrait of Loy "in rapport with divine Mind." Alluding to the ephemerality of matter and their mutually shared faith in an alternate



Figure 2.11. Mina Loy, *Stars*, ca. 1933. Oil on cardboard, 21⅝ × 25⅝ in. Private collection.

Courtesy of Roger L. Conover.

reality of spirit, and suggesting perhaps Loy's special warmth in an icy world, Cornell named one blue-tinted assemblage after her 1922 poem "Apology of Genius." Reprinted on the announcement for her solo show at Levy's gallery, Loy's poem included these lines:

> In the raw caverns of the Increate
> We forge the dusk of Chaos
> To that imperious jewellery of the Universe
> —the Beautiful—[99]

"Collage = *life*"

Although they are not banned in Christian Science, the visual arts are not considered conduits of faith like icons, altar paintings, and mandalas in other religions. Eddy occasionally mentioned Old Master artists in her writing and decorated her Gilded Age homes with landscape paintings and pictures of Jesus. But she also insisted that "the truest art of Christian Science is to be a Christian Scientist; and it demands more than a Raphael to delineate *this* art."[100] Eddy believed that the materiality of art, from fabric and form to model and representation, distracted people from the "beautiful images of thought" at the center of her metaphysics. As she remonstrated in *Science and Health*: "Material sense never helps mortals to understand Spirit, God," and "what-



Figure 2.12. Joseph Cornell, *"Imperious Jewelry of the Universe" (Lunar Baedeker): Portrait of Mina Loy, Daguerreotype-Object*, 1938. Photograph by Man Ray. Assemblage of silvered glass, glass shards, cut-out printed illustration, gelatin silver print, in artist's frame, 5 3/16 × 4 3/16 × 1 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; 125th anniversary acquisition, Lynne and Harold Honickman gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001, 2001-62-3.

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ever materializes worship hinders man's spiritual growth and keeps him from demonstrating his power over error."[101]

Cornell and Loy negotiated these Christian Science tenets by making modern art that focused on the felt life of spirit and highlighted the errors of matter. "The effects of C.S. are not so much seen as felt," Cornell jotted in his diary in 1952, quoting Eddy.[102] Other, or competing, aesthetic interests in representation, in depicting real-world, real-time things, places, people, and events, or in autobiography, in reflecting on the nature of the self, were supplanted by Eddy's admonition that "the fading forms of matter, the mortal body and material earth, are the fleeting concepts of the human mind."[103]

Aiming to liberate art from the burden of corporeality, Cornell and Loy made modern art that corresponded with the "unfoldment" of spiritualized consciousness. This was a paradoxical enterprise, of course, since both artists worked explicitly *with* material in order to conceptualize the ontological unreality of matter that was the core of their metaphysical religion. They did so in part by engaging modern art practices that disrupted and undermined materiality itself in order to establish new realities: in particular, collage and assemblage. "Collage = *life*" Cornell wrote in a diary entry, an epithet that neatly summarized his spiritual modernism.[104]

Described as the twentieth century's "most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation," collage (from the French *coller*, "to paste") was a stylistic hallmark of both visual and literary modernism: from Picasso's 1912 painting *Still Life with Chair Caning* to the poetry of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams.[105] In 1943, Peggy Guggenheim organized a major exhibit of collage at Art of This Century, showing the work of both "well-established European and American modernists" such as Picasso, Schwitters, Joan Miró, Alexander Calder, Duchamp, Loy, and Cornell, and relative newcomers such as Motherwell and Jackson Pollock. By 1948, Clement Greenberg was lauding collage as "the most succinct and direct single clue to the aesthetic of genuinely modern art."[106] Disrupting conventional notions of originality, authorship, ownership, beauty, and permanence, avant-garde painters and poets alike employed collage's cut-and-paste sensibilities to rearrange and re-present the forms of the known world in alternative ways. Assemblage art like Duchamp's readymades and Cornell's boxes extended these approaches into three dimensions.

Actually, cultural practices of recirculation and reinvention emerged earlier in the nineteenth century, which saw the introduction of an "array of innovations in printing and imaging technology" and a major "expansion of the literary and pictorial market that transformed the publishing industry." By the middle of the nineteenth century, Michael Leja writes, a "new image ecology" materialized, with rising numbers of publishers targeting mass audiences with multiple forms of new media.[107]

Americans gleaned this burgeoning landscape of paper ephemera—printed "scraps" including holiday cards, paper dolls, tickets, invitations, name cards, cartes de visite (photographic calling cards), trade cards, postcards, holy cards, photographs, playbills, labels, newspaper clippings, travel memorabilia, and all manner of advertising—and reworked it into scrapbooks and photo albums. Motivated by desires to "save, organize, and transmit knowledge through a homemade archive," cut-and-paste scrap projects helped their makers cope with the overwhelming amount of information newly available in the modern mass-mediated age. Photocollage, among other nineteenth-century amateur handiwork practices, worked to subdue, discipline, and domesticate "the unruly efflorescence of commercial images."[108] Simultaneously, collaging al-



Figure 2.13. Joseph Cornell, *Untitled*, 1930s. Collage, 9⅞ × 7⅜ in.

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lowed people to "create their own cultural nexus." Importantly, Ellen Gruber Garvey argues, scrapbooking gave marginalized Americans opportunities to author their own, or alternative, personal and historical narratives.[109]

As a modern artist, Cornell adopted similar practices: not to author personal narratives about himself but to conceptualize Christian Science's reality of spirit. His small collages of the early 1930s "corrected" images he appropriated from other sources, such as books on scientific experiments, to conform to Christian Science's metaphysical logic. In the announcement he designed for Levy's 1932 exhibition, for example, Cornell modified Poyet's illustration of a young boy shooting darts from a blowpipe with an image of the same young boy expelling the word "Surréalisme" from a pastry tube. He thus replaced, as per Eddy, "the objects of material sense with spiritual ideas." Likewise, in his untitled collage of a man closely examining a spinning coin—also an image appropriated from Poyet—Cornell revised the scene to show the man wearing a metal colander on his head, suggesting the "holes" inherent in the preoccupation of mortal mind with matter and material concerns like money (figures 2.13 and 2.14). Augmenting the colander with what appear to be three silver bombillas, drinking straws used to strain the leaves and stems of yerba maté and other teas, Cornell literally evoked the process of filtering out everyday distractions and material things in order to reach the spiritualized consciousness premised in Christian Science.

Cornell was, of course, an inveterate collector of material things, and would probably be called a hoarder today. Lynda Hartigan observes that at the time of his death, Cornell's tiny house in Queens was crammed with some three thousand books, as many record albums and vintage films, tens of thousands of paper scraps—letters, diary pages, postage stamps, playbills, pamphlets, and newspaper and magazine clippings—and just as many of the things he used in his art projects: from birds' nests and buttons to clay pipes, doll parts, cordial glasses, marbles, corks, and compasses.[110] Cornell tried to

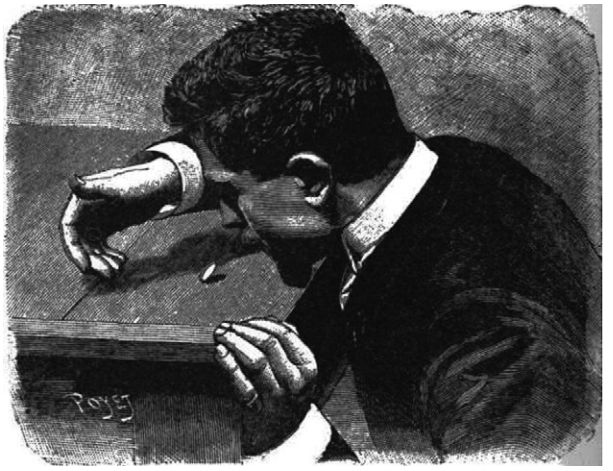


Figure 2.14. Louis Poyet, illustration for "La pièce qui saute," in Tom Tit, *La science amusante: Cent nouvelles expériences par Tom Tit*, 8 19/64 × 5 45/64 in. (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1892): 87.

keep track of this "archival mass" but often lost things: "I had a Mina Loy original to mail you . . . now I can't find it!" he wrote Charles Henri Ford in 1951, grumbling about the "ceaseless flow of ephemera" occupying his house. Cornell worried about his "habit of too much piling up" of what he admitted was a "bewildering confusion of material."[111] But he qualified—and justified—his collecting in two ways: first, as a "method" or technique of making a kind of modern art attuned to his religious beliefs, and second, as a means of "resolving" matter on numinous terms, especially through close attention to what he called the "metaphysics of ephemera."

Cornell's archival impulses and his interests in ordering and understanding material culture echo Walter Benjamin's ambitious and unfinished *Arcades Project*, a "materialist philosophy of history" that excavated Paris's nineteenth-century architectural past in a collage of quotes, reflections, and "exposés" aimed at critiquing the city's modern state.[112] Cornell's collecting practices also share affinities with Warhol's *Time Capsules*: 610 cardboard boxes stuffed with personal papers, fan letters, hospital bracelets, dishes, wigs, sketchbooks, Christmas cards, prayer cards, direct mail, bills, receipts, bank records, and more that the artist saved from the 1970s until his death in 1987.[113]

But Cornell's materialistic explorations cohered around spiritual concerns rather than historical or personal accounts. His notes and diaries recount deep interests in devising a system of modern art that decentered conventional notions of materiality in order to demonstrate "revelation," in particular the revelation of personal experiences and feelings of profound spiritual meaning. Such structural interests were no doubt motivated by the guiding order of his religion, and by Eddy's own labored efforts to legitimize her revelations within the metaphysical system of Christian Science. Contrary to assumptions that Cornell was a self-taught naïf who worked "in the absence of any aesthetic theory," Cornell's journals divulge an anxious preoccupation with fostering, as he wrote, a "method or idea aside from subject matter."[114]

Discussing *GC 44*, for example, Cornell described how the portfolio's abundant materials represented "a 'method' for crystallizing experiences" of exceptional "mystery," "intensity," and "joy and delight." He reflected on *GC 44*'s "dreamlike accumulation" at length, explaining how it corresponded with "standing upon the threshold of the world of authentic visions and being allowed to linger—being plunged into this apocalyptic realm of shining beauty."[115] Reckoning with Christian Science's renunciation of "material sense" and his own problematic addiction to material accumulation, Cornell proposed a modern art of spiritual revelation.

He repeatedly tinkered with its nomenclature, working parts, and iconography, writing copious notes on the connections between his religious beliefs and his art. He considered using symbols to spiritually activate his art, writing, "*CS Lecture*, 'Spiritual teaching must always be taught by symbols'" (a quote from *Science and Health*) and jotting down various "symbol" references such as "symbolic phrases 'I am the vine,'" "Motherwell 'French Symbolism,'" "Light is a symbol of mind," and "Hymn 108, 'as we rise the symbols disappear'" (this last a reference to a popular Christian Science hymn).[116] In one diary entry, he simply wrote "*GC 44* 502:14," citing a passage in *Science and Health* that reads: "The crude forms of human thought take on higher symbols and significations, when scientifically Christian views of the universe appear, illuminating time with the glory of eternity."[117] Cornell specifically linked *GC 44* and Christian Science in another entry titled "*G.C. Cosmos*," in which he noted the "relat.[ion] of C.S. viewpoint (or basis) or relationship to G.C. experiences (Emphaz. [emphasizing] the spirit the warmth comfort & authenticity of the exp.[eriences] to which they apply." Echoing Eddy, he also relayed his frustrations in adequately conveying experiences which "never can be put down in human language."[118]

If Cornell's writing was often as awkward as Eddy's, his artistic ambitions were more transparent: he wanted *GC 44*, among other portfolios and projects, to "recapture" spiritual experiences and feelings. "These experiences," he explained, "find an endless fulfilling in literature, painters' images, items found unexpectedly in newspapers, even sundry stray items that might bring an 'extension,' a renewal of the original magic."[119] In both his collecting and his collage practices, Cornell appropriated quotidian "items" to organize a modern art of spirit. His attention to the symbolic and spiritual nature of things was related: Cornell aimed to "devise a *lingua sacra* where literally everything could acquire a numinous significance."[120]

Except for occasional references to the Ghent Altarpiece in *GC 44* and reproductions of Renaissance paintings of the Christ child in a few late collages, Cornell rarely referenced Christian iconography in his modern art. Nor did he illustrate passages from the Bible or *Science and Health*, although he did include references to "The Great Blondin" in his 1943 portfolio *The Crystal Cage*. Blondin, a French acrobat, was the first tightrope walker to cross Niagara Falls (in 1859), a feat that Eddy described in *Science and Health* as one of mind over

matter: "His belief that he could do it gave his thought-forces, called muscles, their flexibility and power."[121] In collages, assemblages, and explorations like *The Crystal Cage* and *GC 44*, Cornell organized a spiritual modernism that aimed to explain his understanding of and commitment to the abstract metaphysics of Christian Science.

"metaphysics of ephemera"

From collecting ephemera to embracing creative practices like collage and assemblage, the Surrealists were deeply attentive to materiality. Some engaged materials to oppose conventional artistic norms—challenging separated categories of high and low, for example, by strategically mixing fine art and popular culture techniques and subjects. Other Surrealists, Juan Suárez suggests, were drawn to the ambiguity and inscrutability of things not because they wanted to locate their historical or symbolic meaning but because they imagined their "radical alterity": how things might carry out "a subversion of the quotidian" and spark the revolutionary overhaul of modernity that formed the basis of Surrealism's more anarchist ways of thinking. Cornell's art was similarly, Suárez remarks, a "vivid demonstration of the vexing complexity of modern objects."[122] But Cornell's subject was spirit. Driven—as he told Mina Loy—by his "Science and healthy thoughts about the unconscious in Surrealism," Cornell ventured to reveal the "metaphysics of ephemera," a phrase he frequently cited in his diaries to evoke the "transcendent possibilities of the banal."[123]

Cornell's view of the numinosity of things allowed him to collect and collage objects and images within Christian Science's metaphysical frame of mind. A diary entry from 1949 is telling in this regard: "Worked in cellar clearing out musty, mildewed accumulations, dark cluttered corners, etc. Gradually this avoided chore suddenly brought that feeling that has come before of a complete happiness and significance; the debris takes on an exalted aspect."[124] Importantly, Cornell downplayed the physical resilience of these "exalted" things by cultivating an aesthetic of decay: making boxes from weathered wooden frames and working with torn, broken, discarded, and distressed materials, many dating to earlier times and now obsolete—like the antique clay pipe in *Soap Bubble Set*.[125]

Likewise, in the mid-1940s, Cornell began making sandboxes: shallow, rectangular glass-fronted containers filled with shells, driftwood, colored sand, balls, metal rings, and other things. He designed them to be handled, their contents shaken up and then resettled into new and different patterns—sort of like the mechanical toy Etch A Sketch (invented in the late 1950s). Constantly shifting in appearance, the internal instability of Cornell's sandboxes corroborated his conceit that matter perceived by mortal mind was inherently insubstantial and transient: "unreal and temporal," in Eddy's words. Only spirit—represented by the "authentic visions," wondrous experiences, and



Figure 2.15. Joseph Cornell, *Bel Echo Gruyère*, ca. 1939. Painted wood box with foil-covered paperboard bellows, shredded paper, cut-outs from maps and engravings, and cord, 3⅝ × 7¾ in. (diameter). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; gift of the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, 1985.64.42A-B.

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sublime feelings that Cornell aspired to reveal in his boxes and assemblages—was real.

These religious thoughts and themes steered Cornell's modern art from the 1930s through the 1970s. His repeated references, for example, to the force of wind—to the breezy currents powering the spider web mainsail in his 1931 collage, the young boy's breath expelling the word "Surréalisme" in his 1932 announcement for Levy's art gallery, or the bubbles blown from the clay pipe in *Soap Bubble Set*—alluded to the transformative power of divine spirit. The idea of wind as a metaphor for spirit, or for the actions of God, is common in the Bible. Likewise, in *Science and Health*, Eddy described wind as "the might of omnipotence and the movements of God's spiritual government, encompassing all things." The English word "spirit" is itself derived from the Latin *spiritus*, meaning breath.[126] Originating in his religious beliefs, Cornell's recurrent attention to wind and its effects was driven by his interests in symbolizing spirit in everyday life.

Even playful pieces like *Bel Echo Gruyère* (ca. 1939, figure 2.15), which roughly translates into the nonsensical phrase "the beautiful sounds of cheese," signal Cornell's metaphysical interests. This assemblage consists of a small circular box whose lid is decorated with a picture of a dairy cow. Papered inside with a map of Switzerland, the box features a foil-covered triangle, a shape imitating a wedge of the cheese (Gruyère) named after the town in the Swiss Alps where it originated. Resting on a bed of faux straw (shredded paper), the "cheese" triangle is wrapped with a cord whose tag end features another picture of a dairy cow. The triangle is actually a cow-in-a-can noisemaker—a common toy, mass marketed beginning in the 1920s—that "moos" when turned upside down.[127] If aligned with the Surrealist trope of confounding visual expectations—*"this is not a cheese"*—Cornell's assemblage is further informed by his religious belief that mortal perceptions, including sound, are fundamentally illusory: *"This is not a cow."*

In other pieces, Cornell specifically alluded to medicine, the bête noire of



Figure 2.16. Joseph Cornell, *Untitled ("Sure Cure" Pill Box)*, ca. 1931–33. Paper boxes, ½ × 1¾ in. (diameter). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; gift of the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, 1985.64.40.

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Eddy's metaphysics. In a number of untitled pillboxes dating to the 1930s, he replaced drugs (the lid of one small round box reads "SURE CURE for that TIRED FEELING," probably a slogan for caffeine pills) with tiny shells, beads, seeds, rhinestones, colored grains of sand, and pictures of ladybugs and movie stars cut from magazines (figure 2.16). In *Untitled (Pharmacy)* (1942, figure 2.17), he filled a wooden box about the size of a bathroom medicine cabinet with glass apothecary jars containing dried leaves, copper wire, gold paint, a butterfly, shells, glass balls, colored sand, feathers, chunks of rock, wooden dowels, fruit pits, and lace.[128]

Identifying these faux samples of "materia medica" as incongruous tokens of no curative value, Cornell challenged the efficacy of conventional medicine and evoked Eddy's decree that Christian Scientists must "abandon pharmaceutics, and take up ontology,—'the science of real being.'"[129] Likewise, in *Object* (1940), Cornell altered volume 12 of *Bibliothèque du Médecin-Praticien*, a nineteenth-century reference guide for French doctors. He "corrected" its spiritual noncompliance by inserting a darkly painted glass-and-metal coil on the title page and then gluing together the rest of its pages (figure 2.18).[130] Applying a curative spiritual lens to this physician's textbook, Cornell directed viewers to see what he believed was the dark nothingness of conventional medicine.

Such concerns also inform Cornell's box constructions. *Soap Bubble Set* (figure 2.1) was one of a dozen or so similarly themed glass-paned boxes that he made from 1936 through the 1950s, several of them featuring microscopic bits of matter floating in airy, ephemeral spheres. While Cornell enlarged the images of fossil foraminifera and blood and acid fluids to make them visible to viewers, he "corrected" them—and the materialist science they represented—by placing them inside bubbles: elusive forms that burst and disappear, metaphors of insubstantiality and untrustworthiness. A *Soap Bubble Set* shown at Copley Galleries in 1948 was subtitled *Spirit Level*, alluding, Dawn Ades suggests, to "the actions of tilting, adjusting, and straighten-



Figure 2.17. Joseph Cornell, *Untitled (Pharmacy)*, 1943. Mixed media, 15¼ × 12 × 3⅛ in. Private collection.

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ing the box, with the constant possibility of displacing its delicately disposed contents, in what amounts to a mental as well as physical process."[131] *Things* are immaterial in Cornell's metaphysical art, replaced by *thoughts*: a category not just of ideas but also of actions and emotions that approximate spiritual "unfoldment" and "scientific mental healing." However opaque the materiality of his art, Cornell's use of things was predicated on his consideration of their fundamentally spiritual meaning, or possibilities, in Christian Science.

Concepts of correction, healing, and spiritual release also informed Cornell's many boxes dedicated to women. Cornell was repeatedly drawn to women that he only briefly glimpsed and rarely met, including ballerinas, opera singers, and movie stars. Some of them died before he was born, such as Emily Dickinson. Collecting material scraps and pictures of them, he reimagined them in box constructions not as likenesses or fleshy bodies but as spiritual portraits "in rapport with divine Mind." *Custodian—M.M.*, for example,

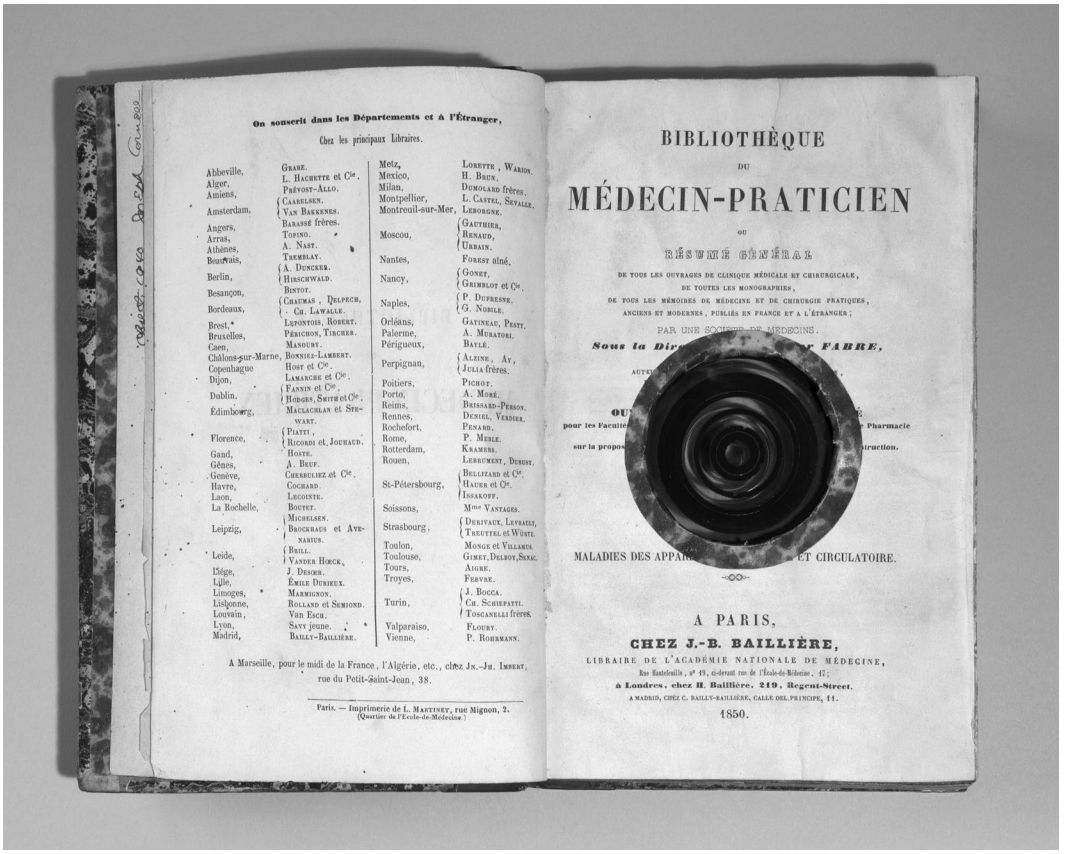


Figure 2.18. Joseph Cornell, *Object*, 1940. Printed publication (*Bibliothéque du Médecin-Praticien ou Résumé Général*, vol. 12 [Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1850]) with interior glued en bloc and altered with marbleized paper, painted clear glass, and metal coil, 8⅞ × 5⅞ × 1½ in. Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, Charlottesville, VA. (Illustrated on p. 181, fig. 62 in Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, and Ecke Bonk, *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp . . . In Resonance* [Houston, TX: Menil Collection, 1998].)

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was made after Marilyn Monroe committed suicide in 1962, and includes a constellation chart, pieces of driftwood, a rubber ball, and a metal ring and chain inside a weathered wooden box (figure 2.19). Its title and contents were consciously symbolic. A Christian Science "custodian," Gilbert Carpenter wrote, was a "master of sickness and error," a spiritual guardian who surmounted problems with "the power of God, the power that holds the universe as you would hold a rubber ball."[132]

Cornell had kept a dossier on Monroe since the mid-1950s and owned a copy of Maurice Zolotow's 1960 biography detailing her childhood in multiple foster homes, her efforts to be respected as more than a blonde bombshell in Hollywood's male-dominated studio system, and her upbringing in Christian Science. The day after her funeral (August 8, 1962), he jotted the phrases "ob-



Figure 2.19. Joseph Cornell, *Custodian—M.M.*, 1963, open view of box construction. Painted wood, paper collage, metal hoop, metal chain, rubber ball, and nails, in painted wood box construction with glass, 18 × 12 × 5⅛ in. Private collection.

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ject for Marilyn Monroe," "already an eternity," and "M.M., How inevitably it becomes *a must* the rapport established via Zolotow (p. 191)."[133] In a later letter to Irving Blum, who organized shows of Cornell's work at his Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, Cornell recalled: "I experienced a totally unexpected revelation in the wake of the tragic passing of Marilyn Monroe . . . There are no words at the moment to convey the spontaneity and naturalness of this unfoldment, although it may take some time for the working out."[134]

Appointing himself Monroe's spiritual caretaker, Cornell created *Custo-*

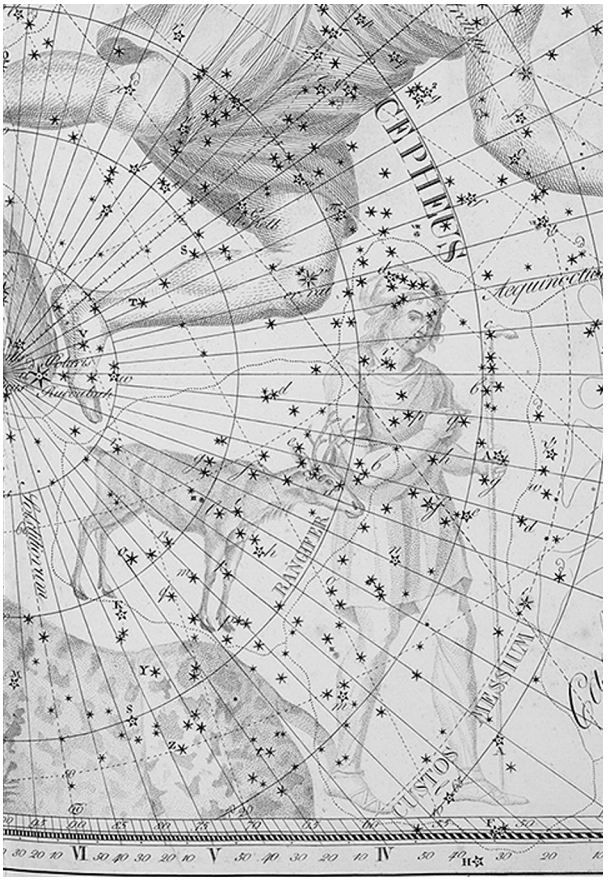


Figure 2.20. Johann Elert Bode, *Uranographia sive astrorum descriptio viginti tabul oeneis incisa ex recentissimis et absolutissimis Astrononmorum observationibus* (Berolini: Apud autorem, 1801), detail of table III, depicting Custos Messium and Rangifer, n.p.

Courtesy of the Linda Hall Library of Science, Engineering, and Technology.

dian—M.M. to "correct" the errors he perceived in her media misrepresentation, and to picture the "spiritual truth of timeless being" that is "eternity" in Christian Science.[135] Using objects made of wood, metal, and rubber to signify the material world, Cornell papered the inside of the box with Chart III of German astronomer Johann Bode's *Uranographia* (1801), the largest star atlas produced during the golden age of celestial cartography.

In particular, Cornell appropriated Bode's map of Custos Messium, the "Harvest Guardian," who explored the northern skies and discovered new stars with Rangifer the reindeer at his side (figure 2.20). Enlightenment-era astronomers aimed to accurately record the stars in celestial atlases but imagined—and named—them on earthly terms; hence, Bode's picture of a shepherd holding a crook, and the herd animal next to him.[136] Envisioning things beyond one's grasp, from blood crystals to comets, was the sort of metaphysical conundrum that Cornell repeatedly toyed with and tried to resolve in his modern art. Rich in references to the stars and the skies beyond, *Custodian—M.M.* was his revelatory "unfoldment" of what he believed Monroe, the movie star, was entitled to in death: an escape from earthly things and the triumph of spiritual "eternity."

Explorations

To be sure, Cornell made plenty of things. His boxes and collages were shown in galleries and sold to collectors and museums, helping him maintain a presence in the art world and generating some income from the art market. And as his reputation as a modern artist increased, curators and collectors asked him to make more and more things. But Cornell's diaries suggest that his preferred practice of art making, and the one to which he devoted the most conceptual and theoretical energy, was the "exploration."[137] Organizing multiple portfolios of prints, photographs, postcards, newspaper clippings, brochures, maps, calendar pages, notes (both handwritten and typed), and other scraps, with each dossier more or less focusing on a particular subject, Cornell aimed to "recapture" particularly affective—and highly elusive—feelings and experiences that symbolized, for him, spiritualized consciousness.

The most elaborate exploration in this regard was *GC 44*, a portfolio of hundreds of items corresponding to his experiences during the summer of 1944, when he worked part time in a garden center (hence "GC") owned by a former Christian Science practitioner.[138] His experiences were neither earth shattering nor traumatic and seem to have consisted mainly of riding his bike from Queens to the nursery and observing ordinary places and things during his trips. Yet they were deeply meaningful to Cornell, who recalled them for years afterward in chance encounters, "vivid flashbacks," and briefly glimpsed sights—an abandoned house, the logo on the side of a truck—to which he ascribed deep symbolic significance.[139]

Despite the brevity and banality of this summer job, Cornell worked on *GC 44* for over twenty-five years, continually adding things to the portfolio and writing and rewriting statements about what it all meant (figures 2.21 and 2.22). In "Approach #1," for example, he explained how *GC 44* crossed "the border line of enchanted realms" and "allowed" him "to remain there in such full consciousness of its splendor." In notes from 1947 he revealed: "*GC 44* is a diary, journal, a repository, laboratory, *picture gallery*, museum, sanctuary, observatory, keepsake. It is the core of a labyrinth, a clearing house for dreams & visions." *GC 44* may have been the pinnacle of Cornell's spiritually attuned modern art: it was "an exercise," he said, "a challenge, an opportunity—toward the difficult process of the recapturing of the atmosphere of many remark.[able] expers.[experiences], the elusive nuance of mood."[140] It was certainly the closest approximation to the essentially conceptual art he aimed to create. As he reminded himself in one of the many statements he wrote (and edited) about the portfolio: "the mere ~~fact~~ act of making anything out of the chaos of notes herein essentialized is enough *just in itself* for the *GC 44*."[141]

Cornell started *GC 44* after Duchamp hired him to assemble his *Boîte-en-valises*, compact leather suitcases filled with miniature reproductions of art Duchamp had made decades earlier, such as *Nude Descending a Staircase*, *The*



Figure 2.21. Joseph Cornell, *GC 44*, 1944–1970. Photomechanical reproductions, photographs, postcards, and typed and handwritten notes. 3½ × 9½ × 11 in. Joseph Cornell Study Center, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

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Large Glass, and various readymades. Duchamp planned to make hundreds of these "portable museums" in both "ordinary" and "deluxe" editions and paid Cornell $20 for every two suitcase-boxes he assembled.[142] Between 1942 and 1946, Cornell put together around eleven deluxe and thirty ordinary *Boîte-en-valises* for Duchamp. During this time he also began work on *GC 44* and *Duchamp Dossier* (ca. 1942–1953), another portfolio of ephemera (including discards from some of the *Boîtes* he assembled) dating to the peak years of their friendship and collaboration.[143]

Duchamp organized his *Boîtes* in typical Duchampian fashion: as an insightful if satirical critique of art world operations and incentives. His was a "small business," he wryly commented to critic Calvin Tomkins.[144] Cornell's artistic explorations were never so snarky, or pragmatic. Although inspired by Duchamp to similarly imagine *GC 44* as a "museum without walls," Cornell was more ambivalent about the public and mercantile nature of his work.[145] Aspiring to a "white magic" that revealed the metaphysics of ephemera and the reality of spirit, Cornell's modern art was attuned to specific religious meanings that he did not easily or openly clarify. His journals and diary pages, and a basic understanding of Christian Science, help decipher Cornell's intended focus on spirit and spiritual experiences. Without these codes or clues, viewers responded to his cryptic art in a number of different ways, some of which Cornell found frustrating. In a 1954 diary entry discussing an aviary assemblage he was working on, he encouraged himself to stay the course: to make art "in the pure spirit of creative joy vs. too much thought of audience

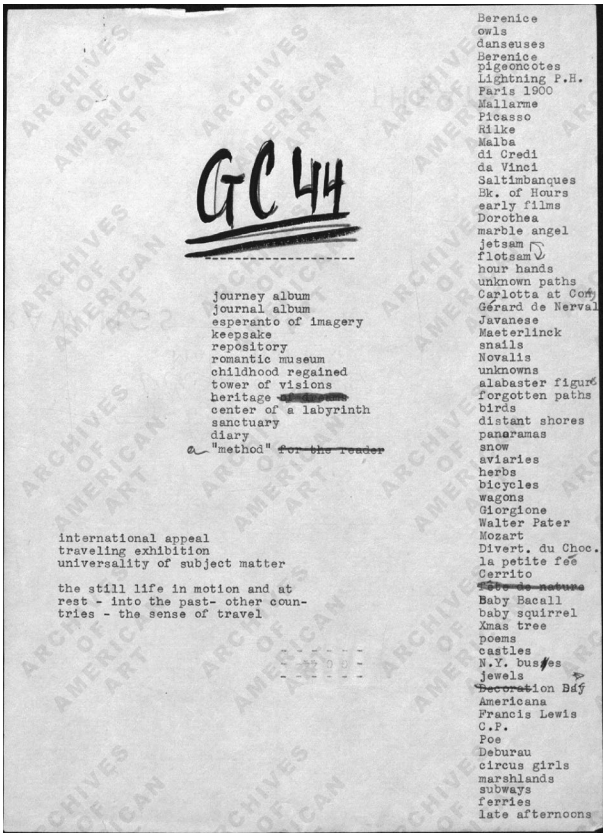


Figure 2.22. Joseph Cornell, *GC 44* notes, 1944–1961. Joseph Cornell papers, 1804–1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

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as motive." He further reminded himself of the "importance of this type of research & *its yields* vs. too much absorption in boxes."[146]

"locked into boxes"

Cornell often remarked on the clarity of thought and "feeling of harmony" that he gained in his basement studio, a quiet, private space where he spent hours making art while the rest of the household slept. Art making was a devotional practice to Cornell, like meditation. Perched over his worktable, surrounded by files of scraps and cardboard boxes full of things, he concentrated on clearing away discord and discovering the spiritualization of thought that was central to his religious beliefs and his modern art. As he noted in one 1946 diary entry:

> Had satisfactory feeling about clearing up debris on cellar floor—"sweepings" represent all the rich cross-currents or ramifications etc. that go into the boxes but which are not apparent (I feel at least) in the final result . . . Feeling of harmony about cellar work . . . An appreciation of the state of *mind* that made all the minutiae of these journeyings so rich & eventual in their humble way.[147]

Cornell's creative routines were similar to those of other modern artists: disciplined, focused, secluded, repetitive. His art making rituals were further informed by his Christian Science faith in spirit. In a diary entry from October 1952, Cornell haltingly described the "late Fall light that dramatizes (poeticizes the humblest object) with a religious significance—in cellar the sunlight streaming through from West on my hands fingering the coarse yellow rope." He added: "How awkward these words to describe sublime, holy, beauty of these experiences."[148]

As these and other comments suggest, Cornell struggled with his art. He worried about whether or not its intended spiritual "sweepings" were "apparent." He worried about his "awkward" way with words and his seeming inability to express or demonstrate the realm of spirit. He worried about his art being misunderstood or taken out of context. In the 1950s, he grew increasingly anxious about whether his art could or would ever approximate the spiritual "unfoldment" he desired, and he questioned the efficacy of the aesthetic method he had developed to recapture spiritual experience. "Can the ecstacy of the original GC44 expers. [experience] ever be done justice to," he asked himself in 1952, leaving the question unanswered.[149]

Cornell was a chronic worrier—one of several conditions that led him to seek out Christian Science's curative theology in the 1920s. He was, by all accounts, socially anxious and physically awkward: curious but uneasy with other people. He was not unfriendly; indeed, Cornell was unfailingly polite and had many acquaintances. Nor was he a hermit. "Voyaging" through cultural Manhattan, he regularly attended gallery openings, concerts, and movies. Back in Queens, he often invited artists and critics to his home. But Cornell was very detached, very unsure about how to be, or behave, among others. Although he fantasized about certain women, and some men, in his box constructions, it is doubtful he ever acted on his "erotic desire." Robert Motherwell, who first met Cornell in the 1940s, observed that Cornell was deeply uncomfortable about conventional corporeal and affective expectations and had a "horror of anything physical: flesh, blood, appetite, realism." Cornell, he added, "neglects the fact that people sweat and snore, that a woman looks very different in hair curlers—he couldn't bear that idea, and there's not a trace of it in his work."[150]

Cornell's anxieties were often directed toward his glass-fronted box constructions, and he increasingly voiced his "dissatisfaction" both "with the medium of the boxes" and with constantly reworking and revising them. He further lamented "their cumbersomeness, immobility, loss of lustre having passed into collectors hands."[151] In 1967, he disappointedly wrote that his boxes had "become so typecast as sculpture," seen by critics and collectors as only "so-called 'objects'" rather than the spiritual explorations he intended. When gallerist David Mann complimented him on several recent assemblages, Cornell confided: "you don't know how terrible it is to be locked into boxes all your life, you have no idea what a terrible thing it is."[152]

If Cornell originally devised his box constructions to collect and "correct"

matter, and thereby assert the sublimity of spirit, he became progressively disillusioned by their overbearing materiality. The boxes, he felt, were too dense and too inflexible to accommodate the revelations of spirit. "Looking at finished version of new FIGURE-HEAD Soap Bubble Set at cellar table," Cornell remarked in a 1952 diary entry, noting "the reflection of Head of a Girl (Rubens' daughter) on the bulletin board in the glass of the box." It was this reflection's "satisfying kind of enrichment," he revealed, that he really wanted to express and yet found "so difficult to inject into the boxes."[153]

Frustrated about ever achieving this "satisfying" state, Cornell was further unnerved by the afterlife of the boxes once they were beyond his control. In April 1945, for example, Peggy Guggenheim wrote to tell him that "an accident" had happened at her Art of This Century gallery, and the glass case of one of his boxes had broken. Cornell's response to this rather mundane (and easily fixed) mishap was to furiously scribble in pencil over her typewritten note—as if to erase it—and then write below, quoting in part from a passage on "the divine economy" in *Science and Health*: "To the phys. senses the strict dem.s [demands] of C.S. seem peremptory but mortals are hastening to learn that life is God, good, & that there is neither place nor opport. in Science for *error of any sort*." At the top of Guggenheim's letter he wrote, "Should have counteracted this discouragement by going right to books and declaring the truth. No reality in a material past. *Gratitude*."[154]

Cornell's anxieties about this incident reveal his uncomfortable recognition of the tensions between his religious beliefs, his art practices, and the art market. Aiming to demonstrate the life of spirit in his collages and assemblages, Cornell drew on matter that Christian Science deemed illusory. Although he devised a creative system that enabled and justified his materialism, when things went awry—when accidents happened—he responded as a true believer and questioned his intentions, asking himself why he was making boxes for certain places, or selling them to collectors who did not share his beliefs. Accidents were not just accidents to Cornell: they were signs of mortal error, warnings of disorder. Their prevention demanded increased vigilance.

Box constructions such as *Toward the Blue Peninsula: For Emily Dickinson* (1953, figure 2.23) capture Cornell's primary interests in the release of spirit from physical containment. But they also betray his anxieties about the efforts demanded of his spiritual modernism. Inspired by the image of Dickinson's bedroom in Amherst, Massachusetts, where she wrote hundreds of poems, and perhaps identifying with her image as a solitary and sequestered artist, Cornell crafted his box as a cage, painted in chalky white on the inside and screened in part with wire mesh.[155] Inserting a dowel perch and a curved bird feeder, he designed the box to resemble an abandoned aviary, alluding to Dickinson's description of herself as a "little wren." On the floor of the cage, he pasted two small scraps of printed paper, referencing her writing. Inside the aviary-like box, he added a small, framed window revealing an expanse of blue skies and wispy clouds, in hues reminiscent of Loy's 1930s paintings.

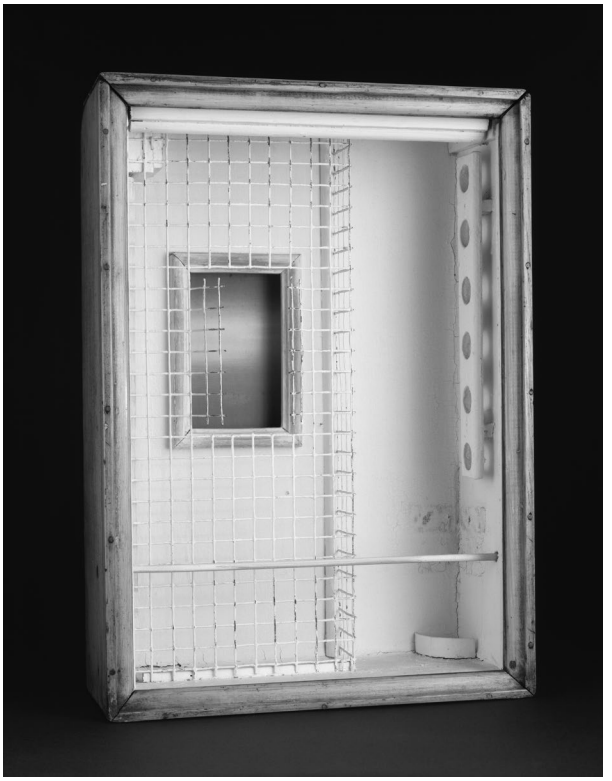


Figure 2.23. Joseph Cornell, *Toward the Blue Peninsula: for Emily Dickinson*, 1953. Box construction, 14½ × 10¼ × 5½ in. Private collection.

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Cornell left the screen open in front of the window, allowing the bird—a symbol of spirit—to fly away. The patch of cerulean sky in an otherwise austere box enticed viewers to peer into Dickinson's "little Room" and ponder, as she did in a poem written in 1863, how it was "Too scant—by Cubits—to contain / The Sacrament—of Him." Brought up in a Calvinist family, Dickinson affirmed in her poetry both her personal need for faith and her personal doubts about mainstream religion. Identifying with her hesitancy, which so resembled his own feelings of uncertainty and indecision, and likewise identifying with the ambiguous meaning of Dickinson's words, Cornell named his box after the closing lines of her poem: "It might be easier / To fail—with Land in Sight— / Than gain—My Blue Peninsula— / To perish—of Delight."[156]

Despite his doubts about the methods, media, and clarity of his modern art, his doubts about ever reaching his own "blue peninsula," Cornell never stopped "watching and working," as per his Christian Science beliefs. He kept his faith and continued to make boxes and collages, exhibiting both in gaining numbers of gallery shows and museum exhibitions. If comfortable with selling his collages (most priced at less than $100) and, more often, giving them to friends, Cornell became increasingly anxious about letting go of the boxes (many priced at over $1000 by the later 1950s). "He had never liked selling his boxes in the first place, preferring to give them away to actresses and young

female friends who he felt could understand their purity of spirit," remarks Cornell biographer Deborah Solomon.[157]

Dickran Tashjian recounts Cornell's "countless" acts of gift giving as special transactions, intended for recipients he deemed spiritually sympathetic. Born on Christmas Eve, Cornell was especially attuned, Tashjian suggests, to the "spiritual value of a gift above its source and substance."[158] But when Cornell's "gifts" became highly valued in the art market, worth far more as "art" than as revelatory demonstrations of spirit, he began treating them as unfinished or incomplete projects, such that even after they had been sold, or given away, he sometimes asked their owners to return them so he could make "corrections." In 1955, Duchamp wrote Cornell to remind him about a box "he took to repair" some time earlier, and whose owners (French diplomat Henri Hoppenot and his wife, photographer Hélène Delacour Hoppenot) were quite anxious to have returned.[159]

Cornell was not just squirreling his art away, like postwar painter Ivan Albright (who only sparingly showed or sold his paintings). Nor was he protesting the "patterns of exploitation" and "leeching ambitions" of the modern art market, like Abstract Expressionist artist Clyfford Still (who quit the Betty Parsons Gallery and the commercial art world in 1951).[160] Rather, by the 1950s, Cornell had reached the conclusion that finished, or finite, works of art could never truly express the timeless, unbounded flow of spirit that he aimed to convey. He lamented that when his boxes "passed into collectors' hands" they lost their "lustre" and became static, lifeless things.[161] Commerce killed their spirit.

His solution was to keep his boxes close at hand and carefully watch over them, thereby adhering to both the everlasting terms of his religious beliefs and protecting his spiritual modernism. His art, he determined, should remain unfinished and incomplete, always open-ended. As he described *GC 44* in 1951:

> Never finished (GC 44) but unfolding and continuing in unsuspected places & times; in an old print, a modern colour, a new or old master, something read in the daily paper or a book. A face seen in a crowd or on the 'long journey home' via subway . . . the thread caught up with seeming never ending freshness and significance.[162]

Informed by his religious beliefs, his materialist methodology, and his rejection or subversion of the art market, Cornell's "never ending" art was the American exemplar of Kandinsky's vision of a spiritually resonant modernism.

Joseph Cornell: American Modern

In 1959, Cornell made two similar collages, *Americana: Natural Philosophy* (figure 2.24) and *Fountain of Youth*. Both include a reproduction of a portrait by



Figure 2.24. Joseph Cornell, *Americana: Natural Philosophy (What Makes the Weather?)*, ca. 1959. Masonite, paper, paint, colored pencil, graphite, and ink. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; gift of Robert Lehrman in honor of Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, 1991.90.

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American colonial painter John Singleton Copley, which Cornell juxtaposed against a panoramic view of Arizona's Monument Valley, or a similarly iconic American Western landscape, bisected by a rainbow. Both spotlight Copley's *Daniel Crommelin Verplanck*, a 1771 portrait of a young boy sitting on the steps of his family's country estate in Fishkill, New York, posed with a pet squirrel tethered to a metal leash. Both feature a dove flying above young Daniel's head. And both include additional illustrations, differently arranged in each collage, that Cornell clipped from *The Golden Guides*, a series of pocket-sized reference books on science and nature. Cornell collected dozens of these guides for anticipated art projects, marking certain pages "CUT." For *Americana: Natural Philosophy*, he cut up color pictures from the book *Stars*, including a diagram illustrating the oscillating motion of the earth and another image titled "How a Raindrop Refracts Sunlight."[163] On the reverse of *Fountain of Youth*, Cornell wrote that Copley was "one of the first and greatest of the 'Coonskinners'—that is, American artists who worked out their own style of seeing."[164]

Like the *Soap Bubble Set* he made twenty years earlier (figure 2.1), Cornell's collages embodied his religion's belief in the spirit basic to all things and principles, including those of modern science. Light, for example, is essentially an invisible energy force that has no matter: it only becomes visible to the human eye via frequencies of color or with the aid of mechanical devices like tele-

scopes. In his 1959 collages, Cornell paired a science-book illustration of how we see a rainbow when raindrops refract the light from the sun into a color spectrum with the picture of a dove, "a symbol of divine Science," Mary Baker Eddy wrote, characterizing "purity and peace; hope and faith."[165] Blending symbols of science and faith, Cornell "worked out" his "own style of seeing" and expounded on his belief in the ephemerality of matter and the reality of spirit.

Cornell's use of Copley's portrait of young Daniel may have alluded to his brother Robert. Despite his physical disabilities and confinement, Robert's endurance—he was forty-nine years old in 1959—seemingly confirmed the Christian Science conviction that "life is not contingent on bodily conditions."[166] Yet neither Daniel nor the chained squirrel cleaved to his white leggings look particularly comfortable in this life: both bodies are rigid and formal, and both boy and animal look directly at the viewer with guarded, watchful expressions. Robert's care was demanding and while his brother believed it was his mission, artwork featuring chattelized animals and taxing children suggested the strain of caretaking.

Cornell's inclusion of an American Western landscape in the background of these collages, and his comments about Copley, suggest his own anxious attention to his place, his agency, reputation, and significance, in American art history. His specific reference to Copley and "Coonskinners" was inspired by Harold Rosenberg's *The Tradition of the New* (1959), published just a few months before Cornell began work on these collages. In the book's first essay, "Parable of American Painting," Rosenberg paired Revolutionary War history with contemporaneous Cold War attitudes about American exceptionalism to argue that "the genuine accomplishments of American art" were in the "anti-formal" individuality of certain "sharpshooting" artists like Copley. Such artists, said Rosenberg, were dogged, inventive, and independent "Coonskinners" who pioneered new cultural pathways by refusing to follow conventional styles of European or British art, or what he called "Redcoatism." Coonskinners worked in an "unblinking wilderness," Rosenberg asserted, focusing on the "uneasy insistence and individual self-consciousness that go with discovery."[167] His arguments struck a chord with Cornell, who saw himself as a modern heir, as he put it, of "American artists who worked out their own style of seeing." In Cornell's case, that style was steered by his religious beliefs.

Multiple modern artists championed Cornell as a substantial American artist and significant artistic influence. In his 1981 article "American Quartet," Robert Morris listed Cornell, Duchamp, Pollock, and Hopper as "cornerstone figures" in modern American art. In a 1986 catalogue essay, Irish artist, art critic, and writer Brian O'Doherty stated that Cornell was the equal of Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning. Other American moderns paid homage to Cornell by appropriating his aesthetic vision, or more accurately, reproducing his ways of making art—his "methodology of facture and the density of

inclusion," as Morris put it.[168] "I used to copy him," painter Perkins Harnly recalled, explaining how he duplicated Cornell's collage sensibility in his campy style of Victorian-themed watercolors. "He would use a valentine, things I liked, and quaint little things that had been out of style for 50 years . . . post cards, odd little things. I used them. I put them back in my pictures."[169] Harnly and Cornell showed together at Levy's gallery in 1933.

Cornell's collage aesthetic found pride of place at Tiffany & Company in the mid-1950s, when Gene Moore, the Fifth Avenue jewelry store's window dresser, hired Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns (working under the name Matson Jones Custom Display) to create various tableaux. Their collaborative designs included displays of diamond rings, bracelets, watches, and silverware inside dramatically lit windows decorated with antique maps, postcards, tools, dolls, and mannequin hands—which looked very much like enlarged Cornell boxes. Rauschenberg, Johns, Motherwell, Bruce Conner, Jess, George Brecht, and George Herms were among postwar American moderns who embraced collage and assemblage styles, and who credited Cornell as an influence.[170]

Traveling in Italy and North Africa from 1952 to 1953, Rauschenberg made a series of small wood and metal boxes called *Scatole Personali*, each containing found objects such as rocks, sticks, bones, beads, string, fur, feathers, hair, personal photographs, and images cut from postcards. These and another series of assemblages he called *Feticci Personali* evolved into the freestanding mixed-media "combines" he produced in the later 1950s.[171] Yet while Cornell explored materiality to grasp the resonance of spirit, Rauschenberg's box sculptures and sprawling assemblages were motivated by interests in media experimentation, in expressions of postwar personal identity, and, most ambitiously, in breaching the gaps between art and life. Years later, Rauschenberg remarked, "The only difference between me and Cornell is that he put his work behind glass, and mine is out in the world. Cornell was rarifying the treasures of his thoughts, and I was trying to get people physically involved."[172] Both were modern artists, but Cornell's fluid and unfixed art was rooted in his religious beliefs more than in aesthetic, biographical, or social concerns.

Art critics—including Harold Rosenberg—were initially dubious about Cornell's modern art bona fides. Cornell met Rosenberg in 1952 at Willem de Kooning's studio and invited him to Utopia Parkway to see his recent boxes. Rosenberg declined.[173] Despite having gained visibility in postwar art galleries and museums, Cornell drew little serious critical or art-historical attention during his lifetime. Most critics viewed him as a trivial art world outsider—untrained, unschooled, living in Queens—and responded to his work accordingly. One reviewer described Cornell's 1939 solo show at Levy's gallery as "a holiday toy shop for sophisticated enjoyment." In 1946, *New York Times* critic Howard Devree called Cornell's artwork "doodads in dada." In 1950, *ARTnews* editor Thomas Hess wrote: "Joseph Cornell has taken the surrealist conven-

tion . . . combined it with patient carpentry and after-dinner-conversation wit, and comes up with an art-form which is personal, precious, diverting and almost insignificant."[174] Calling Cornell's art decorative and childlike, critics asserted that it was insubstantial, and that Cornell himself was not a serious modern artist. Calling his art "precious," an adjective akin to "affected," "fey," and "poncy," they questioned his masculinity in a homophobic postwar America where the boldly aggressive art of Abstract Expressionism held critical sway.

Cornell took exception with some of these jibes. In a letter to Guggenheim Museum director Thomas Messer, whose museum organized a major show of his work in 1967, Cornell wrote: "Two recent articles on my work have used the term, invented by Julien Levy and which I have never used myself, "TOYS FOR ADULTS," which is a misnomer and even factually erroneous." He added that the "very first ever" of his artworks to be exhibited "shared the walls with the premiere of Dalí's famous watch piece in the historic occasion of SURREALISM launched in America from Julien Levy's place at 602 Madison."[175] Peeved at his critical dismissal, Cornell demanded his place in modern American art history.

Later in his career, as definitions and models of American modernism became less constrained by limiting formalist dictates and, simultaneously, a more capacious American art market developed, Cornell's critical fortunes improved. In 1961, in the MoMA exhibit *The Art of Assemblage*, curated by William Seitz, Cornell's work—fourteen boxes "displayed in a theatrically darkened room dominated by his *Medici Slot Machine* (1942)"—outnumbered that of any other artist except German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. In 1967, retrospectives of Cornell's work at the Guggenheim and the Pasadena Museum of Art were well received. *New York Times* critic Hilton Kramer praised Cornell as a "modern classic" and called the New York show in particular "an exhibition of unforgettable beauty."[176] In 1970, Cornell was generously represented by twenty-two box constructions in a major show of American modernism at the Metropolitan Museum of Art titled *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940 to 1970*, organized by Henry Geldzahler. He also had a solo show that year at the Met featuring his recent collages.[177] When he died in 1972, Cornell was undeniably recognized as an American modern.

Still, in 2003, when the centenary of Cornell's birth was marked with several exhibitions in New York and an extensively illustrated catalogue that included an essay on Cornell's religious faith, critic Kramer wrote: "I've been an admirer of Cornell's work for more than half a century, but I must confess it never occurred to me to suspect that this consummate aesthete and fantasist had all along been living a secret life as a Christian mystic." Kramer went on to insist that it was Cornell's "vocation in Surrealist collage" that accounted for his aesthetic significance, more "than anything in Mrs. Eddy's theology."[178] Kramer's surprise about Cornell's commitment to Christian Science, and his disdain for its relevance in terms of how Cornell conceptualized and made his

art, suggests the endurance of critical assumptions today that modern artists cannot be religious. Cornell was both. Recognition of his position as a spiritual modern not only liberates him from being "locked into boxes" but opens the history of modern American art to new and provocative areas of inquiry and interpretation.

3

Mark Tobey & Bahá'í

"White Writing" & Spiritual Calligraphy





In April 1944, Clement Greenberg remarked that Mark Tobey's solo show at the Marian Willard Gallery deserved "the most special notice." Willard's New York gallery featured nineteen of Tobey's paintings, from the "all-over" abstractions *Tundra* (1944, figure 3.1) and *Forms Follow Man* (1941–1943), to the dense figurative pictures *Threading Light* (1942, figure 3.2) and *E Pluribus Unum* (1942–1943). Writing in the *Nation*, Greenberg observed that while Tobey was an older artist ("a man of fifty"), he had "made one of the few original contributions to contemporary American painting." His "great innovation," Greenberg elaborated, was "'white writing': the calligraphic, tightly meshed interlacing of white lines which build up to a vertical, rectangular mass reaching almost to the edges of the frame; these cause the picture surface to vibrate in depth—or better, toward the spectator."[1]

Greenberg's review was more than a little backhanded, however. While complimenting the "intensity, subtlety, and directness with which Tobey registers and transmits emotion," the critic chastised the small scale of Tobey's pictures, their limited palette ("a delicate affair of pale tints"), and their "affinity" with Chinese art. "His painting is not major," Greenberg concluded, adding: "It is obligatory that Tobey work to expand his range."[2]

Greenberg's misgivings about Tobey's paintings corresponded with his formalist dictates about modern art, and his championship of American moderns who better fit his critical agenda. His antipathy toward Tobey, and toward European painters like Kandinsky and Mondrian, stemmed from suspicions that their art was guided by what he considered irrelevant and distracting concerns, from metaphysics to "Orientalism." While Tobey's art merited "special notice," it did not, in Greenberg's view, represent the best of mid-twentieth-century American modernism. He bestowed that honor on Jackson Pollock. After seeing Pollock's "smoky, turbulent painting" at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery in 1945, Greenberg declared him "the strongest painter of his generation." If Tobey's pieces were small—*Forms Follow Man* measures fourteen by twenty inches—Pollock's pictures were big and bold, aggressively painted, brilliantly colored, and seemingly devoid of extraneous influences beyond "his own manifest faith," wrote Greenberg, "in the efficacy, for him personally, of art." Ironically, some of Pollock's pictures were actually inspired by Tobey's "white writing," which Pollock saw at Willard Gallery in 1944. Likewise, paintings by Pollock and Tobey were exhibited together in two group shows that year, a sequence of stylistic pairing and influence that Greenberg chose to overlook, and that he later excluded from the history of modern American art.[3]

Figure 3.1. (*facing*) Mark Tobey, *Tundra*, 1944. Tempera on wood, 24 × 16½ in. Neuberger Museum of Art collection, Purchase College, State University of New York, Purchase, NY; gift of Roy R. Neuberger, 75.16.44.

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Figure 3.2. (*facing*) Mark Tobey, *Threading Light*, 1942. Tempera on board, 29¼ × 19¾ in. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 86.1944.

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Figure 3.3. Mark Tobey, *Mark Tobey Self Portrait*, ca. 1930. Oil on canvas, 24 × 17¾ in. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; NPG.88.162.

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Tobey (1890–1976) was hardly an unknown American modern in the 1940s, if an exceptionally idiosyncratic artist who lived in multiple places and worked in multiple styles and media throughout his career (figure 3.3). In 1940, his abstract painting *Modal Tide* won the Baker Memorial Award in the Seattle Art Museum's Twenty-Sixth Annual Exhibition. In 1942, his tempera drawing *Broadway* (1935–1936), an animated scene of New York's "Great White Way," was awarded a purchase prize in the *Artists for Victory* exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Tobey's 1944 Willard Gallery show was his twelfth solo exhibit since 1917, when Knoedler displayed his fastidiously drawn charcoal portraits of contemporary notables including opera singer Mary Garden, poet Angela Morgan, and playwright Winthrop Parkhurst (figure 3.4).

Born in Centerville, Wisconsin, Tobey was largely self-taught. As a teenager, he took a few drawing classes at the Art Institute of Chicago (from 1906 to 1908) and honed "an intense appreciation of the Pretty Magazine Girl," copying covers by Harrison Fisher and Howard Chandler Christy "with an interest and love which anyone of that age and of the period can well remember."[4] Moving to Manhattan in 1911, he worked as a fashion illustrator, interior decorator, and staff artist for the *Quill*, a gossipy "little magazine" published in Greenwich Village. During the interwar years, Tobey met other moderns, in-



Figure 3.4. Mark Tobey, *Winthrop Parkhurst*, 1916. Charcoal on gray paper, 21⅝ × 17¾ in. Gift of Mrs. Wolfgang Schoenborn, Museum of Modern Art, 177.1977.

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cluding Marcel Duchamp and Marsden Hartley, at the West 67th Street apartment of Walter and Louise Arensberg. A closeted gay man, Tobey also socialized in the salons that writer and interior decorator Muriel Draper hosted in her East Side apartments, which offered a "supportive haven for homosexuals" including Lincoln Kirstein, Walker Evans, Max Ewing, and George Antheil.[5] Along with artists Frank Overton Colbert, Alfred Maurer, and John Sloan, writers Orrick Johns and Malcolm Cowley, and curator Holger Cahill, who lived next door to him at 21 West 16th Street, Tobey concocted "Inje-Inje" in the late 1910s, a faux American art movement that simultaneously spoofed and celebrated Dada.[6]

Tobey wrote poetry, short stories, fragments of novels with titles like "Run as the Days Run" and "Window to Space," and a fifty-thousand-word autobiography (never finished). He wrote hundreds of letters to friends and published essays in *ARTnews*, *College Art Journal*, *Magazine of Art*, and the short-lived (1947–1949) magazine *The Tiger's Eye*. Later in life, he studied music and wrote scores for piano and flute, counting musicians and composers John Cage, George Frederick McKay, and Paul McCoole among his friends.[7]

Like these American moderns, Tobey experimented with diverse media: painting in watercolor, tempera, and oil; drawing with charcoal, ink, and pencil; and printmaking in lithography, intaglio, and woodcut. A visitor to Basel, Switzerland, where Tobey spent the last sixteen years of his life, found him

flirting with "new techniques, with new materials—tracing through gold foil, monotypes printed from ribbed and porous foam rubber or from pieces of plastic, and work with quick-drying glues."[8] Further exploring diverse subjects and styles—representational, cubist, Surrealist, white writing—Tobey generated a prolific body of portraits, landscapes, still lifes, genre scenes, and nonobjective paintings.

Tobey was also an incessant nomad. From 1925 on, he traveled extensively throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Europe, studying Arabic calligraphy in Palestine, Chinese brushwork in Shanghai, Zen painting in Kyoto, and new styles of avant-garde art in Paris, where he had tea one afternoon with Gertrude Stein.[9] He sketched people and landscapes wherever he went, translating his impressions into paintings titled *Near Eastern Landscape* (1927), *Middle West* (1929), *Algerian Landscape* (1931), *Mexican Ritual Scene* (1931), *Shop Front, Hong Kong* (1934), *Seated Japanese Figure* (1934), *Broadway* (1935–1936), *San Francisco Street* (1941), *Pike Street Seattle* (1941–1942), *New York* (1944), *Northwest Fantasy* (1953), *Fountains of Europe* (1955), *Plains Ceremonial* (1956), and *Unknown Journey* (1966). During the 1920s and 1930s, Tobey taught art at the Cornish School (Seattle) and Dartington Hall (Devonshire, England). In 1928, he offered a master class on abstract art at the studio of Canadian modern Emily Carr in Victoria, British Columbia.[10] Throughout the course of his long career, Tobey exhibited his wide-ranging body of artwork: at the Contemporary Arts Club and Museum of Modern Art in New York and in galleries and museums in Basel, Boston, Chicago, Greenwich Village, Hollywood, London, Paris, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC.

Tobey's peripatetic life and multivalent styles of modern art were inseparable from his faith in Bahá'í, a religion he joined in 1918 and followed for almost sixty years. Founded in mid-nineteenth-century Iran, Bahá'í is a monotheistic and messianic religion focused on spiritual and global unity. Bahá'í argues that God has set in motion historical forces intended to unify all people across barriers of belief, class, gender, race, and national affiliation. Its aim is to create a peaceful global society of spiritual harmony.

Both Tobey's enduring attention to human subjects and his development of an all-over style of abstract art were motivated by Bahá'í interests in a new world order of universal humanity. His innovative white writing can be traced to his appropriation of the revelatory calligraphy of Bahá'í's nineteenth-century founders. Tobey never hid his religious beliefs and often wrote and lectured on his art and his faith, teaching in Bahá'í schools, serving on Bahá'í committees, and painting scenes based on Bahá'í scripture.[11] Bahá'í was central to Tobey's vision of modern art. It was antithetical, however, to Clement Greenberg's formalist assumptions about the course of mid-century modern American art. This chapter considers the components of Tobey's spiritual modernism and the backlash against them in American art criticism, particularly in a post–World War II period dominated by secularization theories of modernity.

Bahá'í

Bahá'í theology is based on "progressive revelation," a vision of global order that views the world's major religions as "only evolutionary stages in God's plan to educate and unify the whole planet."[12] Bahá'í maintains that each faith has its own teachings and prophets—Abraham, Buddha, Christ, Krishna, Mohammed, Moses, Zoroaster—but they share spiritual truths and worship the same god and there is, in effect, only one world religion with one objective: the "oneness of mankind." While mindful of interfaith ecumenism, Bahá'í sees itself as the independent heir of formerly revealed religions. Bahá'í scripture asserts that global futurity depends on a common faith that "fulfills the prophesies of all the world's functionally equivalent, yet historically specific, religions." For Bahá'í faithful, these prophesies center on global harmony and humanism. As Bahá'í leader Abdu'l Bahá stated in 1911, "Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is not a religion." Relatedly, Bahá'í argues that all people are God's chosen people, and all prophets are renovators: messengers who come to earth to revise, reform, and remake the world. Bahá'í's mission, then, is to lay the foundation for a new world civilization of spiritual unity, and metaphors of building and rebuilding are common in its canonical texts. As such, Bahá'í focuses on two religious imperatives: fostering individual spiritual education and forming the "social solidarity of humanity through divinely revealed laws and institutions."[13]

Proclamations of messianic and millenarian urgency were pervasive in the nineteenth century. In England in 1830, dispensationalist preacher John Nelson Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren movement, invented the doctrine of the rapture: the end times when faithful evangelical Protestants (dead and alive) will suddenly "rise up" and join Christ in heaven. In the United States in 1843 and 1844, followers of Baptist preacher William Miller quit their jobs, sold their homes, donned white robes, and anxiously awaited the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ, a "great disappointment" that led some of them to recalculate the prophetic intent of the Book of Revelation and form a new religious movement called Seventh-day Adventism. In China between 1851 and 1864, Protestant revolutionary Hong Xiuquan, who proclaimed himself the second son of God and younger brother of Christ, organized the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and attempted to overthrow the Qing Dynasty, a failed millenarian rebellion in which an estimated twenty to thirty million Chinese civilians and soldiers died.

And in Iran in 1844, Ali Muhammad Shirazi, a charismatic twenty-five-year-old merchant known as the Báb (the Gate or the Door in Arabic) proclaimed himself divinely appointed to initiate a new spiritual covenant. He was denounced as a heretic by Shi'ite Islam clerics, and likewise feared by the Qajar ruling class for the threat his religious insurgency posed to their rule, and to the nascent formation of an Iranian nation-state. The Báb was executed in Tabriz in 1850, and thousands of his supporters died in clashes with the gov-

ernment.[14] His messianic appeal flourished, however, and in 1863 an upper-class functionary named Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri proclaimed himself the Báb's prophesized successor. Known as Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God) and lauded by followers as a Manifestation of God, a prophet and bearer of revelation, he founded Bahá'í and declared its believers the "people of Bahá." Although cradled in nineteenth-century Persia, Bahá'í was not an "offshoot" of Islam but an independent new religious movement whose foundation of belief was based on the divine words revealed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Notably, Bahá'u'lláh did not claim to be the last or final Manifestation of God but only the most recent prophet in a long line of revealed religions.

Exiled to an Ottoman prison in Akka, Palestine, where he died in 1892, Bahá'u'lláh carried on his ministry by advising growing numbers of Bahá'í pilgrims and organizing the new messianic religion around revelations, transcribed into sacred texts called "tablets." In eighteen thousand works, including spiritual poems and verses, letters to global leaders, holy books, and epistles addressing religious laws and moral codes, Bahá'u'lláh outlined Bahá'í's core principles and articulated his vision of its purpose. His and the Báb's writings, and the letters, talks, and "authorized interpretations" of his successors Abdu'l Bahá (Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son and Bahá'í leader from 1892 to 1921) and Shoghi Effendi (Abdu'l Bahá's eldest grandson and Guardian of the Faith from 1921 to 1957), constitute the religion's canonical texts.

Originating amid millenarian challenges to Islamic and Ottoman legitimacy, and bred in exile and diaspora, the new religion of Bahá'í fostered a startlingly utopian mission of human rights, freedom of conscience, the separation of church and state, the rejection of national sovereignty, and world peace. Emphasizing "independent investigation of truth," faith was qualified as a matter of personal choice. Emphasizing individuality, the religion saw difference and oneness as complimentary and inseparable: Bahá'í promoted diversity, not uniformity. Emphasizing tolerance and compassion, Bahá'í counseled the control of ego in favor of social service: "Loose thy soul from the prison of self" and "become distinguished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love and justice."[15] Bahá'í further advocated the compatibility of science and religion, equality between men and women, racial integration, universal peace, universal education, an international language, and an international tribunal.

Early Bahá'í, historian Juan Cole relates, challenged the imperialism and violence of despotic monarchies, absolutist religions, and feuding nineteenth-century nation-states with a liberal, and liberating, "plea for balance, for freedom of religion not only from an Established Church but also from state coercion on behalf of instrumental rationality and civil-bureaucratic control."[16] In numerous tablets, Bahá'u'lláh spurned national allegiances and denounced nationalist warfare. As he stated in 1890, "These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family . . . Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this,

that he loves his kind."[17] Bahá'u'lláh's peaceful aspirations included a "Lesser Peace" built on the unity of all nations and a "Most Great Peace" of global spiritual, social, and political unity.

Yet military metaphors and a spiritually militant tone confounded Bahá'í's messianic, crisis-driven theology, which called on true believers to vanquish "the powers of darkness on the battlefield of the world" by joining an "army of light." As Abdu'l Bahá wrote in 1913: "The Bahá'í Grand Army consists of the invisible angels of the Supreme Concourse. Our swords are the words of Love and Life . . . We are fighting against the forces of darkness."[18] The peace envisioned by Bahá'í's founders was informed by ominous end time predictions of global catastrophe. While Bahá'u'lláh prophesized that the "end of days" was just another stage in the evolution of a new world, modern apocalyptic anxieties, coupled with the persecution (and criminalization) of Bahá'í in Iran, helped mold the new religion as one of spiritual combat—fighting against "the forces of darkness"—and fueled a certain degree of paranoia and suspicion among its followers. Despite its radical model of a one-world religion representing the "ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations," Bahá'í visions of human liberation were taxed by its privileging of order, authority, and conflict, by the problematic binary of "whiteness" versus "darkness," and by its condemnation of homosexuality.[19]

Drawn to its evangelizing egalitarianism and charismatic confidence, Americans began following Bahá'í after it was introduced at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Bahá'í leaders considered the United States, with its historical trajectory as a "redeemer nation" shaped by concepts of manifest destiny and exceptionalism, especially auspicious for their new religious movement. In 1912, Abdu'l Bahá prophesized that America's modern destiny was to "proclaim the oneness of mankind . . . [and] lead all nations spiritually."[20] In 1946, in his artist's statement for MoMA's *Fourteen Americans* exhibit, Tobey reiterated this destiny on cultural terms: "Ours is a universal time . . . America more than any other country is placed geographically to lead in this understanding, and if from past methods of behavior she has constantly looked toward Europe, today she must assume her position, Janus-faced, toward Asia."[21] Written as postwar American art was gaining global visibility and dominance, Tobey's message of spiritual and aesthetic universalism, of a modern art unfettered by nation-state bonds, was not particularly well received.

The first Bahá'í community in the US started in Chicago in 1894 and in 1898, the first American Bahá'í cohort (including philanthropist Phoebe Hearst) made the pilgrimage to Akka. In 1909, Abdu'l Bahá was freed after forty years of incarceration. The first Bahá'í Congress, held in Chicago, drew representatives from thirty-five US cities, and plans were announced to build a Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois (where a massive temple opened in 1953). During an eight-month speaking tour across America in 1912, Abdu'l Bahá visited Green Acre, the religious community in Eliot, Maine, where Marsden Hartley worked in 1907, which became the first Bahá'í summer school.[22]

Compared with new religious movements like Christian Science, US membership in Bahá'í was small, numbering only around two thousand in the early 1920s, shortly after Tobey joined. With the translation of canonical texts into English and under the leadership of Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í expanded in interwar America, and also became increasingly bureaucratized. Instituting rational-legal systems of religious leadership and growth, Shoghi Effendi downplayed the personal magnetism of Bahá'í prophets in favor of what Max Weber termed the "routinization of charismatic authority."[23] Objections to Bahá'í's twentieth-century shift toward "Administrative Order" occasionally erupted in internecine conflict, with some followers accused of "covenant-breaking" and subsequently excommunicated.[24] When Tobey became Bahá'í during World War I, he found the new religion's critique of mainstream faith traditions, nationalism, and violence, and its focus on peace and love, liberating and inspirational. Over the course of his life, he kept his faith but also wrestled with Bahá'í's rigid religious prescriptions and disciplinary expectations, including its censure of homosexuality. African American philosopher Alain Locke, also a follower of the Bahá'í faith and also gay, struggled with similar issues.[25]

Membership in Bahá'í involves more than accepting Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation of God and believing in the concept of a one-world religion. Being Bahá'í centers on cultivating a disciplined personal spirituality and committing to "a variety of behaviors and modes of social interaction" including worship, fasting, teaching, pilgrimage, tithing, and following the laws and codes dictated by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, or Most Holy Book.[26] Spiritual growth in Bahá'í especially hinges on social relationships, such that monastic and ascetic practices common in other religions are shunned and attending Bahá'í summer schools, seminars, and retreats with other followers is strongly encouraged. Likewise, heterosexual marriage is considered a Bahá'í norm, and premarital sex, adultery, and homosexuality are viewed as religious transgressions. (Bahá'í laws similarly forbid alcohol, recreational drug use, gambling, and begging.)

Becoming Bahá'í starts with signing a Bahá'í Declaration card and joining a local Bahá'í community, or Spiritual Assembly; no one is born into the faith and followers may not retain membership in other religions. From age fifteen, Bahá'í are expected to recite at least one of three obligatory daily prayers, usually in private and preceded by ablutions. In a 1939 letter to his sister, painter Morris Graves described Tobey "read[ing] aloud Bahá'í prayers" and chanting the name of the Báb during a visit to his home near Puget Sound.[27]

Spiritual practices of "deepening" and "consultation," from individual study of Bahá'í writings to group discussion of specific scriptural texts, are intended to strengthen knowledge of and commitment to the faith. Pilgrimage to Bahá'í holy places, such as the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa and the prison cell of Bahá'u'lláh in Akka, are also considered instrumental to spiritual growth. Tobey made his first pilgrimage to these sacred sites in 1925. During his second visit, in 1933, he met Shoghi Effendi (with whom he had been correspond-

ing for several years) and wrote a "poetic homage to the great Baha'i prophet, Abdu'l Bahá":

> To Abdu l' Bahá:
> Born on a silvery wing
> Your spirit flew
> Into my lifeless heart
> And kissed to bloom
> The spirit flowers that entombed there grew:
> And secretly, my body flamed anew.[28]

Although Bahá'í worship can differ from one local Spiritual Assembly to the next, it centers on devotion, education, and social outreach. Bahá'í has no liturgy, priests, clergy, or sacraments, and relatively few rituals (mainly weddings and funerals). Communal worship at Bahá'í temples, or centers and homes, consists of prayer, scriptural readings, and interpretation, and can include chanting and singing. Social work performed as a "service to humanity" is also considered a form of worship. Every nineteen days, at the start of each month of the Bahá'í calendar, local communities hold meetings with prayers, readings, discussions of spiritual and practical matters, and meals; regular attendance at the Nineteen Day Feast is considered a "duty and a privilege" among believers.[29] Bahá'í Holy Days commemorate important anniversaries such as the martyrdom of the Báb and the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. Naw-Rúz (New Day), celebrated on the spring equinox, marks the first day of the Bahá'í calendar year and follows a month of fasting (no food or drink from sunrise to sunset).

In addition to daily devotional requirements of praying and reading sacred texts, participating in monthly feasts, and observing Holy Days, Bahá'í are encouraged to "infuse the world" with their faith. World travel is strategic to Bahá'í community building, which helps to explain some of Tobey's incessant wandering. "Let us be grateful for the remarkable services being rendered by the American believers who travel in other lands," *The Bahá'í World* declared in 1936, thanking Tobey (who had recently traveled in China and Japan) and other Bahá'í for promoting "the Cause" all over the world.[30] "Teaching the Faith" takes multiple forms, from offering classes in spiritual education to organizing social and economic development projects oriented toward Bahá'í goals. Boundaries between teaching and proselytizing are loose: while Bahá'u'lláh counseled the fundamental "independence" of faith and criticized religious coercion, he also wrote: "Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for God hath prescribed unto everyone the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds."[31]

Hazy distinctions between the private and public dimensions of his faith would vex Tobey, whose homosexuality was at odds with Bahá'í doctrine and whose interest in developing a distinctively independent modern art was also

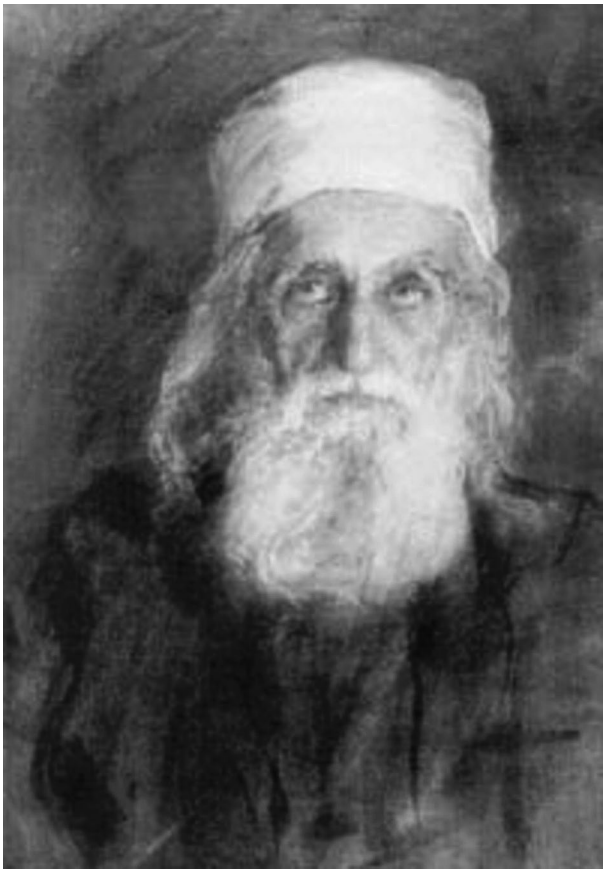


Figure 3.5. Juliet Thompson, *Portrait of Abdu'l Baha*, 1912. Painted in three sittings in June 1912, New York City, NY. Destroyed.

Photo: Picture Art Collection / Alamy Stock Photo.

seemingly incompatible with the religion's goal of universal humanism. Yet Tobey was a dedicated Bahá'í and repeatedly drew on the religion's principles and practices to construct his personal version of spiritual modernism. His respect among Bahá'í was and is substantial. When he died in 1976, the Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Bahá'í faith, sent a cable to all spiritual assemblies praising Tobey as a "distinguished dedicated servant [of] Bahá'u'lláh." Likewise, the Bahá'í magazine *World Order* published a series of tributes including ceramist Bernard Leach's reflection that Tobey's paintings represented "a world message redolent of his faith." A retrospective in Spain in the late 1990s prompted a reviewer in the Bahá'í newsletter *One Country* to remark that Tobey, "while defying categorization, must be counted as one of the 20th Century's most innovative, and ultimately, influential artists."[32]

Tobey and Bahá'í

Tobey was introduced to Bahá'í by American artist Juliet Thompson, who had met Abdu'l Bahá in Palestine in 1909 and painted his portrait when he visited New York in 1912 (figure 3.5).[33] Thompson also shared her faith with the Leb-

anese American poet-painter Kahlil Gibran, whose slim volume of spiritual aphorisms *The Prophet* (1923) was one of the best-selling books of the twentieth century.

As a teenager in Boston, Gibran was mentored by art photographer Fred Holland Day, posing for his Pictorialist reenactments of Bible stories and developing his own religiously themed Symbolist drawings.[34] Moving to New York, Gibran gained a reputation in Arab American literary modernism and became a commercially successful artist, exhibiting at the Montross Gallery and M. Knoedler & Co. Living across the street from Thompson's Greenwich Village townhouse, Gibran was working on a series of face-to-face sketches of contemporary luminaries when Abdu'l Bahá came to town. Thompson arranged a portrait sitting for him and afterward, Gibran proclaimed that he had "seen the Unseen, and been filled," adding, "For the first time I saw form noble enough to be a receptacle for the Holy Spirit." Although Gibran never joined Bahá'í, he was captivated by the religion's focus on unity and global peace and later declared Bahá'u'lláh's revealed writings to be the most "stupendous literature that ever was written."[35]

Tobey was equally impressed by Abdu'l Bahá's charismatic image, which he first encountered in Thompson's apartment in 1918. "Upon a wall near where I was seated," he later recalled, "there was a photograph of a man with a white beard, wearing a white turban—a remarkable face . . . I had a very strange and powerful dream which concerned this person."[36] A few months later, Thompson invited him to the Bahá'í summer school, Green Acre, where Tobey formally converted. As he exclaimed in a letter to Muriel Draper during his stay:

> Muriel I think I have found what I have felt so long sub-consciously. The realization of the basis for my life from now on. The true vision of the outcome of refined materialism and the beginning realization of a cause so tremendous that I can hardly begin to explain anything about it . . . (Please don't think I have gone mad—I haven't.) I have come into the light of the teachings of Baha 'O'Ala [*sic*] and Abdul Baha.[37]

Shortly after his conversion, Tobey painted *Conflict of the Satanic and Celestial Egos* (figure 3.6), a reflection on Bahá'í teachings about "the prison of self" and the spiritual alienation of self-absorption. Depicting a huge prophetic figure hovering in the clouds, his arms stretched above a shadowy mass of struggling bodies, Tobey's hazy, agitated sketch is reminiscent of William Blake's drawings for the Book of Job, including his watercolor *Job's Sons and Daughters Overwhelmed by Satan* (1806). Tobey could have seen the English mystic's art in New York's Morgan Library, where a copy of his illustrated Book of Job was added to the library's sizable Blake Collection in 1903.[38]

Tobey's Bahá'í-conversion picture also resembles the drawings that Gibran made for his 1918 book *The Madman: His Parables and Poems*, a parable about lunatic wisdom and creative liberation. One sketch in particular features dis-



Figure 3.6. Mark Tobey, *Conflict of the Satanic and Celestial Egos*, ca. 1918. Watercolor on cardboard, 18½ × 12 in. Private collection, Seattle, WA.

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traught figures including Adam, Eve, and a snarling snake clustered under colossal statues of Egyptian, Buddhist, and Mesopotamian religious idols and the outstretched arms of the crucified Christ (figure 3.7). Later recalling this period in his life, Tobey observed: "Art was to me a medium through which one could experience inspiration, therefore heightening the value of living." Impressed with Gibran's aesthetic and commercial acumen, Tobey aimed to imitate both by illustrating a copy of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* in pen and ink. In January 1917, Marie Sterner curated an exhibition of Gibran's drawings at Knoedler, about ten months before she organized Tobey's first solo show of charcoal and ink portraits at the same gallery.[39]

Returning from Green Acre to New York, Tobey later remarked that he "thought that everybody I knew would be interested and wanting to know what Bahá'í was, but after a while I realized they weren't interested in hearing anything about a new religion—especially one with a name like Bahá'í, which no doubt was an eastern cult."[40] His father and older brother were particularly skeptical, and Tobey reached out to Abdu'l Baha for advice. Writing from

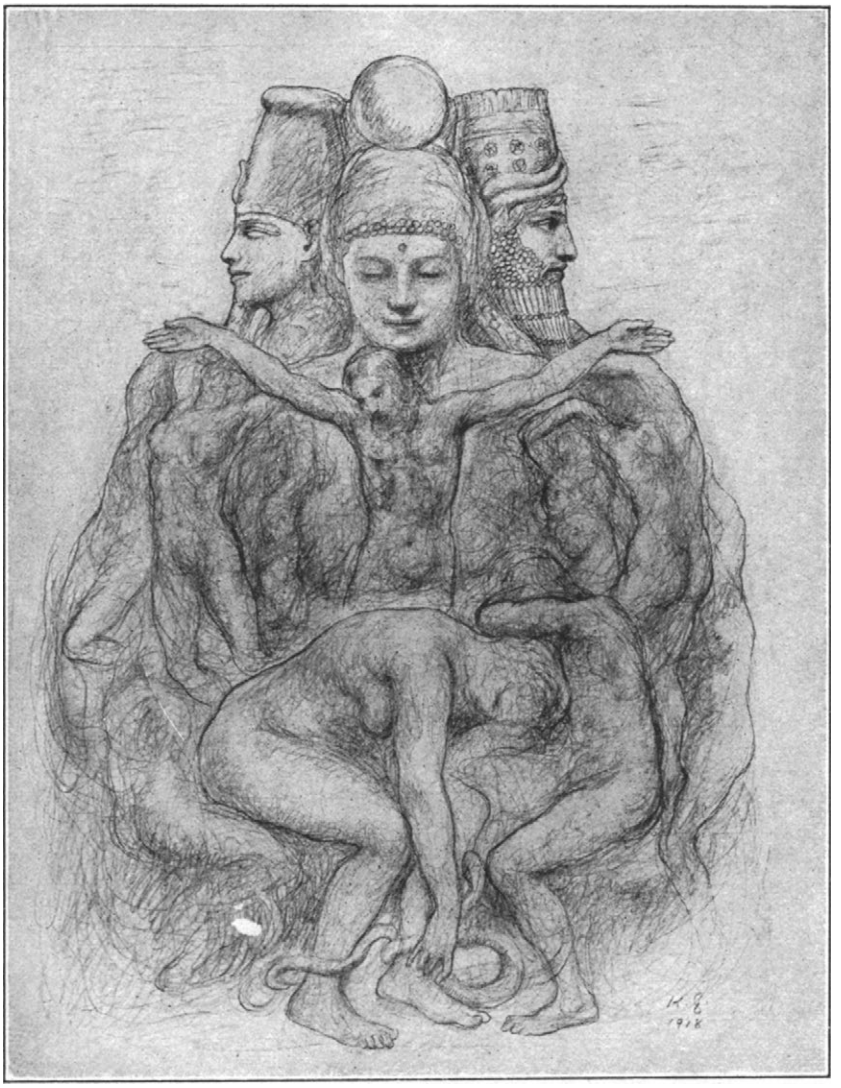


Figure 3.7. Kahlil Gibran, illustration from *The Madman: His Parables and Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918).

Palestine in 1919, the Bahá'í patriarch encouraged Tobey to sustain his "spiritual sentiments" and offered a prayer for his family: "From the bounties of God, I supplicate that thy father and brother may be forgiven, may receive a share from His generosity and may be immersed in the ocean of pardon and forgiveness."[41]

In a separate letter to Juliet Thompson, Abdu'l Bahá asked her to convey his "warmest, most loving greetings to Mark Tobey on my behalf." Unlike Mary Baker Eddy, he and other Bahá'í leaders fully supported art making:

> I rejoice to hear that thou takest pains with thine art, for in this wonderful new age, art is worship. The more thou strives to perfect it, the closer wilt thou

> come to God. What bestowal could be greater than this, that one's art should be even as the act of worshipping the Lord? That is to say, when thy fingers grasp the paintbrush, it is as if thou wert at prayer in the Temple.[42]

Emboldened by this artistic and religious encouragement, Tobey became a committed Bahá'í. Joining a Bahá'í study group (to whom Abdu'l Bahá also wrote a letter of commendation, in 1920), Tobey immersed himself in New York's Bahá'í community, serving on the "Consulting Committee" of the Bahá'í Library (416 Madison Avenue) and the "Decoration Committee" (with Juliet Thompson) of the Eleventh Annual Bahá'í Congress at the Hotel McAlpin in April 1919. He attended Bahá'í lectures, befriended Bahá'í scholars, introduced others (including Bernard Leach) to Bahá'í, gave lectures on the faith, taught classes at Bahá'í summer schools, published articles in Bahá'í journals, and donated paintings and money to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa.

Capitulating to his faith's heteronormative expectations, Tobey even got married: to playwright Dorothy Kirchner Earle on February 13, 1923, in Croton-on-Hudson, New York.[43] "There's no doubt that the experience I had of coming to see the value or experience of Bahá'í has had a big influence on my life," Tobey noted in a 1962 interview, adding that his faith had "brought a tremendous impulse" to his art.[44]

Like Marsden Hartley, Tobey was a spiritual seeker. The youngest of George and Emma Tobey's four children, including his brother Leon and sisters Crippa and Frances, Tobey was baptized Methodist and grew up in a devout Congregational family in Trempealeau, Wisconsin.[45] Drawn to religious ritual and performance, he considered the priesthood when he was young. In an autobiographical short story titled "Evangelist," written in the late 1930s, Tobey recounted his childhood attraction to a visiting preacher: "He must go again, every night when the man spoke. He wanted to fly until he was lost to everything and everybody only the evangelist waiting for him to take him to heaven, through the gates of heaven."[46] As a child, Tobey was magnetized by religious rituals and spaces, attracted especially to the emotional and experiential terms of faith. "Occasionally on summer days," he reminisced about his Wisconsin boyhood, "I'd go up and peek in the Catholic Church [St. Bartholomew's, built in 1873]. It was very *verboten* but I wanted to see those colored pictures on the wall."[47]

As an adult, Tobey was enthralled by the visual and material artifacts of multiple religions, from Zen paintings to Billiken dolls (Mind Cure talismans designed by Kansas City art teacher Florence Pretz in 1908, patented with the logo "The God of Things as They Ought To Be").[48] Likewise, in addition to his personal collection of Bahá'í books (full of underlining and marginalia), Tobey read widely on other belief systems. He shared his insights on books by Frances Fenwick Williams (*A Soul on Fire*, 1915) and Sheldon Cheney (*Men Who Have Walked with God*, 1945) in letters to artist Lyonel Feininger, and gave

copies of the *Bhagavad Gita* to friends in Seattle.[49] He often quoted the medieval German theologian Meister Eckhart and his parable about the search for inner, hidden meanings. Eckhart's parable was repeated in a short appreciation that Julia and Lyonel Feininger wrote for Tobey's 1945 exhibition at Willard Gallery: "If you seek the kernel, then you must break the shell. And likewise if you would know the reality of Nature, you must destroy the appearance, and the farther you go beyond the appearance, the nearer you will be to the essence."[50]

Bahá'í's interfaith agenda sanctioned Tobey's spiritual searching and sampling. Its emphasis on "progressive revelation," for example, permitted his attention to Christian prophets, among others. A holiday card that he designed for Muriel Draper featured a dove, a female figure carrying a giant quill, a banner reading "Christ be with you," and the message: "In the midst / of a shattered world / The spirit of Christ / Walks the face of the Earth / Christmas Thoughts / and New Year's greetings / 1920."[51] In 1934, Tobey studied meditation at a Zen monastery near Kyoto, a practice he continued throughout his life. He conveyed his wide-ranging religious interests in paintings titled *The Last Supper* (1945) and *The Deposition* (1947), and in still others demonstrating the East Asian brushwork he learned from his friend Teng Baiye, an accomplished Chinese artist who studied at the University of Washington in the 1920s.[52]

Tobey's spiritual seeking found refuge in Bahá'í because it permitted his development of an integrative and independent modern art while simultaneously, he felt, disciplining his queer desires. Tobey's multiple modern art directions were fomented in New York in the teens through his contact with other moderns, and buffeted by his gnawing worries that commercial art and portraiture, his financial bread and butter, were unsatisfying. "One night after an evening at a party at Marcel Duchamp's studio," he later recalled, "while waiting for an elevated train I kept wondering if by chance there might be something else greater than art. This idea remained with me for several days—during which I thought considerably about the expression 'the love of God,' what it is, what it could mean to one like myself. This led to prayer to know about this profound state."[53] Shortly after this epiphanic moment, he met Juliet Thompson and found Bahá'í.

Tobey's phrase "one like myself" is telling. As he intimated in illustrated letters to Draper, his friend and confidant since 1916, his homosexuality was a matter of intense personal anxiety (figure 3.8). Although he socialized in a vibrant interwar gay subculture in Greenwich Village, befriending other queer artists including Hartley, writer Janet Flanner, poet and dancer Mark Turbyfill, and interior decorator Wymer Mills, Tobey worried about his vulnerability in a presumptively heteronormative America where sexual difference was prohibited and policed.[54] Bahá'í offered relief, dictating the control of his sexual desires in favor of spiritual fellowship. "Realize Mules!" he excitedly wrote to Draper during his conversion at Green Acre, "This means absolutely the com-

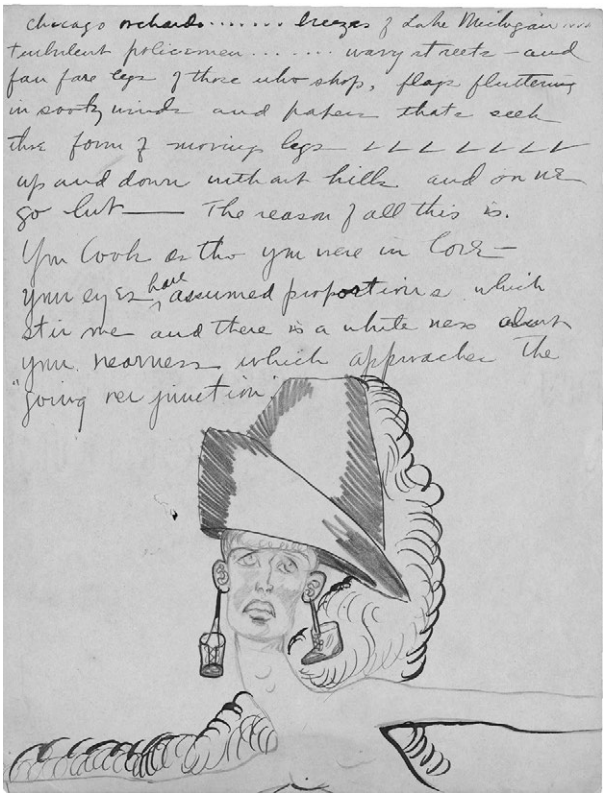


Figure 3.8. Mark Tobey, pencil sketch of Muriel Draper, in letter to her, ca. 1921. Muriel Draper papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, CT.

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mand over my lower self."[55] As he reiterated in his 1933 "poetic homage" to Abdu'l Bahá: "secretly, my body flamed anew."

Christopher Reed explains that Tobey's turn to Bahá'í was a classic case of Freudian sublimation informed by modern Western fantasies about the transformative potential of "Orientalism." Or as artist Morris Graves put it, "Tobey was attracted to Lawrence of Arabia but so closeted that he found expression only via the more elevating Islam of Bahá'í."[56] Seattle art critic Matthew Kangas argues that Tobey, Graves, Guy Anderson, and other interwar artists in Seattle appropriated "Asian art traditions and techniques as a palimpsest for building a gay erotics of painting," adding: "Asian art or the 'look' of Asian art was the veil to pull over the pain of being homosexual in an alien unsympathetic culture."[57] Following these lines of reasoning, Tobey's attraction to Eastern aesthetics and Bahá'í beliefs was animated by the psychic and social healing that Asian "Orientalism" seemingly offered.

Consistent with Thomas Tweed's theory that religions function to "intensify joy and confront suffering," Tobey's faith in Bahá'í was certainly therapeutic.[58] As per Bahá'í imperatives, Tobey tried to ease his psychic distress about being gay in a hetero-dominant society by redirecting his sexual orientation and getting married. But his marriage to Dorothy Kirchner Earle was brief and bitter, ending in annulment when he abandoned her and fled to Seattle af-



Figure 3.9. Mark Tobey, *Dancing Miners*, ca. 1922–27. Oil on canvas, 67 × 39¼ in. Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 42.19.

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ter just a few months. "There are two hells: marriage and celibacy. Take your choice," Tobey later told author Marzieh Gail. He never discussed his marriage to Earle, who was listed on the Detroit Social Register in the early 1920s and whose one-act play "You're Such a Respectable Person, Miss Morrison" was published in the literary magazine *Smart Set* in 1915. He even backdated his move to Seattle by a year to erase her and their momentary marriage from his biography.[59] Tobey's letters to Muriel Draper convey his misery about the entire affair—"D. wrote and said Your wife—I could vomit." Draper, among other friends, repeatedly counseled Tobey that he should "never be married."[60]

Tobey was candid with Draper about being gay, describing his 1927 painting *Dancing Miners* as a "rather glorious" picture of two men "in love" (figure 3.9). Based on the image of a same-sex couple waltzing in Jean Andre Castaigne's 1891 etching *A Miners Ball*, a raucous scene of an all-male hoedown during

the California Gold Rush, Tobey told Draper that his picture "will be called a Homosexual canvas and I shall need to be near *you* [underlined nine times] when I show it."[61]

While he was unwilling to conform to Bahá'í expectations of marriage and heteronormativity, Tobey struggled with his sexuality and often expressed interests in restraint and control, both personal and aesthetic. A 1925 visit to the Paris studio of sculptor Constantin Brancusi, who was also gay, prompted Tobey to comment admiringly about the Romanian artist's "own mastery over himself." A 1945 letter to Julia and Lyonel Feininger conveyed his disappointment in Marsden Hartley's paintings (shown in a posthumous retrospective at MoMA) and his failure—in Tobey's opinion—to develop a more disciplined body of work: "Hartley never had anyone to help stabilize him so I presume that is the reason for his spurts of romantic adventure and perhaps the reason why he sometimes became so cheap in color and hard decorative decision."[62] Hartley's muddled artistic oeuvre, Tobey implied, related to his inability to establish a stabilizing, sublimating, and controlling influence in his life—as he believed he had with Bahá'í.

Tobey's faith in Bahá'í was further animated by his quest, as he mused after an evening with Duchamp, for "something else greater than art." Duchamp's disdain for the visual or "retinal" impediments of painting was enormously influential for the course of twentieth-century modernism, and no doubt influenced Tobey's own search for something "greater" than either imitative strategies of representation or formalist moves toward "art for art's sake."[63] Later asked by critic Katherine Kuh about his artistic aims, Tobey replied: "The only goal I can definitely remember was in 1918 when I said to myself, 'If I don't do anything else in my painting life, I will smash form.'" Tobey elaborated: "I began to react to the Renaissance sense of space and order. I felt keenly that space should be freer. As I remember, I really wanted to smash form, to melt it in a more moving and dynamic way." His sentiments were more explorative than anarchistic: as per Meister Eckhart's parable about breaking the shell, Tobey's goal of breaking through the formal boundaries of art was predicated on discovering "greater" interior truths and re-presenting them on more holistic and integrative terms. "I've tried to decentralize and interpenetrate so that all parts of a painting are of related value," he told Kuh, adding, "Perhaps I've hoped even to penetrate perspective and bring the far near."[64]

Duchamp's insights about an unrestricted and reconceptualized art motivated Tobey and countless other American moderns. But Bahá'í's boundless theology of universal unity guided Tobey's spiritual modernism and gave it purpose. If other Bahá'í claimed him as a visual overseer of their shared religious faith, Tobey insisted on his aesthetic independence, stating: "I am a Bahá'í, and I am a painter, but I am not a Bahá'í painter." He often quoted Shoghi Effendi's assertion that there was no "official" Bahá'í art, justifying the multifaceted styles and subjects of his modern painting by explaining that "the Guardian freed art from didactic purposes" and reiterating the progres-

sive aims of the religion itself.[65] Refusing to be identified as a Bahá'í artist, Tobey never hesitated, however, to acknowledge how his Bahá'í beliefs shaped and directed his modern art.

Portraiture and the Oneness of Mankind

Not surprisingly in a religion dedicated to the "oneness of mankind," portraiture was especially commended among Bahá'í. In her column "The Current Art" in the Bahá'í magazine *Reality*, Mary Hanford Ford often singled out portrait painters such as Juliet Thompson, Frances Soule Campbell, and Marco Zim, praising their "consciousness of the poetry of life" and deft "sureness of technique." In one typical passage, Ford exclaimed how Zim's "marvelous portrait of Abdul Bahá" was "beautiful in color, powerful in handling, and floats free from the background like a living thing." Reviewing Thompson's 1921 show at Knoedler, which included portraits of interwar personalities such as Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Princess Cantacuzene (granddaughter of Ulysses Grant), Ford explained that her pictures "attracted the attention of connoisseurs" because of their "mystical pastel-like touch." Less interested in signature styles and realistic likenesses than "profound feeling," Ford argued that "the artist is not simply an expression of personal genius, he is an open channel through which vibrates the collective spirit of his day in one way or another."[66] Like other Bahá'í, Ford was especially attracted to American artists whose work seemingly conveyed that "collective spirit."

Tobey was among them. If best known for his abstract art, Tobey made portraits throughout his career. He exhibited twenty-three headshots at Knoedler in 1917 (figure 3.4). He drew and painted pictures of friends and patrons in the 1920s (*Portrait of Edith Stern*, 1923; *Portrait of Mrs. Edgar Ames in Chinese Robe*, 1927; *Portrait of Rudolph Weisenborn*, 1928) and artists and gallerists in the 1940s and 1950s (*Portrait of Kenneth Callahan*, 1944; *Portrait of Zoë Dusanne*, 1957).[67] Despite the advent of photography, demands for painted portraits endured. Twentieth-century American artists ranging in stylistic diversity from Florine Stettheimer and Charles Demuth to Hartley, Benton, Gibran, Walt Kuhn, Romaine Brooks, William H. Johnson, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi painted portraits, using the format to explore changing ideas about American identity and hone their own modern art sensibilities. Tobey's portraits were similarly attuned: a look at the dozen or so self-portraits that he painted from the mid-teens through the early 1970s, including a 1923 "cubist" rendition (figure 3.10) and a more expressionistic picture painted a few years later in which he posed in a fedora and colorful tie (figure 3.3), shows that he experimented with the medium as much as anyone. But Tobey's pictures of people were further animated by Bahá'í notions of universal humanism.

Tobey's "sketches, caricatures, religious compositions, or street scenes," William Seitz observed, "represented almost every social group and type: saints, society women, vendors and workers, actors and entertainers, danc-



Figure 3.10. Mark Tobey, *Untitled (Cubist Self Portrait)*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 24⅛ × 18⅛ in. Private collection.

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ers, prostitutes, and skid-row bums."[68] Bahá'í aspirations of racial diversity and integration were also central in his art, if problematic in terms of his religion's reliance on "whiteness" as a signifier of the "light of oneness" and a foe of the "forces of darkness."

In December 1929, for example, Tobey exhibited a number of figurative works, including *Bath-House Attendant*, *Black Torso*, and *Portrait of Mark Turbyfill*, at Romany Marie's, a Greenwich Village café and gallery. The space had been recently modernized by Buckminster Fuller in his "Dymaxion" style, a futuristic design scheme featuring lightweight aluminum panels in hexagonal shapes.[69] A brochure for Tobey's exhibition illustrated his stylistic diversity, from a sketch titled *Portrait of a Man Scratching Himself* to the abstract drawing *Before Form*, which imitated the undulating, biomorphic designs of European Surrealists like André Masson. The brochure included a page of sprawling handwritten prose (unsigned) that pondered "What are this man's tools?" and riffed on the color "white"—"A white sky!" "The White Head!" "What is white?"—before concluding: "More and more canvases—rhythmic—only the artist sees them—I stand alone—White is what!"[70] Informed by Bahá'í ideas of enlightenment as "white light," these ruminations on the meaning of "whiteness" in Tobey's modern art embodied racist constructs of an essentially White superiority. Although Bahá'í prophesized a post-racial future

of universal humanism, its—and Tobey's—color-blind identification with "whiteness" represented a troubling lack of recognition regarding race-based privilege.

The brochure for Tobey's 1929 exhibition also featured an unsigned, one-paragraph "Note." Probably written by Fuller or by another of Tobey's inter-war acquaintances—and Romany Marie habitués—such as Holger Cahill, Marcel Duchamp, Marsden Hartley, or Isamu Noguchi, the "Note" cast Tobey as a leading light in the American avant-garde:

> The French Surrealists, in a special issue of *Variétés*, drew up a map of the world and left out America, it being non-existent from their point of view. Mark Tobey is one of the very few who put us back on the map. Surrealism becomes apparent. It is working itself out as a reflex of its time. The question has been asked how relevant Surrealism is to America. It is the relevant force for America, and not until we discover its magic will there be a cultural release.[71]

Published in the Belgian magazine *Variétés* in June 1929, *The Surrealist Map of the World* refused national and cartographic borders, eliminating Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, and re-centering the earth in the Pacific Ocean.[72] Referencing this map's revisionist critique of the Western world, the author of this "Note" tied Tobey's art, and modern America's cultural futurity, to the liberating "magic" of Surrealism.

As a follower of Bahá'í, Tobey certainly shared the Surrealist critique of a world dangerously divided into competing nation-states, and the movement's focus on producing alternative, redemptive views of reality. He no doubt concurred with the 1925 Surrealist declaration: "We are disgusted with the idea of belonging to a country at all, which is the most bestial and least philosophic of the concepts to which we are all subjected."[73] As a Bahá'í who was a modern painter, however, Tobey was less inclined toward developing a distinctively "American" art of "cultural release," as suggested by the writer of this "Note" for his 1929 show at Romany Marie's. Tobey was more interested in fostering an integrative spiritual aesthetic unrestrained by territorial borders and focused on universal humanism. "My imagination," he wrote in 1951, "has its own geography." Likewise, although he experimented with many styles of modern art, including Surrealism, throughout his career, Tobey shrugged off affiliation with any particular movement and preferred to be called a "humanist."[74]

Tobey's humanist aesthetic did not go unnoticed. After seeing his work at Romany Marie's, MoMA curator Alfred Barr invited Tobey to participate in the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans* (1930–1931). Tobey showed several portraits. In 1930, Muriel Draper wrote a long article on Tobey in *Creative Art*, musing on "the constant and varied flow of his life in painting" and remarking, "The essential power of his work is in his control of form and his force of rhythm. When these combine, his painting emerges with full con-

viction. It happens in a portrait, a landscape, a pure design, naked human figures or a group of objects." In 1931, a solo show at New York's Contemporary Arts Gallery featured thirty-eight works, including *Dancing Miners* and the figure paintings *Blue Nude*, *Torso*, *The Sleepers*, and *Three Acrobats*.[75] Marsden Hartley, making a stab at art criticism in the early 1930s, wrote an essay describing Tobey as "more modern than the local modernists," and a "thinker and a mystic" who was "at his best in the depiction of human states of being." Subtly connecting Tobey's faith with his art—Hartley and Tobey first met in 1920, shortly after Tobey's conversion to Bahá'í—Hartley called him "a revealer of the content of shapes" who "finds a consistent harmonic synthesis for these revelations" in his pictures.[76]

Tobey's "harmonic synthesis" was sustained in his annual shows at Willard Gallery in the 1940s and 1950s. These typically consisted of both abstract and figurative pictures, including scenes of people crowded together on streets and in markets, as in *Broadway Boogie* (1942), *San Francisco Street* (1941), *Rummage* (1941), *E Pluribus Unum* (1942–43), and *Electric Night* (1944). A retrospective of seventy works at the Whitney in 1951 included a 1917 *Self-Portrait*, a 1921 pencil drawing titled *Cotton Club*, the lithographs *Burlesque* and *Vaudeville* (both 1924), and the large painting *Odalisque* (1927, figure 3.11), as well as more recent works—*Icon* (1949), *Deposition* (1949), and *Beach Space* (1950)—depicting figures in various settings. Even Tobey's sumi drawings of 1957, spirited ink-on-paper abstractions made by "flinging" and brushing specially prepared inks onto dampened sheets of mulberry paper, yielded multiple portraits of friends and models.[77]

As a follower of the Bahá'í faith, Tobey was compelled by community and drawn to diversity: his Michelangelo-esque painting *Odalisque*, for example, depicts a female nude of color. Yet Bahá'í's concentration on spiritual fellowship was often difficult for him. Tobey frustrated many friendships. Various accounts describe him as "testy," "cold," and "chronically irritated," always in a "permanent condition of stress."[78] Strong relationships—such as his friendship with Northwest Coast modernist Morris Graves—dissipated in jealous resentment when others achieved art world success and Tobey felt overlooked and underappreciated. Impatient and judgmental, Tobey often complained about the burden of social interaction, writing:

> Profitless discussions fatigue and weary a person. People who call on me almost every day carry on a stream of profitless, unspiritual talk and I must listen to them with patience. We are commanded to associate with all people. Today three persons called and they talked for one hour without any definite result.[79]

Seattle painter Wesley Wehr recounted, "Tobey could be such a complex prima donna—deeply intelligent, thoughtful, considerate one moment—obsessively self-centered and disgruntled the next."[80]

A challenging personality who was challenged by personal relationships,

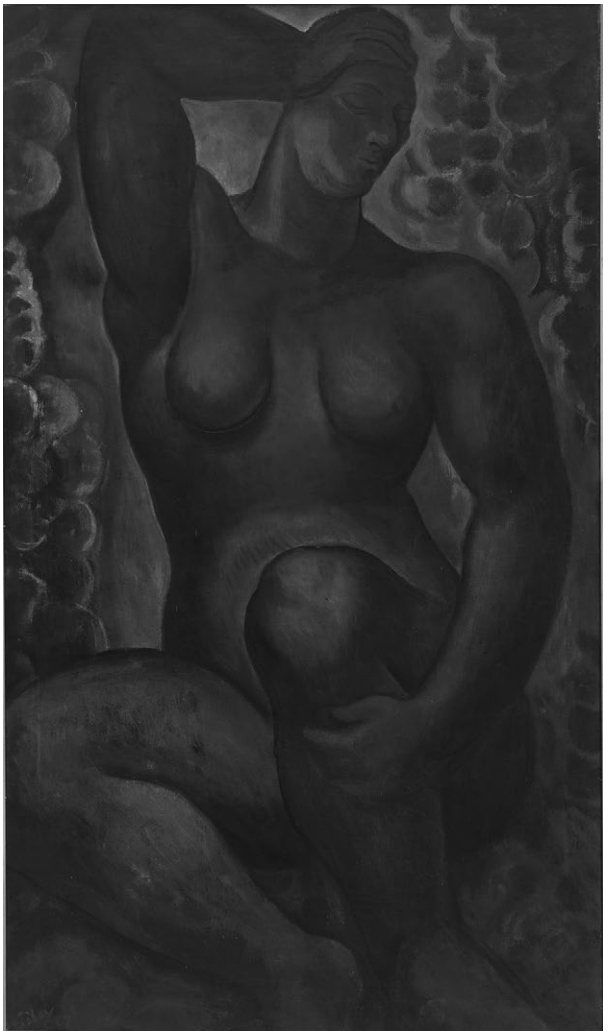


Figure 3.11. Mark Tobey, *Odalisque*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 48 × 28 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Rogers Jr. in memory of Juliana Force, Whitney Museum of American Art, 50.14.

© 2022 Mark Tobey / Seattle Art Museum, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Digital image © Whitney Museum of American Art. Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Tobey nonetheless never stopped visually navigating whatever social universe he occupied. While teaching at the Cornish School, he painted portraits of his colleagues and visiting artists, including puppeteers Richard Odlin and Ellen van Volkenburg and dancer Martha Graham. While teaching at Dartington Hall in the 1930s, he painted a figurative mural based on the forceful anti-war, anti-state choreography of Graham's protégé Margaret Barr, a political leftist who headed the college's Dance Drama Group (figure 3.12). While living in Seattle off and on from 1923 through the 1950s, he painted portraits of Northwest Coast society matrons and culture brokers (many of whom took classes with him) including Anne Ames, Elsa Churchill Griffiths, Betty Bowen, and Zoë Dusanne.

Tobey also spent many hours sketching dozens of men (and some women) in Seattle's Pike Place Market, a "multilevel maze of stalls, small shops, and open counters" where local farmers and merchants from the city's ethnic

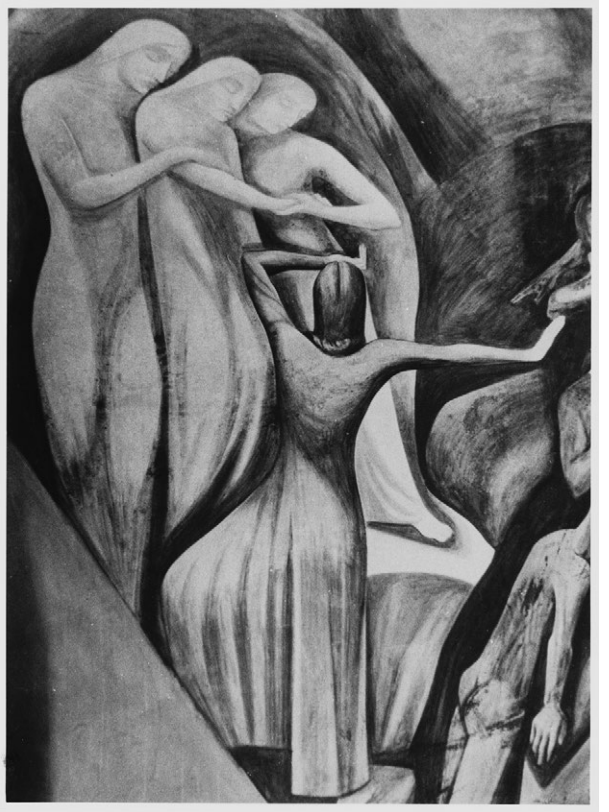


Figure 3.12. Mark Tobey, panel of mural for Dartington Hall, Devonshire, England, ca. 1935, destroyed.

© 2022 Mark Tobey / Seattle Art Museum, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photograph from Michael Whitney Straight papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

communities sold their goods. As George Chauncey details, gay men in early twentieth-century America "socialized extensively" in working-class neighborhoods because they were often more tolerant of sexual difference.[81] Observing Bahá'í imperatives, Tobey flocked to Seattle's public market to witness, record, and experience humanity's wide-ranging flux. Throughout his career, Tobey's aesthetic attention to human figures and social interaction was guided by his faith's focus on spiritual solidarity. Rarely comfortable confined to a studio or bound to a single medium or technique, Tobey spent much of his time traveling from place to place, sketching the dynamics of human behavior, including his own, in multiple art styles.

Dropping out of high school in 1906, Tobey found work in Chicago as a technical draftsman, shipping clerk, and fashion-catalogue illustrator; moving to New York in 1911, he was hired by *McCall's* and began drawing portraits. He also pursued a career as an interior decorator, painting a mural of "French gardens in misty blues and greens and lavenders" for *Vogue* editor Edna Woolman Chase's West 10th Street brownstone, and designing "diverting door knockers" and artsy window blinds "transformed" by "a cosmic abstraction of suns and moons painted in brilliant hues with Japanese inks." Muriel Draper enthused about Tobey's "great talents" for interior design in her *New Yorker* column "In and about the House" (written under the pseudonym "Repard



Figure 3.13. Mark Tobey, *Toddle Holds*, cartoon for the *Quill* [Greenwich Village, NY] 9, no. 4. (October 1921): 15. Hathi Trust Digital Library, digitized by Google, original from University of Michigan.

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Leirum," or her name spelled backward), noting: "He is a boon to decorators and an important addition to the small group of artists who work with them."[82]

In 1921, Tobey joined the staff of the *Quill*, one of several "little magazines" that fueled interwar Greenwich Village's "American Bohemia" reputation. Edited by "Village Troubadour" Bobby Edwards, a "gifted parodist" who made cigar-box ukuleles, among other things, the *Quill* was a gossipy guide to Greenwich Village's tearooms, cabarets, and art studios. In addition to reviews of the latest plays, it featured editorials on contemporary issues from birth control to interracial marriage, and it made humorous jabs at the tourists who flocked to the neighborhood for evenings of bohemian slumming.[83] Edwards and Tobey shared the same irreverent sense of humor, and Tobey was invited to help set the *Quill*'s satirical tone. He did so with witty pen-and-ink drawings titled *The Grave Stone of Night Life* (a decorative mishmash of mostly-naked chorus girls, faceless male dancers in tuxedos and top hats, and spider webs, all frolicking on a tombstone) and *Toddle Holds* (the Toddle was a Jazz Age dance move) (figure 3.13).

From the perspective of an art history focused on the evolution and achievement of single or signature styles, Tobey's multiple artistic labors are difficult to assess and, hence, easy to dismiss. Even his most sympathetic biographer, MoMA curator William Seitz, who organized a major retrospective



Figure 3.14. Mark Tobey, *E Pluribus Unum*, 1942. Opaque watercolor on paper mounted on paperboard, 19¾ × 27¼ in. Gift of Mrs. Thomas D. Stimson, Seattle Art Museum, 43.33.

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of Tobey's work in 1962, argued that Tobey was in his mid-forties before the "diverse elements" of an "uneven" and "erratic" artistic career "began to coalesce" in a "contemporary abstract style" of significance. Seitz acknowledged Tobey's debt to Bahá'í, stating in the opening pages of his catalogue: "Although he painted before his conversion to the Bahá'í World Faith in 1918, the existing content of his art is a direct outcome of this revelation."[84] But in the early 1960s, keen to confirm Tobey's pioneering role in the evolution of the most prominent modern art style of the day—Abstract Expressionism—Seitz downplayed Tobey's "other" artistic forays. He especially lauded Tobey's breakthrough method of white writing.

Yet Tobey's faith in Bahá'í's integrative humanism steered him throughout his artistic career. As a personal guide and spiritual objective, Bahá'í connected his scattered and diverse art projects. "Produce a synthesis," he explained to his friend Mark Turbyfill, a poet and dancer who sought him out in 1927 to learn how to paint.[85] Paintings like *E Pluribus Unum* (1942–1943, figure 3.14), based on his sketches of Pike Place Market, perhaps most obviously convey Bahá'í's message of social and spiritual oneness. Packing the scene with images of vendors and shoppers representing a range of ages, ethnicities, races, gestures, and emotions, and drawing them out of scale and piled on top of one another, Tobey rejected academic rules of "space and order" and pushed his view of an inclusive, decentered humanity to the front of

the canvas. The painting's rhythmic spatial patterning is augmented in its top tier, which features a jumble of abstract symbols and designs extracted from multiple cultural sources, from Native Northwest Coast totems to Islamic architecture.

Importantly, *E Pluribus Unum* is neither a happy celebration of human mingling—more than a few of the characters in the picture appear to be frowning, grimacing, and yelling—nor an anxious critique of the dangerous homogeneity of mass man, as per Frankfurt School theorists. Rather, Tobey's painting captures the crowded cacophony of human difference. Although the title of the painting recalls the motto of the Great Seal of the United States of America—"out of many, one"—Tobey's use of the Latin phrase was less a nod to nation-state loyalty than to Bahá'í prophecy that the US was the ideal leader of the messianic religion's mission of global spiritual edification. Tobey's depiction of miscellaneous individuals in a crowd, or the complimentary and inseparable terms of difference and oneness, stemmed from Bahá'í principles of unity in diversity.

Despite his protestations that he was "not" a Bahá'í artist, Tobey painted a large number of canvases (perhaps one-quarter of his work, one writer estimates) illustrating Bahá'í historical figures and events.[86] *Near Eastern Landscape* (1927), for example, depicts the Shrine of the Báb, while *The Red Tree of the Martyr* (1940) references the Báb's earliest followers. Advised by Shoghi Effendi to paint the "early heroes of the Faith, but not the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh," Tobey depicted Bahá'í prophets on symbolic terms.[87] *Rising Orb* (1935) shows a group of believers responding to the Manifestation of God by raising their faces and arms in the direction of a celestial sphere described in Bahá'í scripture as the "Orb of Divine Revelation." Discussing the painting at a Bahá'í assembly in Seattle in 1961, Tobey explained: "When we wake up and see the inner horizon light rising, then we see beyond the horizon [and] break the mold of men's minds with the spirit of truth . . . This light will burn away the mist of life and will become very, very great."[88]

Retreat from Civilization (1939, figure 3.15), on the other hand, illustrates the horrifying consequences for a world that refuses Bahá'í spiritual guidance. Depicting a Christlike figure carrying the limp body of a woman of color, stepping through a minefield of barbed wire and bones, and surrounded, on the left, by figures being executed and, on the right, by broken and decapitated sculptures (including the State of Liberty), Tobey's symbol-strewn picture—a flaming halo emanates from the head of the bearded Christ—was clearly cautionary. Contextualized by the outbreak of war in Europe (Germany invaded Poland in September 1939), *Retreat from Civilization* was also informed by Bahá'í's messianic predictions of apocalyptic upheaval and the "end of days." As Tobey related in a 1938 letter to a Bahá'í friend: "There is some very dynamite and dynamic news from Shoghi Effendi, in which he says the persecutions are about to begin and that everything from religions to classes will fight us and seek to annihilate us—that we have the only healing influences



Figure 3.15. Mark Tobey, *Retreat from Civilization*, 1939. Tempera on thin onionskin paper, 8 × 10$^{9}/_{16}$ in. Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA; gift of Barbara Bronson-Himmelman, FA 67.13.

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and must be the leaven of the whole world and that the Bahá'í's will be the fragment left to begin the new world!"[89]

Tobey more optimistically painted the foundations of this "new world" in *The New Day* (1945) and *Arena of Civilization* (1947, figure 3.16), both depicting architectural interiors coded with symbols especially meaningful to Bahá'í schooled in the religion's revealed tablets. *Arena of Civilization*, which Tobey said he "composed" from the "richly loaded Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and His son Abdul Bahá," illustrates structural strata from dank catacombs to the vaulted ceiling of a dome. Charting the progressive evolution of civilization, Tobey cast the swathed figure of Lazarus in the picture's bottom tier and depicted ethereal, dematerialized figures at the top. As he explained in a statement for the Willard Gallery, where *Arena of Civilization* was shown in November 1947 (along with twenty other recent works): "The upper part of the painting is symbolic of the new and finer forces of our age, the ones we call modern; hence less formed but there to be formed as growth evolves. This signifies not only finer instruments but also spiritual and mental concepts relative to the material advance. 'All things appear by degree . . .' Abdu'l Bahá."[90]

Many of the critics who reviewed this 1947 exhibition, Tobey's third solo show at Marian Willard's gallery, remarked on the figurative paintings that visibly referenced Bahá'í history and scripture, including *Retreat of the Friend* and *Day of the Martyr* (both 1947). Some were notably piqued. "One finds oneself annoyed," wrote the critic at *ARTnews* (most likely Thomas Hess), "that such a talented artist often pushes his conclusions into obscurity, and this reviewer found himself even more annoyed with the pretentious religious philosophy which Tobey insists on dragging into his titles. He is an excellent painter, cer-

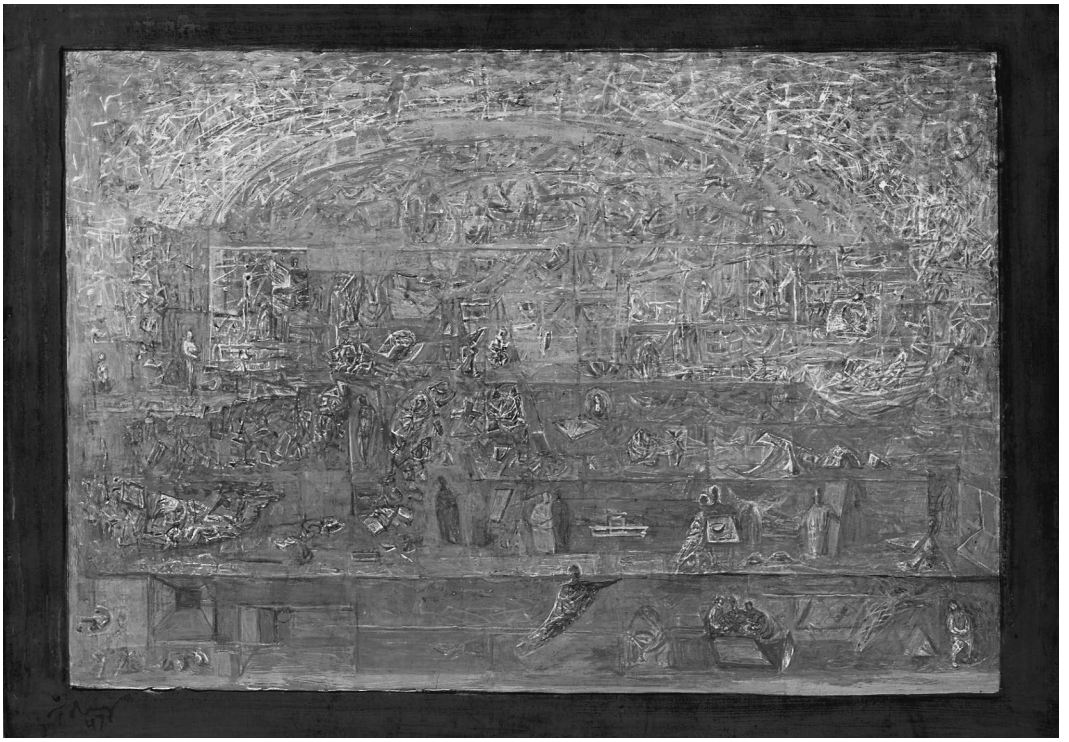


Figure 3.16. Mark Tobey, *Arena of Civilization*, 1947. Tempera on board, 14 × 19½ in. Moeller Fine Art, Berlin.

© 2022 Mark Tobey / Seattle Art Museum, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photograph courtesy of Moeller Fine Art Berlin–New York.

tainly among the most distinguished of his generation in America, but he is not Joan of Arc."[91] Such criticism escalated in the postwar era, as critics, curators, and collectors realized that even Tobey's nonobjective paintings, his white writing and all-over abstractions with titles like *Extensions from Baghdad*, *Prophetic Plane*, *Blaze of Our Century*, and *New York Tablet*, were deeply informed by his faith in Bahá'í.

White Writing and Spiritual Calligraphy

Talking with Seitz in 1962 about the inspirations for his white writing, Tobey reminisced, "It goes back as far as 1920–22. I was living in the Village, painting and thinking and feeling that in some way I had to demolish form . . . Partially my interest in Bahá'í caused this reaction. I didn't want finalities anymore, I wanted endless extension." He elaborated: "You see, when I wanted to smash form, I wanted to smash the image which was in space. I wanted to give the light that was in the form a release."[92]

Tobey's style of white writing is exemplified in *Threading Light* (figure 3.2), which weaves scrawling white lines through and across barely discernible images of birds, doorways, and figures wearing traditional Persian robes and headdresses. *New York Tablet* (1946, figure 3.17) dispenses with representational images altogether to focus on a tightly compressed network of thin white lines spilling out of a book-like form—a tablet—and onto the open



Figure 3.17. Mark Tobey, *New York Tablet*, 1946. Opaque watercolor and chalk on paper on wood panel, 24⅞ × 19 in. Edward W. Root bequest, Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, New York, 57.263.

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spaces of the rest of the canvas. Both pictures embody Tobey's chief interests in rupturing form to release "the light" inside, in integrating and uniting individual parts of the composition, and in creating a kind of gestural painting transcending visual barriers of space and time. Regarded when they were first exhibited as groundbreaking examples of Abstract Expressionism, Tobey's all-over abstractions were, he explained, informed by his faith in the "endless extension" of Bahá'í and his explicit attention to the liberating aesthetic and spiritual possibilities of East Asian and Arabic calligraphy.

Art collector (and future gallerist) Sidney Janis was the first to use the term "white writing" and to expound on its origins in an essay that Marian Willard commissioned for Tobey's first show at her gallery. One of several women who

shaped mid-century American modernism, Willard opened her first gallery in New York in 1936 and represented Graves, Feininger, Charles Seliger, Gina Knee, Norman Lewis, and David Smith, among other artists. Especially interested in abstract-leaning artists whose work projected "a personal statement as well as a vision of the universal," Willard often commissioned short essays and poems for her gallery's exhibition catalogues.[93] "Nine years ago in 1935," Janis wrote, "Mark Tobey evolved the techniques of white writing, which has since distinguished his work. This method, a fusion of the spirit of Chinese writing with morphic characters rooted in 20th century painting, derives from Tobey's intensely personalized vision."[94]

Janis's assessment was based on three works that Tobey painted in the mid-1930s: *Broadway Norm*, *The 1920s (Welcome Hero)*, and *Broadway*, which the Metropolitan Museum of Art had purchased in 1942.[95] Densely configured with towering skyscrapers, crowded streets, and neon signs, *Broadway* and *The 1920s (Welcome Hero)* celebrated New York's mesmerizing cosmopolitanism. Tobey remarked that *The 1920s (Welcome Hero)* was inspired by Manhattan's 1927 ticker-tape parade for Charles Lindbergh, commemorating the first solo flight across the Atlantic, and by the general "hullabaloo of great parades down Fifth Avenue in the twenties—the sirens, bells, horns, cheers, the cacophony of the whole experience." The smaller tempera *Broadway Norm*, by contrast, was an abstract mesh of multicolored lines.

Connecting these three New York–centric paintings was Tobey's white writing: a network of opaque white lines either traced around and over images and objects or looped in a lacy labyrinth all over the picture surface. Whether used to outline and enhance specific representational and iconic details, or to convey the vitality of nonobjective shapes and designs, Tobey's method of "writing" a painting conveyed the movement and intensity of social interaction that he felt, especially in an urban setting. It was, he explained to Kuh, a "technical approach which enabled me to capture what especially interested me in the city—its lights—threading traffic—the river of humanity chartered and flowing through and around its self-imposed limitations."[96]

Tobey honed what he called his "calligraphic impulse" at Dartington Hall in the mid-1930s.[97] A progressive school founded in the late 1920s at a country estate in South Devon, Dartington was the brainchild of Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst, wealthy and well-educated British American liberals whose ambitions centered on managing a self-sufficient art college outfitted with "a farm, a garden, workshops, playgrounds, woods and freedom."[98] Tobey was among the artists and musicians whom the Elmhirsts invited to teach at Dartington, which in the 1930s became home to avant-garde ensembles such as the Jooss-Leder Dance School and the Chekhov Theatre Studio. Bernard Leach, who joined the faculty in 1932, recalled that Tobey was a "marvelous" teacher whose popular classes attracted "artists, dancers, musicians, housewives, servants and gardeners—both the élite and the simpler-minded."[99] In addition

to teaching, Tobey designed costumes for dance performances (which he had also done at Cornish), painted murals for school buildings (figure 3.12), and organized a Bahá'í study group.

As college administrators, the Elmhirsts were incredibly supportive and generous with their faculty. In 1932, they paid for Tobey's travels in Mexico, where he reconnected with Marsden Hartley and Martha Graham and spent time with photographers Tina Modotti and Edward Weston. In 1934, the Elmhirsts sent Tobey and Leach on a paid sabbatical to China and Japan. "We drew constantly," Leach recalled of their stretch in Hong Kong, noting that Tobey was especially "fascinated by the vertical signboards outside every shop—characters, black on white, red on gold."[100] In Shanghai, Tobey stayed with his friend Teng Baiye, who had returned to China after completing his master's degree and teaching art at the University of Washington. Tobey resumed brush painting with him, practiced writing Chinese characters, and lectured in a few of his classes at the University of Shanghai. Teng Baiye, David Clarke writes, was "an agent of cultural exchange" for Tobey, introducing him to Asian art techniques and ideas that he experimented with for the rest of his life. In Japan, Tobey spent a month at Enpuku-ji, a temple and meditation center near Kyoto that catered to Westerners interested in studying Zen Buddhism.[101]

In his 1958 article "Japanese Traditions and American Art," Tobey related that his travels in East Asia led to his impression that Japanese art was framed by "two strong characteristics: concentration and consecration. That all of nature did not have to be shown as in a stuffed bird, hence there was more life for the imagination." He observed, further: "In China and Japan I was freed from form by the influence of the calligraphic."[102] Returning to Dartington in 1935, Tobey quickly painted *Broadway*, *Broadway Norm*, and *The 1920s (Welcome Hero)* "within a few nights of each other," and began his experiments in white writing. Starting with Janis's 1944 essay for Willard Gallery, subsequent accounts of his new calligraphic method of painting stressed their origins in East Asian art and philosophy—although, as art historian Joshua Taylor observed, the "thrusts and curves" of Tobey's paintings displayed "few actual Chinese strokes."[103] Tobey concurred, remarking in 1961, "I have never copied any Oriental models, but have merely drawn from them the dynamism I needed."[104]

Tobey's thoughts on liberating his art from the tyranny of form and making paintings that, integrating multiple sources, embodied "more life for the imagination," were pondered much earlier, of course, as was his attention to the "calligraphic." Overlooked in art-historical accounts of the origins of his white writing are the inspiration of Arabic calligraphy, from the line and design of Arabic letters to, especially, the "revelation writing" of Bahá'í's Persian founders.[105] From the moment of his conversion in 1918, Tobey became acquainted with the aesthetic, symbolic, and intrinsically spiritual properties of Arabic calligraphy, especially as many of Bahá'í's canonical texts were avail-

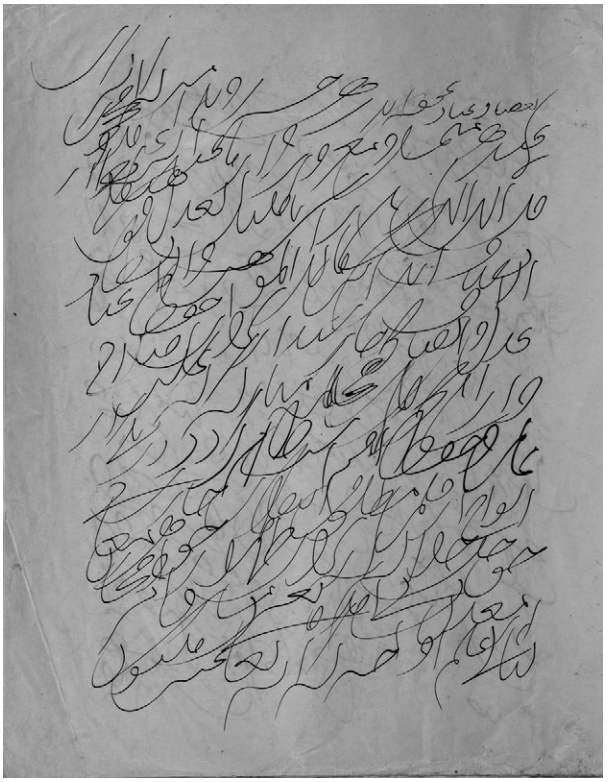


Figure 3.18. Mírzá Áqá Ján, leaf from the original Revelation Writing of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*.

© Bahá'í World Centre.

able only in the original Persian. Through his friendship with Juliet Thompson, he gained access to the extensive library of Bahá'í texts that she collected during pilgrimages to the Middle East and kept in her Greenwich Village apartment. Serving on the "Consulting Committee" of New York's Bahá'í Library, Tobey gained further familiarity with Bahá'í tablets published in Arabic. These and other texts were also reproduced in interwar Bahá'í journals like *Reality* and *Star of the West*, both of which featured "Persian pages" in their issues.

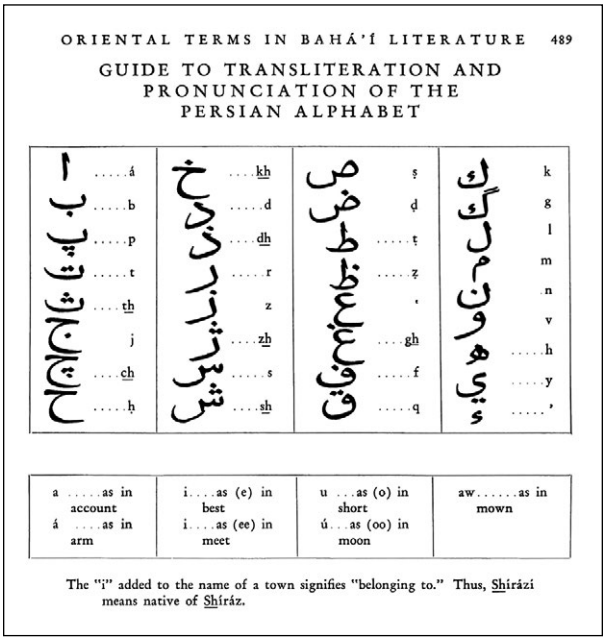
During his pilgrimages to Haifa in 1925 and 1933, both trips taken before his Dartington sabbatical in East Asia, Tobey had the opportunity to see original pages of Bahá'í "revelation writing" (figure 3.18). These were holy texts that Bahá'u'lláh dictated to his secretaries "day and night," beginning in Baghdad in 1853 and continuing during his exile in Akka. Bahá'u'lláh was adept in both Persian and Arabic literary forms—distinguished between one another by the use of four additional letters in the Persian alphabet—and wrote letters in both languages. His revelations were usually transmitted orally over the course of many hours, during which he paced back and forth, hurriedly uttering verses in a continuous flow and sometimes chanting in "a special heavenly language." His secretary, Mírzá Áqá Ján, developed a distinctive method of "revelation writing," a rapidly written shorthand of lines, squiggles, strokes, and symbols that allowed him to record up to one thousand verses an hour. Other assistants were kept busy transcribing the sacred verses into Arabic, and

every few months they were compiled into volumes bearing a seal of approval from Bahá'u'lláh. They were then published and disseminated throughout the Middle East and around the world.[106]

Bahá'í traces its origins, and guiding purpose, to the word of God as revealed to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Hence, the representation of words has utmost significance. If Christians believe the word of God was made flesh in the human form of Christ, Bahá'í believe that the word of God is embodied in the form of revelation transcribed into sacred scripture. Like Christian icons and Buddhist mandalas, written words in Bahá'í tablets have transformative power for followers of the Bahá'í faith. Words are considered the symbolic and prophetic expression of divine authority. Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked," and "Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame."[107]

Bahá'í's origin in mid-nineteenth-century Persia helps to account for its similarities with Islamic ideas about revelation and writing. Given the prohibition of idolatry in Islam, and general interdictions of figural representation, words and letters constitute much of the subject matter of Islamic art and are ubiquitous in Muslim visual and material culture: in ceramics, textiles, and metalwork; in secular and religious architecture. Calligraphy, or "beautiful writing," is considered a centerpiece of Islamic art, and writing the word of God is considered a reverential act. As the language in which the word of God was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed, Arabic script is associated with divine authority and is deeply symbolic: each letter of the Arabic alphabet carries specific religious meaning. Shaped by didactic and creative stimuli, Islamic calligraphy developed in different cursive styles, with some artists exploiting its intrinsic symbolism by coupling certain letters on ideographic terms. The nineteenth-century Bahá'í calligrapher Mishkín-Qalam, for example, appropriated Arabic letters to depict the birds frequently referenced in Bahá'í writing, including "the Mystic Dove," "the Nightingale of Paradise," and especially, the "celestial roosters" that crowed "the dawning of a New Day."[108]

Among the books in Tobey's personal library was *The Bahá'í World 1932–1934*, a 732-page compendium, overseen by Shoghi Effendi, of faith-related activities. In addition to listing Tobey's Bahá'í evangelizing in the British Isles—"Mr. Mark Tobey of America . . . helped in every way; bringing back messages from the Guardian upon his return from Haifa"—the book includes illustrations of Arabic and Persian calligraphy and a chart of their alphabets, the page of which Tobey dog-eared for easy reference (figure 3.19).[109] While Tobey could not read Arabic, he copied different styles of Arabic calligraphy in multiple paintings. *Transit*, for example, (1948, figure 3.20) depicts specific letters from the Persian alphabet, while *Tundra* (1944, figure 3.1) layers letters in painterly strokes and lines, including teardrops and hash marks of white daubs. Approximating the look of Bahá'í's original calligraphers, Tobey



ORIENTAL TERMS IN BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE 489

GUIDE TO TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION OF THE PERSIAN ALPHABET

.....á	....kh	ṣ	k
.....b	.....d	ḍ	g
.....p	....dh	.....ṭ	l
.....t	.....r	.....ẓ	m
....th	z	‘	n
j	....zh	....gh	v
....ch	.....s	.....f	.....h
.....ḥ	....sh	.....q	.....y
			.....’

a .....as in account	i....as (e) in best	u ...as (o) in short	aw.....as in mown
á .....as in arm	i....as (ee) in meet	ú...as (oo) in moon	

The "i" added to the name of a town signifies "belonging to." Thus, Shírázi means native of Shíráz.

Figure 3.19. “Oriental Terms in Bahá’í Literature, Guide to Transliteration and Pronunciation of the Persian Alphabet,” *The Bahá’í World 1932–1934*, vol. 5 (Haifa: Baha’i World Centre, 1981): 489.

© Bahá’í World Centre.

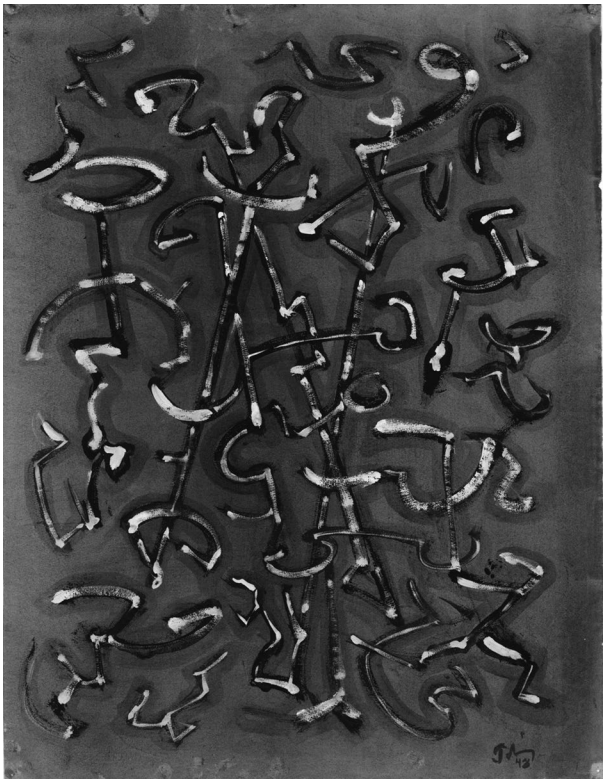


Figure 3.20. Mark Tobey, *Transit*, 1948. Tempera, ink, wash, and chalk on paper, 24½ × 19 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; George A. Hearn Fund, 1949, 49.160.1.

© 2022 Mark Tobey / Seattle Art Museum, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art; image source: Art Resource, NY.

furtively inserted symbolic images of birds in some of his pictures, showing them in *Threading Light* (figure 3.2), for example, as dynamic creatures—like carrier pigeons—who function to relay the message of a new world.

Beyond copying the techniques and forms of Arabic calligraphy, however, Tobey aimed to develop a spiritual modernism that convincingly embodied his religious beliefs. Searching for a visual model, he turned to Bahá'í revelation writing and devised a similar pictorial shorthand of densely configured squiggles, strokes, and white lines that he "wrote" all over the surface of abstract paintings like *White Night* (1942), *Crystallization* (1944), and *New York Tablet*. Tobey was very clear about their formal and symbolic origins in the written revelations of his religious faith. In *ARTnews*, he described the "modern complex structure" of his 1945 painting *The Dormition of the Virgin*, which was featured on the cover of the magazine, as "multiple space bounded by involved white lines [which] symbolize higher states of consciousness, or dimensions spoken of in the Father's Kingdom." He wrote about *Threading Light* on similar terms: "White lines in movement symbolize light as a unifying idea which flows through the compartmented units of life bringing a dynamic to men's minds, ever expanding their energies toward a larger relativity."[110] He gave his paintings titles—like *New York Tablet*—that explicitly referenced the textual forms of Bahá'í revelatory writing. At the very moment that his all-over abstractions were gaining attention as provocative new directions in modern American art, Tobey unequivocally linked his white writing with his religion's prophetic designs. Tobey's abstractions, Patricia Junker remarks, "were never without references to humanity, to Bahá'í teachings."[111]

Intent on smashing form, on breaking through barriers of mass, volume, perspective, and space to "release" light, Tobey turned to writing his modern paintings because in Bahá'í, writing is a spiritual, symbolic, and prophetic act of releasing the word of God. He appropriated the gestural style of Bahá'í revelation writing because its form and content represented the closest and most direct recording of the word of God as spoken by Bahá'í prophets: for believers, its cryptic code is the sign of a new world. Too, the animation and movement of Tobey's white writing intimated the progressive evolution of spiritual oneness, the movement toward a new world civilization, that was at the core of his Bahá'í beliefs. He further relied on a white line because in Bahá'í, whiteness signified divine light. From *Tundra* and *Threading Light* to *New York Tablet*, Tobey drew on Bahá'í's revelatory calligraphy to spiritualize his canvases.

Tobey's spiritual modernism was no secret. It was, in fact, the subject of considerable speculation as examples of his white writing became increasingly ubiquitous in postwar exhibitions of modern American art. In the early 1940s, Hartley described him as a "true mystic" and "great murshid" (Arabic for teacher). In a 1953 article on Abstract Expressionism's spiritual impulses, Seitz wrote that Tobey's art "follows the mystical rationalism of the high middle ages." That same year, *Life* magazine published "Mystic Painters of the North-

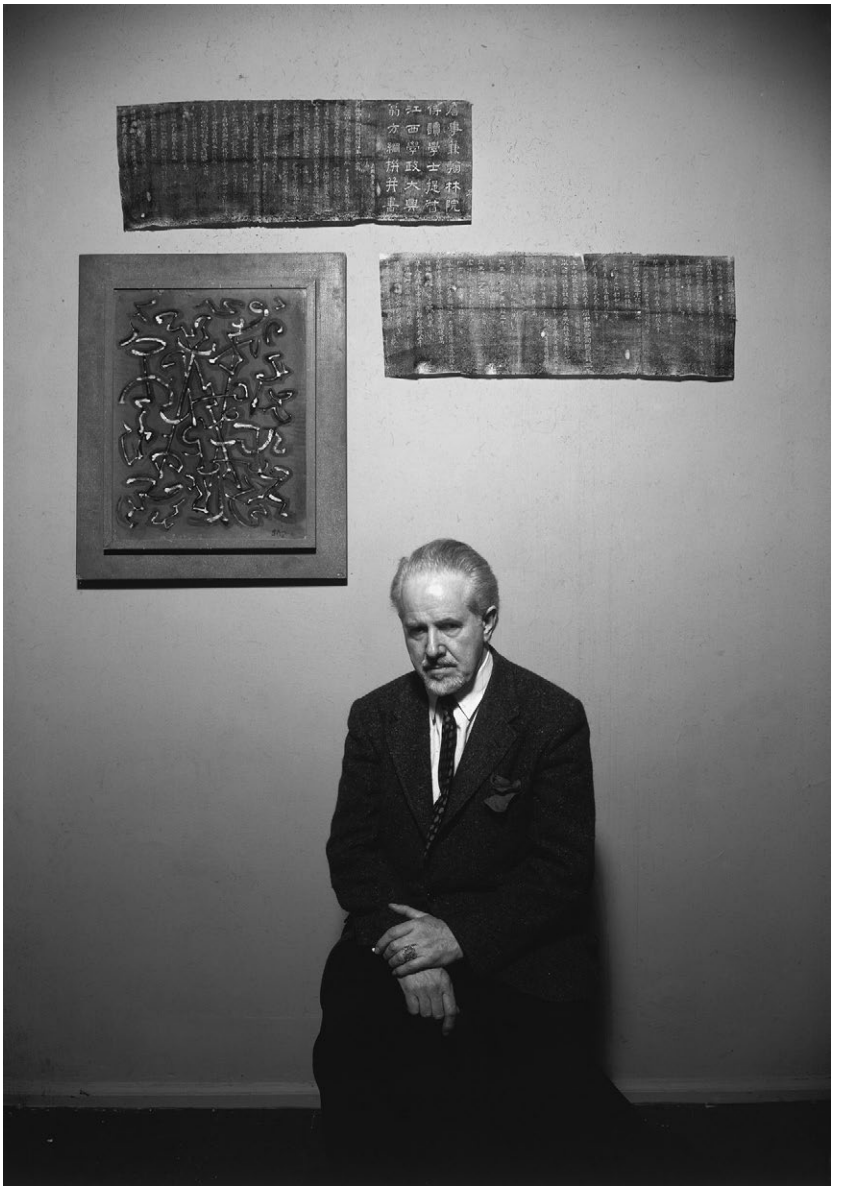


Figure 3.21. Eliot Elisofon, *Mark Tobey*, 1953. Photograph.

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west," a six-page color spread that opened with a photograph by Eliot Elisofon captioned "Painter-philosopher Mark Tobey sits meditatively beneath his art (left) and panels of Chinese writing which influenced it" (figure 3.21). Interviewing him in 1956, writer Selden Rodman observed that Tobey was "firmly persuaded that the critical moment in a good painting takes place in a kind of trance—a mystical state in which the artist's soul or unconscious guides his hand."[112] All of this discourse fostered Tobey's art world reputation as a spiritual sage and otherworldly mystic. In postwar America, however, and especially for critics like Clement Greenberg, mysticism was problematic.



Figure 3.22. William R. Heick, *Marcel Duchamp and Mark Tobey at the 1949 Western Round Table on Modern Art, San Francisco Museum of Art*, 1949. Photograph. Collection of James W. McManus.

Photograph: William R. Heick.

Mark Tobey: Modern but Minor

By the mid-1940s, Tobey's modern art was being shown in ten or more exhibitions a year, from solo shows at the Willard Gallery, the California Palace of the Legion of Honor (San Francisco), the Art Institute of Chicago, Whitechapel Art Gallery (London), and the Otto Seligman Gallery (Seattle), to group shows throughout the US and Europe. In 1946, Tobey was included in the Tate's *American Painters from the 18th Century to the Present Day* and MoMA's *Fourteen Americans*; in 1949, he was included in *The Intrasubjectives* at the Kootz Gallery, along with Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Rothko. In 1950, his work was shown in the Metropolitan Museum's *American Painting Today* and the Walker Art Center's *Contemporary American Painting*. Always a productive and prolific painter, Tobey labored to meet art world demands.

In 1949, Tobey was invited to participate in the Western Round Table on Modern Art, a three-day symposium at the San Francisco Museum of Art that convened creative and intellectual luminaries including Marcel Duchamp, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, composers Darius Milhaud and Arnold Schoenberg, and critic Kenneth Burke. Each participant was asked "to bear on questions about art today" (figure 3.22). *Look* magazine featured the proceedings in a four-page spread titled "Modern Art Argument," and quoted Tobey's response to the question "Should art please the public?" Reflecting on the process and purpose of his painting, Tobey remarked:

> The artist is not concerned with communication while he is in action. But after he is through, he likes to feel there is communication from his work. There is current the idea that the artist in this egoist, always thinking of himself. I think he is concerned with his art, which he considers greater than himself.[113]

In 1956, Tobey represented the US in the Guggenheim Foundation's first International Award, established to "stimulate public interest in contemporary art and . . . encourage the work of artists throughout the world."[114] In 1958, Tobey's painting *Capricorn* was awarded the City of Venice Prize for Painting at the twenty-ninth Venice Biennale.[115] And in 1961, Tobey won first prize for painting at the Carnegie International.

Tobey was clearly a major presence in postwar American art. But as that art was reviewed, defined, and historicized, he was reconfigured as a "minor" modern and relegated as a footnote in an Abstract Expressionist canon that came to be dominated by Pollock, Rothko, and Willem de Kooning. For critics, curators, and writers including Greenberg, Hess, Harold Rosenberg, William Rubin, Hilton Kramer, Sidney Tillim, and Irving Sandler, Tobey's art was deemed insignificant and, worse, irritating. Marginalizing it, rendering it impotent and inferior and subsequently writing it, and Tobey, out of modern American art history, became their common project.

Reasons for Tobey's critical and art-historical ostracism from the postwar American avant-garde are plentiful. In his first review of Tobey's work in 1944, Greenberg said his paintings were too small. Size mattered in a mid-twentieth-century America obsessed on all fronts—political, economic, cultural, and global—with domination. The "minuscule scale" of his art "was one of the things that was used to differentiate Tobey from Pollock . . . I did it in my book," Sandler later recalled, describing his 1970 survey of Abstract Expressionism titled *The Triumph of American Painting*.[116] Anxious to assert the authority—the "triumph"—of a distinctively American avant-garde, postwar critics and curators promoted artists who painted big, brawny pictures: ruggedly masculine artists whose boldly painted canvases embodied a certain "anonymity of abstraction" seemingly free of distracting personal or political details.[117] "Pollock's superiority to his contemporaries in this country," Greenberg decreed in 1946, "lies in his ability to create a genuinely violent and extravagant art without losing stylistic control. His emotion starts out pictorially; it does not have to be castrated and translated in order to be put into a picture."[118] Tobey's more diminutive pictures, by contrast, which openly "translated" his Bahá'í beliefs in world peace and spiritual unity, were the sort of modern pictorial castration that Greenberg determinedly rejected.

Tobey also worked extensively in tempera and with water-based pigments on paper, media that held less prestige in a Western art market where oil on canvas was considered the main attraction, visually and commercially. In a series of *Artforum* articles chronicling the modernist bona fides of Pollock's

Abstract Expressionist paintings, MoMA curator William Rubin took special delight in savaging Tobey's media choices, writing that his "virtually consistent eschewal of oil paint in favor of tempera results in pictures that lack the substantial material richness that we appreciate in Pollock and most of his American coevals." Rubin's emphasis on the "substantial material richness" of oil on canvas is telling in terms of both critical and art market hierarchies. As Jeffrey Weschler observes, "Artists who have chosen specifically to use techniques adapted to paper—watercolor, tempera, gouache—as their major media of expression not only generally receive lower prices for their works, but are seen as somehow less ambitious or serious for using these media."[119]

Tobey's stylistic sources were also discredited. In an era of acute Cold War paranoia and American chauvinism, foreign influences from European to "Oriental" were suspect. Elaborating on Pollock's distinctively nativist background and inspiration, Rubin asserted that Tobey, by contrast, "arrived at his all-over pictures . . . through Klee (his 'doodling' and Cubist-influenced grid compositions) and, more significantly (and unfortunately, I believe, for his quality), through Oriental calligraphy."[120] Jingoistic judgment of this sort effectively questioned Tobey's legitimacy as an *American* artist.

Rubin's censure of Tobey's appropriation of East Asian brushwork was shared by Hess, who wrote that paintings like *Structure* (1946) were fundamentally defective because of "the Oriental models to which he is so attached." Hess added: "Understatement to the point of preciosity and restraint to the degree where statement is innocuous—both flaws which so often mar Oriental painting—are evident in this modest tempera."[121] Drawing on offensive Asian stereotypes—sly and conniving ("understated"), artificial and deviant ("preciosity"), inscrutable and mysterious ("innocuous")—Hess maligned Tobey's art and dismissed it as pernicious "Orientalism." Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Tobey's paintings were marginalized by postwar culture brokers intent on nurturing modern art that championed distinctively American—read White, male, and heteronormative—sources and tropes. While the moniker of "white writing" seemingly fit their postwar cultural agenda, the form and content of Tobey's "Orientalist"-inflected paintings did not.

Nor did Tobey himself. The mystic dandy depicted in *Life*'s 1953 article on Northwest Coast artists was not the mid-century American modern that critics like Rubin, Hess, and Greenberg preferred to champion. As Sam Hunter later remarked, Tobey was considered "far too precious to be of any relevance to the New York School."[122] In postwar America, words like "precious," "delicate," "whimsical," "effete," "strange," "lovely," "decorative," and "quivering," all of which were used to describe Tobey and his painting in reviews and articles, were typically code for queer.[123] Pollock's paintings, by contrast, were habitually described as "violent," "explosive," "volcanic," and "untidy," embodying, Hunter wrote in a 1949 *New York Times* review, "a ravaging aggressive virility."[124]

Calling someone "arty," Reed observes, "has often been a euphemism for

homosexuality," and postwar perceptions of male American painters, especially avant-garde artists, as limp-wristed sissies were common. Combating these stereotypes, postwar critics crafted a hyper-masculinist Abstract Expressionist persona, and cast Pollock as its heteronormative superstar. Artists who violated that identity, like Tobey, were snubbed. Tobey's Grand Prize at the twenty-ninth Venice Biennale, for example, was virtually ignored in the American art press.[125] Artists who were perceived as being too much like Tobey were also rebuffed. Norman Lewis, who had his first solo exhibit at Willard Gallery in 1949, was dismissed by *New York Sun* art critic Henry McBride for being "too close for comfort to the style employed by Mark Tobey. One Mark Tobey is enough."[126]

Kosme de Barrañano lists Tobey's sexual orientation, his faith in Bahá'í, and his "distaste for every form of group affiliation" as the leading factors that made him "unsuited to be a figurehead" of postwar American modernism.[127] Not that Tobey especially wanted to be that figurehead. "I don't want to carry a lead role in American painting," he remarked in a 1952 letter to Willard. "I want to paint, that's all." He told his companion, Pehr Hallsten, a year later: "Art fame is something—but to live in God is really something."[128]

Tobey's spiritual modernism was informed by universal concerns that superseded national (or regional) commitments. His allegiance to American art was tempered by his worries about America itself, about whether or not the nation could or would advance the new world order prophesized by Abdu'l Bahá. Found among Tobey's papers is a July 1954 "Letter to the American Bahá'í Community" from Shoghi Effendi, warning followers about the "spiritual, moral, social, and political" crisis facing the United States:

> The American nation . . . stands, indeed, in *grave peril*. The woes and tribulations which threaten it are partly avoidable, but mostly inevitable and God-sent, for by reason of them a government and people clinging tenaciously to the obsolescent doctrine of absolute sovereignty and upholding a political system, manifestly at variance with the needs of a world . . . crying out for unity.[129]

Tobey responded to these warnings with his own plea: "The art of the future cannot germinate in antagonism and nationalistic rivalry, but will spring forth with a renewed growth if man in general will grow to the stature of universal citizenship."[130] In Cold War America, however, Tobey's entreaty to a spiritual modernism without or beyond borders fell on deaf ears.

Tobey's attachment to America was further undercut by his long-standing habits of spiritual searching. From his mid-thirties until he died at age eighty-five, Tobey spent a third of his time living outside the United States.[131] And while in America, he lived in Seattle: not the New York epicenter of the avant-garde. As Hilton Kramer snidely remarked in 1962, "Mark Tobey has long pursued his artistic career at some distance, spiritually and geographically, from

New York, and New York has returned the compliment by remaining more or less unmoved by his copious production and his immense reputation abroad." Irritated by MoMA's homage of a Tobey retrospective in 1962, Kramer was incensed by the "inflated and preposterous claims made for Tobey's art" in Europe and Great Britain.[132]

After Tobey won the international grand prize for painting at the Venice Biennale, for example, British modern Patrick Heron enthused, "A case could be made out claiming that Tobey is one of the most influential painters now living: he is the forerunner of Pollock." But these claims were made on foreign soil. In 1961, Tobey was the first American artist to be honored with a retrospective at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Palais du Louvre, in Paris. That year he also had a solo exhibition at the Galerie Beyeler in Basel and was heralded as a "pioneer" of American modernism in the group show *American Vanguard Painting*, which was organized by the USIA (United States Information Agency, a branch of the US State Department) and traveled to Austria, Yugoslavia, Great Britain, and Germany.[133] Tobey's international reputation made him even more suspect among American critics intent on promoting a distinctively American avant-garde. When Europeans took advantage of his reputation to assail other American artists—as did French writer Françoise Choay when she praised Tobey's painting for its "patience and attention to minute detail," contrasting it with the "violence" and "sloppiness" evident in the modern canvases of other Abstract Expressionist artists, such as Pollock—American critics became even more infuriated.[134]

Tobey's humanism was another source of their bile. "The thing we've got to fight for is humanism—it's the highest thing we know; we can't mechanize ourselves out of existence," Tobey told *Art Digest* writer Belle Krasne in 1951.[135] Tobey's commitment to humanism was different from that of Ben Shahn, Jack Levine, and other socially conscious artists whose protest paintings and inspirational posters focused on raising consciousness about progressive and democratic means of political reform. While Tobey shared their beliefs in human rights and world peace, his humanism centered on a new world order of spiritual oneness. Despite their stylistic and ideological differences, however, in mid-century America "humanism" in general was equated by many Cold Warriors with Communism and was cause for alarm.[136]

By fighting "for humanism," Tobey made himself vulnerable to postwar critics who repeatedly declared that modern art was fundamentally irreconcilable with any kind of "ideological utility." In 1956, for example, Harold Rosenberg alleged that humanism was a "*political* argument" primarily "designed to shark up a militant solidarity of Plain Men in behalf of an ideology seeking social power and to 'integrate' the artist into a *polis* ruled by this ideology."[137] Defending Abstract Expressionism and its artists as fiercely independent American moderns meant stridently disassociating both from any extraneous influences.

These influences included religion. Much of the postwar critical put-down

of Tobey related to his faith in Bahá'í. When John Russell commented that "Tobey's fame in the 1960s is owed mainly to pictures which are nearer to the altar-piece than to newsprint," he positioned him as a religious artist rather than a spiritually engaged modern.[138] For many postwar critics, including Theodor Adorno, connections between "art and religion today" were "highly problematic." In a 1945 essay on the subject in *Kenyon Review*, Adorno underscored the argument that links between art and religion were only achieved in "non-individualistic, hierarchical, [and] closed societies" and "the dichotomy between art and religion is irreversible" in modern times.[139]

Miffed by Tobey's confidence about the meaning and purpose of his paintings, and rarely scoping the nuances of his beliefs, postwar critics dismissed Tobey as a delusional "prophet" and derided his art as "religious," not modern. "Because of Tobey's spiritual aspirations," Sidney Tillim wrote in 1962, "discussions of his work more frequently than not reek of Oriental incense, tabloid mysticism and just plain obscurantism." Or, as Rosenberg sarcastically observed the same year: "Tobey's dominant tone is the chalky tan-gray of scratchings on a slate or a tablet of stone, as if he wished to fix his twentieth-century experience into a message brought down from the mountain."[140]

Religion, in other words, muddied modern art. Religion distracted modern art's critically mandated focus, by independent individuals, on the problem of form and the goal of self-criticality. Religion threatened the construction of a pure and explicitly American avant-garde. Religion was not only extraneous to modern art, it was manipulative, holding believers captive to mystical "scratchings on a slate." In an era informed by theories of secular modernism, whereby religion and modern art were considered wholly incompatible, Tobey's Bahá'í-inflected spiritual modernism was dismissed and denounced. As Greenberg intoned, the only viable form of American modernism was free of "illegitimate content—no religion or mysticism or political certainties."[141]

Tobey understood the terms of his critical dismissal and tried to explain that the modernist rejection of religion was informed by a misguided response to institutional conditions. He was quoted in 1970 stating, "The denial of religion so prevalent today (and among many artists, also) is not so much based on a knowledge of religion as on reactions to what I might term church-ology, or the confusion of the pure teachings with the ritualistic pageantry which has grown up and blotted the light of the teachings."[142] But his assessment was ignored. Although Tobey insisted that he was a modern artist who was religious, not a religious artist, his faith in Bahá'í contributed to his outlier status in postwar American art. However innovative his white writing had been considered in the mid-1940s, by the early 1960s many critics saw Tobey as a marginal and minor modern.

Tobey took issue with his critical rejection in the postwar American art world, laying blame and examining motives in letters to friends. While he shrugged off figurehead status in American modernism, he refused to be rendered insignificant. "I have been waiting," he peevishly wrote Marian Willard

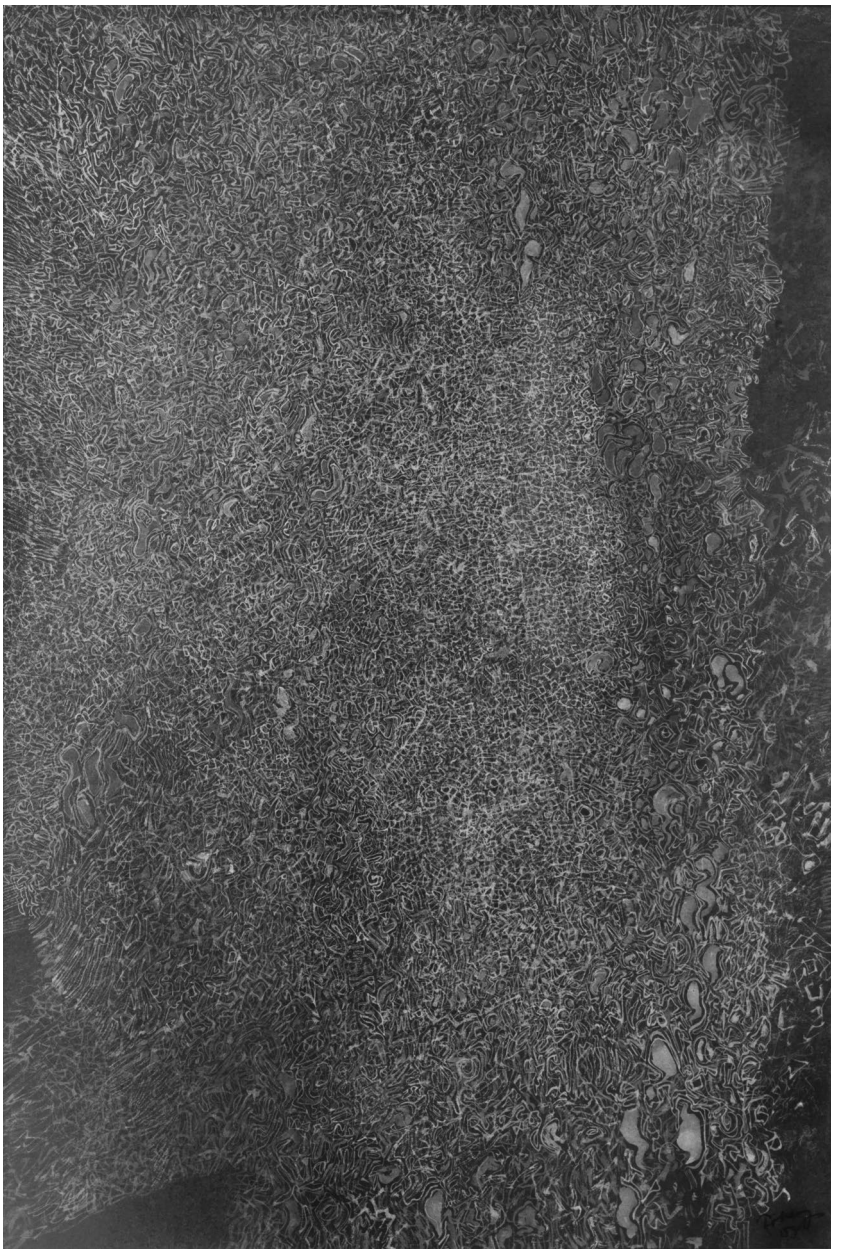


Figure 3.23. Mark Tobey, *Canticle*, 1954. Casein on paper, 17¾ × 11⅝ in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; gift of the Sara Roby Foundation, 1986.6.79.

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in 1950, "for someone to come out in New York and give me some credit."[143] He was particularly miffed that the stylistic links between his white writing and Pollock's early Abstract Expressionist paintings, such as Pollock's 1949 canvas *Cathedral*, were ignored and then denied by mid-century modern art critics. Following the publication of Rubin's *Artforum* articles on Pollock in 1967, Tobey wrote a rejoinder defending his pioneering influence among the postwar avant-garde, writing: "I have nothing against Pollock. I never envied him and in some cases I liked him. But when he made his *Cathedral* over which

the NY boys made a huge fuss—I felt he had known me better than they did." Tobey ended his letter to Rubin (which he apparently never sent) with this jab: "History shows there are many good artists but alas very few good critics."[144]

Despite the hostile critical response that his spiritual modernism provoked in mid-century America, Tobey never stopped searching for stylistic means of conveying his faith. Paintings like *Canticle* (1954, figure 3.23), with its subtly rendered yet frenetic brushwork, overlay of luminous color, and spiritually resonant title (a canticle is a hymn or song usually based on holy texts) visibly embody Tobey's Bahá'í beliefs in an integrative new world of the "oneness of mankind." Such paintings also conveyed his enduring faith in the revelatory possibilities of modern art. As he observed in 1962, "We talk about international styles today, but I think later on we'll talk about universal styles . . . the future of the world must be this realization of its oneness, which is the basic teaching as I know it in the Bahá'í Faith, and from that oneness will naturally develop a new spirit in art."[145]

4

Agnes Pelton & Occulture

Spiritual Seeking & Visionary Modernism





In April 1932, Agnes Pelton's *Illumination* was prominently featured in a display window at Black, Starr & Frost, an upscale jeweler on Fifth Avenue (figure 4.1).[1] Rendered in shades of indigo, violet, and gray, the painting depicts several indeterminate vertical forms—icy peaks or burning flames—surging upward toward a single star, a luminous body suspended in a midnight blue sky (figure 4.2). Set in the middle of a tasteful arrangement of rings and bracelets, *Illumination* was a lure to the designer jewelry that was the mainstay of Black, Starr & Frost, the first store to install large plate-glass windows in New York's Diamond District.[2] The company's display of the twenty-five-carat "Lucky" Baldwin ruby in 1931, which Robert Clifford Black said represented his firm's "implicit faith in the intrinsic value of fine gems" and "return of prosperity" in a nation downed by the Great Depression, received widespread press coverage.[3]

Shown alongside tapered candles, silk scarves, a Metropolitan Opera program, a trade catalogue open to an article on rubies and sapphires, a glittering collection of precious gems posed on star-shaped doilies, and a sign heralding "STARS OF LIGHT embedded in stones of surpassing beauty!," Pelton's painting accommodated consumer and class desires among Fifth Avenue window shoppers.[4] A magnifying glass balanced on a black velvet riser invited their up-close inspection of one particularly spectacular star sapphire. A placard at the left announced: "'Illumination' a painting by Agnes Pelton, courtesy of Delphic Studios."

Directed by activist journalist Alma Reed, Delphic Studios was a key interwar venue for modern art, opening in 1929 at 9 West 57th Street with an exhibit of drawings and paintings by Thomas Hart Benton and José Clemente Orozco. Through the early 1940s, Reed showed the work of diverse moderns including Maxine Albro, John Graham, Sargent Johnson, Raymond Jonson, David Park, Diego Rivera, and Edward Weston. An offshoot of the Delphic movement, which embraced ancient Greek culture and mysticism to reinvent and re-enchant the modern world, Delphic Studios was also part of a "Theosophical network" of individuals attracted to utopian concepts of universal brotherhood and alternative religious traditions.[5] At her gallery and salon (an apartment in Greenwich Village nicknamed the "Ashram"), Reed provided a supportive space for spiritually inclined artists and intellectuals including Emil Bisttram, Kahlil Gibran, and Nicholas Roerich. A decade after she showed Pelton's paintings, and arranged the Black, Starr & Frost window display, Reed exhibited the work of Paulina Peavy, whose bold, jewel-colored

Figure 4.1. (*facing*) Agnes Pelton, *Illumination*, 1930. Photograph of painting in window display at Black, Starr & Frost, New York, April 1930. Agnes Pelton papers 1885–1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Figure 4.2. (*facing*) Agnes Pelton, *Illumination*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 45½ × 27 in. Private collection.

canvases were inspired by multiple spiritual sources, including an alien muse named Lacamo.[6]

Agnes Pelton (1881–1961) never envisioned *Illumination*, or the other paintings she showed at Delphic Studios in 1932, as mercantile eye candy, or auspicious symbols of financial recovery. Rather, *Illumination* embodied Pelton's personal search for signs of spiritual insight. As she later observed, "though art lends itself willingly to illustration of mental concepts . . . [it] can contribute to the apprehension of spiritual life, and the expansion of a deeper vision." Paintings like *Illumination* conveyed Pelton's spiritual apprehension on modern art terms. Composer and astrologer Dane Rudhyar described their "glowing colors and translucent forms" as "psalms of integration sung to the Spirit in man."[7] Displayed to sell high-end jewelry at Black, Starr & Frost, however, Pelton's spiritual modernism was misread and discounted.

Pelton's spiritual seeking transpired over half a century and mediated two very different styles of modern art: "Imaginative" paintings of ethereal figures, often young women posed in dreamy landscapes, and canvases like *Illumination*, which she christened "My Abstractions." While she also painted portraits, landscapes, and still lifes, Pelton prioritized her Abstractions. "Always do 'this' work first—others only when these do not call you," she wrote in her journal. She composed poems for some of them, hinting at their meaning in a different medium. *Illumination*'s poem reads: "From frozen wastes / Through shrouding dark / Rise peaks of aspiration / A great star answering."[8]

Born in Stuttgart, Germany, Pelton was raised in Brooklyn and took up painting and music at an early age. She studied piano with her mother, who ran the Pelton School of Music from 1888 to 1920, and with Arthur Battelle Whiting, a composer who wrote romantic pieces set to the poems of William Blake and Omar Khayyam.[9] From 1895 to 1900, she attended Pratt Institute, studying under Arthur Wesley Dow. Her cohort included modern painters Max Weber and Pamela Colman Smith (who illustrated the Rider-Waite Tarot deck), and Pictorialist photographer Gertrude Käsebier.[10] In 1900, Pelton taught at the Ipswich Summer School of Art, an artist's colony north of Boston that Dow founded in 1891. For a few years, she assisted in her mother's music school and then, in 1907, enrolled in an outdoor painting class taught by American Impressionist William Langston Lathrop in Lyme, Connecticut. From 1909 to 1910, she lived in Italy, taking classes in life drawing at the British Academy of Art in Rome and studying with Hamilton Easter Field, an American artist who collected Japanese prints and works by Picasso and had a studio in the bohemian neighborhood of Via Margutta. Field's "helpful criticism," she later recalled, "liberated the creative impulse" of her Imaginative paintings, which she honed during summers at his art school in Ogunquit, Maine, from 1911 to 1914.[11]

Pelton's first solo show was at Ogunquit in 1911, an exhibition of sixteen Imaginative paintings including *Sea Shell* (figure 4.3). In 1912, Walt Kuhn saw her work and invited Pelton to take part in the International Exhibition of



Figure 4.3. Agnes Pelton, *Sea Shell (Nude on Beach)*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 12 × 13 in. Willis Henry Auctions.

Modern Art that he, Walter Pach, and Arthur B. Davies were organizing. One of fifty women (among 304 artists) represented in what came to be called the Armory Show, Pelton showed two Imaginative paintings—*Vine Wood* (1913) and *Stone Age* (1911)—in Gallery D, near works by American moderns Marsden Hartley and Charles Sheeler.[12]

During the 1910s, Pelton painted dozens of Imaginative paintings (figure 4.4). She exhibited in New York galleries, participated in group shows, and was reviewed and mentioned in newspapers and art magazines. A solo show of her Imaginative canvases at Dora Brophy Gallery in 1915 was described as "illusive little semi-nudes, blossoming fields and glimpses of misty days."[13] In 1919, Pelton's own "appreciation" of Elie Nadelman's modern sculptures at Knoedler Gallery was published in Henry McBride's *New York Sun* art column.[14] A visibly active Imaginative painter, Pelton was seemingly on the path to art world success.

In 1921, however, Pelton abandoned Manhattan and moved to rural Long Island, where she lived alone in an old windmill and began painting rays of light, stars, and white flames in enigmatic, mystical settings. In 1931, she moved again, to Cathedral City, California, near Palm Springs, where she spent the last decades of her life painting Abstractions for herself and desert landscapes—she called them "tourist pictures"—to make a living.[15] Pelton died in 1961, virtually forgotten in American art history.



Figure 4.4. Janet M. Cummings, *Agnes Pelton in Studio (Jefferson Market Building, 10th Street & Sixth Avenue, New York)*, ca. 1915. Photographic print, sepia, 5⅛ × 6¹¹⁄₁₆ in. Agnes Pelton papers 1885–1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; digital ID no. 7975.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, Pelton was rediscovered. In 1986, she was included in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's groundbreaking exhibit *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*.[16] In 1989 and 1995, retrospectives of her work were organized at Ohlone College and the Palm Springs Desert Museum.[17] In recent decades, her reconsideration as an "overlooked female artist" with a "rightful place within the canon of modern and contemporary art history" has escalated. In 2019, the Phoenix Museum of Art showcased her Abstractions in an exhibit that traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art. In 2009, she was aligned with other female American moderns in an exhibit named after her 1930 Abstraction: *Illumination: The Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe, Agnes Pelton, Agnes Martin, and Florence Miller Pierce*. Reviewers were ecstatic. "Forget Georgia; Agnes Finally Gets Her Due," Christopher Knight exclaimed, hailing Pelton's "exquisitely handled painting technique" and "celestially cosmic visions."[18]

This chapter situates Pelton's spiritual modernism in the religious sources, beliefs, and practices she explored and absorbed: New Thought, Theosophy, astrology, and Agni Yoga, a metaphysical panoply that Christopher Partridge calls "occulture."[19] Pelton's spiritual seeking was broad but focused. She turned to alternative religious movements for spiritual paths to self-discovery and mental and physical healing, for new ways of seeing, knowing, and being. Each metaphysical discipline corresponded to sustained interests in re-

enchanting her modern art, especially by *animating* her Abstractions on spiritually powerful terms.

Pelton was not a cultist, or a member of an organized faith. She was familiar with many, including Will Levington Comfort's Glass Hive in Los Angeles, Katherine Tingley's Lomaland in San Diego, and Trabuco College in the Santa Ana Mountains, a "spa for the soul" organized by Gerald Heard, Aldous Huxley, and Christopher Isherwood in 1942.[20] But Pelton's spiritual seeking was private, motivated by forging a modern art that embodied her interests in mystical experiences and spiritual understanding, and her conviction that abstract styles—as Kandinsky argued—best conveyed them. Over a long career, Pelton explored various esoteric belief systems to develop an increasingly abstract art of spiritual modernism. Her openness to alternative religious beliefs, and her visual configuration of them, was shaped by family scandal, therapeutic need, personal distrust of mainstream religious institutions—especially patriarchal Protestantism—and her resolve to continually evolve as a modern artist.

Family Scandal and Neurasthenia

Pelton was the granddaughter of Theodore Tilton (1835–1907), a journalist, poet, and popular Lyceum speaker who in 1874 launched the most infamous sex scandal of the Gilded Age by suing preacher Henry Ward Beecher for "criminal intimacy" with his wife, Elizabeth Tilton (figure 4.5).[21] Beecher, a charismatic minister whose Sunday sermons at Brooklyn's Plymouth Church attracted thousands, was the celebrity evangelist of the day: a national icon of religious virtue, a Christian patriarch. New York elites paid top dollar to rent main floor pews in his church (which seated 2,800), where guest speakers in-

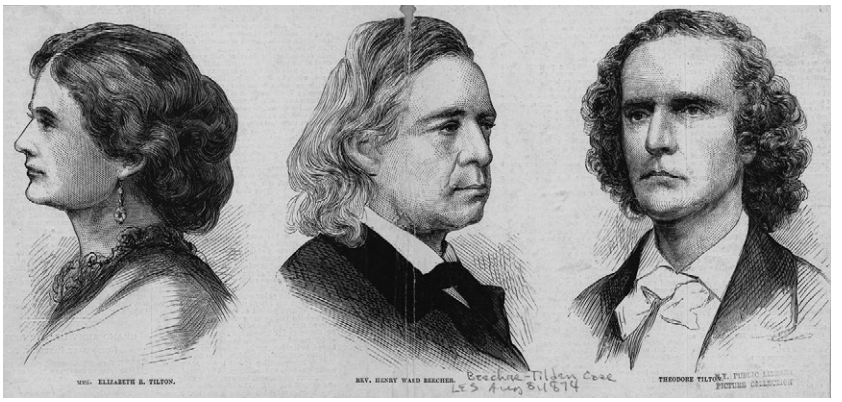


Figure 4.5. Unknown artist, *Mrs. Elizabeth R. Tilton; Rev. Henry Ward Beecher; Theodore Tilton*, 1874. Written notes on border say "Beecher-Tilden case" and "Aug. 8, 1874." From *Leslie's Monthly Magazine* (New York: F. Leslie, 1904–1905). New York Public Library, NY; Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection.

Photograph: New York Public Library / Art Resource, NY.

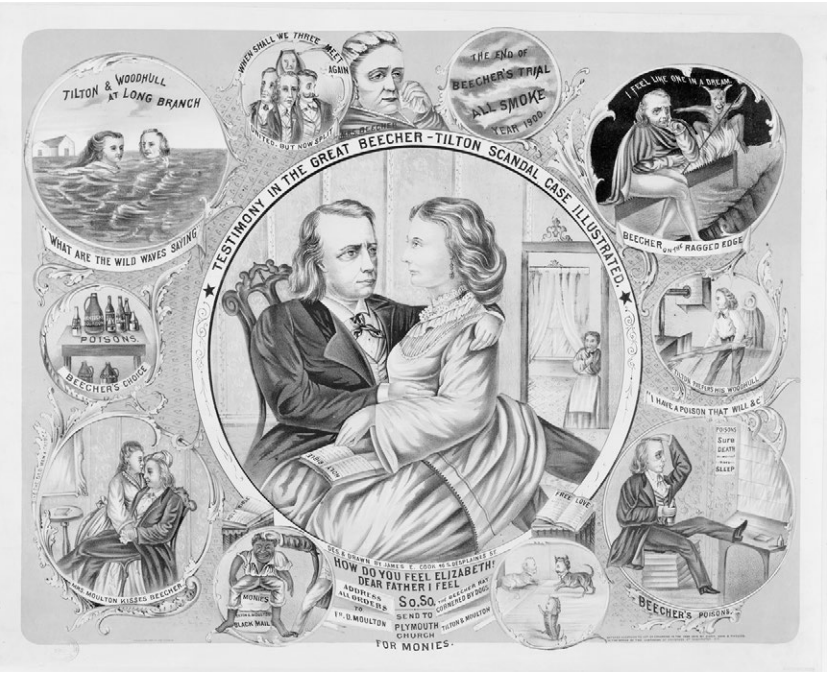


Figure 4.6. James E. Cook, *Testimony in the Great Beecher-Tilton Scandal Case*, 1875. Lithograph, 22 × 27⅞ in. Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-pga-03156.

cluded Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and Beecher's sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[22] Adoring parishioners flocked to Beecher's sentimental homilies about a kinder, gentler Christianity of personal sanctuary and positive feeling, an accommodating religiosity that segued with modern American "faith in autonomous selfhood." Brooklyn, nicknamed the "City of Churches," basked in Beecher's popular Protestant oratory.[23]

Young, handsome, romantic, and religious, Theodore Tilton joined Beecher's church in 1853 and became the minister's amanuensis, transcribing his sermons for the Congregationalist newspaper the *Independent*, where he became editor-in-chief in 1863. Deeply committed to social and political causes, Tilton wrote passionate, unequivocal opinions supporting abolition and women's rights, subjects on which Beecher vacillated. Despite their political differences, they were friends. Beecher officiated at Tilton's wedding to Elizabeth in 1855, Tilton commissioned William Page (the "American Titian") to paint Beecher's portrait in 1869, and Beecher was a frequent visitor to Theodore and Elizabeth's art-filled home in Brooklyn Heights, sharing meals and playing with their four children, including Agnes Pelton's mother, Florence.[24]

But in December 1870, when twelve-year-old Florence told her father that Beecher and her mother had been sexually intimate—which Elizabeth Tilton at first confirmed and then denied—Theodore Tilton "tore the picture of Mr. Beecher" from the wall of his study and "stamped it in pieces."[25] And when details of their adultery became the lurid fodder of a sensationalist American press (figure 4.6), Tilton sued his pastor for alienation of affection. No mat-

ter that Tilton himself had had several extramarital affairs, including one with free-love advocate and presidential candidate Victoria Woodhull. In 1875, a civil trial ensued, attended by dozens of reporters and thousands of spectators; millions more followed its salacious revelations in their local papers. Over one hundred witnesses took the stand.[26] Elizabeth Tilton, however, never testified, "silenced" in a courtroom where male ego dominated—adultery being defined as a property dispute between men—and the sexual appetites of a popular pastor were blamed on feminine wiles.[27] The six-month trial ended in a deadlocked jury, which Beecher claimed as moral exoneration and his critics lambasted as religious hypocrisy. Theodore Tilton, for one, never recovered his religious faith.

The scandal shattered the Tilton family. Separated from his wife, expelled from Beecher's church, and ostracized from journalism, Theodore Tilton went on the Lyceum circuit for seven years, lecturing on topics like "The Problem of Life" with great "oratorical success."[28] In 1883, after his children were of age, he moved to Paris and joined an American "colony" of diplomats, socialites, and expatriate artists on the Right Bank. Boarding with former New York lawyer William J. A. Fuller and his daughter Kate Fuller, Tilton spent his time writing poetry, dining with friends (including Frederick Douglass, who visited him in 1887), and playing chess. A *Cosmopolitan* magazine sketch of the colony's American notables described him as "Theodore Tilton, poet and dreamer, pouring over a bookstall on the quays and always an esteemed and valued companion."[29] Tilton died in Paris in 1907.

Back in Brooklyn, Elizabeth Tilton was "dropped by her former friends" and "sank into obscurity" in Crown Heights, where she died in 1897.[30] When she confessed three years after the trial that she had, in fact, had an affair with Beecher, she was also excommunicated from Plymouth Church. She turned to the Calvinist Christianity of the Plymouth Brethren (whose founder, John Darby, invented the eschatological concept of the rapture in the 1830s), a fundamentalist sect that held a literal interpretation of the Bible, had no clergy or churches, forbade divorce, and discouraged mixing with nonbelievers. The Brethren often met in her home for long hours of Bible study and hymn singing.[31]

After the trial, Florence Tilton and her sister Alice were sent to Germany to study music. In 1880, Florence married William Halsey Pelton, the son of a Louisiana sugar baron who had moved his family to Stuttgart during the Civil War. Their marriage was fraught: William suffered from "serious neurotic symptoms" and Florence drained their finances seeking a cure from "all the best-known doctors in Europe." In 1888, she and seven-year-old Agnes moved back to the United States, and into Elizabeth Tilton's house in Brooklyn. Agnes's father "came and went," she later wrote, and died of a morphine overdose in New Orleans in 1891.[32] Her mother never remarried. To support herself, her only child, and her socially shunned mother, Florence Pelton took in boarders and opened a music school.

She also became a partner in the Taylor Movement Cure Company, "an institution for mechanical and manual massage" which she and two other investors incorporated in 1899 with $5,000 in capital.[33] Disgruntled with conventional medical attitudes about disease and disability, New York doctors Charles and George Taylor invented new methods and machines to cure ailing patients, especially women. By the late nineteenth century, their ideas about massage and exercise had shaped a burgeoning practice of physical therapy and rehabilitation by trained professionals, one whose clients included Olivia Clemens, Alice James, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.[34] In addition to the economic motives of her investment, Florence Pelton was no doubt drawn to movement cure for her own physical ailments—one of her hands had been ruined by incompetent piano teachers at the Stuttgart Conservatory—and for her daughter, who was a "delicate girl with constant backaches." As Agnes later confided to Dane Rudhyar, "From the time of puberty at thirteen I was much inclined to melancholy and tears which was probably aggravated by being an only child in a household of deeply religious and perhaps unnecessarily serious people."[35]

She was particularly aggravated by some of her mother's boarders, including a "troublesome young woman" who named her mother in a divorce suit.[36] In May 1901, this woman accused her husband Walter—a massage therapist by vocation—of "kissing and hugging" and being "intimate" with Florence Pelton during the time they boarded in her house. A month after making this accusation, she withdrew her lawsuit and acknowledged that Florence Pelton and another corespondent were actually "most respectable women."[37]

Despite its proven health benefits and professional legitimacy, massage was shadowed by scandal and social disapproval at the turn of the last century. Its focus on physical stimulation for therapeutic release challenged more inhibited cultural attitudes about touch and the body; its association with prostitution—which the *British Medical Journal* excoriated in its 1894 series "The Scandals of Massage"—upset mainstream ideals about acceptable forms of labor, especially for women.[38] Unlike *her* mother, however, Florence Pelton refused to be victimized by Gilded Age expectations of female submission and passivity. The fact that she was more interested in the economic and therapeutic effects of massage than in gender norms and social niceties was not lost on her daughter.

Agnes Pelton's personal, artistic, and spiritual choices were strongly shaped by her mother's model of female independence, which emphasized self-reliance, self-employment, and physical autonomy through alternative health practices. Although Pelton had many friends, she never married. She lived with her mother until she died in 1920, and thereafter lived by herself. She was often blunt about social norms regarding marriage and childbearing, remarking about the wedding of "an old and dear friend," for example, that "whatever the marriage turns out to be, it is a liberation from the deteriorating condition of life with a sister with five children—who took all her energy and

substance and though she gave it gladly, she was wearing out and down."[39] Pelton focused her "energy and substance" on herself and her modern art.

Like many single self-supporting women, Pelton was a "Live-Aloner," a term popularized by advice writer Marjorie Hillis in her 1936 bestseller *Live Alone and Like It: A Guide for the Extra Woman*.[40] If Pelton's single-woman status prompts speculation today about her sexual orientation, Pelton herself rarely addressed it: she was far more focused on studying metaphysical disciplines and creating spiritually informed modern paintings than in fostering romantic or sexual relationships with men or with women.[41]

Pelton's spiritual modernism was further shaped by a skepticism about mainstream Christianity that she shared with her maternal grandfather. Nineteenth-century novelist Elizabeth Stoddard called Theodore Tilton an "Apostolic humbug" and historian Henry Adams dismissed him as "a half-insane newspaper roarer."[42] But Pelton and her mother revered him. Florence Pelton kept a "shrine" to her father in her Brooklyn home, and when *The Complete Poetical Works of Theodore Tilton* was published in 1897 (shortly after Elizabeth Tilton died), "made a little ritual" of presenting copies of the book to her siblings (her sister Alice and her brothers Carroll and Ralph) and to Agnes's cousins.[43] Theodore Tilton was similarly fond of his eldest daughter: he wrote his popular poem "The Fly" for Florence when she was two years old. His granddaughter's name may have been inspired by "The Silver Bell of Stuttgart," a poem Tilton wrote shortly before Agnes was born that mentions Saint Agnes, the patron saint of young girls.[44] Pelton hardly knew her grandfather—she and her mother visited him just once in Paris in 1905, where she took possession of a large portrait of him painted by British artist Kate Morgan. But she recorded dreams about Theodore Tilton in her journals and sketched a 1946 Abstraction that she dedicated "To. T.T." and titled *The Grandfather*. And she prominently hung Morgan's huge portrait of Tilton wherever she lived.[45]

Pelton never mentioned her maternal grandmother, except to say that her gloomy adolescence in Brooklyn was worsened by being raised in a "deeply religious" household where, among other things, Elizabeth Tilton banned newspapers for fear that they might mention her ignominious past. "I was, of course, brought up never to speak of it," Pelton later recalled of "the great scandal involving my Grandfather and Henry Ward Beecher." Still, she divulged, her mother was "crushed" by the Beecher-Tilton scandal and so was she: "it cramped her whole life and it also cramped mine . . . My Mother loved both her parents, so it is evident what a blasting experience it was, and that it also overshadowed me." Pelton added that she also "suffered acutely" when her mother was falsely accused of adultery by the "troublesome" female boarder.[46]

The specter of scandal clearly troubled Pelton, as did the specters of poverty and sickness. She regularly worried about money, recording her anxieties in her journals and proposing numerous moneymaking schemes—art classes, interior decoration, opening a tearoom, selling "tourist pictures"—that might

alleviate her financial needs. Being an independent "Live-Aloner," Pelton was almost entirely self-supporting and struggled with economic insecurity.

Slight and thin, Pelton suffered from "bad health" throughout her life; in addition to back pain and heart palpitations, she may have been anorexic. When she was young, she later wrote, she developed "a strong personal aversion" to the eating habits of the boarder who named her mother in the 1901 divorce suit, and related that her issues with food "went on for years." When she was nineteen, she had a nervous breakdown after teaching at Dow's summer school in Ipswich:

> I roomed with another young teacher, and could not sleep. Also I was greatly worried as because of my youth—I looked younger than I was—none of the pupils—mostly mid-western school teachers would pay any attention to what I tried to teach them. That autumn, probably Oct. or Nov. I had a serious fever lasting 6 weeks with at its height 104-degree fever . . . For about 3 weeks I was barely conscious and there was some fear that I might slip away from exhaustion. The doctor pronounced it neurotic fever.[47]

Pelton's illness was neurasthenia, a ubiquitous diagnosis at the turn of the last century based on a variety of psychiatric and somatic symptoms—headaches, fatigue, anxiety, insomnia, depression, dyspepsia, loss of appetite, and more—thought to stem from the stressful conditions of modern life. Defined (and popularized) by nineteenth-century physician George M. Beard as a "chronic, functional disease of the nervous system," neurasthenia was claimed as an exceptionally "American" disease: as evidence that Americans—especially White, Protestant, highly educated, and middle- and upper-class Americans—were more advanced, more civilized, and more "modern" than others, and hence suffered more in modern times. William James—also a neurasthenic—called it "Americanitis," or the price that American moderns paid for their ambition and striving, their obsession with success.[48]

Like other neurasthenics, Pelton managed her nervous exhaustion, financial worries, and afflictions with the physical therapies of movement cure and massage. She also sought relief in modern art and metaphysics. Rejecting the Christian patriarchy at the center of the "great scandal" that racked her family in the nineteenth century and "overshadowed" her unhappy youth, Pelton sought a visual arena that might have a calming effect on her neurasthenia and meet her aesthetic and spiritual needs. She tried first with Imaginative painting.

Imaginative Painting

In 1917, Knoedler's hosted *Imaginative Paintings by Thirty Young Artists of New York City*, a show focused on the "romantic and idealistic character" of modern American painting. Pelton was represented by six Imaginative canvases



Figure 4.7. Agnes Pelton, *Vine Wood*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 18 × 14 in. Private collection.

Photograph: Steeve-x-art / Alamy Stock Photo.

including *Vine Wood* (figure 4.7), exhibited earlier at the Armory Show. In her artist's statement, she wrote:

> Painting is an art of visualization; and color its essential means of expression . . . As color is primarily a sense perception, it is apprehended emotionally—whether sombre or gay, serene or turbulent . . . the art of painting should convey through its language of color, and by harmonious relation of its other elements, the interpretation of the higher possibilities of vision—the without seen from the within.[49]

Her remarks suggest her attention to Kandinsky's writing on the fusion of modern pictorial form (especially color) and affect, and her budding interests in Theosophy's harmonial spirituality.

The term "imaginative" was widely used in the early twentieth century to describe an art of "introspection rather than observation," focused on an "internal, symbolical world rather than the external, empirical one."[50] Quoting William Blake's "significant preachment" to "put off intellect and put on imagination," Marsden Hartley praised "the reflection and meditation and poetic brooding" of artists he named "Imaginatives," such as Alfred Pinkham Ryder. The spiritual impulses in Imaginative painting were more often implied than explained by either artists or critics. Dematerialized forms, dreamy figures, and hazy settings were simply assumed to be more "expressive to the spirit" than sharply rendered or "objective" shapes and subjects. "Immaterial" images were simply, or vaguely, considered more soulful, sensual, and spiritual.[51]

Pelton's Imaginative paintings were aligned with Symbolism, the art of poets and painters united "against what they saw as the dominant materialist, naturalist and determinist ethos" of the Gilded Age.[52] Stimulated, she later wrote, by "the atmosphere of Italy and seeing the great works of art there" when she studied with Field from 1909–1910, they were also inspired by mythological sources, Romantic poetry, and synesthesia, a sensory condition in which two or more senses are perceived or activated simultaneously, such as when one sees musical sounds as colors.[53] Pelton's sketchbooks from the 1910s include "color scales superimposed on musical scales," such as treble-clef notations matched with the initials of certain colors ("R" for red, "G" for green). Her interests in "sensory crossovers," in devising symbolic media equivalents, were motivated by Kandinsky, who wrote about "colour-music" and his own multi-sensory experiences in *On the Spiritual in Art*.[54]

Following Besant and Leadbetter's *Thought-Forms*, Kandinsky assigned certain moods and emotions to certain colors and sounds:

> Blue is the typical heavenly colour. When very dark, blue develops an element of repose. When it sinks into black, it echoes a grief that is hardly human . . . In music, light blue is like a flute, dark blue like a cello.[55]

Kandinsky's synesthetic interests corresponded to his search for nonmimetic forms of spiritual modernism, and music was his model. Music, he believed, was "an expression of the artist's spiritual life" and inherently abstract, "fully emancipated," he wrote, from the obligations of representing "natural phenomena." Relatedly, Kandinsky pressed modern painters to devise a "language of form and colour" that best expressed "inner necessity" and liberated modern art from "a direct dependency on nature."[56] If conditioned—like Theosophy and other forms of occulture—by Western biases about music, mood, and color, Kandinsky's aesthetic advice resounded with many American moderns. It especially stimulated Pelton, who was both a painter and a musician. She "could not have missed" his *Improvisation 27* at the Armory Show, and her journals reference his spiritual and compositional counsel.[57]

Imaginative art was diverse, ranging from allegorical murals by Puvis de

Chavannes to visionary still lifes by Odilon Redon, who was represented by seventy-five prints and paintings at the Armory Show, more than any other artist. Painters and photographers including Alice Boughton, Claude Buck, Arthur B. Davies, Arthur Wesley Dow, Kahlil Gibran, Gertrude Käsebier, Augustus Vincent Tack, Henry O. Tanner, and Elihu Vedder were among American moderns who made Imaginative art, some compelled by interests in "embodiment" (such as Davies), others aiming to redefine modern female identity (Boughton, Käsebier).[58] Their numbers, and critical and public reaction to their work—especially after the Armory Show, where Redon's color-drenched dreamscapes were crowd favorites and bestsellers—indicate that Imaginative art was more prevalent than the art-historical record suggests.[59] Pelton's paintings were part of this trend.

Imaginative canvases titled *Calm* and *Tranquility* suggest her interests in emotional states of being.[60] They also indicate her strong interests in female identity. Like other Symbolists, Pelton's "signature image" was a young White woman. But unlike Käsebier, who painted the maternal female, or Anne Brigman, who photographed female nudes communing with nature, Pelton's White women were awkward and quirky.[61] *Vine Wood* depicts a woman in an Archaic Greek peplos, holding a bunch of grapes, and standing in a dense setting that Pelton described as a "dark earth and wood interior, like the 'maiden hair wood.'" The scene evokes the "dim glade" and "phantasmal delicacies" in Romantic poet Edgar Fawcett's *Maidenhair* (1880), an ode to "shadowy ferns."[62] While three manic monkeys jump from one vine to the next in Pelton's painting, the "maiden" looks blankly at whoever or whatever has interrupted her.

That demeanor is replicated in Alice Boughton's contemporaneous portrait of Pelton dressed in toga-like clothes, standing by a tree, holding a peach, and staring solemnly, even sullenly, at the viewer (figure 4.8). Both Boughton's photograph and Pelton's painting follow Symbolist art's fetishization of genteel White women, "frequently shown in a meditative, dreamlike state," Charles Eldredge remarks, to encourage "free associations dear to the imaginative spirit." Clothed or nude, these "idealized angel-women" personified feminine purity and virtue.[63]

But the White women Pelton painted tend to be more comic than idyllic. *Sea Shell* (figure 4.3) features a young girl wearing a conch for a hat. *The Toilet* (1913) depicts a naked nymph in a mossy grotto, fussing with her hair. *West Wind* (1915) suggests the total dematerialization of a woman's body in a turbulent gale.[64] None of these figures are lissome and, like the dispassionate female in *Vine Wood*, each is inscrutable. In these and other Imaginative paintings, Pelton spoofed the era's preoccupation with feminine gentility and respectability, adding giggling monkeys (*Vine Wood*) and kooky headpieces (*Sea Shell*) to make her point.

Critics were not quite sure what to make of her art. Reviewing a solo show at Ardsley Studios, a Brooklyn gallery established by Hamilton Easter Field,

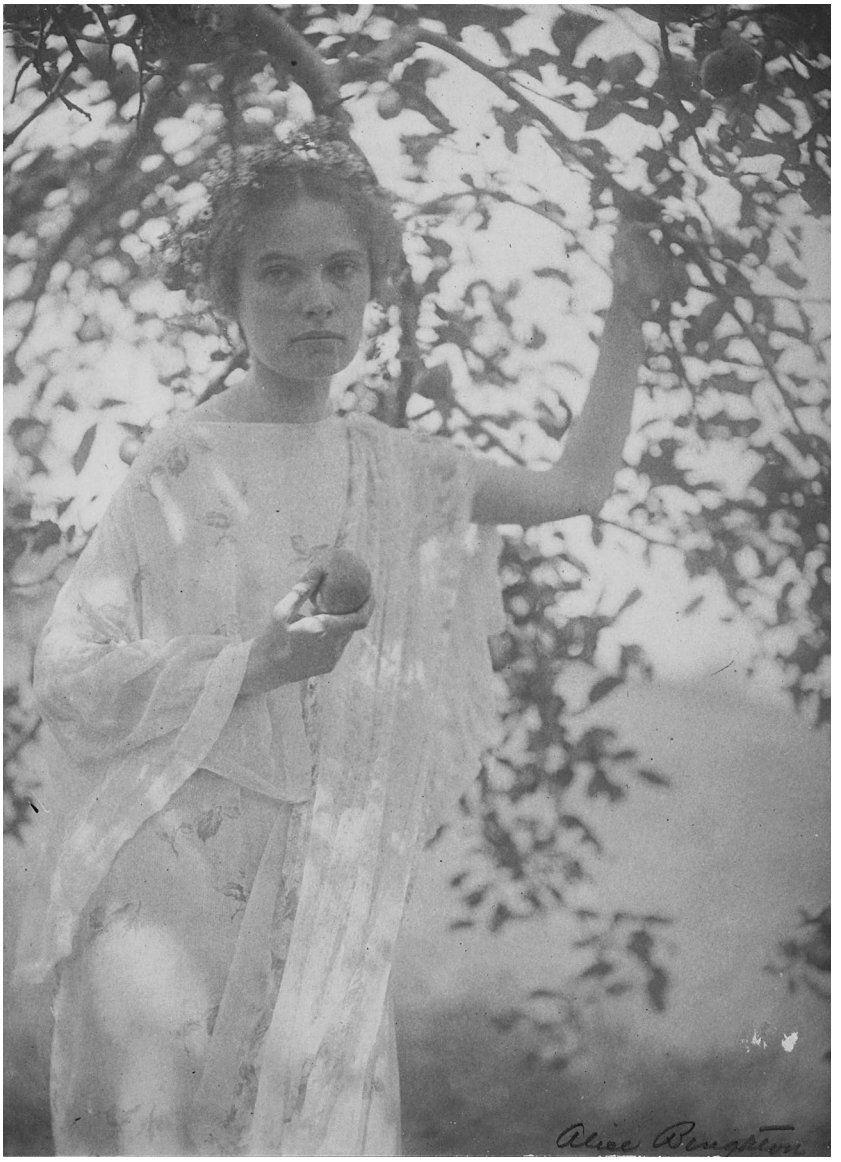


Figure 4.8. Alice Boughton, *Photograph of Agnes Pelton*, ca. 1910. Carolyn Tilton Cunningham family collection, courtesy of Nyna Dolby.

McBride remarked, "The *Sea Shell* caps the head of a tender girlish nude who stands upon a beach teasing a fish she has caught in her hands." Forbes Watson commented that Pelton's pictures were "too attenuated, and in a few the fragile color descends to insipidity." Other writers said her Imaginative paintings were "strangely quaint" and "humorous," displaying a "fragile charm" that "eludes definition."[65] In 1915, Homer Saint-Gaudens called Pelton's paintings "eccentric" and called Pelton herself "a dreamer of dreams," adding: "It is very hard to say what Miss Agnes Pelton . . . is driving at."[66]

Women responded to Pelton's Imaginative paintings differently, perhaps recognizing their offbeat comedy as a subversive refusal of patriarchal expectations of female decorum or sex appeal. Popular illustrator Nell Brinkley was



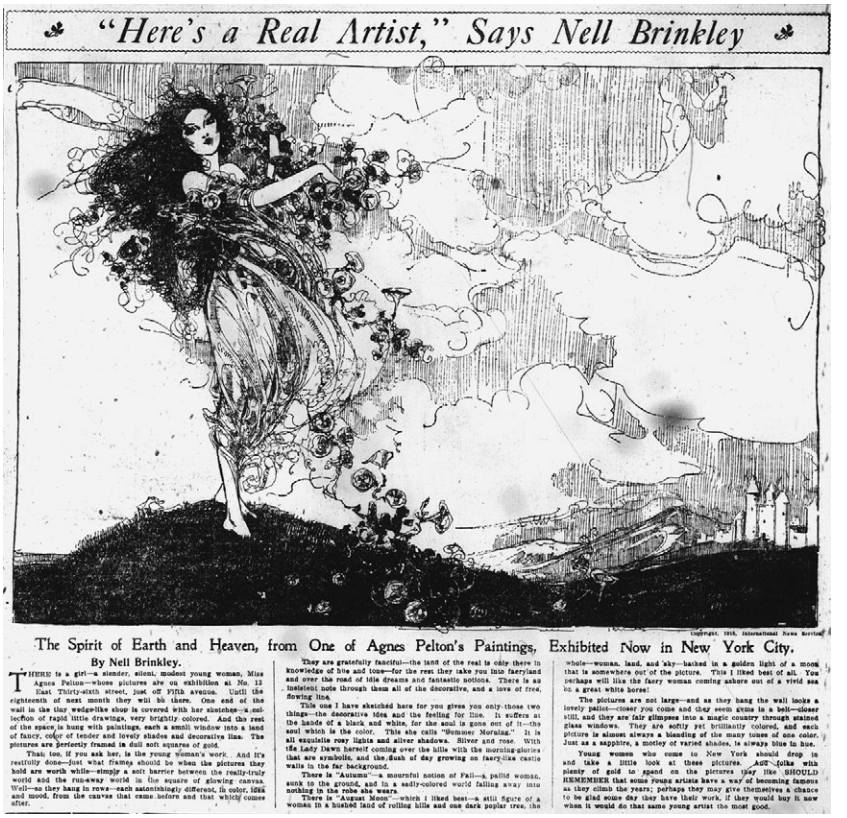
Figure 4.9. Agnes Pelton, *Morning Glories*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 14 × 20 in. Collection of Bruce Bornick, current location unknown.

especially taken with Pelton's *Morning Glories* (1913, figure 4.9), a picture of a girl in a gossamer gown, tangled up in a cluster of flowery vines. Possibly inspired by Elizabeth Akers Allen's 1876 poem "Morning Glories," which opens with "Oh, dainty daughters of the dawn, most delicate of flowers / How fitly do ye come to deck day's most delicious hours!" Pelton's painting is practically parodic: the droll female she depicted undercuts romantic associations between flowers, fertility, and femininity. Brinkley liked her attitude and copied Pelton's picture in one of her weekly columns, announcing "Here's a Real Artist!" (figure 4.10).[67]

Called the "Queen of Comics," Brinkley worked for the Hearst newspaper syndicate and was one of the highest-paid artists of the day, known for her popular cartoons of self-assured working girls: fun and flirtatious blondes with bright eyes and bow lips who dressed in pretty sheaths, liked to laugh, and were boldly independent. Her "Brinkley Girl" was the "New Woman," the vigorous feminist ideal of the early modern era. By the early 1910s, the Brinkley Girl had replaced the Gibson Girl as America's favorite female character.[68]

Both Pelton's and Brinkley's pictures of quirky, independent women challenged the "paedophilically provocative" paintings of artists like Paul Chabas, whose notorious *September Morn* (1911) invited viewers to spy on a naked girl in a lake, and drew the particular wrath of anti-vice crusader Anthony Comstock (figure 4.11).[69] Reinscribing Pelton's picture with her signature New Woman, Brinkley used her newspaper column to promote Pelton's work at the Dora Brophy Gallery. "Young women who come to New York should drop in and take a little look at these pictures," Brinkley advised, adding "And folks with plenty of gold to spend on the pictures they like SHOULD REMEMBER that some young artists have a way of becoming famous as they climb the years."[70]

Brinkley's promotion of Pelton's paintings was brokered by Arthur Bris-



"Here's a Real Artist," Says Nell Brinkley

The Spirit of Earth and Heaven, from One of Agnes Pelton's Paintings, Exhibited Now in New York City.

By Nell Brinkley.

THERE is a girl—a slender, silent, modest young woman, Miss Agnes Pelton—whose pictures are on exhibition at No. 12 East Thirty-sixth street, just off Fifth avenue. Until the eighteenth of next month they will be there. One end of the wall in the tiny wedge-like shop is covered with her sketches—a collection of rapid little drawings, very brightly colored. And the rest of the space is hung with paintings, each a small window into a land of fancy, color of tender and lovely shades and decorative line. The pictures are perfectly framed in dull soft squares of gold.

That, too, if you ask her, is the young woman's work. And it's restfully done—just what frames should be when the pictures they hold are worth while—simply a soft barrier between the really-truly world and the run-away world in the square of glowing canvas. Well—so they hang in rows—each astonishingly different, in color, idea and mood, from the canvas that came before and that which comes after.

They are gratefully fanciful—the land of the real is only there in knowledge of bite and tone—for the rest they take you into fairyland and over the road of idle dreams and fantastic notions. There is an insistent note through them all of the decorative, and a love of free, flowing line.

This one I have sketched here for you gives you only those two things—the decorative idea and the feeling for line. It suffers at the hands of a black and white, for the soul is gone out of it—the soul which is the color. This she calls "Summer Moralia." It is all exquisite rosy lights and silver shadows. Silver and rose. With the Lady Dawn herself coming over the hills with the morning-glories that are symbols, and the flush of day growing on faery-like castle walls in the far background.

There is "Autumn"—a mournful notion of Fall—a pallid woman, sunk to the ground, and in a sadly-colored world falling away into nothing in the robe she wears.

There is "August Moon"—which I liked best—a still figure of a woman in a hushed land of rolling hills and one dark poplar tree, the whole—woman, land, and sky—bathed in a golden light of a moon that is somewhere out of the picture. This I liked best of all. You perhaps will like the faery woman coming ashore out of a vivid sea on a great white horse!

The pictures are not large—and as they hang the wall looks a lovely pallet—closer you come and they seem gems in a belt—closer still, and they are fair glimpses into a magic country through stained glass windows. They are softly yet brilliantly colored, and each picture is almost always a blending of the many tones of one color. Just as a sapphire, a motley of varied shades, is always blue in hue.

Young women who come to New York should drop in and take a little look at these pictures. And folks with plenty of gold to spend on the pictures they like SHOULD REMEMBER that some young artists have a way of becoming famous as they climb the years; perhaps they may give themselves a chance to be glad some day they have their work, if they would buy it now when it would do that same young artist the most good.

Figure 4.10. Nell Brinkley, "The Spirit of Earth and Heaven," *Buffalo Enquirer*, November 26, 1915, p. 13.

Courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Buffalo, NY.



Figure 4.11. Paul Emile Chabas, *September Morn*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 64½ × 85¼ in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Coxe Wright, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1957, 57.89.

Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.



Figure 4.12. John Singer Sargent, *Mrs. Charles Thursby*, 1897–98. Oil on canvas, 78¼ × 39½ in. Newark Museum, Newark, NJ; purchase by exchange, 1985, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Pitney, Emilie Coles from the J. Ackerman Coles collection, Mrs. Lewis B. Ballantyne, and the Louis Bamberger collection, 85.45. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, CC0 license.

bane, editor of the *New York Journal* and brother of Alice Brisbane Thursby, an artist and socialite whose class connections helped advance Pelton's career. In the mid-nineteenth century, their father Albert Brisbane popularized the utopian socialist views of French philosopher Charles Fourier. John Singer Sargent's 1898 portrait of Thursby with her hands on her hips and a piercing gaze captures an intense New Woman (figure 4.12). Thursby studied art in Paris in the 1880s, had a long friendship with art patron Mabel Dodge (who also wrote for the *New York Journal*), was romantically involved with art collector John Quinn, corresponded with Gertrude Stein, and was Pelton's primary patron in the 1910s. Thursby introduced Pelton to art world "movers and shakers" from

critics Carl van Vechten and Henry McBride to artist and curator Bryson Burroughs.[71] Pelton's mother took copious notes on the collectors, dealers, and "society matrons" who attended the "teas" and "informal exhibitions" of her daughter's art that Thursby hosted in her New York apartment, detailing what they bought and how much they spent.[72]

Sales were modest. Despite Thursby's patronage, Brinkley's promotion, and her steady record of exhibitions, Pelton struggled for income. In 1913, she illustrated the children's book *When I Was a Little Girl*, by suffragette Zona Gale. In 1914, she shopped her pen-and-ink drawings to editors at *Vanity Fair* and the *Delineator*. In 1917, she tried her hand at interior design, advertising her skills in "adapting painting to the modern home" with "imaginative and decorative panels." Arthur Brisbane commissioned a large panel for his apartment, but most of Pelton's art ventures failed. Gale, for example, complained about the "haunting quality" of Pelton's illustrations and asked her to sketch something that "will not be quite so frightful to an impressionable child." Editors concurred, saying Pelton's odd pictures were not "suitable" for their magazines.[73]

In 1917, Pelton attended a lecture by Walter Pach titled "The Interest of Modern Art." Struck by Pach's remarks about John Covert's abstract painting *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1916, figure 4.13), she wrote in her journal: "He said that the service to humanity rendered by this art was in placing before the looker the spiritual emotion detached from material form: that abstract art could make a direct unhampered appeal to the mind as Spirit." Intrigued by Covert's Cubist reinvention of religious subject matter—the story of a monk in the desert, assailed by demons—Pelton observed: "An abstraction arising from a material thought which recognizes that Spiritual reality is matter itself will convey . . . beauty and holiness."[74]

A year later, Pelton condemned her canvas *River Maidens*, which she had recently shown at the annual exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists. "It is a fantasy," she complained, and "belongs to the black marble mantle and the refined physical & intellectual surroundings for which it was made—not my life." Denouncing her Imaginative paintings as "insincere" and "not real," and questioning their conceptual vagueness, Pelton reconsidered her aesthetic directions. Quoting Helena Blavatsky, she vowed to make a modern art of "perfect consciousness" and "Divine Reality."[75] Moving to Long Island, she stopped painting wispy pictures of girls in fanciful settings and began painting Abstractions "detached from material form" and animated by new metaphysical belief systems, especially those founded by female religious figures.

Spiritual Seeking: New Thought

One of these new belief systems was New Thought, which William James described as a "genuine religious power" focused on healing, "healthy mindedness," and a "deliberately optimistic scheme of life."[76] New Thought leader Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849–1925) promoted mind cure as the path to health,



Figure 4.13. John Covert, *Temptation of St. Anthony*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 25⅞ × 23¹⁵⁄₁₆ in. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT; gift of Collection Société Anonyme, 1941.416.

happiness, and direct communion with God in her twelve-lesson course *High Mysticism* (1907). She grounded her teachings in the idea that "life's ultimate Truth is the omnipotence of good."[77]

Initially a follower of Christian Science, Hopkins believed in the power of mind over matter and the curative results of positive thinking; likewise, she rejected traditional Christian dogma regarding evil and sin. Digressing from Mary Baker Eddy, however, Hopkins was open to modern medicine and other belief systems including Buddhism and Theosophy. Hopkins also identified the Holy Spirit as a female Divine, or Mother Spirit. She mentored female religious empowerment by recruiting women to the College of Metaphysical Science that she founded in Chicago and preparing them for ecclesiastical leadership. New Thought swept modern America: in the 1902 article "The Metaphysical Movement," one magazine estimated that it had "more than a million adherents."[78] Hopkins's critique of patriarchal Protestantism, her pioneering of an "alternative feminist theology" of Christian mysticism, and her New Thought "institution building" had a significant impact on modern American religions.[79]

Moving to New York in 1895, Hopkins practiced a private mind cure minis-

try in a suite at the Iroquois Hotel on West 44th Street. A "very stately woman who wore a long dress and a hat at all times," Hopkins offered talk therapy that blended "practical mysticism" and metaphysical healing. Appointments were hard to get: as many as four people vied for every hour of personal counsel that she offered.[80] Among her patients were Mabel Dodge, Elizabeth Duncan (sister of modern dancer Isadora Duncan), Ernest Holmes (founder of the New Thought movement Religious Science), Florence Scovel Shinn (an illustrator and author of New Thought books like *The Game of Life and How to Play It*), and modern American painters Maurice Sterne, Andrew Dasburg, and Agnes Pelton.

Hopkins's New Thought therapy focused on removing psychic blockages and re-forming "the right relationship with Divine Mind." Mabel Dodge, who began seeing her in 1916 and wrote a chapter on Hopkins in her 1936 memoir, *Movers and Shakers*, recounted:

> She sat in her little drawing room, in the Iroquois Hotel, clothed in an exquisite gown all soft black lace and silk, a large-brimmed lace hat on her soft white hair, and she smoothed and relaxed one so that at the end of one's hour one was renewed and reassured. I sat before her in a comfortable armchair three times a week. The shades were lowered and fresh flowers filled the room . . . her violet eyes held mine . . . The effortless way—that was the way she counseled . . . An emphasis upon the power within that knows all and does all.[81]

Led and followed by Progressive Era White women who saw themselves as "part of a women's religious movement that would herald a new 'women's era,'" New Thought also attracted American men seeking health, wealth, and spiritual self-fulfillment.[82] Will Levington Comfort (1878–1932), a popular journalist who wrote both potboilers (*Routledge Rides Alone*, 1910) and mystical tracts (*The Hive*, 1918), turned to New Thought to confront his alcoholism and explore the spiritual, rather than strictly pecuniary, possibilities of creative labor. He shared his insights in letters to Mabel Dodge and in his 1914 autobiography *Midstream*, an account of his struggles "to put body and mind and spirit—into a book, as into a being." Describing sessions in New York with a "slightly older" woman "of rare loveliness" who encouraged him to focus on "pure spiritual self-revelation," Comfort observed: "I seemed to know what she meant always, receiving a clear vision of the finished thing in her mind. Her glow was upon all her friends whom I met."[83]

Persuaded that "all creative thought is spiritually energized" and encouraged to become a man of "vision," Comfort abandoned journalism and moved his family to Krotona, a Theosophy colony in the Hollywood Hills.[84] His daughter Jane, who became Pelton's close friend and confidant, later wrote that Krotona "was like some mystical birthplace of his soul and it welcomed him like a prodigal son." Less impressed, Jane satirized Krotona's "stuffy" spiritual community, including her father, as intellectual gasbags whose "faces

had a consciously sanctified look" and whose "selfish" obsessions often left an "awful mess" for their families and followers.[85] Other Krotona residents included Alice Bailey, who coined the term "New Age," and Dane Rudhyar, who took his first astrology class at Krotona and scored the music for the colony's annual Pilgrimage Play. In 1920, Comfort published *The Mystic Road*, asserting that "the inner quest, far as it seems from life in America to-day, is the key to all that is great in the arts." Bailey, who left Krotona to focus on occult meditation and esoteric astrology at the Arcane School, credited Comfort as a major spiritual influence.[86]

Comfort left Krotona to become the guru of his own spiritual community, the Glass Hive (also called the Comfort Group) in Highland Park, a bohemian neighborhood in Los Angeles. In lectures, letters, and magazines, Comfort urged his followers to tread their own "mystic road" to greater spiritual awareness. One member recalled: "The door at the Comfort home was always open to the seeker. Evenings were mainly spent in the large room before the fireplace, W.L.C. stretched upon a pallet or sitting low as he listened or spoke the word of the moment. Among those informally gathered were teachers, artists, savants, ministers, seekers for spiritual light."[87]

In 1918, Pelton read Comfort's *Midstream* and copied long passages in her journal. In 1928, she moved to Los Angeles for eight months and spent time at Comfort's commune, befriending Jane, absorbing her father's words and advice—"Don't let anyone critique or stop you from doing this work"—and painting Abstractions.[88] She wrote Mabel Dodge that she was visiting "an old friend who belongs to the Glass Hive Community," adding, "I am not at all sure that I do, but in spite of some things that put me off about W.L.C. & the lot of them, I have felt an especial pull in that direction." Pelton visited many spiritual communities, but never joined them. Like Jane Comfort, she recognized their potentially authoritarian elements and the "awful mess" created by undisciplined charismatic leaders—from Henry Ward Beecher to Will Levington Comfort.[89]

Pelton began studying New Thought with Hopkins in 1920. They met in Taos in early 1919, where both were guests at Mabel Dodge's nascent New Mexico art colony.[90] Pelton and Dodge had met years earlier in New York art circles and stayed in touch through the 1940s. In 1912, Dodge bought Pelton's Imaginative painting *The Willow*.[91] During the teens, Pelton occasionally attended her salons at 23 Fifth Avenue. Drawn to Dodge's liberating energy and enthusiasm, Pelton later told her:

> That beautiful white 'Salon'—though I only saw it perhaps three times—was a positive influence in my life during a long period more or less sombre. Its living freshness and the feeling of light, as well as beauty, seemed and was so *new*. Beauty, when I had seen it before, which was seldom, seemed derivative, and usually static, but of course you always infuse life into any place where you are.[92]

In 1917, Pelton and their mutual friend Alice Brisbane Thursby were witnesses at Dodge's third marriage to Maurice Sterne in Peekskill, New York. In 1938, Dodge and her fourth husband, Tony Luhan, visited Pelton in Cathedral City. When Pelton's mother died, Dodge encouraged Hopkins to accept Agnes as a patient. In January 1921, Hopkins wrote her that Pelton was "sweet as a flower and [was] doing wonderful portraits. She will have her eighth lesson tomorrow." Pelton herself wrote Dodge, "I've seen Mrs. Hopkins several times lately as I wanted to feel better than I have for some time, and I'm really beginning to."[93]

New Thought was a healing source and aesthetic guide for Pelton. Quoting popular New Thought author Annie Rix Militz (who was ordained by Hopkins in 1891), she wrote in her journal, "Divine knowledge is self-increasing" and "Spiritual transactions must be translated into the language of mortal sense." Underneath, she added her own words in brackets: "This is where the forms of the natural world must appear in a picture, or can do so—not for themselves but to convey thought as future light."[94] Pelton "translated" New Thought's doctrine of spiritual self-awareness, of thought as light, in numerous Abstractions depicting stars and rays. She projected its emphasis on spiritual evolution in paintings like *Being* (figure 4.14), which depicts a swirling oval form emerging from "dark solid earth" and "attended by light filling vapors." She first sketched *Being* while taking lessons with Hopkins in 1923.[95]

Pelton also visualized Hopkins's model of a female Divine. *Mother of Silence* (1933, figure 4.15) depicts the Holy Mother that Hopkins conceived in her New Thought trinity. Pelton wrote that the painting was inspired by an image she "sensed" of a "Mother of Wisdom—could almost see her—richly clad in full dark colors in an interior with little light . . . receiving & sending out *far* over the world—an adept." She added: "She is a real person whom I can & will come to know better—a wise & blessed presence." Pelton kept the painting close and treated it as a source of inspiration and guidance. In 1939, she wrote: "Looking at Mother of S. Thought of Mrs. Hopkins' and opened 4th study p. 23. *Is not faith the confidence of things chosen?* She seemed to be here, her influence working for me—combined with Mother on wall."[96]

Michael Zakian argued that *Mother of Silence*'s symbolism was "cross cultural, resembling both a Christian icon and an Asian Buddha."[97] Icons, broadly understood as "portals to the holy" in Eastern and Western religions, depend on veneration. Their sacred meaning is animated by how viewers interact with them, from looking and touching to kissing, holding, and bowing. More than "mere" images or objects, icons represent the visible, the faces and/or bodies of deities, and the invisible, the states of transcendence beyond human perception. "Because they are, in a manner, alive, and not simply dead representations," writes Bernard Faure, icons are "images of power."[98]

Pelton appropriated a powerful iconic sensibility in *Mother of Silence* and other Abstractions to convey the living, dynamic terms of her spiritual beliefs. Her Abstractions did not simply "represent" her spiritual beliefs but were ani-



Figure 4.14. Agnes Pelton, *Being*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 26 × 21⅞ in. Private collection.

Photograph: Peter Palladino / Agnes Pelton Society / Bridgeman Images.

mated, as Kandinsky admonished, with the "emotional power" they engaged. "Here is neither realistic, nor intellectualistic and formalistic art," Rudhyar observed. Rather, Pelton's Abstractions conveyed "a power which is missing from so much of modern art."[99] New Thought, among other metaphysical sources, inspired her modern "images of power."

Pelton was also motivated by New Thought's ecumenical openness. In *High Mysticism*, Hopkins advised her New Thought students to keep motivational journals: "Fill . . . blank pages with quotations from philosophers, poets, mystics, on the foregoing twelve points. Put them in your own original inspirations as they come to you. So will you write your name with the stars."[100] Pelton filled her journals with the insights of mystics including Comfort, Blavatsky, and Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. Jotting their words next to her sketches, she indicated specific spiritual inspirations for her Abstractions. A page from March 1931, for example, references Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson's *The Angelic Hosts* (1928): "In the fire world I perceived beauty in the Abstract as a living power" (figure 4.16).[101] Next to Hodson's words, she sketched

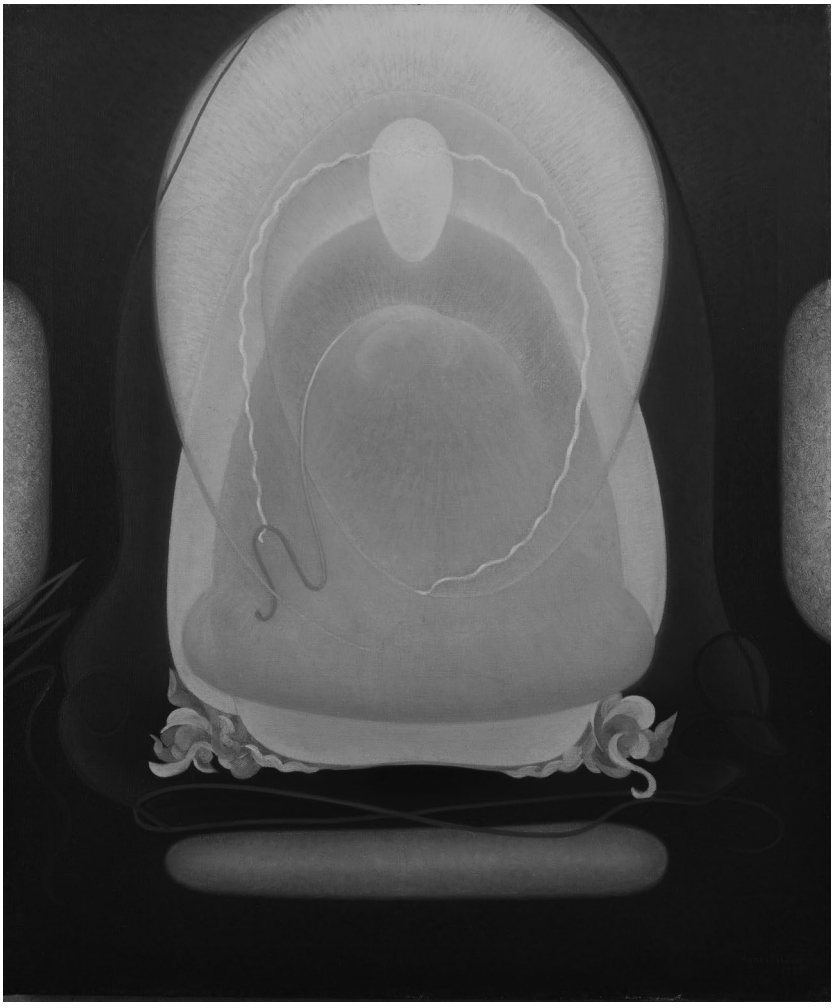


Figure 4.15. Agnes Pelton, *Mother of Silence*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 30 × 25 in. Private collection.

Mount of Flame (1932, subtitled *The Spiritual Mountain*) and listed its colors, themes, and moods, such as "white heat" and blue and yellow "tongues of flame" (figure 4.17). Hodson's descriptions of the fiery power of Divine Self were among many Theosophical sources that Pelton appropriated.

Spiritual Seeking: Theosophy

Pelton's spiritual modernism was especially indebted to the revelations of secret knowledge by Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891). Seeking to revive religious cultures "effaced by mainstream Christianity," Blavatsky aimed to re-enchant the modern world.[102] Rebuking organized religions for failing to satisfy modern desires for spiritual harmony and scientific discovery, she championed the "purely divine ethics" of Theosophy and its three objectives: the development of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity "without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color"; the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and sci-

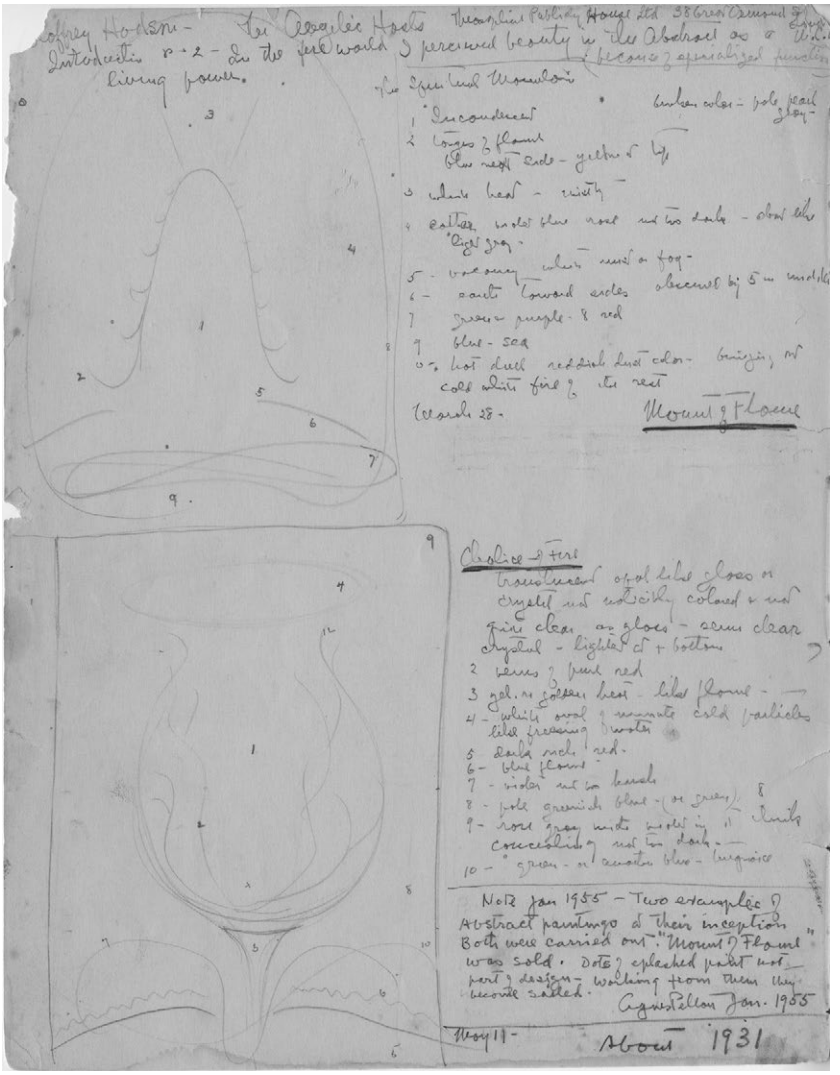


Figure 4.16. Agnes Pelton, sketch for *Mount of Flame*, 1932. University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, NM; Raymond Jonson Archive, one sheet from the Agnes Pelton files.

ence; and the investigation of nature's hidden mysteries via the "psychic and spiritual powers latent in man."[103] Rejecting materialism, liberal individualism, social hierarchy, and biological determinism, Blavatsky promoted an "Ultimate Truth" centered on spiritual evolution toward Higher or Divine Self. To reach this truth, the "spiritual pilgrim" must marshal multiple senses, including sight, sound, and smell. "We believe in a Universal Divine Principal, the root of ALL, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of being," she declared.[104] For Theosophists, the path to Higher Self, and the purpose of life, is the liberation of the soul through multiple reincarnations.

Like Hopkins's New Thought, Blavatsky's Theosophy was a feminist metaphysics, with female leadership and the recovery of ancient goddess religions at the helm.[105] Differently, however, Blavatsky's concept of the Uni-

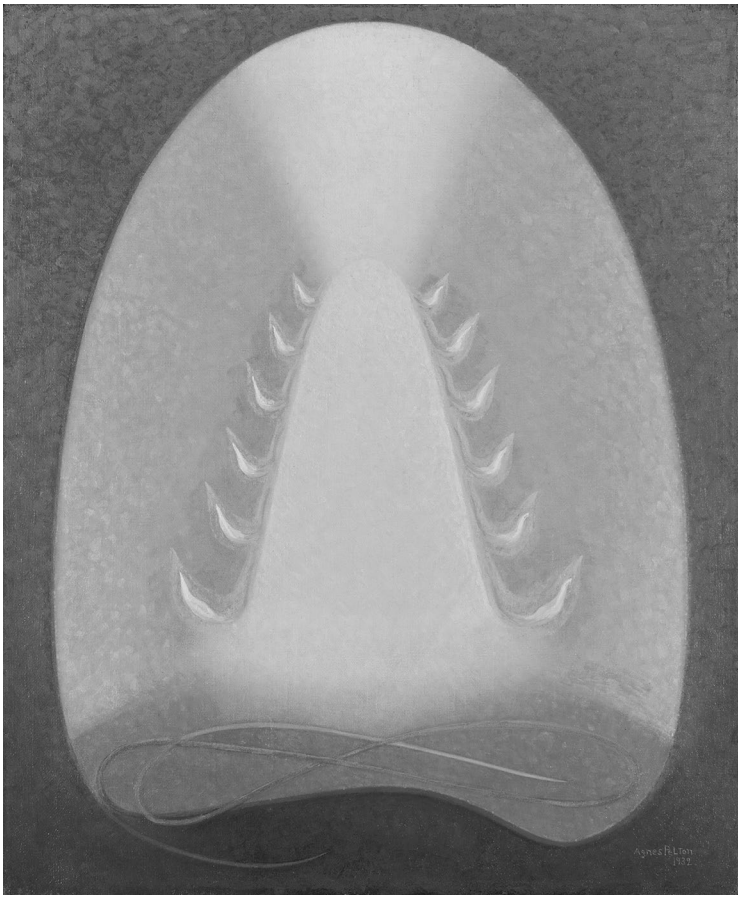


Figure 4.17. Agnes Pelton, *Mount of Flame*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 24 × 20 in. University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, NM; bequest of Raymond Jonson, Raymond Jonson Collection, 82.221.1950.

versal Divine was gender neutral, neither male nor female, neither "Father nor Mother." The "absolutely spiritual Man," she declared, is "entirely disconnected from sex." An individual's "gendered self" was an insignificant distraction from Theosophy's primary focus on spiritual union with Higher Self.[106]

Theosophy's conceptual bedrock lies in esoterica that Blavatsky believed could reset the spiritual foundations of modern times. This included the wisdom she claimed to receive from two spiritually evolved Masters or Mahatmas—Morya and Koot Hoomi (K. H.)—and occultism, which she saw as a metaphysics of resistance and renewal, not as devil worship.[107] Synthesizing Eastern and Western theology, borrowing from alchemy, astrology, Buddhism, Freemasonry, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Hinduism, Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, and Spiritualism, and accommodating ancient knowledge with modern science, Blavatsky designed Theosophy as a dynamic, progressive, and "harmonial" substitute for mainstream religions.[108] Theosophy was, Christopher Partridge clarifies, "fundamentally Western," a re-enchantment of "Western thought with an Eastern flavour" driven by modern Western needs for self-realization, autonomy, and well-being. Fascinated with "excavating a hidden knowledge protected from modernity in a timeless, Oriental realm of wisdom

and spirituality," Blavatsky's Theosophical cosmology was a deeply romantic, ahistorical, and essentialist form of Orientalist occulture.[109]

Soul-searching rather than God-centered, Theosophy emphasizes personal mystical experience—meditation, intuition, revelation, dreaming, and clairvoyance—as a conduit to the divine. The experience of "mind," Catherine Albanese observes, is central to metaphysical beliefs, and meditation ("guided visualization") channels "states of contentment, self-possession, and mastery."[110] Pelton's meditation was arduous but rewarding: "After week or more of effort to meditate at 6 a.m.," she recorded in her journal, "my life purpose clear again this morning: To Establish Centers of Radiation in my paintings that are open to all." Her Abstractions, she explained in 1929, were "little windows, opening to the view of a region not yet much visited consciously or by intention—an inner realm, rather than an outer landscape." Their content was otherworldly: "There is no semblance of material things or substances visible here," she wrote, "except when a symbol materializes into the language of named things."[111]

In the late 1930s, Pelton built a meditation room in her Cathedral City house where she read, dreamed, prayed, burned incense, and sketched her Abstractions. As she noted, "A swift & brief notation in pencil is made of the relationship of forms in space, and a description in words of the color which is apprehended though not seen by the outer eye."[112] These embodied practices constituted her religious beliefs and shaped and directed her spiritual modernism. Writing to Jane Comfort in 1943, she remarked: "I am in the Silence Room, filled with warm, white quietness and the Mother [her painting, *Mother of Silence*] looks down on me."[113]

Seeking signs of spiritual inspiration, Pelton recorded her visions and dreams. Theosophists value dreams as epiphanic transmissions from higher spheres. In 1945, Pelton recorded a dream about climbing a "narrow high" mountain and experiencing a "marvelous revelation." A few months later she painted *Ascent* (1946), subtitled "Soul Flight" and "Liberation," an Abstraction featuring an arrow-shaped ray pointed toward a golden light. The arrow, she wrote, "is near, like part of oneself." The golden light "is far, of brilliant infinity."[114]

Pelton also practiced libanomancy, observing and interpreting burning incense for spiritual signs. "The smoke of the incense was a symphony of movement," she told Jane in one letter. "Rise and fall, in and out of the beam of sun, it filled the whole room with soundless movement." She subtitled a sketch for her 1935 painting *Beatitude* "Incense Time" and described the Abstraction as an image of "delicate rosy tipped wings" supporting a "Center of Exquisite Luminosity." She added at the bottom of the page, "God is where we summon him when we make a center of receptivity a culmination," a paraphrase of Theosophical meditative themes and practices.[115]

In her 1,500-page magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky detailed Theosophy's "fundamental" propositions: that reality is "Omnipresent,



Figure 4.18. Agnes Pelton, *The Primal Wing*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 24 × 25 in. San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA.

© San Diego Museum of Art / gift of the artist / Bridgeman Images.

Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable"; that the Universe is in constant flux and motion; and that all Souls cycle for eternity through seven planes (or rays) of existence in an "obligatory pilgrimage" to Higher Self. She also listed Theosophy's core beliefs in karma, reincarnation, immortality, universality, and the sevenfold constitution of the universe into The Absolute, Spirit, Mind, Matter, Will, Ether (a substance linking the astral body and the physical body, or the transcendent and the material), and Life.[116] Challenging Darwin's theory of biological evolution, Blavatsky proposed a theory of spiritual evolution achievable at seven stages, or rays, of being.

Other religions also feature septenary principles—consider Catholicism's seven sacraments, Christian Science's seven synonyms for God, the Seven Heavens of Islam and Judaism, the seven chakras of Hinduism. But the number seven has heightened significance in Theosophy, referencing seven rays, seven eternities, seven prismatic colors, the sevenfold nature of man, and more. Inspired by esoteric doctrines of correspondence and seeking to impose some sort of order on her sprawling metaphysics, Blavatsky and Annie Besant, her successor, explained that seven was "the root-number of our system."[117] Pelton echoed Theosophy's septenary significance in paintings including *Primal Wing* (1933), which depicts a seven-feathered form floating above a dark, hilly landscape (figure 4.18). In her notes on the painting, she quoted Blavatsky's *Book of*

Dzyan: "The last vibration of the 7th eternity thrills through infinitude . . . The vibration sweeps along, touching with its *Swift Wing* the whole universe."[118]

Pelton appropriated other Theosophical concepts in other Abstractions. Many of them, including *The Ray*, *Sea Change*, *Translation*, and *Voyaging* (all painted in 1931), *Mother of Silence*, *Memory* (1937), *Challenge* (1940), *The Blest* (1941), *Spring Moon* (1942), *Birthday* (1943), *Prelude* (1943), and *Lost Music II* (1956), feature sinuous cords or strings in multiple colors. These allude to "the thread of spirit" or Sutratma, a Sanskrit term for "soul thread" and a synonym, said Blavatsky, of the "reincarnating Ego" in "one life after the other." In metaphysical circles, the Sutratma is a life-giving connective thread (or channel) extending from Higher Self to the physical body. When a person is alive, this etheric thread—a slender, unseen cable that clairvoyants describe as a golden or silver cord—charges the body with energy. At death, the thread is severed.[119] Repeatedly referencing threads and cords in her Abstractions, Pelton visually evoked the intervals of reincarnation that Theosophy's "spiritual pilgrim" experiences on the eternal journey to Divine Self.

In 1928, the Theosophical Society recorded an "official" global membership of forty-five thousand members, including 8,520 Americans. Yet membership numbers are misleading in terms of Theosophy's larger impact. Following Blavatsky's death in 1891, the movement split into two main factions in India (led by Besant) and California (led by Katherine Tingley), and many smaller schisms, each claiming spiritual authorization from one or more Mahatmas, and each contemptuous of rivals. Despite these institutional rifts, Theosophy's unifying metaphysics of mystical experience, or "perennial philosophy," became the foundational core of the post–World War II New Age movement.[120] Theosophy's reclamation of hidden mysteries, optimistic encouragement of personal spiritual awareness, and insistence on re-enchanting modern life resonated in many cultural and social domains throughout the twentieth century.

Recovering and reconciling ancient wisdoms with modern imperatives of self-knowledge, Theosophy was very much a modernist project. As such, it was very attractive to modern artists. Europeans including Kandinsky, Hilma af Klint, Kasimir Malevitch, and Piet Mondrian each adapted Theosophical motifs in their paintings.[121] So did Canadian artist Lawren Harris and Australian painters Clarice Beckett, Roy De Maistre, Florence Fuller, and Grace Cossington Smith.[122] American moderns Mabel Alvarez, Hyman Bloom, Arthur B. Davies, Arthur Dove, Katherine Dreier, Marsden Hartley, Zama Vanessa Helder, Charmion von Wiegand, and Pelton similarly turned to Theosophy to tap forms and forces that stimulated their different approaches to spiritualized creativity.[123]

Theosophy guided Hilla Rebay's vision of New York's Guggenheim as a "museum-temple" filled with nonobjective paintings by Kandinsky, Mondrian, and other artists she called "prophets of spiritual life." In 1937, Rebay, who was the Guggenheim's first director when it was called the Museum of

Non-Objective Painting, stated: "Non-objectivity will be the religion of the future. Very soon the nations on earth will turn to it in thought and feeling to develop such intuitive powers which lead them to harmony."[124] Theosophy also influenced the Transcendental Painting Group (TPG), which was founded in New Mexico in 1938 and whose members (including Pelton, Harris, Raymond Jonson, and Emil Bisttram) were dedicated to abstract art. In 1940, Pelton and Jonson proposed a TPG exhibit to Rebay, but it was never realized.[125] Blavatsky prophesized that the US was ideal for modernity's metaphysical reinvention, writing "it is in America that the transformation will take place, and has already silently commenced."[126]

Pelton was introduced to Theosophy in the 1910s by Emma Hart Newton, who was active in the American section of the Theosophical Society, first in New York and then in Southern California. Newton studied piano with Pelton's mother and attended the "teas" that Alice Brisbane Thursby hosted to promote Agnes's art. In 1921, Pelton painted Newton's portrait in New York. In 1928, Newton introduced her to Will Comfort and his Glass Hivers in Highland Park.[127] In gratitude, Pelton painted *Divinity Lotus* for her (figure 4.19), depicting what Blavatsky called "a most occult plant" and universal symbol of spiritual enlightenment, transcending from muddy water to beautiful flower. Pelton translated that symbolism in her painting, which she described as a vaporous "bluish swirl" emerging from a rosy white lotus, a "living solid" reaching toward "rays as points of light above."[128] Newton owned several of Pelton's Abstractions including *Star Gazer* (1929), *Resurgence* (1931), and *Ahmi in Egypt* (1931), which was named after her, and Pelton often visited her when she moved to Cathedral City.[129]

Like many spiritual seekers, Pelton discovered most of her insights in books; indeed, "book culture" was "integral to the rise of liberal religion in the twentieth century."[130] Earlier, in the mid-nineteenth century, the popularity of Spiritualism—a belief system based on communication with the dead—was amplified by a network of newspapers such as *Banner of Light* (published in Boston from 1857–1907) and *Spiritual Telegraph* (New York, 1852–1860).[131] New Thought's popularity was similarly fostered by a robust print culture, from Hopkins's *High Mysticism* to Militz's *Master Mind Magazine*.[132] New practices in the print marketplace, including the mass production of publications specifically aimed at religious readers, were fueled in part by growing numbers of readers seeking diverse examples of mystical literature. Demand triggered supply, and vice versa: by 1900, readers interested in occulture had access to a remarkable variety of magazines, books, newspapers, pamphlets, charts, and self-help tomes advertised in both mainstream and esoteric publications.

Magazines like *Occult Life* featured pages of ads for inexpensive mail-order offerings on numerology, astro-psychology, natal star charts, and "Kabbalastic Understanding."[133] Occulture was also ubiquitous in the popular press: almanacs featured astrology-based weather forecasts, tabloids published the readings of "Society Palmist" Cheiro (the sobriquet of William John Warner, who



Figure 4.19. Agnes Pelton, *Divinity Lotus*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 26 × 16 in. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR, 2007.188.

Photograph: Dwight Primiano.

told the fortunes of celebrities like Oscar Wilde and the Prince of Wales), and newspapers began printing daily horoscope columns in the early 1900s.[134] Financial astrology, or Astro-Economics, exploded in the 1930s, popularized in books like *Astrology and Stock Market Forecasting* (1938), which related the movements of celestial bodies to the rise and fall of the Dow Jones. In 1936, Dane Rudhyar's *Astrology of Personality* introduced the horoscope's twelve-paragraph sun-sign format, which dramatically boosted astrology's mainstream popularity.[135] Print media of all types legitimized occulture in modern times.

Theosophy's popular transmission depended on print. Focused on study and meditation, Theosophy's literary orientation was manifest in Blavatsky's many books, including *Isis Unveiled* (1877), *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Voice of the Silence* (1889), and some fourteen volumes of her collected articles and letters. Other Theosophy texts ranged from "channeled revelatory works" and philosophical treatises to biographies, handbooks, and novels. By 1900, at least 60 Theosophical magazines were published around the world, including nine different titles in New York.[136]

Pelton read widely in all genres, copying notes about Theosophy in her journals and sharing her insights in letters to friends. Especially attentive to Blavatsky's books, she also quoted liberally from Alfred Percy Sinnett's *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky* (1925), William Quan Judge's *Echoes of the Orient: A Broad Outline of Theosophical Doctrines* (1890), and Gottfried de Purucker's *Golden Precepts of Esotericism* (1931). Living in Southern California, Pelton was close to Purucker at Point Loma, where he assumed the leadership of the Theosophical Society in 1929 and wrote extensively on Theosophical teachings.

Pelton's reading was a spiritual practice, a variant on *Lectio Divina* (Latin for "divine or holy reading"), a Catholic monastic practice of scriptural reflection, meditation, and prayer focused on communion with God. Pelton's engagement with metaphysical texts guided her spiritually attuned modern art. It also helped her define and distinguish her Abstractions from other forms of modern art.

In 1930, she copied passages from *The Bright Messenger* (1922), a Theosophist novel about reincarnation. She quoted in particular: "No mind, no intellect can convey a message that transcends human experience and reason. Art, however, can . . . The more perfect and adequate the form, the greater the flow of life, of knowledge, of power it can express." Under this passage, she wrote a revealing paragraph comparing her Abstractions with Georgia O'Keeffe's "enlarged" paintings of flowers, noting:

> Sources not the same as AP [Agnes Pelton]—aim decorative beauty subjective reaction & things seen as felt . . . they are done with paint & brush, they are *not seen primarily inside*, in the realm of Ether, as I call it. You see it first inside then paint with air! Turning paint to atmosphere. She sees first outside . . . then with charming effect makes a decorative canvas of it.[137]

Although Pelton and O'Keeffe both studied with Arthur Wesley Dow and shared mutual friends—most notably, Mabel Dodge—they made very different kinds of modern art. Distinguishing O'Keeffe's "decorative" attention to external "things" from her own focus on the "realm of Ether," Pelton explained her primary interests in a spiritual modernism guided by metaphysical currents.[138]

She subtitled her 1935 Abstraction *Day*, for example, "Fountain of Truth, the open door," alluding to Theosophy as a fount of esoteric wisdom and a portal to the divine (figure 4.20). More specifically, *Day* references *Fountain—Source of Occultism*, a compilation by Purucker on Theosophy's spiritual principles. Describing the rectangle in the middle of the painting as the threshold into a "new sphere," Pelton wrote that the gushing forms next to the door were rays of "new light," the star of Venus on the left was a symbol of a new day, and the dark blue shape hovering on the right was "a presence from above," a "subtle" entity charged with guiding believers along the path, or ray, to spir-



Figure 4.20. Agnes Pelton, *Day*, 1935. Oil on canvas, 25¼ × 23½ in. Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ; gift of the Melody S. Robidoux Foundation, 2014.38.

Photograph © Phoenix Art Museum. All rights reserved.

itual enlightenment.[139] Disinterested in the "charming effect" of O'Keeffe's canvases, Pelton's spiritual searching focused on finding "more perfect and adequate" means to turn paint into mystical "atmosphere."

Spiritual Seeking: Astrology and Agni Yoga

Pelton's spiritual modernism was further shaped by astrology. Dane Rudhyar (1895–1985) was a friend and visited her in Long Island (figure 4.21) and Cathedral City. Rudhyar was an occult polymath. Born Daniel Chennevière in Paris, he emigrated to the US in 1916, studied Eastern philosophy and Theosophy, acted in silent films, and changed his name to Rudhyar, adopting the Sanskrit for Rudra, a dynamic incarnation of Shiva. In the 1920s, he composed ultramodern polytonal music, developing a "sonically intensified version of Blavatsky's cosmos" with a unifying "Single Tone" harmonics. "Sound is a tremendous Occult power; it is a stupendous force," Blavatsky stated in *The Secret Doctrine*, asserting that sonic, psychic, and spiritual vibrations all constituted a



Figure 4.21. *Dane Rudhyar*, March 1930. Photograph. Agnes Pelton papers, 1885–1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; digital ID no. 10402.

harmonic continuum.[140] Aiming to re-enchant Western sound by linking "dissonance with spirituality," Rudhyar's "new music" offered the metaphysical alternative Blavatsky imagined.[141]

Rudhyar first saw Pelton's Abstractions at Montross Gallery in 1929. Over the following decades, he described them as "living symbols" of "vitality and power" representing "a glowing vision of spiritual reality."[142] He served as spiritual adviser for the TPG in the 1930s, suggesting they use the word "transcendental" to define and promote their nonobjective art, and called Pelton "the closest perhaps of all the painters of the Group to the Kandinsky type of creative movement."[143] Rudhyar also published the occult magazine *Hamsa* ("swan" in Sanskrit), which was breathlessly subtitled "An Organ of Wholeness Dedicated to the Upholding of the Ideal of Harmonic Cooperation and Synthesis and to the Establishment of a Living Civilization Animated by the Conscious Realization of Every Individual of the Living God." *Hamsa* contributors included photographer Edward Weston and spiritual writers Bo Yin Ra, Walter DeVoe, and Muriel Sanatsan.[144]

Pelton was a *Hamsa* subscriber, and paid tribute to its avatar in *Ahmi in*



Figure 4.22. Agnes Pelton, *Ahmi in Egypt*, 1931. Oil on canvas. 36 3/16 × 24 3/16 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; purchase, with funds from the Modern Painting and Sculpture Committee, 96.175.

Digital image © Whitney Museum of American Art. Licensed by Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Egypt (figure 4.22), a showy Abstraction featuring a gold-crowned swan: a venerated mount for various Hindu deities, a symbol of freedom, purity, and spiritual attainment. Swimming in an inky pool bordered by dark icy peaks, the swan moves toward a supernatural landscape of jewel-like lotus flowers and a brightly lit proscenium stage surrounded by beaded curtains. It moves, in other words, toward the mystical symbolism of enlightenment and divine consciousness, and with its head turned slightly toward the viewer of Pelton's painting, it beckons us to do the same. Somewhat similarly, Pelton's *Primal Wing* (figure 4.18) alluded to the *Hamsa* essay "Winged Thoughts" (1933), which entreated "Rejoice when the plumed thoughts fly through you to do their work in the world."[145]

In 1930, Rudhyar married Malya Contento, who was Will Levington Comfort's secretary and a member of astrologer Marc Edmund Jones's Sabian Assembly, a group that studied "Solar Mysteries" through the "Sabian Symbols," a set of word-images corresponding to the 360 degrees of the zodiac wheel.[146] Returning to astrology, which he had first explored at Krotona in 1920, Rudhyar began his foundational reformulation of the field, shifting it

from a predictive or event-based calendrical scheme of planetary cycles and causation to a psychospiritual system of intuition and personality. "In California," he later wrote, "I discovered the fascinating language of astrology—a language which seemed to have lost contact with the basic human experiences of cosmic order and significance as revealed by the night sky." He expounded on the subject in more than a thousand articles and dozens of books, including *The Astrology of Personality* and *The Planetarization of Consciousness* (1970), becoming one of the most influential astrologers of the twentieth century.[147]

Inspired by Alice Bailey's prophecies regarding a "New Age of Aquarius," Rudhyar pioneered Harmonic Astrology (later called humanistic or transpersonal astrology).[148] Working with the Sabian Symbols and depth psychology, he devised an astrology that correlated planetary cycles with personal feelings, intuitive behaviors, spiritual self-awareness, and social responsibility. "The goal of Harmonic Astrology," he wrote, "is to lead men to the fulfillment of their whole nature and being; fulfillment, correlation, integration—and thus sublimation. What is necessary, then, is to enable the person whose chart is analyzed to do the things which, if his *instinct* had not been frustrated by family and society, he would have done in pure spontaneity."[149] Reinventing astrology as a system of signs rather than causes, Rudhyar emphasized personal agency: "Each individual is in a very real sense the center of his own universe. It is the way he orients himself to the universe as a whole that matters."[150] A birth chart provided structure, in other words, but the path of spiritual transformation was a matter of choice, not fate.

Pelton's birth chart was among many that Rudhyar studied in his initial construction of Harmonic Astrology; indeed, some of Pelton's most revealing insights about her early life come from notes she shared with him about her family and upbringing. "How dear of you to go over my chart again for a birthday present!" she remarked in a 1934 letter to Rudhyar detailing the journeys, experiences, illnesses, deaths, dreams, scandals, and "good" or "beneficial" influences in her life. She ended her account with a survey of the skies: "Lately the stars have been nearer again. Such nights! Such relationships—such—ooo! Qualities? Movements? Sounds?"[151]

In a letter to TPG co-founder Raymond Jonson she similarly enthused: "Do you watch the stars these summer nights? Marvelous and indefinable emanations descend from them—something new—neither sound, sight, or smell. I only know that something wonderful goes on and that a faculty will sometime develop to apprehend it, if we preserve an open sensitiveness to it." And in a 1932 journal entry she wrote:

> A night under stars. Coming out of sleep & consciousness overlapped a moment and I held a nearer feeling or perception of the stars. I was nearer them, or else their potencies reached me—rayed out toward me, softer, filial, or streaming, speaking, reaching, giving messages before they again assumed the march of their natural physical aspect. I was facing Arcturas [*sic*] & that region.[152]

Pelton's affective response to the stars indicates how she comprehended spirituality through felt experience. Her spirituality was driven by feelings of wonder, awe, and mystery accompanied by feelings of joy and expansiveness, of new possibilities.[153]

Scanning the skies for personal, aesthetic, and spiritual insights, Pelton turned to astrology for a system of interpretation, a method to "apprehend" the "potencies" that the stars "rayed out" to her. She made notes about moon phases, recorded astrological signs, read issues of *Horoscope* and *American Astrology* (which Rudhyar wrote for), and remarked on zodiacal incidences in letters to friends. Casting a chart on whether or not to get a bank loan to build a home studio, she consulted Rudhyar: "Horary chart on studio. Moon-Pluto conjunction Ast. Of Per. [*Astrology of Personality*] p. 303." Choosing the ruling planet—Leo (her birth sign) in the ninth house ("the span of assurance") at the third degree—she copied its interpretation from Rudhyar's astrology textbook: "Mature woman her hair just bobbed, looks into mirror. Sense of freedom from age and realization of the value of youth. Self-creation & independence from fate. Will power." A few weeks later, Pelton signed the loan papers.[154]

Astrology further informed the subjects Pelton painted, especially Abstractions featuring stars, from *The Guide* and *Star Gazer* (both 1929) to *Lotus for Lida* (1930), *Ahmi in Egypt* (figure 4.22), *Even Song* (1934), *Day* (figure 4.20), *Memory* (1937), *Resurgence* (1938), *Star Icon II* (1939), *Challenge* (1940), *Future* (1941), *Awakening* (1943), and *Birthday* (1943). The "great star" in *Illumination* (figure 4.2) supplemented Black, Starr & Frost's window display of star sapphires. Her 1934 painting *Orbits* (figure 4.23) depicts seven stars looping around Mount San Jacinto, the highest peak near Cathedral City. Describing them as "stars of various sizes, colors, & luminosities," Pelton explained that they embodied an "enclosing purpose—auras of love like guiding lights."[155] For Pelton, stars were symbols of enlightenment, and apprehending and painting them was a spiritual practice.

Another occulture source for Pelton's spiritual modernism was Agni Yoga, founded by Russian émigré painter Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947) and his clairvoyant wife Helena (1879–1955). In 1913, Nicholas designed the costumes and sets for Stravinsky's modernist ballet *The Rite of Spring*, which premiered in Paris. Stateless after the Russian Revolution, the Roerichs arrived in New York in 1920 and developed a neo-Theosophy that, appropriating the Sanskrit for fire (agni) and union (yoga), promoted "fiery energy" as spiritual transcendence. Nicholas produced thousands of visionary paintings depicting Shambhala, a mythical Himalayan landscape of peace and beauty presided over by guru-like mystics such as himself (figure 4.24). Helena produced Agni Yoga's teleology, drawing on visual tropes of fire, stars, hearts, chalices, and bells to symbolize spiritual enlightenment and "Living Ethics."[156] Claiming to receive "psychic sendings" from Mahatmas Morya and K. H., the same Masters who relayed ancient wisdom to Helena Blavatsky, Helena Roerich chan-

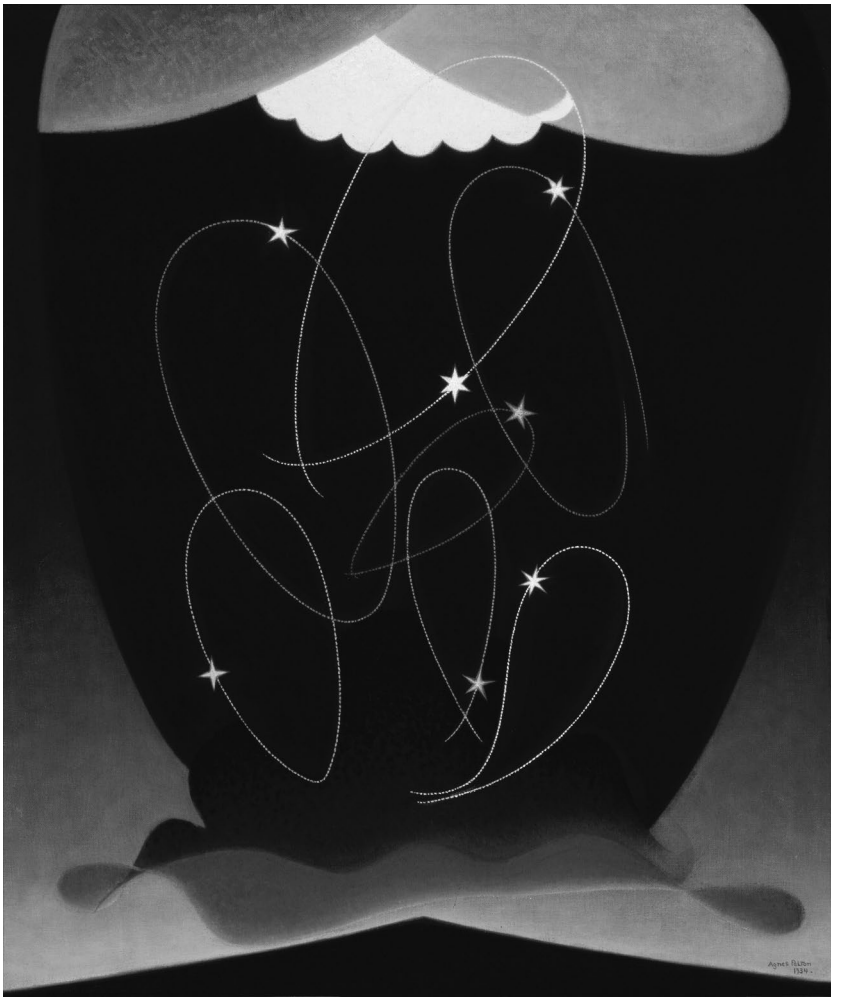


Figure 4.23. Agnes Pelton, *Orbits*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 31¼ × 27¼ in. Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA; gift of Concours d'Antiques, the Art Guild of the Oakland Museum of California.

neled a "new Teaching" that, she said, "moves the world along a more human path" and "completes Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*."[157] The Roerichs's ultimate aim was to generate a spiritual revolution headquartered in the mountains of central Asia, where other disaffected moderns would follow their teachings.

Agni Yoga maintains that the universe is a vast energy system governed by certain spiritual laws. Believers are encouraged to harness their psychic energies, the dynamic life forces of mind and heart, for personal and planetary healing and insight. "In the broadening of consciousness, and the improvement and enrichment of our thinking," Helena Roerich wrote, "we restore the health of all that surrounds us."[158] Similar to New Thought and Theosophy, spiritual cognition—she argued—was especially manifest in female psychic energy and the "spiritually sovereign position" of woman as "Mother of the World."[159] The "New Epoch," she asserted in 1938, "demands new definitions. And nothing is further removed from contemporary thinking than a patriarchal state, and a primitive one at that!"[160]



Figure 4.24. Nicholas Roerich, *Path to Shambhala*, 1933. Tempera on canvas, 18¼ × 31 in. Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York, NY.

Agni Yoga, she declared, was the "synthesis of all Yogas," the penultimate pathway to the soul's unity with divine consciousness, immortality, and infinity.[161] Deviating from the physical discipline of asanas (poses) and pranayama (breath control) practiced in other yogas, Roerich devised Agni Yoga as a spiritual discipline of "Divine Fire." Her writing abounds with fire references—"fiery consciousness, fiery perception, fiery ego, fiery body, fiery breath, fiery forces, fiery space"—and to the ailments that Agni Yoga's "psycho-fiery energy" aims to heal.[162] Followers practice refining their spiritual fires and releasing the psychic life force of Prana. Meditation focuses on keeping chakras—swirling wheels of energy that run from the base of the spine to the crown of the head and constitute and transmit Prana—unblocked and active to ensure well-being. Like Blavatsky, Roerich freely appropriated the "energy" argot of Eastern and South Asian religions popularized in texts like C. W. Leadbeater's *The Chakras* (1927), which Pelton copied at length in her journals (figure 4.25). Healthy chakras, Leadbeater related, vibrated with iridescent violet rays and signaled the "thought and emotion of a high spiritual type."[163] In Western occulture like Agni Yoga, chakras were seen as channels of New Age healing energy.

Pelton began following Agni Yoga in the 1920s and painted several fire-themed Abstractions including *White Fire* (1930), *Fire Sounds* (1930), *Mount of Flame* (1932), and *Fires in Space* (1938). She also made copious notes on Agni Yoga texts. Like Blavatsky, Roerich expounded on her religious doctrine in multiple texts—all available by mail order from the Roerich Museum Press—including *Leaves of Morya's Garden: The Call* (1924), *Leaves of Morya's Garden: Illumination* (1925), *New Era Community* (1926), and the fourteen-volume *Signs*

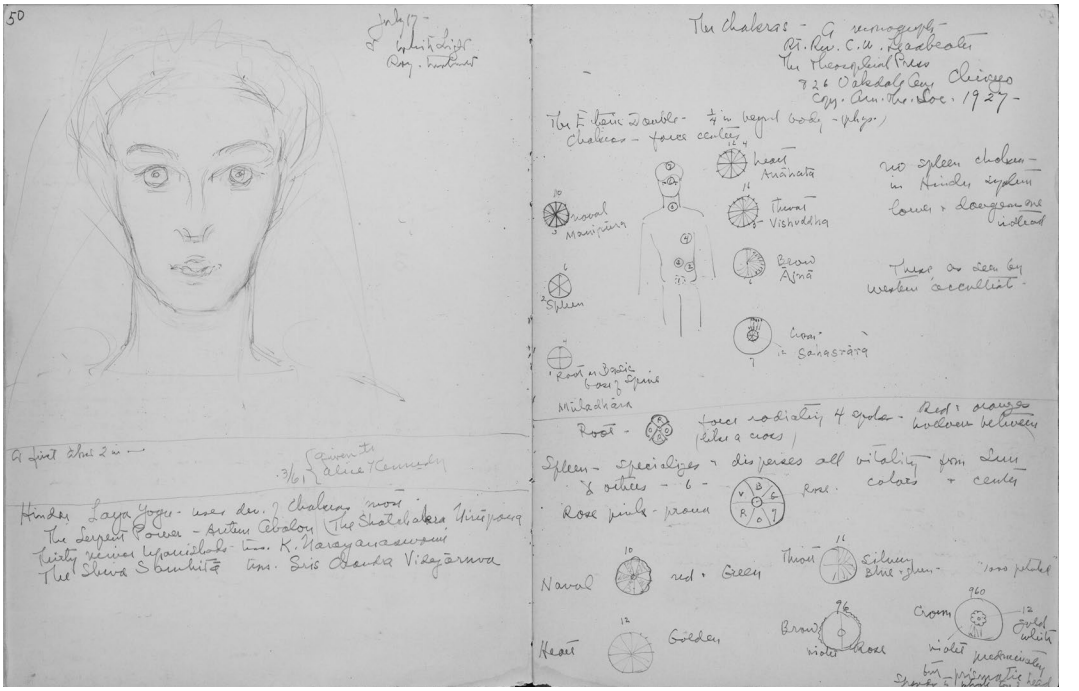


Figure 4.25. Agnes Pelton, sketchbook page of notes and drawings from C. W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1927). Agnes Pelton papers 1885–1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

of Agni Yoga, which included *Infinity I* (1930), *Infinity II* (1931), *Heart* (1932), *Fiery World* (1933–35), *Aum* (1936), and *Brotherhood* (1937).[164]

Pelton paid tribute to occulture mystics in her paintings *Intimation* (1933), a robed male figure with intense, fiery eyes, and *Barna Dilae* (1935, figure 4.26), a serene blue-eyed woman posed against a gold backdrop, dressed in a filmy white wimple with rays emanating from the top of her head. Susan Aberth argues that these "guru-like" figures may be portraits of Nicholas and Helena Roerich; by extension, they suggest Pelton's visual interpretations of Agni Yoga's metaphysical attributes, from its fiery energy to its calming influence.[165] Inspired by a dream of an "exquisite shrine glowing softly," Pelton also painted *The Being: A Transcendental Vision* (1934), which features a deity in lotus pose sitting inside a niche embellished with tiny crown chakras. The figure, she wrote, was "neither man nor woman but both," radiating "living points of light" and projecting "a beneficent vibratory influence."[166] It summarized Pelton's assessment of Theosophy's essentially asexual Higher Self, the perfect state reached at the seventh ray of spiritual evolution.

For Pelton, Agni Yoga was a spiritual conduit to improved health and creativity. "Agni Yoga in early a.m." was a typical entry in her journals. Other entries specified how Agni Yoga guided her art making choices. On January 6, 1935, for example, she wrote: "Do only what fits into the consciousness of Infinity, then you avoid needless efforts that arise from temporary anxieties or ambitions . . . The eye on Infinity straightens the path that is otherwise full of windings & side issues." Referencing Agni Yoga texts, Pelton implored herself



Figure 4.26. Agnes Pelton, *Barna Dilae*, 1935. Oil on canvas, 14⅛ × 13 in. University of California Irvine Institute and Museum for California Art, Irvine, CA; Buck Collection.

to stay focused on Abstractions rather than be diverted by "side issues" like "tourist pictures."[167]

Agni Yoga had a significant following with significant properties, including a twenty-seven-story Art Deco skyscraper at 310 Riverside Drive.[168] Named the "Master" after the Mahatmas who guided Agni Yoga, the building included the Roerich Museum, the Roerich Museum Press, the Master Institute of United Arts, and the Corona Mundi ("crown of the world") International Art Center, where hundreds of Roerich's paintings were displayed alongside the Tibetan art he collected. Thomas Hart Benton, Emil Bisttram, Claude Bragdon, and Richard Neutra were among modern artists and architects invited to lecture at the Master Institute, as were Alice Bailey, Geoffrey Hodson, and Manly Hall, best known for his occult encyclopedia *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (1928). Rudhyar, just beginning to articulate Harmonic Astrology, delivered a lecture series in spring 1930 titled "Four Essential Types of Forms."[169]

The day before the Master opened in 1929, Pelton wrote in her journal: "After finishing *Star Gazer* [an Abstraction featuring a chalice, lotus bud, and a

glowing star] saw empty easel and felt light myself—empty, relieved like an egg shell is empty becoming a completeness in itself with beauty now just a covering for life within. And all through this days work thought of Roerich and his work & Corona Mundi." Shortly thereafter, she sent Jane Comfort a postcard of a "picture by Roerich of a sage and a Deity by a waterfall," a depiction of the Indian mystic who introduced Tantric Buddhism to Tibet.[170] In 1930, Pelton was invited to give a talk on her Abstractions at the Master Institute, where she told her audience: "Each one expresses a state of being, an activity which is becoming something, or leading somewhere, or telling us something. It is not sight alone which is engaged."[171]

Adopting Agni Yoga's dynamic idiom, Pelton used the word "activity" to describe her painting practice. She defined her Abstractions as animated entities—expressing, becoming, leading, telling—engaged in an evolving "state of being." She saw them as *living* pictures: as vibrant images that embodied her spiritual thoughts and experiences, and possibly sparked similar awareness ("telling us") among viewers. Rejecting modern art's commodity fetishism, Pelton aimed to re-enchant her Abstractions with an animistic belief in the "power of images."[172] If she was thrown off-balance or felt "empty" when she finished one and faced a blank canvas, it was because the demands of "completeness," as she put it, were constant and yet, as with all things modern, unending, unresolved, and impossible.

Occulture shaped and directed Pelton's Abstractions but she was, above all, a modern artist. Except for her portraits of Agni Yoga spirit guides, Pelton did not paint religious manifestos. She practiced Agni Yoga's meditative routines and referenced its symbolic tropes in her paintings, but she adapted it—like all the spiritual sources she absorbed—to fit her needs. Doing so was not easy, as she often told Jane. "I have started a lot of new pictures—Abstractions—and they are all so far in the early stages, which always means patience and hard work," she confided in one letter. In another, she quoted from *Agni Yoga II*—"The manifestation of joy in the work is also the manifestation of a special form of psychic energy. Joyous labor results in *success multiplied several times*"—and then wrote, "This joy talk is exasperating," especially "when we are *driving ourselves*, or have personal cause for *sorrow* of some sort."[173] Pelton believed in the benefits of her spiritual seeking, in the creative results of her attention to "psychic energy." But she also recognized the irksome degree of self-consciousness and scrutiny of faith that her Abstractions demanded. Still, she devoted herself to them, a devotion that included searching for the ideal place, or landscape, to paint.

Abstractions

Pelton began painting Abstractions at the Old Hayground Windmill, "a mystical house," she wrote, "reaching into Heaven and radiating from its center" (figure 4.27).[174] A remnant of Long Island's agricultural past, built in 1801 near



Figure 4.27. "Old Hayground Windmill, Watermill, L.I. Now occupied as a studio by Miss Agnes Pelton," ca. 1921. Postcard. Agnes Pelton papers, 1885–1989. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Bridgehampton, the mill was drafty and dilapidated but quiet and remote, a "perfect spot," one reporter wrote, for Pelton "to paint things as they really are—the way they impress the inner self." She continued:

> That's what Miss Pelton loves doing, painting the sound of crackling fire, the picture of peace, as it formed in her own mind, of renunciation, of faith, of sleep. The ideas for her pictures come to her only when she is in a receptive mood, quiet, untroubled. Suddenly, one appears, a perfect mental image. She makes a quick pencil sketch of the outlines, notes down the colors, and later works out the finished creations.[175]

Silence is commended in many religious traditions, and Pelton often mentioned her need for quiet, meditative spaces of "receptive silence." Abstractions titled *The Voice* (1930), *Mother of Silence*, and *Spirals in Silence* (1940) suggest her disciplined communion with, as Blavatsky put it, the spiritual inspiration of "the voice of the silence."[176]



Figure 4.28. Agnes Pelton, *The Ray Serene*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 24½ × 26½ in. Collection of Lynda and Stewart Resnick.

Moving to the windmill in 1921, Pelton quickly shifted to a more spiritually engaged modern art. She first showed her Abstractions in 1922 in the Salons of America, a "No jury, No prizes" group that championed experimental directions in modern art. A reviewer at the *New York Herald* singled out Pelton's new nonobjective style of "geometrical form and modern color" and called her entry, titled *Harmony*, "a sparkling contribution to the show."[177] She followed with the Abstractions *The Ray Serene* (1922–1925, figure 4.28), *The Fountains* (1923–1926), and *Being* (1923–1926, figure 4.14), each sketched between 1922 and 1923. Animated, bold, and colorful, her earliest Abstractions were activated by her grasp of New Thought and Theosophy.

In *The Ray Serene*, Pelton juxtaposed agitated, comblike marks with denser multicolored shapes, fixing a glowing beam in the middle of the canvas to indicate Theosophy's unifying force of divine light. The painting's title directly referenced C. W. Leadbeater's description of Mahatma Morya, "Representative of the First Ray," in *The Masters and the Path* (1925): "He stands with all the unshakable and serene strength of His Ray, playing a great part in that work of guiding men and forming nations."[178] Pelton similarly exercised Theosophical teachings in *The Fountains*, especially the movement's originating metaphysics as divine wisdom siphoned from "long sealed ancient fountains."[179] In the swirling forms of *Being* (figure 4.14) she drew upon New Thought's dictum of spiritual self-realization and Theosophy's concept of spiritual evolu-

tion, of moving toward the Higher Self "at the end of the great cycle of being." Blavatsky's insights were also echoed in Pelton's poem for *Being* which read, in part: "Within the whirl of time . . . The will to be, takes shape."[180]

"Modern art," Pelton wrote in 1928, is "a language rather than a presentation." She added: "The reason for my sharp edges & accurate curves is that these Abst.'s express motion as activity. Blurred masses give off a vibration according to quality of color . . . The forms must be symbolically defined."[181] For the rest of her career, Pelton searched for compositional models to guide her spiritual modernism, adjusting the elements of color, shape, line, value, and texture to "symbolically" convey her metaphysical interests in harmony, balance, and Divine Self. As she relayed to Raymond Jonson in 1934, "My own works are not entirely abstract—except in a few instances, and I really should find another name to present them to the world."[182] She stuck with calling them Abstractions.

"This windmill seems to have become my center for the present," Pelton told Mabel Dodge in 1923, adding, "I love it here, and feel happier & more contented than I have anywhere before."[183] Windmills are symbolic: as instruments that harness essential elements for energy, they resonate as spiritual emblems of transmutation, as vital forces that transform one state into another. Pelton considered the Hayground Windmill an especially alchemical space of personal spiritual growth. But being perennially broke and constantly worrying about money undercut her spiritual well-being. She often depended on friends for support. When Alice Brisbane Thursby bought two of her paintings, she exclaimed, "now I can look forward to several months of undisturbed work—which is simply priceless."[184] She also capitalized on the "tea house craze" that swept interwar America.[185] Mostly operated and frequented by women, tea houses sprang up in old barns and inns that were repurposed as sites of female sociability, creativity, and economic opportunity. During the decade she lived there, Pelton promoted the Hayground Windmill—located just off Montauk Highway, 110 miles from Manhattan—as her gallery, serving tea to summer tourists and prospective art buyers.[186]

She mounted several exhibits in the mill's cramped quarters, juxtaposing her Abstractions with landscapes, still lifes, and portraits, her financial mainstay. Pelton started paintings portraits in Taos, and in 1919 exhibited pastels of Pueblo Indians at the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe.[187] Living on Long Island, she painted portraits of local elites including Samuel Parrish, founder of the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York, and children, such as *Marion Fox at 11 Months* (1925, figure 4.29). She funded her travels to California, Hawaii, and Lebanon during the winters by painting more portraits, including the daughter of Chinese doctors in Honolulu and the children of the president of the American University in Beirut.[188] She exhibited *Portrait of Antonio Luhan* (Mabel Dodge's fourth husband) at the Society of Independent Artists in 1927, and *Portrait of Jane Levington Comfort* in 1930.

Compared with portraits painted by her modern art peers, such as Charles

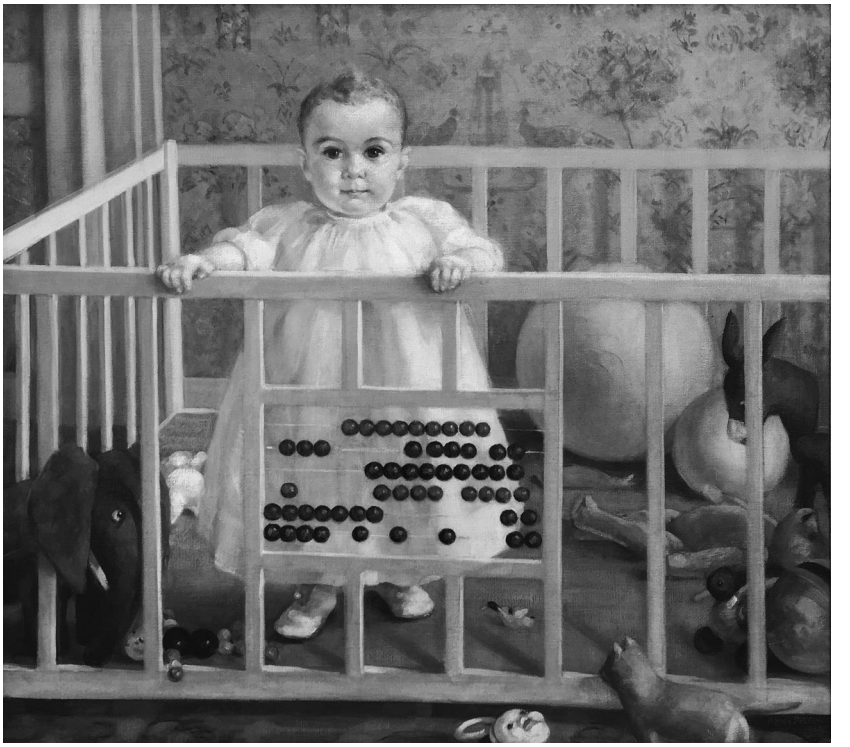
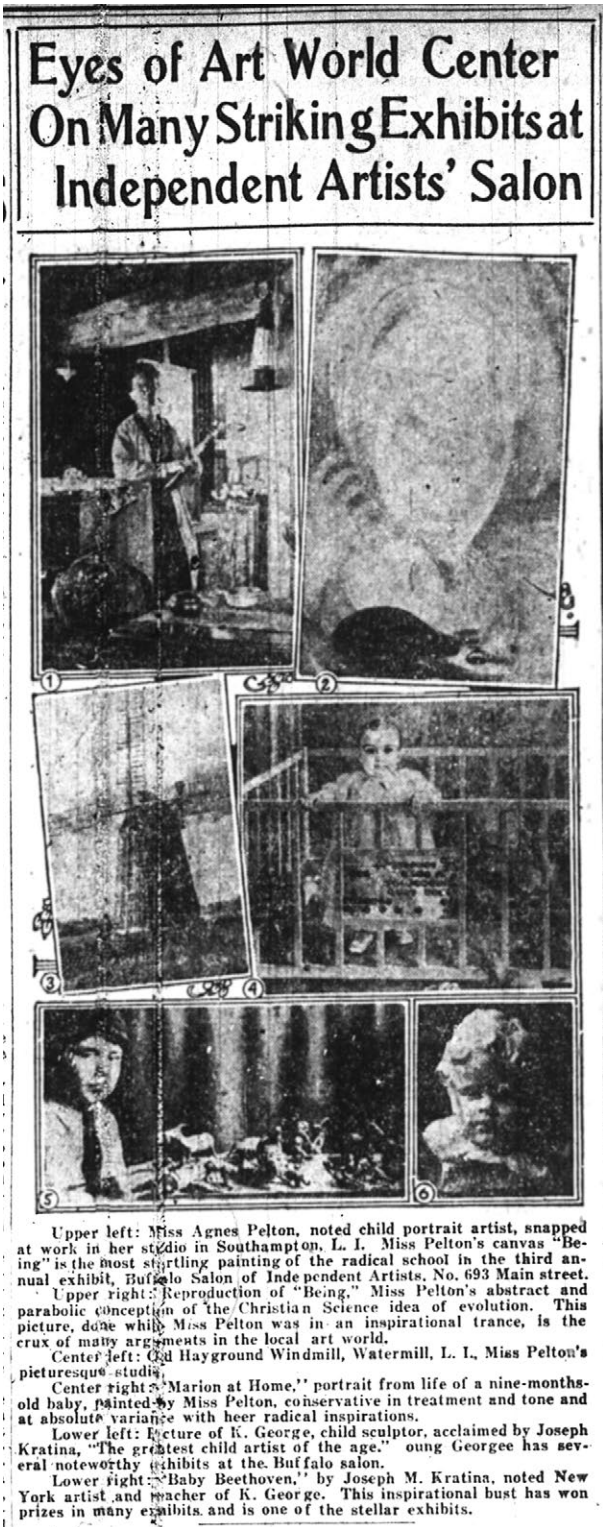


Figure 4.29. Agnes Pelton, *Portrait of Marion Fox at 11 Months*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 34 × 38 in. Collection Don Bacigalupi.

Demuth's "poster portraits" and Katherine Dreier's *Psychological Abstract Portrait of Ted Shawn* (1929), Pelton's portraits were unadventurous and bourgeois. If, one author argues, they "provided tickets to travel the world in the 1920s," Pelton herself found them flat and dull, writing: "My portraits tend to be souls imprisoned in flesh—looking out of the eyes, the flesh is not animate."[189] And she bitterly resented the time they took away from her Abstractions.

Critics also questioned Pelton's artistic "variance." In 1925, she showed a portrait and an Abstraction—*Marion Fox at 11 Months* and *Being*—at the Third Annual Buffalo Salon of Independent Artists (figure 4.30). Reviewers called *Being* "the most talked of canvas on display," in part because Pelton was a "noted child portrait artist" and "it is seldom that a portrait painter of the conservative school indulges in such lapses into ultra-radical treatment." They were especially intrigued by how and why she painted her Abstractions, observing: "Miss Pelton declares these radical paintings absolutely involuntary. She is seized by a sudden desire to paint a certain abstract thing, she says. She cannot rest, the idea possesses her even in the night and she is forced to her canvas until she has completed the work which is done almost entirely in a sort of semi-trance."[190] Roused by the "desire" motivating her Abstractions, critics alluded to their sexual foundations.

Ignoring their salacious remarks, Pelton declared, "I am first an artist and stand for beauty and personality rather than commercial enterprise."[191] She continued to paint and show a mix of canvases but steadily sought exhibition



Eyes of Art World Center On Many Striking Exhibits at Independent Artists' Salon

Upper left: Miss Agnes Pelton, noted child portrait artist, snapped at work in her studio in Southampton, L. I. Miss Pelton's canvas "Being" is the most startling painting of the radical school in the third annual exhibit, Buffalo Salon of Independent Artists, No. 693 Main street.

Upper right: Reproduction of "Being," Miss Pelton's abstract and parabolic conception of the Christian Science idea of evolution. This picture, done while Miss Pelton was in an inspirational trance, is the crux of many arguments in the local art world.

Center left: Old Hayground Windmill, Watermill, L. I., Miss Pelton's picturesque studio.

Center right: "Marion at Home," portrait from life of a nine-months-old baby, painted by Miss Pelton, conservative in treatment and tone and at absolute variance with heer radical inspirations.

Lower left: Picture of K. George, child sculptor, acclaimed by Joseph Kratina, "The greatest child artist of the age." oung Georgee has several noteworthy exhibits at the Buffalo salon.

Lower right: "Baby Beethoven," by Joseph M. Kratina, noted New York artist and teacher of K. George. This inspirational bust has won prizes in many exhibits and is one of the stellar exhibits.

Figure 4.30. "Eyes of Art World Center on Many Striking Exhibits at Independent Artists' Salon," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, November 15, 1925, p. 84.

Courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Buffalo, NY.

venues specifically for her Abstractions. In 1926, she showed *Being* in the annual members exhibition of the Whitney Studio Club, and *The Fountains* at the Brooklyn Museum. Living temporarily in Southern California in 1929, she showed *Being, The Fountains*, *Ecstasy* (1928), and several other Abstractions at Grace Nichols Gallery in Pasadena and at Jake Zeitlin Rare Books in downtown Los Angeles.[192] In November 1929, back in New York, she had a solo show at Montross Gallery titled *Abstractions*. In 1931, Argent Galleries exhibited twenty-one of her abstract canvases.

Pelton's solo shows in New York were widely reviewed, with critics complimenting her "genuinely creative and captivating" style and "exquisite" use of color. "In the trend away from materialism," an *ARTnews* reviewer wrote, "Miss Pelton is a child of the new age. She is harbinger of the future for other painter poets." A backhanded compliment, this review insinuated that Pelton was a creative juvenile (she was fifty) who embraced arcane ideas: in 1931, skepticism about religion, new and old, was a hallmark of American journalism.[193] Henry McBride followed suit, writing: "Agnes Pelton is likely to prove a trifle difficult to the earthbound. Her work suggests esoteric initiations, mysterious rites and incantations in some vague borderland of the conscious that most are not permitted to enter."[194] McBride's ridicule of Pelton's spiritual modernism was similar to his derision of O'Keeffe's religious associations a year earlier. It was also personal. In a 1933 letter to Mabel Dodge praising *Intimate Memories*, the first volume of Dodge's autobiography, McBride remarked that he would have "discarded the unimportant Agnes Pelton completely" from the memoir.[195]

Searching for a more empathetic environment, Pelton moved permanently to California. After ten years, life in the windmill had become untenable: a storm had damaged one of its fantails and "hordes" of sightseers were disrupting the meditative silence that Pelton needed to paint her Abstractions.[196] Her solo shows in Los Angeles in 1929 had been well received and California seemed more receptive to her spiritual modernism.

In 1930, *Time* magazine published a breezy article discussing how "thousands of persons, dissatisfied with the faiths of their fathers" were seeking "new spiritual footholds" in "sun-drenched California, where Nature exhibits herself in mystical opulence." California's mythical image, with its mild climate, seemingly ample land, and geographic location on the Western edge of the continent, at a considerable distance from the nation's Puritan beginnings, had attracted alternative religious movements since the mid-nineteenth century; by the 1890s, Christian Science, Theosophy, and New Thought were established throughout the state.[197] Pelton's spiritual seeking led her to Cathedral City, a small town named after majestic rock formations in the San Jacinto Mountains. It was just a few hours from Point Loma in San Diego, where Katherine Tingley's Theosophical enclave Lomaland was established in 1900.

Over the next thirty years, Pelton produced scores of Abstractions; her last canvas, *Light Center*, was painted shortly before she died in March 1961. She

made valiant efforts to show them, exhibiting at Delphic Studios in 1932 and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in the 1940s. Her work was occasionally noted. In 1939, *Day* (figure 4.13) was lauded at the New York World's Fair: "This small example of imagination caught and put on canvas atones for many walls full of lethargic art. It is beautiful in color, beautiful in composition, beautiful in thought. Besides all this, it points the way for the beholder to do some thinking of his own."[198]

But Pelton slipped into art world obscurity. In his survey text *Understanding Modern Art* (first published in 1936), Leo Katz observed that Pelton was "almost in a class by herself" with a "strictly mystical style." He considered her a neglected American modern: "Although her work has been exhibited in many places, the idealists have completely missed their opportunity to show an active interest."[199] Neither Pelton nor Raymond Jonson were included, for example, in the Whitney's 1935 exhibit *Abstract Painting in America*, an omission that prompted Jonson to organize the TPG.[200] Nor did Pelton's Abstractions sell. "There certainly is very great interest in your work, and I enjoy exhibiting it," Alma Reed told her, but she had "no luck" in selling any of her paintings in the 1932 Delphic Studios show.[201] The San Diego Museum of Art was one of few museums to acquire one of Pelton's Abstractions during her lifetime, when Pelton donated *Primal Wing* in 1934 (figure 4.11). Pelton kept most of them, or gave them to friends, which further isolated her spiritual modernism from art-world attention.

She resorted to "tourist pictures" to stay afloat financially, painting smoke trees and desert landscapes. She worried about the time and energy they demanded and repeatedly chided herself: "Do not let Absts. lapse, most important to the inner rhythm"; "the particular picture not so important as the working on one with rhythmical regularity"; and "To be what I am, I MUST no longer neglect Abst., must not be driven by time & what is passing." In one particularly harsh passage in her journal she wrote, "Disgust with self & literal copying," referencing her "struggle" with realistic landscape painting. She added, "Without Abst. you are neglecting your larger dimension of expression, your personal gift of *this life*. Landscape may be other lives."[202] Desert landscapes hindered her spiritual evolution in "this life."

Agnes Pelton: Spiritual Modern

Meditating, burning incense, chronicling her dreams, practicing "holy reading," studying the stars, and channeling her chakras, Pelton never stopped searching for the spiritual inspirations that shaped and directed her modern art. In 1944, Rudhyar visited her in Cathedral City and told her she was "beginning a new cycle" and should stay "open to new inspiration." In 1950, inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1922), she painted *Lost Music II*, an Abstraction featuring a broken lyre floating in space (figure 4.31).[203]

The story of Orpheus figures prominently in Theosophy as a parable of



Figure 4.31. Agnes Pelton, *Lost Music II*, late 1950. Oil on canvas, 22 × 24⅛ in. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; purchased with funds provided by the Fannie and Alan Leslie Bequest and the American Art Acquisition Fund.

Digital image © 2021 Museum Associates / LACMA. Licensed by Art Resource, NY.

faith and reincarnation. Orpheus, son of the Greek god Apollo and the muse Calliope, enchanted everyone with the music he played on his seven-stringed lyre. When his beloved wife Eurydice died, he charmed the guardians of the underworld to recover her, but lost her a second time, and forever, when he disobeyed—or disbelieved—their terms of transmigration. Inconsolable, Orpheus spent the rest of his life playing mournful music until a band of Maenads, angered by his endless sorrow, ripped him to shreds. Evoking the failure of art detached from belief, Pelton painted Orpheus's lyre as a damaged instrument with disengaged strings: the entire left side of the grill has disappeared, and its strings have snapped. In her sketch for *Lost Music II*, Pelton described Orpheus's lyre "melting away . . . decomposing its material form." She also quoted from Rilke's ninth sonnet: "Only he who has already lifted the lyre among the shades is entitled to render unending praise."[204] Orpheus lost his artistic power to reanimate the world, and lost the love of his life, Pelton suggested, because he lost his faith.

Abstractions like *Lost Music II* embodied Pelton's persistent search for a personally meaningful spiritual modernism. Consistent with her focus on creating a living art, Pelton's Abstractions were always dynamic. She repeatedly tested and revised her painting style, shifting from the sketchy brushwork of early Abstractions such as *The Ray Serene* and *Being* to more refined canvases on which she laboriously applied layers of glazes, creating a luminous, almost

stained-glass effect to approximate her spiritual insights. In 1939, a reviewer remarked that Pelton's Abstractions embodied "a new trend in which color, refined until it ceases to be mere pigment, transcends the purely material and becomes a part of the metaphysical order."[205]

Color was central to Pelton's spiritual modernism, and she admonished herself to "bring to consciousness" its "resonance timbre which lights spirit impulse, and *enriches*, infuses, harmonizes the more objective manifestations." As she noted, "Color remains for you the pure clear direct creative impulse, & awakens it in those who respond to your Abstractions."[206] While her Abstractions were inspired by her particular spiritual seeking, Pelton was also interested in how others responded to their "spirit impulse," and tried to secure their affective conditions. In 1933, for example, she gave *Wells of Jade* to Raymond Jonson, telling him it was one of her "more intimate pictures." When Jonson said he wanted to frame the painting under glass, Pelton protested, saying that her Abstractions "can't radiate through glass" and would "cease to function," becoming "too remote."[207] Their color "consciousness" would be obstructed.

She had the same reservations about reproducing her Abstractions, worried that copies of her paintings would diminish their spiritual potency. In 1942, clinical psychiatrist Fritz Künkel asked Pelton for color reproductions of her paintings for patient therapy and "dream analysis." Pelton did not comply, noting later, "Thought of practical use of Abstractions—fear of cheapening or popularizing them." As Walter Benjamin asserted in 1935, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space."[208]

Pelton yearned to make a spiritual modernism of "presence." Her Abstractions corresponded to the intensity of her faith, and to her belief that dynamic and colorful paintings like hers were capable of activating similarly spiritual responses in viewers. In mid-century America, however, Pelton's spiritualized aesthetic was out of sync with modern art's primary status as a market-driven commodity. Despite the art world's disinterest, Pelton never stopped positioning herself, her beliefs, and her spiritually attuned abstract paintings against what she perceived as the hollow expressions of mainstream religious cultures.

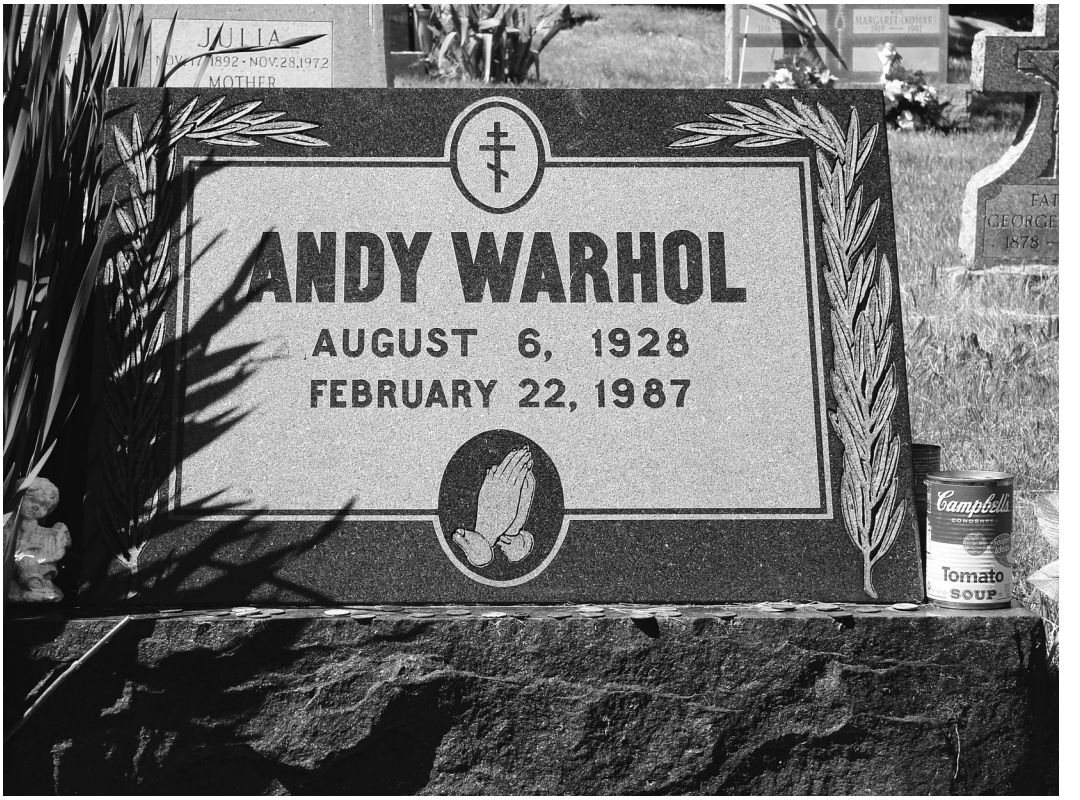
In January 1960, for example, a year before she died, Pelton painted *The Clarion Call*, a dynamic Abstraction she called "light filled." In her notes, she pointedly contrasted her work with "the limp efforts of belief" expounded by Oral Roberts, a popular Christian televangelist who is considered the founding father of the "prosperity gospel," a doctrine that equates Christian faith with physical well-being and financial wealth.[209] At Pelton's funeral, held at the Cathedral City Community Church in March 1961, her friends placed "one of her most spiritual Abstractions up beside the pulpit" (*The Blest*, painted in 1941). It was, said one, "an utterly RIGHT service, in keeping with Agnes herself." Pelton's ashes were scattered in the San Jacinto Mountains. Her Abstractions were scattered among local friends and flea markets.[210]

Today, Pelton's Abstractions are coveted examples of modern American art. Their prices have skyrocketed and museums around the country scramble to show them. In 2017, *Ahmi in Egypt* (1931) and *Sea Change* (1931) were included in the Whitney Museum's seventh floor survey of modern American art—and were copied in "eye-catching socks" available for purchase in the gift shop.[211] Agnes Pelton would no doubt be delighted and dismayed by this response: gratified that her Abstractions captivate and enchant, but disappointed that material interests still trump the transcendent quest of her spiritual modernism.

5

Andy Warhol & Catholicism

Pop Art's "Spiritual Side"


JULIA
MOTHER
ANDY WARHOL
AUGUST 6, 1928
FEBRUARY 22, 1987
Campbell's
Tomato
SOUP

In his eulogy for Andy Warhol, delivered at St. Patrick's Cathedral on April 1, 1987, John Richardson stressed the Pop artist's "spiritual side," his upbringing in a "fervently Catholic family," and his faith as an adult.[1] Warhol was fifty-eight years old when he unexpectedly died following gallbladder surgery. His family held a private funeral in Pittsburgh at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, which included a Divine Liturgy (mass) in the Slavonic plainchant unique to their Carpatho-Rusyn ethnic religious traditions. He was buried near his parents, Julia and Andrej Warhola, in St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. His tombstone, outfitted with a live streaming "grave cam," is often decorated with Campbell's Soup cans, Coca-Cola bottles, Brillo boxes, Mylar balloons, crucifixes, rosaries, flowers, pictures, and notes left by visitors (figure 5.1).

A "glittering New York crowd" paid tribute at Warhol's memorial mass at St. Patrick's, held on April Fool's Day.[2] Several thousand invited guests, including longtime friends, fashion designers, socialites, Hollywood A-listers, rock-and-roll royalty, and blue-chip artists attended the service, which featured musical preludes by Mozart, Messiaen, and Ravel, a tribute from Yoko Ono, a reading from the Book of Wisdom by Warhol "superstar" Brigid Berlin, and holy communion. The mass card reproduced Warhol's 1985 painting *Raphael Madonna—$6.99* (figure 5.2), an adaptation of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1513–1514) showing Mary and the Christ Child flanked by Saint Sixtus and Saint Barbara—and a giant red price tag reading "$6.99." The memorial "was a triumph of the Catholics," recalled Warhol's onetime lover, poet John Giorno. "It was a heavenly display of worldly power."[3]

Richardson implied that Warhol hid his faith, suppressing a "secret piety" known only to his family and closest friends. Yet Warhol regularly attended church and prayed. He believed in God, kept a crucifix and a well-thumbed book of prayers by his bedside, and surrounded himself with other Catholics.[4] "Almost everyone who remained relevant in Andy's life was Catholic," one memoirist recalls, adding: "Being brought up Catholic gives a sense of hierarchical order, discipline and faith. Faith, when embraced, anchors the creative . . . the romantically rich and multi-layered religion that forgives all—lest we forget!—allows unconventional traditionalists."[5] Although a sexually active gay man, which the Catholic Church condemns as "intrinsically disordered," Warhol was a lifelong Catholic.[6] Catholic ideas, subjects, and practices were an integral part of his art, from the commercial work he produced in the 1950s to the Pop screen prints he began making in the early 1960s. Far from hiding his faith, Warhol repeatedly turned to it for creative inspiration.

Figure 5.1. (*facing*) Andy Warhol gravesite, St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery, Bethel Park, PA, 2021.

Photograph: Allie Caulfield, Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-2.0.



Figure 5.2. Andy Warhol, *Raphael Madonna—$6.99*, 1985. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 13 ft., ¼ in. × 9 ft., 8 in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.358.

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He also questioned it: testing the "deposit of faith."[7] Warhol's faith was not, in other words, blind.

Andy Warhola was born in Pittsburgh in 1928, the youngest son in a working-class family of Eastern Slav and Byzantine Catholic immigrants.[8] His art interests were nurtured at home, at public school, and at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (today, Carnegie Mellon University) where he studied pictorial design. After graduating in 1949, Warhol moved to New York (with college classmate Philip Pearlstein) to work in commercial art. He landed major commissions almost immediately and dropped the "a" from his last name when his first credited illustration was published in *Glamour* magazine.[9]

Described by biographers as shy and self-conscious, insecure about a phys-

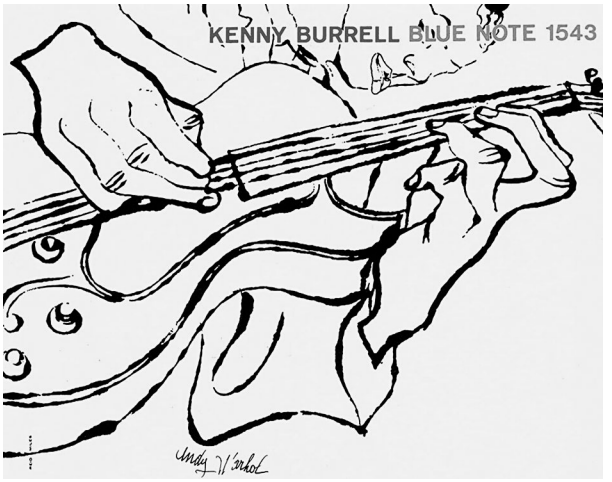


Figure 5.3. Andy Warhol, record cover design for *Kenny Burrell, Vol. 2*, 1956, Blue Note Records, BLP 1543. Collection of the author.

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ical appearance marked by blotchy skin and male-pattern baldness, Warhol was shrewd about mainstream society, especially the WASP values of the advertising industry clustered on Madison Avenue. "He understands the machinery of myth-making," art critic Barbara Rose observed in 1971.[10] Warhol capitalized on his insights about inclusion, authority, and social and cultural hierarchy throughout his career. By the mid-1950s, he was one of the best-paid artists in advertising, known for working quickly, meeting deadlines, and a "blotted line" style of drawing or tracing images in wet ink and then reprinting them on additional sheets of paper. Hired to illustrate articles in *Glamour*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Vogue*, album covers for Blue Note, Prestige, and RCA Victor (figure 5.3), Christmas cards for Tiffany and Company, and newspaper ads for I. Miller Shoes, Warhol was prolific. He was also respected, winning awards from the Art Directors Club, commercial art's foremost professional organization.[11] And he had media presence. In 1957, his designs for "imaginary footwear" painted in gold leaf and "created to symbolize a well-known personality," like Julie Andrews, appeared in a two-page spread in *Life* titled "Crazy Golden Slippers" (figure 5.4).[12]

Grossing upward of $70,000 a year (equivalent to more than $600,000 today), Warhol was wealthy.[13] In 1957, he formed Andy Warhol Enterprises, Inc. to manage his employees (he began hiring assistants in 1955 to accommodate multiple commissions), consolidate his diverse creative ventures (which included publishing and filmmaking), and protect himself from liability. He "embarked on a collecting odyssey" and bought everything from American folk art and Art Deco furniture to designer jewelry, vintage Fiesta ware, Navajo textiles, cookie jars, and wristwatches.[14] He attended gallery and museum openings, familiarized himself with art world movers and shakers, and collected prints by Picasso, Miró, and Jasper Johns, and paintings by Grace Hartigan, Yves Klein, Larry Rivers, Frank Stella, and Pavel Tchelitchew. In 1960, he moved into a five-story townhouse on Manhattan's Upper East Side. His

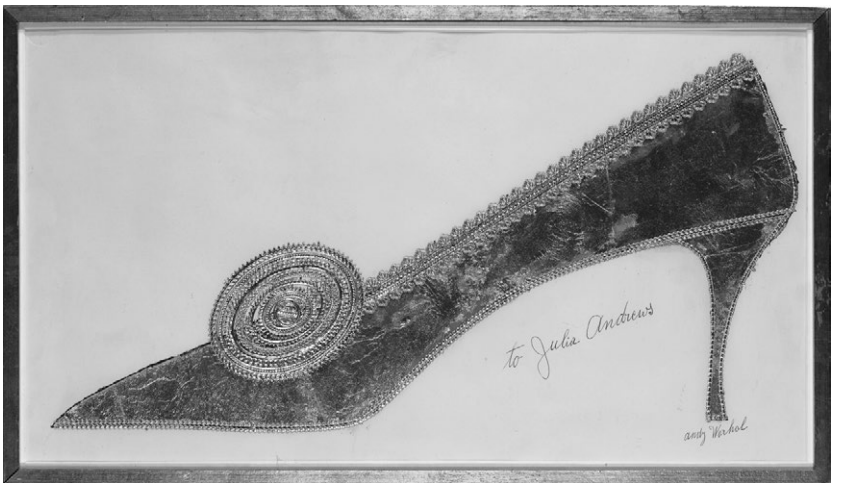


Figure 5.4. Andy Warhol, *Golden Shoe (Shoe for Julie Andrews)*, 1956. Foil collage and ink on paper, 13 × 23 in. Private collection.

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mother, who had lived with him since 1952 (his father died in 1942), built a "nice little altar" in the basement where they prayed together before he went to work.[15]

Warhol's commercial art success anchored fine-art ambitions. His first solo show, at the Hugo Gallery in 1952, featured drawings inspired by the short stories of Truman Capote, whom he idolized. He exhibited at several small New York galleries in the 1950s, including the Loft in 1954 and the Bodley in 1956, where he showed erotic sketches of young men. But Warhol yearned for attention from elite art world patrons. Shifting to paintings of soup cans and soda bottles, he aligned himself with the new genre of Pop, showing his work in July 1962 at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles and earning his first review in *Artforum*.[16] Shifting to screen printing, he made grid-like canvases of repeated images of money, such as *200 One Dollar Bills* (1962), and similarly serialized portraits of movie stars like Warren Beatty and Marilyn Monroe. In November 1962, he had his first Pop art exhibit in New York at Eleanor Ward's Stable Gallery.

In 1962, Warhol also began his *Death and Disaster* series: paintings based on gruesome images appropriated from mass media (tabloids, wire services, *Life* magazine) of car crashes, suicides, atomic-bomb explosions, electric chairs, burn victims, food poisoning victims, and civil-rights activists being attacked by police dogs. Talking with critic Gene Swenson in 1963 about exhibiting his "death pictures" at the Galerie Sonnabend, France's leading venue for contemporary American art, Warhol said he thought "the show in Paris should be called maybe 'Death in America.'"[17] In 1964, Warhol had his first solo exhibit at the Leo Castelli Gallery, among New York's most prestigious modern art showcases. And he appeared on the cover of *Artforum*, holding a flower in a photograph by Dennis Hopper that was repeated six times, imitating his signature serial style.[18]

By the late 1960s, Warhol was a fixture in both modern American art and

celebrity culture, known as much for the Screen Tests and underground films shot at the Factory, his New York studio, for his management of the rock group Velvet Underground, and for clever quips like "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes," as he was for manufacturing an identifiable style of Pop art. Over the next two decades, mining a huge lode of sources, subjects, media, and techniques, Warhol continued to produce iconic images specific to twentieth-century America: food, faces, guns, skulls, crosses, dollar signs. He also nourished an "insatiable appetite for fame" and "expended tremendous energy in remaining topical, a name in the news." In 1969, he founded *Interview* magazine, a glitzy, gossipy monthly focused on fashion and celebrity. In the 1970s, he became "court painter" to the rich and famous, revitalizing the genre of portraiture and chronicling neoliberal America's "enchantment" with capitalism.[19] In the mid-1980s, he produced the *Last Supper* series, enormous canvases based on Leonardo's iconic depiction of the first Eucharist.

From his choice of subjects to his methods of working, Warhol's religious beliefs and practices infused his art. His understanding of iconicity originated in the Byzantine Catholic church he attended in Pittsburgh, where an eye-catching iconostasis—a screen of icons rising from the floor to the ceiling, broken only by a set of Royal Doors in the center—separated the altar from the nave. His focus on materiality drew on Catholicism's sacramental vision, on seeing God in all things. His assessment of materiality was informed by Catholicism's "analogical imagination," on metaphoric ways of thinking about the presence of God.[20] His focus on duplication can be traced to practices of ritualized repetition in Byzantine Rite worship, including the repetition of vowels and syllables in the translation of liturgical texts. Catholic teachings on the constancy of death, and death as the moment of divine reckoning, informed his *Death and Disaster* series. His work ethic upheld core Catholic values regarding the duty of labor. Yet Warhol's art also challenged his religion's sexual repression and intolerance, imagining a more gracious, tolerant, and charitable Catholicism in modern America.

Critics, curators, and collectors largely disregarded Warhol's religious faith and sexual identity, although both were "in plain view, right on the surface of his canvases."[21] This chapter traces the origins of Warhol's religious beliefs and their revelation in his style of spiritual modernism. It further considers how Warhol projected his dissent from Catholic dogma, and why his religious consciousness was ignored in the history of twentieth-century modern American art.

Byzantine Catholicism

Warhol was raised in the Byzantine Catholic Church, a branch that developed with Christian expansion in the Middle East and Asia and was centered in Constantinople (now Istanbul). If a majority of American Catholics today identify



Figure 5.5. St. John Chrysostom, a church of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, PA, 1957.

with the Western or Latin Rite, early Catholic evangelism generated many "other" rites in the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire, including Alexandrian, Armenian, and Maronite.[22] Like them, the Byzantine Catholic Church is in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church; following the East-West schism of 1054, it sided with the Pope, not the Orthodox Church. Formerly called Greek Catholic because of its non-Latin origins, the Byzantine Catholic Church is one of twenty-three Eastern Rite churches, each headed by its own patriarch (archbishop) and governed by its own set of church laws. Its liturgy and theology vary from Roman Catholicism, comprising different ecclesiastic languages, distinctive prayers, rituals, sacred art, and sacred music, and alternative understandings of the trinity including an emphasis on Christ's divinity.

In Pittsburgh, the Warhola family attended St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church (figure 5.5). Named for a fourth-century bishop in Constantinople renowned for his preaching—hence the epithet "Chrysostom," meaning "golden tongue"—their church was established in 1910 by Carpatho-Rusyn (also called Ruthenian) immigrants. Eastern Slav descendants, the Rusyn originally inhabited the Carpathian Rus, a hardscrabble region in Central Europe just south of the Carpathian Mountains, now divided between Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Wars rendered the Rusyn stateless and many left for the US: Warhol's father immigrated from the village of Miková in 1912, and his mother followed six years later.[23] Working in Pennsylvania coal mines and steel mills, Rusyn maintained their ethnic identity, East Slavic language, Cyrillic alphabet, and Byzantine Catholic faith.

By the 1920s, Byzantine Catholics had organized more than 150 "new im-

migrant" parishes in the United States.[24] There were conflicts, both inside and outside the church. With its sizable immigrant and working-class base, Catholicism was the single largest religious denomination in the US. But anti-Catholicism was pervasive. Many Protestant Americans viewed Catholics as "superstitious and idolatrous," parochial and insular.[25] Catholic communalism was deemed separatist and anti-American. Their supposed opposition to scientific inquiry made them seem anti-modern; their loyalty to the Pope made them dubious democratic citizens. Inside the church, long-standing Roman Catholic opposition to the Byzantine Rite's veneration of icons, which had erupted in iconoclasm in the eighth century, endured in modern times. Likewise, Rome objected to Eastern Catholic approval of married clergy. After 1929, when the Vatican imposed mandatory celibacy for all Catholic priests in North America, including Eastern Rite, thousands of Rusyn immigrants left Byzantine Catholicism for the Orthodox Church.[26] The Warhola family stayed with St. John Chrysostom.

Inheriting the religious traditions of the Christian East and deeply attuned to the Rusyn ethnicity of its parishioners, the church that Warhol grew up in was Catholic but different—or as he noted in his diary, "peculiar."[27] A "discourse of Catholic difference and even of superiority" was cultivated by the Catholic Church as a means of creating community among Americans considered religious outsiders in a largely WASP nation. Consequently, many Catholics shared a paradoxical sensibility of "separatist integration," emulating Protestant norms of success, respectability, and self-sufficiency but, by sustaining distinctive religious beliefs and traditions, also preserving their difference from Protestant America.[28] For Warhol, this difference was compounded by the difference of being raised Byzantine Catholic.

Evoking "heaven on earth," Byzantine Catholic churches are richly decorated with elaborate icon screens featuring images of Christ, Mary, and various saints. Sanctuaries face east, and both the priest and congregation stand and pray in that direction. Incense, used in Eastern Rite churches since the fourth century, is burned four to five times per ceremony to purify the sanctuary; its fragrant smoke signals the prayers of the faithful rising to heaven. Music—no organs or musical instruments are used in the Byzantine Catholic Church—consists of plainchant (*Prostopinije* in Rusyn) sung by the entire congregation, led by a cantor. The Divine Liturgy features Slavonic and English texts sung *a cappella*; psalms and refrains, or short chants, are specific to certain holy days. Communion is celebrated with leavened bread, symbolizing the risen Christ, which is dipped into a chalice of wine and administered with a spoon. Sensually resplendent with smells, sounds, and sacred pictures, the Byzantine Catholic Church is an especially affective devotional space.

It is also a highly performative space, charged with repetitive ritual. Celebrants typically enter the church by walking up the central aisle to a small table holding an icon, which they venerate with a kiss after bowing and making the sign of the cross. Conforming to Durkheimian views on the constitutive role of

ritual in religious belief, Byzantine Catholic liturgies are dynamic: worship is not a duty to discharge while sitting in a pew but an engaged physical activity involving multiple bows and even prostrations.[29] Worshippers stand, not sit, during much of the service. They repeatedly make the sign of the cross from right to left: a different way of professing faith from Roman Catholics and a difference, Warhol noted in his diaries, that Roman Catholics typically derided as "the wrong way."[30]

Byzantine Catholic worshippers also repeatedly recite the short, formulaic Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Ritualized repetition, in fact, is intrinsic in the Byzantine Catholic liturgy, where linguistic differences between texts require priests and congregants to repeat certain vowels and syllables—sometimes as many as thirty-two times. "Byzantine liturgy is replete with its repetitions," observes one celebrant, "usually in groups of three, both because love demands repetition . . . and because threefold repetition is of course a mnemonic device bearing a Trinitarian imprint."[31] In the 1960s, Vatican II reforms would purge "useless repetition" from the Roman Catholic Mass. But Byzantine Catholicism sustained its use of repetitive ritual, recognizing the significance of shared and recurring performance in how worshippers perceive and are persuaded by the Divine Liturgy.

Distinctive Catholic beliefs include the infallibility of the Pope, the doctrine of the Trinity (one God who exists as three distinct and divine persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), seven sacraments (sacred rites including baptism, confirmation, and marriage), veneration of the Virgin Mary, the invocation of saints, the concept of purgatory, and an understanding of salvation through both faith and good works, such as charity. The Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ are considered historical events, not symbols. Catholicism's revelatory authority extends from the Incarnation, the belief that God became flesh as Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice on the cross redeemed humanity from sin and paved the way for their salvation. Catholic history, writes Robert Orsi, "pivots around the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, of the holy in the material, of the supernatural in the natural."[32] Following the doctrine of transubstantiation, Catholics eat and drink consecrated substances—bread and wine—that they believe are literally changed into the body, blood, and divinity of Christ. In the Catholic imagination "the sacred is mediated by the physical," and material things and places may be "imbued with [the] spirit" of "God's graceful presence."[33]

Byzantine Catholics share these core beliefs but diverge from more specifically Roman Catholic practices. Three of the sacraments (baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist) may be administered at the same time, and both children and adults may receive communion during the Divine Liturgy. Deviating from Aristotelian or rational explanations of religious belief, Byzantine Catholic theology emphasizes the mystery of faith. Knowledge of God is considered beyond human understanding: God's immanence is incomprehensible.

The sacraments are called "sacred mysteries," and worship centers on the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist and the supernatural experiences of Christ's resurrection.[34]

Visual and material cultures animate these mysteries; a theology of divine beauty, revealed in highly sensual liturgies, lavishly decorated churches, and gilt-encrusted icons is central to the experience of faith in Byzantine Catholicism. Likewise, Byzantine Catholic churches share ties to Hesychasm, a mystical practice of contemplative, repetitive prayer and chanting that originated among fourteenth-century monks at Mount Athos, in northeastern Greece. Centering on *penthos*, a form of repentant but joyful sorrow, Hesychasm produced the Jesus Prayer, one of many petitions to mercy and forgiveness that Byzantine Catholic faithful frequently invoke during the Divine Liturgy, and throughout their daily lives.

Christ is revered as a divine figure in Byzantine Catholicism, typically represented in icons as Christ Panocrator, or all-powerful. Mariology, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, is less pronounced, although icons of Mary Theotokos (God-Bearer) occupy central positions on church iconostases. Byzantine Catholicism also diverges on the concept of purgatory, the liminal space between heaven and hell. Roman Catholics believe that defiled souls must expel their sins in purgatory to become pure enough for heaven, and that prayers by the living are efficacious for this transformation. Byzantine Catholics, in contrast, believe that judgment occurs immediately after death and that "death ends once and for all the time of testing and merit for each person."[35] Although believers may pray for the dead, the Byzantine Catholic Church places more emphasis on salvation through charity and goodwill. Gaining access to heaven depends on meeting the needs of the living.

Andy Warhol was religious. He regularly prayed at home with his mother and attended parishes in Manhattan, sometimes several times a week. "Went to church" and "went to Mass" were frequent diary entries. In the 1950s, he accompanied his mother to St. Mary's Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite, a parish in the East Village. "At Easter time," his brother John Warhola recalled, they typically brought "a basket of food to be blessed," a Byzantine Catholic custom celebrating the end of Lent. When they moved to the Upper East Side, Warhol frequented the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, a Roman Catholic parish. "We'd see him here every week. Always in the same pew. He would engage in private prayer," one priest recalled.[36] On holidays like Thanksgiving, Warhol served church-sponsored meals to the homeless. Sometimes he took jars to the church "to get holy water," which he then placed around his house. In the 1980s, he took up crystal healing, although he worried that this "might be somehow against Christ." When friends told him about their problems, he habitually remarked: "Go to church and pray to God."[37]

When Warhol was growing up and after Vatican II, the Byzantine Catholic Church frequently debated its conformity or deviance from Rome. Worries about the erosion of its uniquely Eastern Catholic consciousness, or the effects

of creeping "Latinization," exacerbated questions of religious legitimacy.[38] Various rituals and practices, including the veneration of icons, helped affirm a distinctively Byzantine Catholic identity—and were a major inspiration for the Pop art style Warhol developed in the early 1960s.

Icons and Pop

Icons, images of Christ and other holy figures, are surfaces that bear the imprint of the divine. Usually depicting stiff, flattened figures suspended against gold or silver backgrounds, icons are highly stylized and refined. Painted with costly pigments and often inlaid with precious metals and jewels, icons are not "realistic" as per Western or Renaissance ideals of visual representation. Nor are they instructional aids used to tell Bible stories. Rather, icons are the focus of a complex spiritual discipline intended to absorb beholders in their spiritual threshold. For believers, icons are spiritual sites "of primary importance for the imaginary encounter with the holy."[39] Access is channeled through interaction: icons are inherently performative and participatory. Believers do not pray to or worship icons—that would be idolatrous—but pray through them to the spiritual mysteries they embody. Their meaning unfolds through ritualized veneration: beholders bow to them, kiss them, and touch them to activate and experience their metaphysical power.[40]

Warhol was a congregant at St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church from the time he was born until he moved to Manhattan at age twenty. He was certainly aware of the look and purpose of Eastern Catholic icons, especially since he and his mother sometimes attended four services in a single weekend.[41] The ornate, brightly colored iconostasis in his family's church presented the "Heavenly Court" in hierarchical order, from large paintings of Christ Pantocrator and Mary Theotokos on the bottom row to smaller icons of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and other saints above. An icon of the Last Supper was prominently displayed on the third row above the Royal Doors. The conspicuous use of gold symbolized the light of God. Carved in elaborate latticework, St. John Chrysostom's iconostasis offered congregants partial peeks of the sanctuary; they only saw the altar when the Royal Doors were opened during the Divine Liturgy. Located on the threshold between earthly and spiritual realms, the church's icon screen mediated the "visible and the invisible," blocking ordinary sight and redirecting the gaze of beholders to the sacred mysteries beyond.[42]

Like other Byzantine Catholic churches, St. John Chrysostom did not display statues or Stations of the Cross but a "victory of faith in icons" symbolizing the Eastern Rite's triumph over iconoclasm.[43] During the Byzantine Empire, icons were produced in large numbers in church-sanctioned workshops, where painters followed pattern books and copied prototypes. The visual products of a monastic collective, icons followed Byzantine Catholic canon. Unlike Western aesthetic concepts of pictorial naturalism, linear perspective,

innovation, and individual style, Byzantine icons emulated "venerated 'originals.'"[44] Content and composition were preordained, from frontal or three-quarter views and color symbolism (gold signifying divine light, purple for imperial figures), to strict rules regarding the depiction of clothing, hand gestures, and gaze. Icons were usually varnished with linseed oil and amber to produce a glowing, radiant surface. Some details, such as halos, were inlaid with thin sheets of silver or gold.

The spiritual authority of a devotional painting depends on its reception: if viewers do not respond as devotees, with veneration, the icon "cannot act as a sacrament."[45] Icons only become iconic, in other words, through the spiritual encounters—visual, physical, and emotional—of believers. Painted to activate the sacred surrounds of the Byzantine Catholic Church and the spiritual absorption of celebrants, icons were also commonly displayed in homes and on the body. Julia Warhola, for one, wore small pictures of icons, probably cut from Catholic prayer cards, pinned to her slip.[46]

Warhol's "golden slipper" drawings from the mid-1950s, each depicting a shoe detailed in gold paint and symbolizing a postwar personality, suggest his early attention to the look or visual vocabulary of icons. This attention became more obvious in the Pop portraits he began making in 1962, such as *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (figure 5.6). Warhol painted twenty-three portraits of the Hollywood actress shortly after she committed suicide on August 5, a day before his thirty-fourth birthday.[47] Like Joseph Cornell, who made the box construction *Custodian—M.M.* (figure 2.19) as a spiritual correction to Monroe's media misrepresentation, Warhol was moved by her death and reacted by making art that corresponded to his religious beliefs and, in particular, to his faith's veneration of icons.

Each portrait featured the same image, a headshot of Monroe used as a publicity still for the 1953 movie *Niagara*. Following Duchamp, Warhol relied on ready-made images. He enlarged and cropped his photo source, transferred it to a screen, used a squeegee to spread different inks that imprinted on to the canvas or paper, and then hand-painted select features (the lips and eyes, for example) in quirky acrylic colors. Rather than directly copying sources, he repeated, blurred, and destabilized them, intentionally "slipping" their register to create a more dynamic "jump effect." Mistakes, accidents, and "chance methods" were a basic "part of the art," Factory assistant Gerard Malanga recalled.[48]

For Warhol, mistakes were less coincidental than deliberate. He valued mistakes on creative terms, as visible signs of the artist's hand. Mistakes also showed the undeniable presence of difference, or diversity. In Catholicism, mistakes are considered the product of human ignorance; to err is human, only God (and the Pope) are infallible. Mistakes are expected and, to a degree, encouraged: deducing their causes is a means of learning—and profiting—from one's actions. Mistakes are not, in other words, falsehoods to be denied or prevented but signs and practices of human will.



Figure 5.6. Andy Warhol, *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, 1962. Silkscreen ink on synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 6 ft., 11¼ in. × 57 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; gift of Philip Johnson, 316.1962.

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Jennifer Sichel traces how Warhol's conversation with Gene Swenson in 1963 centered on the queer nature of his Pop art, content that was expunged when the interview was originally published in *ARTnews*. Warhol 's oft-quoted comment "everybody should be a machine," for example, was specifically connected to his "fantasy" of a world free of "discrimination" and open, Jonathan Flatley speculates, to "new, queer forms of emotional attachment and affiliation."[49] Predicated on Catholic understandings of the profitability of human error, Warhol's aesthetic embrace of mistakes was an intentional and affective declaration of difference, a provocative appeal to new ways of looking, and feeling.

However different, Warhol's Pop subjects were always identifiable. Viewers sometimes had to look closely to grasp their distinctions, but they were never hidden or denied. *Marilyn Diptych* (1962), a sizable six-by-nine-foot painting, features a grid of fifty images repeated on two large silver canvases, half in loud colors and half in shades of gray. *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, also monumentally scaled at seven feet tall, consists of a single inked headshot fixed in a vast field of gold-colored paint. *Marilyn Monroe's Lips*, another oversize, two-paneled canvas, features 168 identical yet different views of "just" her fulsome



Figure 5.7. Andy Warhol, *Round Marilyn (Gold Marilyn)*, 1962. Two tondi, acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas, 17 51/64 in. diameter per canvas. Froehlich Collection, Stuttgart, Germany.

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Figure 5.8. Andy Warhol, *Round Marilyn (Gold Marilyn)*, 1962. Two tondi on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 2018.

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mouth, which—however disembodied—is clearly hers. *Round Marilyn* (1962), a smaller two-part tondo, features two gold-primed canvases: one highlighting Monroe's face and the other left blank (figures 5.7 and 5.8).

Flat, frontal, and radiant, each based on the same predetermined picture, Warhol's Pop portraits looked like Byzantine Catholic icons. But Warhol was not an icon painter, and his Pop portraits of stars like Marilyn Monroe were not intended as secular age icons. He did not glamorize his subjects according to conventional media and social norms. He did not paint Monroe as a tragic victim scarred by traumatic experiences. His "reworking[s] of Byzantine sacramental aesthetics" were not "eucharistic parodies."[50] Rather, Warhol appropriated Byzantine Catholicism's iconic sensibility, and expounded on the tenets of his religious beliefs, to critique the intersections of art, faith, and commerce in modern America.

Catholic, queer, and a commercial artist, Warhol was very much a modern-

art outsider in the early 1960s. His inclusion in Pop gave him an art world entrée. But he never abandoned the insights about mainstream culture and society that being different afforded him, and he made those insights central in his Pop art. Describing a road trip to California in 1963, and eating at a truck stop where "*everybody* was staring" at him and his companions, Warhol recounted both Pop's cultural omnipresence and its transformative capacity:

> The farther west we drove, the more Pop everything looked on the highways. Suddenly we all felt like insiders because even though Pop was everywhere—that was the thing about it, most people still took it for granted, whereas we were dazzled by it—to us, it was the new Art. Once you 'got' Pop, you could never see a sign the same way again. And once you thought Pop, you could never see America the same way again.[51]

Pop allowed Warhol to be a cultural insider in America and to also "out" himself as a modern American artist who saw, felt, and experienced things differently.[52] He called attention to these differences in Pop pictures featuring multiple views of familiar subjects, and he called on viewers of his paintings to look at these subjects differently, to "never see America the same way again."

As a member of America's Pop art pantheon, Warhol shared the concerns of Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Tom Wesselmann regarding the visibility and authority of mass-produced commodities, from soup cans to movie stars. As a practicing Catholic, he considered these concerns differently. Warhol's productivity, for example, and his ideas about labor, stemmed from Catholic understandings of work as "a form of continuing participation in God's creation."[53] Catholic Church teachings define work as a duty and a right, a mandate of dominion, a means of exercising and fulfilling human potential. Warhol was a workaholic. He called himself a "Business Artist" and organized the Factory around practices of repetition, efficiency, and mass production seemingly lifted from Frederick Taylor's scientific-management playbook. "It wasn't called the Factory for nothing," Velvet Underground cofounder John Cale recalled. "It was where the assembly line for the silkscreens happened."[54]

Yet Warhol's studio—especially its rendition from 1963 to 1967 as the "Silver Factory" on East 47th Street—was also an alternative site of Catholic communalism, a "safe" space where outsiders with shared beliefs came together and worked together. "Any description of Warhol's production," Rainer Crone remarked in 1970, "would be incomplete if it did not take collective work into account."[55] At the Factory, that collective work was largely Catholic. Warhol "superstar" Viva, a devout Roman Catholic who "seriously considered becoming a nun" until Bishop Fulton Sheen "convinced her" otherwise and she pursued a career in underground films, described the Factory as "a way for a group of Catholics to purge themselves of Catholic repression."[56] Inside the Factory, Douglas Crimp observed:

> A whole motley crew of artists, actors, writers, and drag queens and other sexual deviants worked on one another's projects and generally found mutual inspiration in a shared countercultural milieu. And they inhabited and helped make a world beyond their aesthetic endeavors, a world that devised innumerable means of resisting the forces of conformity and repression with radical hilarity, perverse pleasure, defiant solidarity—a truly queer world.[57]

Named for the silver foil on its walls and ceilings, the Silver Factory was a site of intense production where Warhol and his assistants manufactured thousands of Pop prints. As such, it resembled the icon workshops of Byzantine Catholic monks, who collectively produced large numbers of paintings based on preordained religious images. The Factory was less, of course, a moralizing religious space than an audacious setting for legendary parties with lots of drugs.[58] But Crimp's description suggests that it was also a transgressive Catholic collective where different—"countercultural," "radical," "perverse," and "defiant"—ideas about the meaning and possibilities of labor, and modern art, were entertained.

Warhol's Catholic consciousness further shaped his ideas about materiality. While many American artists embraced Kandinsky's model of an antimaterial spiritual modernism, Warhol treated things differently. Searching for subjects in the early 1960s that would give him a distinct Pop identity, as comics had done for Lichtenstein, Warhol chose things—cans of soup, bottles of soda, dollar bills—and duplicated pictures of them in sequential rows, incorporating plenty of "mistakes." Queer theorists including Scott Herring consider "how social norms structure our desires for material things, and how these desires sometimes stigmatize us as deviant."[59] Much of Warhol's career was structured around materiality, from illustrating things for fashion magazines and picturing things in Pop art to collecting everything from American folk art to cookie jars. When Sotheby's auctioned some ten thousand things from Warhol's estate in 1988, critics derided his collection as "an obsessive shopping spree" of "masterpieces alongside . . . junk," and derided Warhol as a hoarder, as someone with "nonnormative" accumulation disorder. Revelations of his *Time Capsules*, the cardboard boxes into which he squirreled away all manner of things, have augmented these assumptions.[60]

As a collector and an artist, Warhol upset modern social norms and art market rules about things. By denying categorical distinctions between fine art, popular culture, and junk—a core concern in modern art theory and practice—he challenged the class and value distinctions that galleries, auction houses, and museums depend on for legitimacy. In his Pop art, Warhol did not compose things into still lifes like Tom Wesselmann did or refine their narrative origins like Lichtenstein did. His Pop painting *Green Coca-Cola Bottles* (1962, figure 5.9) was not a product advertisement. Rather, as a modern artist who was Catholic, Warhol's depiction of things was attached to a sacramental view of reality. This is not to suggest that Catholics are exceptionally materi-

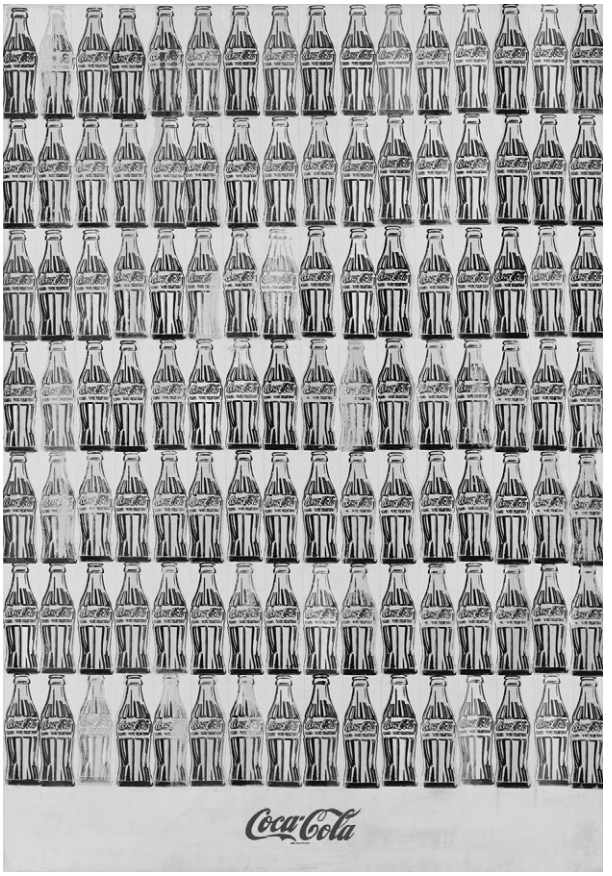


Figure 5.9. Andy Warhol, *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962. Acrylic, screen print, and graphite pencil on canvas, 82¾ × 57⅛ in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; purchase with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of Art, 68.25.

© 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Digital image © Whitney Museum of American Art. Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

alistic but that fundamental beliefs in sacramentality guide Catholic understandings of God's presence, and goodness, in all things. Ranging beyond a purely eucharistic context, Catholic sacramentality imagines how grace works through materiality. Pop art, Warhol once said, was about "liking things."[61] He was not being ironic. His focus on things was intentional, a means of suggesting how much and how often ordinary things were, or had the capacity to be, extraordinary. It was a matter of faith.

His focus on duplication was similar and can be traced to specific practices of ritualized repetition in Byzantine Catholicism. Copious forms of repetition dominate Byzantine Catholic worship, from ornate churches displaying rows and rows of like-painted icons to liturgical services featuring recurrent chanting, repeated gusts of incense, endless crossings, and constant recitations of the Jesus Prayer. Repetition is a practice of memory (or recall) and persuasion. Its rhythmic use in Byzantine Catholic rituals holds and strengthens spiritual contemplation. "Given Andy's ethnicity and religious upbringing," one author remarks, "it would be surprising if his artwork lacked repetition."[62] Warhol used repetition in paintings like *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* and *Green Coca-Cola Bottles* to suggest movement on the flat surfaces of his can-

vases, to make images "jump" and grab our attention. But he also "started repeating the same image," he recollected in 1971, because he "liked the way the repetition changed the same image."[63] For Warhol, repetition, like mistakes, evoked change, or variation. As a modern artist who was Catholic and queer, Warhol used repetition to affirm both his religious and sexual differences.

Warhol's familiarity with the performative dynamics of sacred art in the Byzantine Catholic Church inspired his production of Pop art. Challenging viewers to "never see a sign the same way again," he encouraged them to critique their encounters with images and objects, and to consider how they determined meaning in those encounters. *Round Marilyn*'s two canvases, for instance, suggest the life and death, the presence and absence, of a Hollywood star. But they also illustrate how practices of seeing and believing sanction celebrity and sacrality in modern America—during life and after death. From his earliest Pop portraits to his *Last Supper* series, Warhol's spiritual modernism focused on how images and things become iconic in modern America: on considering how seeing and faith are complementary and connected.

In the 1960s, critics likened Warhol's Pop paintings to icons and, stretching the religious metaphor, cheekily called him "Saint Andrew" and "Saint Andy." Later, he was nicknamed the "Pope of Pop."[64] In 1962, Michael Fried remarked that he was "moved" by "Warhol's beautiful, vulgar, heart-breaking icons of Marilyn Monroe."[65] Nicolas Calas similarly observed:

> Pop art is tailored to the needs of "the lonely crowd" which congregates in subways and fills highways, gazing at ads and billboards with the fascination of medieval masses gathered in churches gazed at holy images—ikons. Pop art is the art of making pop-ikons in an era when magic has withdrawn from mosaics and stained glass to appear on the television screen.

Calas's essay "Pop Icons" was included in Lucy Lippard's *Pop Art* (1966), one of the first surveys of the art movement.[66] Frank O'Hara, who paid homage to Hollywood stars in poems dedicated to James Dean and Lana Turner, also noted the iconic character of Warhol's celebrity portraits, remarking, "Maybe they're not real icons, but there's some sort of almost religious element in them."[67]

Granting a "superficial similarity" between Warhol's paintings and icons, critics ignored their specific religious origins and deeper meaning. Naming him "Saint Andy," they fixated on Warhol himself, on his "virtual idolatry" among what *Artforum* editor Philip Leider called a "sardonic generation" of "younger" artists.[68] Minimally attentive to Warhol's actual art practices, critics mostly discussed his pictures in terms of alienation, consumerism, semiotics, and the technologies of reproduction.[69] Religion, if noted, was discounted as ignorant and irreconcilable with modern art. Likewise, Warhol's sexual identity was "de-gayed."[70] Following Frankfurt School dialectics and, in particular, Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction," critics used Warhol's work to argue that mass culture devalued the "aura" of art and denied the agency of viewers. Whether or not they saw Warhol as a celebrant of the "pulp materials" and "grim predictability" of this manipulative mass culture, critics evaded more-complex assessments of how and why he brokered the look of sacred art in modern times.[71]

Another *Artforum* editor, Joseph Masheck, later recalled that talk of religion was "taboo" among postwar critics intent on "upholding modernity." Although Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse pronounced "art and religion as the only two departments of culture not hopelessly contaminated by capitalism," Masheck related that his "real disappointment as editor was the cynical derision that met any religious reference."[72] By extension, use of the word "iconic" in critical discourse was informed by its shifting postwar meaning as an exceptionally popular person or thing, like a celebrity or brand. "The term is a kind of placebo for critical thought," writes Barry King. "To say something is iconic is to claim it exemplifies its kind without the inconvenience of stating its kind or how it exemplifies."[73] Casual critical allusions to the "iconic" nature of Warhol's paintings failed to acknowledge both the sacred purpose of religious icons and the performative rituals of devotion necessary to their sacred economy.

Warhol himself, of course, was infamously vague about his artistic intentions, purposely confounding interviewers with disingenuous remarks and "yes," "no," and "um" responses to questions. His oft-quoted 1966 statement to Gretchen Berg, "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it," was, in fact, something he never said. Similarly, his quip about fifteen minutes of fame was coined by someone else.[74] Like Bob Dylan, Warhol was elusive in interviews, disengaged and aloof. Tapping into and reimagining different creative spheres—American music for Dylan, American art for Warhol—both men were deeply aware of the culture industry's ravenous appetite for new products and effects. Both adapted accordingly as Sphinx-like workaholics whose art challenged conventions of authenticity and belief. Warhol's interests in audiences and affect were shaped in particular by a distinctive Catholic presence in post–World War II America that reimagined modernism, popular culture, and religious experience.

Postwar Catholic Presence

In its 1966 Easter edition, *Time* magazine asked, "Is God Dead?" in bold red type. The question sparked outrage, including a record-breaking 3,500 letters to the editor. However incendiary, *Time*'s cover article focused on new kinds of spiritual seeking in 1960s America, from the "open-window spirit of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II" to "the new quest" for "a God who can touch men's emotions and engage men's minds." *Time*'s writers insisted that faith was fundamental to American ideals of freedom, stating that "nearly one of every two

men on earth lives in thralldom to a brand of totalitarianism that condemns religion as the opiate of the masses." But they summarized their coverage by suggesting "there may well be no true faith without a measure of doubt," and "contemporary Christian worry about God could be a necessary and healthy antidote to centuries in which faith was too confident and sure."[75] Andy Warhol's Pop art played a part in this critical reconsideration of the role of religion and the questioning of faith in 1960s America.

The US experienced a religious revival after World War II, witnessed in unprecedented church attendance, a boom in new church construction, the rise of prominent religious figures including Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and Bishop Fulton Sheen, and even "overcrowding in religious seminaries."[76] The federal government led this explicitly Judeo-Christian crusade. In 1952, President Harry Truman signed into law the National Day of Prayer, rousing all Americans to "turn to God in prayer and meditation" on the first Thursday in May. In 1954, Congress added "under God" to the US Pledge of Allegiance; in 1956, "In God We Trust" became the US national motto (replacing *E pluribus unum*). Corporate interests bankrolled America's religious renewal, mobilizing campaigns of "Christian libertarianism" aimed at returning a postwar, post–New Deal US to "the values of free enterprise" and the "salvation of the individual," not the welfare state.[77] And Americans fell in line: on a typical Sunday in the mid-1950s, 47 percent of the US population attended church, the highest number on record. Despite the establishment clause of the US Constitution, the basis for the nation's legal doctrine for the separation of church and state, piety and patriotism were inseparable during the Cold War. As "one nation under God," the US harnessed Judeo-Christianity to fight a religious war against godless Communism.[78]

Yet postwar Americans also embraced seeker spirituality, the personal quest for faith that has been an integral part of modern American religious yearning since the nineteenth century. A "spiritual front" of intellectuals and artists, including many Catholics, challenged the lockstep piety of institutional religions with more nuanced questions about faith and religious purpose that were prompted, Daniel Bell observed, by a postwar sensibility of "irony, paradox, ambiguity, and complexity."[79] Admittedly, Catholic Cold Warriors including Senator Joe McCarthy and Father Patrick Peyton were among the most strident anti-communist combatants. Their fierce defense of freedom and democracy was a "classic example" of an American outsider group "portraying itself as the defender of American insider ideals."[80] But other postwar Catholics chose to test "the deposit of faith that is the essence of Catholic belief" and "extend the Catholic vision into uncharted areas and contested dimensions of experience."[81] For Warhol, this extension of vision encompassed the contested subject of sexual difference.

Catholicism was visible and diverse in postwar America. In 1959, cataloguing "hip" versus "square" cultural phenomena, Norman Mailer put Catholicism on the hip list and pronounced Protestantism "lukewarm" and square.[82]

A year later, the election of John F. Kennedy put the first Catholic president in the White House. Some of this postwar Catholic presence took the form of Cold War moralizing: each week from 1952 to 1957, thirty million Americans watched Bishop Fulton Sheen decree "the spiritual stakes in the nation's fight against communism" on his popular prime-time television show *Life Is Worth Living*.[83]

But much of it focused on rethinking what it meant to be Catholic in postwar America, including reimagining the paradoxes of difference.[84] Cultural examples include movies featuring Catholic priests and nuns, from *On the Waterfront* (1954) to *The Sound of Music* (1965), both of which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. Likewise, two darkly comic novels about Catholic seekers received the National Book Award: Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* (1961) and J. F. Powers's *Morte d'Urban* (1962). Flannery O'Connor, who described herself as a "Catholic peculiarly possessed of the modern consciousness" and wrote "Christ-haunted" novels and short stories set in an American South tormented by violence, racism, poverty, and sin, received the National Book Award posthumously, in 1972.[85] Defying Papal proclamations of antimodernism, and Catholic Church demands for doctrinal obedience, these postwar films and stories focused on how modern Catholics grappled with everyday realities by relying on the "dictates of their consciences to adjudicate moral matters rather than on the teaching authority of the Church."[86]

Likewise, postwar Catholic interests in "moral activism—of spiritual and political redemption in the pursuit of an alternative project of modernity"—motivated artists and patrons alike.[87] Some of these interests were inspired by a revival of sacred art led by Dominican priests such as Marie-Alain Couturier, who commissioned French moderns including Henri Matisse, Georges Roualt, and Le Corbusier to rejuvenate Catholic liturgical spaces—and, simultaneously, to "canonize" modern art in France.[88] Influenced by Couturier, "Catholic power couple" Dominique and John de Menil extended this vision of a "sacred modern" art in the US, embracing collecting and cultural philanthropy as a vocation of secular re-enchantment.[89]

Based in Houston, the de Menils hired Philip Johnson to design buildings for the University of St. Thomas (a Catholic liberal-arts college founded in 1947) and commissioned a chapel to display Mark Rothko's paintings. They also collected art, from Byzantine icons and Abstract Expressionist canvases to Warhol's *Flowers* (1964), which they displayed as "incantations."[90] Identifying Warhol as a sympathetic Catholic modern, the de Menils commissioned him to make art for a Vatican-sponsored "ecumenical pavilion" at HemisFair '68 in San Antonio, the official world's fair for 1968. Although the Vatican pavilion never materialized, Warhol developed a thirty-three-minute film titled *Sunset* featuring an unedited, single-camera shot of day's end on the Pacific Coast: a mesmerizing, meditative, color-saturated visual homage to the merger of sky and land, heaven and earth.[91]

At the heart of Catholic consciousness, asserts theologian David Tracy, is

an "analogical imagination" informed by the compatibility of spirit and matter. If, put simply, Protestant culture veers toward a "dialectic" focused on the disjunction and dissimilarity, or opposition, of divine and human worlds, Catholic culture apprehends religious truth through analogy, through metaphors, images, and symbols that speak to or embody the sacred. By extension, Catholicism's use of analogy establishes that "human beings are more good than bad, reality is ultimately trustworthy despite ignorance and sin, reason is the way to find the order of things, and the reign of God is about love, not fear and abasement."[92] Spurning the "disintegrative, logic-chopping proclivities of the dialectical imagination," Catholicism's analogical imagination focuses on what Orsi terms the "matrix of presence": the belief in the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist and the supernatural presence of God in all things and experiences.[93] Anticipating rapport, the creative Catholic imagination searches for correlation. Inspired by "God's gift of faith and revelation," Tracy remarks, Catholics "literally reimagine reality as a new series of ordered possibilities." Inspired by his belief in God's immanence, Warhol brought a "sensibility of Catholic supernatural realism" to artworks like *Sunset*.[94]

Of course, neither Catholicism nor Protestantism are so sweepingly monolithic or easily condensed, and the "Catholic presence" versus "Protestant absence" equation is recognized as a "polemical overstatement."[95] Still, in multiple media including painting, film, photography, poetry, and fiction, "patterns of cultural Catholicism" adhering to an analogical impulse and a sacramental vision were "implanted within twentieth-century American art," writes Paul Giles.[96] These patterns were intrinsic to Warhol's spiritual modernism. Whether or not he fully apprehended the scope and vision of the postwar Catholic imagination, Warhol was a member of the flock. Deploying his difference as a Catholic—a difference doubled by being raised Byzantine Catholic and tripled by being queer—he reimagined the "ordered possibilities" of modern American art in subjects and styles that were informed by his religious beliefs.

In the 1950s, Warhol asserted his Catholic cultural consciousness and his difference in projects ranging from Christmas cards to erotic drawings of men (figure 5.10). Warhol designed holiday cards for Tiffany and Company from 1956 to 1962, depicting Christmas trees, candy canes, and nativity scenes. Like other commercial artists, he borrowed files from the New York Public Library's Picture Collection and copied ads and photos from magazines like *Life*, relying on archives and "scraps" as his primary pictorial resources.[97] His 1956 drawing *Madonna and Child* cribbed from countless representations of the three wise men who followed the Eastern star to Bethlehem to pay tribute to their newborn king. His version of the Christmas story was detailed in gold leaf, copying the look he used in his "golden slipper" drawings and in some of his sketches of naked men. Gold anointed all subjects, sacred and secular.[98]

If nativity scenes affirmed his Catholic beliefs, drawings of naked men tested them (figure 5.11). Throughout the 1950s, Warhol "filled stacks of draw-



Figure 5.10. Andy Warhol, *Madonna and Child*, 1950s. Gold leaf, ink, stamped gold collage, and Dr. Martin's aniline dye on paper, 29 × 22⅞ in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.2067.

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ing pads with an endless succession of male nudes."[99] Using a clean, confident line reminiscent of French moderns like Henri Matisse and Jean Cocteau, Warhol drew the torsos, genitals, heads, and feet of friends, companions, and strangers solicited at parties. He often added tiny, teasing garnishes such as bows, butterflies, hearts, and flowers to select body parts, a "playful eroticism," writes Richard Meyer, suggesting "an alternative economy of visual pleasure in which the male body becomes a site for decoration and witty adornment."[100]

Largely ignored until recently, and even now described as "private," the sketches were exhibited in a 1956 Bodley Gallery show "provocatively titled" *Drawings for a Boy's Book*.[101] Despite the oppression of postwar homophobia, Warhol openly displayed his version of homoerotic art. Defying Catholic Church authority, he declared his romantic attachment to men. Warhol was



Figure 5.11. Andy Warhol, *Male Nude*, ca. 1957. Gold leaf and ink on colored graphic art paper, 17 × 14 in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.2049.

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no "gay pride activist" in these pre-Stonewall times. But, unlike Mark Tobey and other more closeted American moderns, he did not feel guilty about being queer, either.[102] Rather, inspired by a postwar Catholic consciousness that aimed—despite the Church—to destabilize intolerant dogma, Warhol adjudicated his own morality and reimagined love on same-sex terms. It was "a far, far better thing to have creeps like us *in* the Church than on the outside working against it!" observed Warhol "superstar" Ondine (Robert Olivo), whose persona as "Pope Ondine" in several Warhol films in the 1960s included listening to the "confessions" of various Factory penitents.[103]

Warhol literally evoked postwar Catholic presence in *Crowd* (1963), a Pop print based on a United Press International photo of worshippers gathered in Saint Peter's Square, waiting to hear Pope Pius XII's Easter blessing on April 11, 1955 (figure 5.12). Warhol repeated and abraded the image, stretching it to the edges of the canvas to create an all-over effect that exemplified its subject. Like Tobey's teeming scenes of universal humanity in Seattle's Pike Place Market (figure 3.14), Warhol's *Crowd* conveyed Catholic communalism. He reproduced it in *People, People, People*, a poster devised as an alternative to the "saccharine" images used to promote the 1964 New York World's Fair. MoMA's graphic design curator Mildred Constantine described the fair's official posters, including Bob Peak's illustration of a happy heteronormative White family standing in front of US Steel's Unisphere, as "the ultimate in mediocrity." She championed instead Warhol's design, writing: "his black and

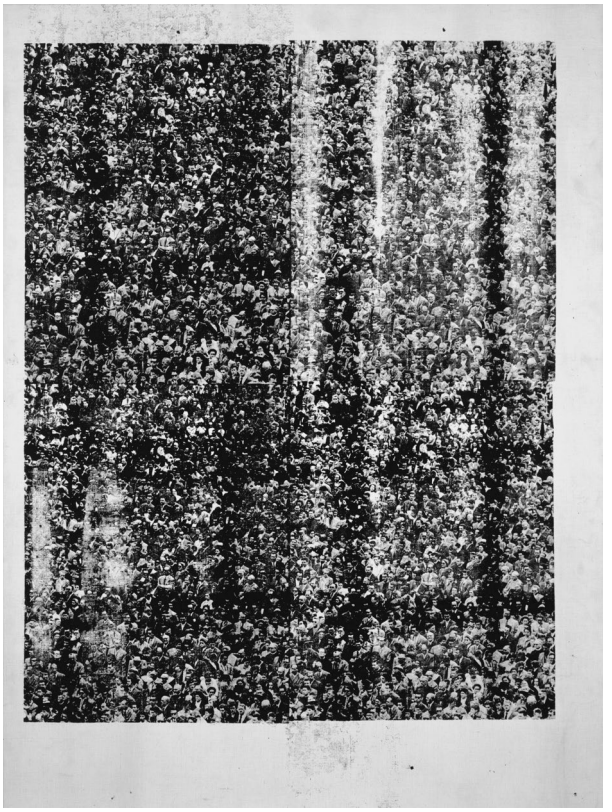


Figure 5.12. Andy Warhol, *Crowd*, 1963. Silkscreen ink on linen, 50 × 30 in. Collection of Jeffrey Deitch, New York, NY.

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white poster suggestive of crowds in motion and simply lettered VISIT NEW YORK VISIT NEW YORK is the lure he provides, inviting the potential visitor to become one of the crowd."[104] Neither she nor Warhol let on that the "lure" he depicted in his poster was actually a crowd of Catholic faithful in Rome.

On October 15, 1965, Pope Paul VI traveled to New York, the first pontiff to visit the United States. Warhol described it as "the most Pop public appearance tour of the sixties." The Pope's one-day "tour" included a motorcade from Kennedy airport to St. Patrick's Cathedral through streets lined with more than one million people, a meeting with President Lyndon Johnson at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, an address to the United Nations, a Papal Mass for Peace at Yankee Stadium to ninety thousand celebrants, and a visit to the Vatican Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. "We watched most of the Pope's tour of New York on TV at the Factory," Warhol recalled (Bishop Sheen provided commentary on CBS). "He came right by our window on his way over to the UN . . . I was left just standing there thinking about how Pope Paul VI himself had gone right by the Factory that afternoon—I mean, the *Pope*, *the* Pope!" Asked what he "liked best" about his visit to New York, the Pope said, "Tutti buoni" ("all good"), which Warhol delightedly observed was "the Pop

philosophy exactly."[105] Connecting the Pope with Pop, Warhol affirmed how Catholicism's analogical imagination, the belief that God's grace makes all things "good," was fundamental to his own Pop "philosophy" of modern art.

Postwar critics did not recognize the degree to which Warhol's Catholic consciousness shaped and directed his Pop art. His sacramental view of all things was considered on class terms, as the dissolution of boundaries between fine art and popular culture, between high and low. His visual repetition of the mundane was seen as a kind of transgressive humor, a sardonic critique of mass-media monotony.[106] Poet Richard Hell describes Warhol's desire to "make everything about his daily life into art" as a "camp impulse," a sensibility—as Susan Sontag put it in her 1964 essay on the subject—"of artifice and exaggeration . . . style at the expense of content."[107] Yet Warhol's Pop art displays little of the ironic humor employed by other modern painters who were queer, such as Grant Wood and Paul Cadmus, who poked fun at ordinary scenes and subjects with pointed satire.[108] As much as he personally engaged in camp posturing, particularly as camp was code for queer, Warhol's pictures embodied a Catholic view of things that was simply different from how most postwar critics saw and understood the modern world.

Other artists also imagined a different kind of Catholic cultural presence in postwar America. In 1951, Tony Smith, a modern sculptor who was Catholic, designed a prototype for an open-plan Catholic church on Long Island, explaining in a later interview that the "church always encouraged the idea of the Renaissance man . . . and to be useful to the church, build churches."[109] Synthesizing the ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Eric Gill, Smith proposed a modern, ground-hugging building with an altar in the middle under a skylight, and Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionist paintings displayed in the sanctuary. Although curator James Johnson Sweeney and various Catholic patrons were interested in Smith's spatially democratic design, the church was never realized.[110]

In 1958, Barnett Newman, who was Jewish, began *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani*, a series of austere abstract paintings, each six and a half feet high by five feet wide, that he named after the fourteen episodes of Christ's Passion and his cry from the cross (translated from the Aramaic): "Why did you forsake me?" Newman stated that Christ's "overwhelming question that does not complain" was central to his series, which was exhibited at New York's Guggenheim Museum in April 1966, just a few weeks after *Time* published its "Is God Dead?" issue. Reflecting on his spiritual seeking, Newman told a *Newsweek* reporter: "I tried to make the title a metaphor that describes my feeling when I did the paintings. It's not literal, but a cue. In my work, each Station was a meaningful stage in my own—the artist's—life. It is an expression of how I worked. I was a pilgrim as I painted."[111]

An iconographic staple of Roman Catholic parishes, the Stations of the Cross is a fourteen-step devotional exercise in which worshippers walk from station to station, praying at each, ending at Christ's entombment. It is an es-

pecially analogic ritual, with believers encouraged to experience and identify with Christ's suffering. Newman similarly expected viewers of his human-proportioned paintings to "stand witness," he wrote, to Christ's agony. He guided their physical and emotional responses in the style and placement of his canvases, each rendered, as per the Stations' sequential narrative, with increasing turbulence and tension. He concluded the series with an additional canvas titled *Resurrection* (renamed *Be II*), seemingly answering Christ's "overwhelming question" with an "affirmation" of salvation, observed Lawrence Alloway, who curated the Guggenheim show. Alloway further noted that while Newman took "possession of the traditional theme on his own terms," his *Stations of the Cross* evoked "the presence" of the Passion's "religious and mythical content" in modern art.[112]

That he did so as a Jew, however, and with abstract paintings, was unacceptable to some. Although, Matthew Baigell notes, Newman was "neither the first nor the only modern Jewish artist to have explored Christological themes" in twentieth-century American art, critical response to his series was "largely negative" and "gracelessly anti-Semitic."[113] *Newsweek*'s reporter related that "some conventional Christians" were "dazed" by "this Jewish painter's disregard for the conventional subject matter." John Canaday at the *New York Times* likened Newman's paintings to "vertical bands of black or white, like unraveled phylacteries," a barbed reference to Orthodox Jewish religious rituals. Canaday also assailed the art museum, writing: "The Guggenheim can no longer be taken quite seriously as a first-rate institution when it devotes its space to the exhibition of such pretentious yardage."[114] In *Arts and Architecture*, Dore Ashton called "the inept paintings" in Newman's series "ludicrously inadequate" and "indisputable proof of his dilettantism as a painter," adding that his signature in each canvas showed a "tremendous lack of tact." In the *Nation*, Max Kozloff chided Newman for his "bland" and "unconvincing" account of the "story of the Via Dolorosa."[115]

Among some theologians, however, Newman's *Stations of the Cross* sparked heightened interests in modern art's "religious sensibility."[116] In 1967, Newman was invited to the First International Congress on Religion, Architecture, and the Visual Arts, an interfaith conference in New York that featured a keynote address by Buckminster Fuller, talks by Harvey Cox and Rudolph Arnheim, and a performance titled *Ordeals* by Reverend Al Carmines, Carolee Schneemann, and Lawrence Kornfeld at Judson Memorial Church. During the Congress, in response to the question "Is There a 'Religious' Art and Architecture?," Newman stated that personal experience and a "sense of place" were critical to the "spiritual dimension" of contemporary art. "The Jewish medieval notion of Makom," he explained, "is where God is. No matter what is said against the vocabulary of the present day aesthete or the present day theologian, it's only after man knows where he is that he can ask himself 'who am I?' and 'where am I going?'"[117]

Audiences flocked to the exhibition, which was Newman's first (and only)



Figure 5.13. Corita Kent, *fiat*, 1953. Color screen print on cream wove paper, 15½ × 21½-in. image; 18 × 24-in. sheet. Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Vivian and Gordon Gilkey Graphic Arts Collection, 91.84.690.

© 2022 Estate of Corita Kent/ Immaculate Heart Community/ Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Image © Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA / Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR.

solo museum show. One newspaper reported that "an invasion of the clergy is keeping the turnstiles spinning at the Guggenheim Museum. Unusual numbers of men and women of the cloth are flocking in to see the latest visual theological dialogue, 14 paintings by a Jewish artist on a traditional Catholic theme." Enthused by religious responses to his *Stations of the Cross*, Newman made plans to sell the series to the Vatican.[118]

Perhaps the most visible Catholic presence in postwar American art was Sister Corita Kent, a Roman Catholic nun and art professor at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles from 1947 to 1968. In the 1950s, Kent made colorful serigraphs of Biblical themes (figure 5.13) in a style akin to Stanley William Hayter and Ben Shahn (who dubbed her the "joyous revolutionary").[119] Influenced by Byzantine art and Abstract Expressionism, she used an iconic sensibility and riotous brushstrokes in her 1953 print *fiat* to imagine the Annunciation of the Virgin and Mary's decree, noted in Luke 1:38, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."[120]

A far remove from the treacly sentimentality of Charles Bosseron Chambers, a popular twentieth-century illustrator known as the "Norman Rockwell of Catholic art," Kent's religious art embodied liberal Catholic views of change and possibility. As she described *fiat*: "I have tried to show the unison of love, faith and hope by a distribution of their three colors, red, blue, and green; shocking the entire composition with something of the excitement this moment of history carries with it." She worked in silkscreen, she explained, because it was "a very democratic form" that let her make "original art for those who cannot afford to purchase high priced art."[121] She kept her prints unnumbered and titled them in lowercase for the same reason.

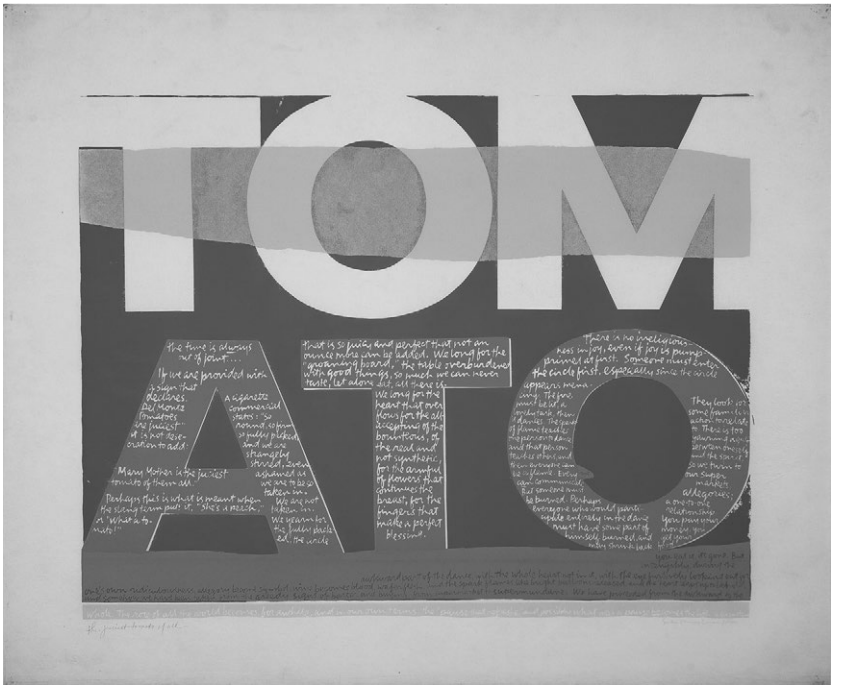


Figure 5.14. Corita Kent, *the juiciest tomato of all*, 1964. Screen print, 29¾ × 36 in. Corita Art Center, Los Angeles, CA.

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Reproduced in church bulletins and shown in galleries, Kent's early prints were widely disseminated and recognized: in 1952, her serigraph *the lord is with thee* won first prize in the annual Los Angeles County Museum Show; in 1954, the editor of *Liturgical Arts* commissioned her print *christ and mary* for the magazine's centerfold. She traveled throughout the US giving lectures and workshops. By 1957, she was showing her work in New York at the Contemporaries Gallery and Morris Gallery; by 1959, she was designing wrapping paper for Neiman Marcus and commercial art for the Container Corporation of America, and exhibiting in annual reviews sponsored by the Art Directors Club.[122] Embracing the reformist spirit of Vatican II, Kent's art changed in the early 1960s, becoming bolder and brighter, and featuring images and texts appropriated from advertising and mass media. Snatching a slogan from Del Monte Foods for *the juiciest tomato of all* (1964, figure 5.14), she printed "tomato" in blocky letters and bright red and orange inks, adding the words "Mary Mother is the 'juiciest tomato of them all'" and "there is no irreligiousness in joy" in handwritten script.[123]

Kent's shift in style is often attributed to Warhol, and seeing his paintings of Campbell's Soup cans in 1962 at Los Angeles's Ferus Gallery emboldened her artistic reach. But she and Warhol were mutually influential. The visibility and success of her work in the 1950s segued with Warhol's burgeoning interest in screen printing. He attended her openings at Morris Gallery, and they shared commercial clients and interests.[124] In 1964, for example, both accepted commissions for the New York World's Fair. Warhol contributed a

black-and-white mural of mug shots titled *Thirteen Most Wanted* for the New York state pavilion, and Kent designed a forty-foot *Beatitudes Wall* featuring colorful organic forms and quotes from the Bible, Pope John XXIII, and JFK for the Vatican pavilion.[125] Blurry mugshots of "most wanted" men and bright paeans to spiritual bliss might seem worlds apart. But both of these World's Fair projects functioned as forms of desire by modern American artists who shared a similarly open Catholic imagination.

In 1967, Kent's *Survival with Style*, an installation of 1,200 cardboard boxes covered with prints, drawings, magazine pages, quotes, and more, was featured at the same International Congress on Religion, Architecture, and the Visual Arts where Newman spoke on the spiritual dimension of modern art. Later that year, Kent appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* surrounded by her "colorful, deceptively witty serigraphs."[126] Throughout the 1960s, she drew on consumer brands—like Wonder Bread—to signal the holy in everyday life, to alert viewers to the presence of the sacred in the ordinary. Borrowing the large cursive "G" from the logo for General Mills, which used it to advertise breakfast cereals, she declared, "The big G stands for goodness" in one print, proclaiming God and faith as sources of nourishment.[127]

"She makes you see things," a minister interviewed for *Newsweek*'s cover article (titled "The Nun: Going Modern") observed. "She's sort of a medium without a message—insisting on the changing image, rather than the stable concept, as the proper religious approach." *Newsweek*'s writers more forcefully asserted that "Catholics seeking new ways to be Christians no longer find the old patterns of much help in creating a more vibrant religious life." And, they added, "Love, freedom and experiment are their bywords" in a new Catholic message of spiritual "renewal." Flailing against change, however, conservative Roman Catholics including the archbishop of Los Angeles were unimpressed. In 1968, after recurrent conflict with the Church's male hierarchy, Kent joined the exodus of American nuns leaving religious orders.[128] Moving to Boston, she refocused her artistic practice on ecumenical terms, championing social justice and protesting the Vietnam War.

Warhol and Kent shared visions of a more tolerant Catholic consciousness and were similarly conflicted about Catholic Church authority. But Warhol was not a religious artist: he was a modern artist who was Catholic and queer. Prompted by the centrality of death in the Catholic imagination, his Pop art turned to issues of mortality.

Death and Disaster

Beginning in 1962, Warhol made countless canvases depicting suicides, car crashes, police brutality, and atomic-bomb blasts. MoMA curator Henry Geldzahler is credited as an inspiration, showing Warhol a tabloid with a photograph of a plane crash and saying, "enough affirmation of soup and Coke bottles. Maybe everything isn't so fabulous in America. It's time for some



Figure 5.15. Andy Warhol, *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, 1963. Silkscreen ink on synthetic polymer paint on two canvases, 8 ft., 9⅞ in. × 13 ft., 8⅛ in. Gift of Philip Johnson, Museum of Modern Art, 234.1991.a-b.

© 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art. Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

death."[129] Warhol imitated the newspaper's front page in a large hand-painted canvas titled *129 Die in Jet* (1962). Shortly thereafter, he shifted to screen prints featuring images lifted from newspaper photo morgues, police files, and mass media. Some canvases showed awful images of mangled bodies, burning cars, and civil-rights protesters being mauled by police dogs. Many were printed in vibrant secondary colors such as green, lavender, pink, and turquoise. A few, such as *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times* (1963, figure 5.15) included an additional "blank" canvas in the same background color, echoing the presence/absence theme of *Round Marilyn* (figure 5.7). "The emphasis was on pretty," Gerard Malanga recalled, describing Warhol's mass production of the *Death and Disaster* series in the Factory. "That was the word he used. It was never 'beautiful,' it was always 'pretty.'"[130]

Death was not pretty in modern America: it was denied. Long before Ernst Becker's bestseller on the subject was published (1973) or Jessica Mitford exposed the greed and deception of the funeral industry in *The American Way of Death* (1963), dying and bereavement were taboo topics in polite, mainstream—read: WASP—society. Geoffrey Gofer's 1955 essay "The Pornography of Death" set the tone, detailing how death in modern times had become what polite society had thought sex was a century earlier: obscene, ugly, unmentionable.[131] Modern death was hidden, relegated to institutional settings—by 1958, almost 61 percent of Americans died in hospitals or nursing homes—and isolated from everyday human experience.[132] And it was defined as defeat, as the failure of modern medicine to combat mortality. Death

was profoundly "un-American," summarized historian Arnold Toynbee, "an affront to every citizen's inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."[133] Alienated from the dying and prohibited from grief, most modern Americans only "saw" death in the movies, on TV, or in the tabloids, where it was hyper-sensationalized as the stuff of horror, as something to fear.

Death was not denied, however, in modern Catholicism. Catholics are no more ghoulish or less fearful about death than others, but their views and understandings of death are grounded in their religion's particular intimacy, or "confident familiarity," with death. Christians believe that death on earth is followed by the promise of an eternal life with God. Catholics further imagine death as a central condition of lived experience, requiring intense and extensive spiritual preparation.[134] For postwar Catholics, death was a constant presence in devotional practices and material and visual cultures, manifest in prayers ending with "pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death," in the celebration of saints on their deathday (not their birthday) and in images of Christ's crucified body. "The most important moment of our lives is the moment of our death," popular Catholic author Leo Trese stated in a 1961 article titled "It Will Happen to You." He added: "Death will 'freeze' forever our spiritual condition of that moment: our state of grace or our state of mortal sin . . . Death is the moment for which God made us."[135]

Many of Warhol's *Death and Disaster* paintings focused on just "that moment:" the suicidal leap, the fatal car crash, the explosion of an atomic bomb. Warhol did not deny death in modern America: he highlighted it in hundreds of canvases. Repeating images, distorting the register of their sources, and prettifying pictures in alluring candy colors, Warhol showed the inevitability and impartiality of death, and beckoned viewers to pay attention. His own feelings about death were complicated by his Byzantine Catholic upbringing and his religious and sexual identity as an adult. Again, Warhol was not a religious artist: these canvases do not affirm death as eternal union with God in heaven. Nor do they cast moralizing aspersions: however shocking, they are not sanctimonious. If his repeated attention to the "moment" of death suggests his interests in divine judgment, it also conveyed his personal misgivings about the conventional grounds that the Catholic Church demanded for such judgment.

Particular events triggered Warhol's focus on death and disaster. He began his portraits of Marilyn Monroe shortly after she committed suicide. He started the pictures of race riots after seeing *Life*'s photos of civil-rights activists being attacked in Birmingham in May 1963. His screen prints of atomic bomb blasts copied photos of US Civil Defense tests conducted in Nevada in the 1950s.[136] His electric-chair pictures, such as *Lavender Disaster* (1963, figure 5.16), were based on a 1953 wire-service photo titled "Sing Sing's Death Chamber," which illustrated how "convicted atom spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg" were "slated to be electrocuted." In the early 1960s, appeals to abolish capital punishment in the US escalated; in 1963, New York held its last

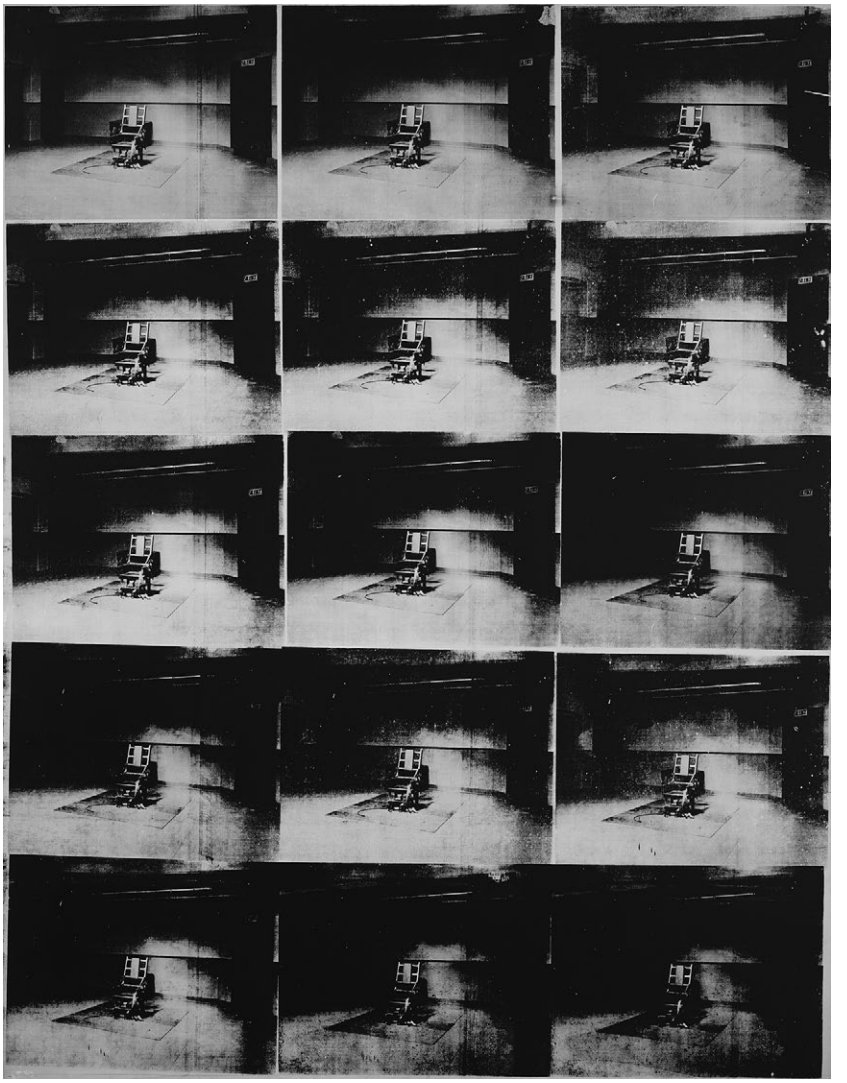


Figure 5.16. Andy Warhol, *Lavender Disaster*, 1963. Acrylic, silkscreen ink, and pencil on linen, 106 × 81⅞ in. Menil Collection, Houston, TX; 1978-005 DJ.

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state execution at Sing Sing.[137] Warhol pillaged already available mass-media images and turned them into Pop paintings to remind viewers that death—just like Campbell's Soup and Coca-Cola—was an undeniable fact of life in postwar America.

Art dealer Ivan Karp worried about their commercial appeal, saying "Who the fuck's going to want to look at an eight-foot picture of a hideous car crash, Andy? You're going to kill your economy." Warhol, Karp recalled, replied, "Oh well, it has to be done." It was a telling response. Even as a Pop artist, Warhol was a commercial artist, a businessman who ran a large studio with multiple employees.[138] Yet from 1962 to 1964 (and later: he worked on screen prints of electric chairs through 1971), he made unsellable pictures of death and disaster a top priority. From August through December 1962, he made "approximately 2,000 pictures."[139] Karp was right: Warhol's income dove in the 1960s,

recovering only when he shifted to portrait commissions in the 1970s. His commitment to the *Death and Disaster* series was, then, deep and personal: it had "to be done."

Warhol mostly depicted "bad" death: the deaths of suicides (a sin in the Catholic Church), reckless drivers, and secret-stealing traitors; the victims of mass destruction, racism, and corporate malfeasance (such as the women in the *Tunafish Disaster* paintings, who died after eating contaminated food sold at their local grocery store). He raised the specter of "bad" death in *Gangster Funeral*, an ominous looking scene that actually depicted the burial of a "77-year-old lady" in Oakes, North Dakota.[140] "Bad" death was the counter to "good" death, which for Catholics means dying in a state of grace after receiving last rites. As a Catholic, Warhol knew that "good" death followed a good Catholic life: praying, going to church, doing good deeds. Raised Byzantine Catholic, he understood the moment of death as the moment when grace and sin are weighed: he did not believe in a purgatorial interlude. His pictures of death and disaster raised as many questions about the nature and consequences of living well as they did about dying badly.

They also raised questions about the nature of memory, about whose death counts in modern America and who is remembered. Aside from Marilyn Monroe, Warhol's *Death and Disaster* paintings focused on unknown, uncelebrated Americans. Talking with photographer David Bailey in 1972, Warhol remarked that he had wanted to make pictures of "people who die in car crashes because you know, sometimes you don't ever know who they are." He added, "People, that, you know, they want to do things and they never do things and they disappear so quickly, and then they're killed or something like that, and then, you know, nobody knows about them. So I thought, well maybe I'll do a painting about a person which you don't know about."[141] The dead have presence in Catholicism: they are noticed and remembered. Warhol's pictures reclaimed them, marking their deaths, and hence their lives, as memorable.

The series was further grounded in Warhol's anxieties about death. "I get very nervous about people falling asleep at the wheel," he divulged, explaining why he kept the car radio on "full blast" during his cross-country road trip in 1963.[142] Biographers recount Warhol's fears of death and dying: he refused to go to funerals (even his mother's funeral in 1972); he was morbidly afraid of illness and disease.[143] Yet Warhol did not fear God or God's judgment. Recalling René Rivera, a drag queen who appeared in thirteen of his underground films in the 1960s and was known professionally as Mario Montez, Warhol observed,

> He used to always say that he knew it was a sin to be in drag—he was Puerto Rican and a very religious Roman Catholic. The only spiritual comfort he allowed himself was the logic that even though God surely didn't *like* him for going into drag, that still, if He really hated him, He would have struck him dead.[144]

Warhol lived—and expected to die—by the same logic. The Catholic Church did not "like" his sexual identity. But, like Rivera, Warhol believed in a God who would not strike him "dead" because he was queer, and who would judge him at the "moment" of death on other terms. He set his identity, religious and sexual, by that faith. He set his spiritual modernism on the same course.

In 2013, Warhol's *Silver Car Crash (Double Disaster)* sold at Sotheby's for $105 million. In 1960s America, however, Warhol's death pictures were mostly un-showable and unsellable. Collectors and gallerists pronounced them "too grim." Critics complained that their "numbing similarity" made death seem like "just another product of the twentieth-century machine . . . neither good nor bad; it *is*." By the 1970s, Warhol's paintings were identified with a neutral "aesthetic of indifference" that Moira Roth explained many modern American artists adopted in the wake of Cold War social and political repression.[145] Subsequent evaluation of the *Death and Disaster* paintings vacillated between "complacent glorification" and "subversive critique." Roland Barthes viewed them on simulacral terms, as flat or passive adulterations signifying only themselves. Thomas Crow analyzed them as social referents "dramatizing the breakdown of commodity exchange." Hal Foster argued that Warhol's death pictures represented the "return of the real" among modern and postmodern artists obsessed with trauma and abjection.[146] The meaning of death in the postwar Catholic imagination was not discussed.

In Europe, culture brokers gamely embraced what they perceived as Warhol's implicit critique of American exceptionalism. Reviewing the *Death and Disaster* series at the Galerie Sonnabend in 1964, which featured canvases of car crashes, suicide, race riots, and the electric chair, French critics lauded Warhol's synthesis of "the current state of brutality and death" and "pure tragedy" in the US. American poet John Ashbery, who lived in Paris and wrote art reviews for the *New York Herald Tribune*, called Warhol's paintings "unmistakably polemical, or as the French say, *engagé*," adding, "His show shakes you up."[147] Rebuffed in America, Warhol's *Death and Disaster* mostly circulated in European galleries and private collections in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Warhol focused on filmmaking in the mid-1960s and announced he was "done" with painting.[148] He wasn't, of course. Soon after his own close encounter with death—after he was shot by Valerie Solanas in 1968 and almost died—he began painting portraits. Hundreds of these commissions helped pay the bills over the next two decades. They also revealed neoliberalism's ideological takeover of America.

Neoliberalism

In the 1970s and 1980s, Warhol made one to two million dollars a year churning out Polaroid-based portraits at twenty-five thousand dollars a head (and an extra fifteen thousand dollars for each additional panel). Subjects included



Figure 5.17. Andy Warhol, *Samuel and Ethel LeFrak*, 1982. Two canvases, acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 40 × 40 in. each. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.601.

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pop stars and celebrities (Mick Jagger, Liza Minnelli, Diana Ross), socialites (C. Z. Guest, Cindy Pritzker), real-estate tycoons (Samuel and Ethel LeFrak, figure 5.17), industrialists (Gianni Agnelli, Hartmut Stoeker), royals (Queen Beatrix, the Shah and Empress of Iran), professional athletes (Dorothy Hamill, Muhammad Ali), politicians (Bella Abzug, Jimmy Carter), fashion designers (Halston, Armani, Yves Saint Laurent)—basically, any patron willing to pose and pay. Encouraged by gallery dealer Bruno Bischofberger to make pictures of the twentieth century's "most important" figures, Warhol also painted portraits of Mao Zedong and Vladimir Lenin, using official photographs as sources.[149]

He leveraged these lucrative commissions to fuel the expanding concerns of Andy Warhol Enterprises, including films and *Interview* magazine. Warhol's diaries are dotted with breezy accounts of parties and nightclubs where he trolled for potential portraits, his Polaroid SX-70 Land camera always in hand. Their pursuit was demanding: he resented time spent "doing society portraits" and more than a few of his sitters didn't like his results. He noted that the LeFraks, for example, "hated their portrait," complaining that "his nose was too bulbous" and she "didn't like her hair." When they returned the portrait for a touch-up because "the pupils were left out of the eyes and there was a spot on the face," Warhol resignedly wrote, "So just when I thought I'd seen the last of them . . . It's like *Night of the Living Portraits*." But the portraits were profitable. Texas oil tycoon Sid Bass commissioned eighteen of them, paying $190,000.[150]

Critics slammed them. Hilton Kramer called them "shallow and boring," carping that Warhol made "every subject look ugly and a shade stoned, if not actually repulsive and grotesque." (Warhol told a reporter, "He's right.")[151] Robert Hughes said they were "fatuous" and called Warhol a "voyeur-in-chief" serving "the interests of privilege" in a new "age of supply-side aesthet-

ics." Alexander Cockburn christened Warhol "fascist chic's recording angel" for painting portraits of political despots like Mao and the Shah.[152] Critical disdain intimated particular anxieties about Warhol's subjects. His unabashed attention to America's—and his own—obsessions with celebrity, fame, glamour, and wealth captured the nation's embrace of neoliberalism, the capitalist ideology of competition, consumption, privatization, and financialization that has dominated American politics, policies, and identity since the 1970s. Warhol's "passionate avarice, fame-love, and workaholism," Peter Schjeldahl observed, "merely reflect his surround." Indeed, Warhol's portraits chronicled how neoliberal America's worship of money and reverence for self-interest became "the religion of modernity."[153]

Money was a persistent theme throughout Warhol's work, from commercial illustrations in the 1950s featuring gold coins to the *Dollar Bill* series of 1962, the *Dollar Sign* series of 1981, and the use of price tags reading "59¢" and "$6.99" in his *Last Supper* series. "I like money on the wall," he declared in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (1975), adding: "Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art."[154] He seemed to depict his capitalist credo in silkscreens like *192 One Dollar Bills*, which features a grid of irregularly inked and abridged banknotes, each 50 percent larger than an actual bill (figure 5.18).

Money is a means of exchange, a store of value. It is fundamentally an object of faith, a matter of trust in the nation or institution it represents. Connections, in fact, between the words "numismatic" (currency) and "numinous" (spirit) follow those between monetary praxis in the Roman Empire and the development of early Christian theology. Catholicism's development of an incarnational sensibility, its mediation of divine authority via materiality, resonated with Roman economic practices of redemptive payments (ransom exchanges) and taxation, both used to maintain social order and imperial fealty.[155] While the concept of "divine currency" is not exclusive to the West, it explains the appeal of capitalism in a religious nation like the United States, especially in the postwar era. More than just "money on the wall" or money as art, Warhol's *Dollar Bill* series looked at how America's money was conscripted during the Cold War on religious terms. Warhol purposely picked the US one-dollar silver certificate, printed in 1957 when the slogan "In God We Trust" was added, as the source for *192 One Dollar Bills*.[156]

Money, or currency, Mark Taylor writes, is also about being current, or new, or modern which, because it is modern, means it is also "ever-changing, ever-flowing."[157] Warhol's take on modern currency looked at its redeemable formlessness (particularly as the postwar US steadily abandoned the gold standard), its primary value as an intangible focus of belief. His pictures of cash prompted viewers to ask themselves how and why they believed in money: the dematerialized fiat of paper currency, the coveted stuff at the center of financial fraud.[158] Just before he started the series, for instance, the press was full of stories about financier Eddie Gilbert, a prep school classmate of Jack Kerouac

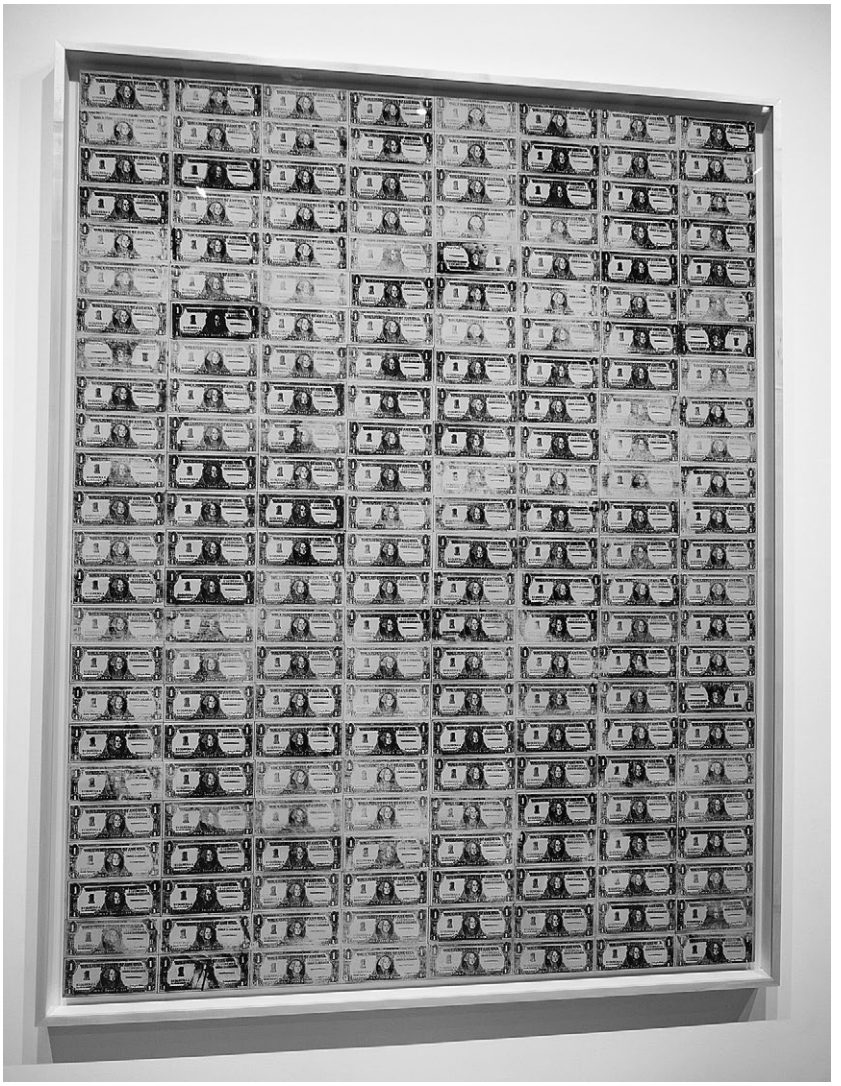


Figure 5.18. Andy Warhol, *192 One Dollar Bills*, 1962. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on linen, 95¼ × 74¼ in. Exhibited as part of *Andy Warhol—From A to B and Back Again*, November 12, 2018–March 31, 2019 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

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and "boy wonder of Wall Street" who "bounded into prominence" in the late 1950s by climbing the social ladder, collecting art, and short stocking companies. Just after Warhol painted his *Dollar Bills* series, the stock market crashed (on Blue Monday, May 28, 1962, the biggest one-day drop since 1929) and Gilbert went "on the road" to Rio, fleeing SEC charges of embezzlement and larceny.[159] Inflected by the terms and origins of his religious beliefs, Warhol's pictures of money raised questions about the "economy of faith" demanded in modern capitalism—and modern art.

Warhol's own pecuniary faith was ambivalent: he "liked" money but distrusted banks, preferring to hoard cash at home or at work. "I don't understand anything except GREEN BILLS," he wrote. "Not negotiable bonds, not personal checks, not Traveller's [*sic*] Checks."[160] He paid tribute to cash in



Figure 5.19. Andy Warhol, *Dollar Sign*, 1981. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 90 × 70 in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.247.

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his *Dollar Sign* series, monumentally scaled canvases depicting capitalism's iconic hieroglyph in bright colors and expressive brushwork similar to the Neo-Expressionism of Julian Schnabel and Jean-Michel Basquiat (figure 5.19). The series was shown at Castelli Galleries in January 1982, just as President Ronald Reagan announced deep tax cuts and further government deregulation, vowing to "make this economy a mighty engine of freedom."[161] Instead, "capitalism unleashed" generated increased economic inequity, unrestrained environmental destruction, the dramatic expanse of finance capital (and its lust for short-term profit over long-term investment), the dilution of social trust, and a critical shift from national to corporate authority.

Substituting or replacing all things, all ideas with "the market," neoliberalism constitutes a "moral and metaphysical imagination," writes Eugene



Figure 5.20. Andy Warhol, *Gun*, 1981–1982. Acrylic paint and silkscreen on canvas, 70 × 90 in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; gift of Vicki and Kent Logan.

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McCarraher, "in which capitalist property relations provide the template for understanding the world." Neoliberal cosmology, Harvey Cox elaborates, is dominated by hubristic reverence for a market that is worshipped as God: "omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent." Driving this "capitalist enchantment" and its "theology of money" is individualism, the internalized belief that individuals are solely responsible for their success and their failure, and that no state or society should interfere with self-interests and "free" markets.[162]

Warhol had always painted market concerns. His art was grounded in material culture and mediated by a religious belief in the sacramentality of all things. As a Catholic, however, neoliberalism's embrace of the market as a "new, perverse form of enchantment, a misdirection of our desires for a sacramental way of being in the world," was unsettling.[163] His paintings of dollar signs and his vanity portraits of the rich and famous belied his concerns. In the 1982 Castelli exhibit, for instance, Warhol had planned to show the *Dollar Sign* series side-by-side with similarly huge canvases of guns and knives (figure 5.20).[164] Doing so would have implied neoliberalism's disastrous social and political consequences: the violence and corruption that escalate when economic egotism trumps social bonds, public trust, and national loyalties. But the big dollar canvases were shown alone and panned by critics as an homage to Reaganomics. "Warhol's work has always been empty," Thomas Lawson wrote in *Artforum*, "but now it seems empty-headed."[165]

For many, Warhol was the exemplar of neoliberalism's "entrepreneurial self," an enterprising, competitive, and unapologetic "Business Artist" who believed that money was the measure of all things.[166] Ayn Rand, the birth-

mother of neoliberalism's "moral economy of inequality," often wore a gold brooch shaped like a dollar sign and called money "the barometer of virtue."[167] Following New York City's economic shift from industrial manufacturing to finance capital, Warhol abandoned the Factory as an alternative site of Catholic communalism and moved his studio to a new location called the "Office." Seeing how an unregulated art market generated skyrocketing prices for upstarts like Schnabel and Old Masters like Velazquez, and how gallery dealers were "jubilant over the way business has revved up since the early 1970s," Warhol cut to the chase and made money his subject.[168] His blatant canvases of dollar signs bared "the truth of art as commodity" in late twentieth-century America, bluntly exposing modern art as the banal focus of capitalist reverence. Too bluntly, perhaps: in 1982, none of the *Dollar Sign* canvases shown at Castelli sold. Within weeks of his death, however, Warhol's prices doubled, and today he is one of the world's top-selling artists. In 1986, *200 One Dollar Bills* sold for $385,000. In 2009, it sold for $43.8 million.[169]

Warhol's prescience about the speculative terms of modern art, and about neoliberal self-interest, is epitomized in his portraits of the monied. Like his repetitive images of dollar bills and his showy paintings of dollar signs, Warhol's celebrity and society portraits project excess. If earlier Pop canvases featuring off-register "mistakes" and garish colors intimated difference, these same techniques applied in pictures of the upper crust inferred exorbitance. From suavely suited moguls chomping on cigars to skinny heiresses with big hair, Warhol encouraged the narcissism of his subjects. Samuel LeFrak, for example, never served in the US military. But he wore a Naval officer uniform for his portrait, including a row of ribbons above the left pocket. Ethel LeFrak was slathered in a "thick Kabuki-like pigment (a camouflage trick that flatteringly erases all wrinkles under a photographic flash)" and "two slashes of vermilion lipstick."[170] When LeFrak expressed reservations about his portrait, publishing executive and art collector John Powers "embarrassed" him into accepting it, asking, "What more do you want?" Later, Powers (who commissioned twenty-four portraits of his wife, Kimiko Powers) took Warhol aside and confided, "I can't believe you made him look so good."[171] Warhol's portraits valorized subjects like the LeFraks as modern art celebrities. Copying a Hollywood headshot style and focusing mostly on their faces, with no background and few props (except for LeFrak's chest candy), Warhol further valorized them as neoliberal celebrities: as figures whose fame and fortune seemingly derived solely from their individual striving, not from enabling networks of class and privilege.

Warhol recognized neoliberal celebrity as ideological smokescreen. In 1980, he turned down a *New York* magazine commission for a cover featuring Ronald Reagan. A few years later, in a series titled *Reagan Budget*, he "somewhat sardonically" superimposed a silhouette of the highly coiffed president with dollar figures and the words "outlays," "reven[ue]," and "deficit," seemingly questioning Reagan's neoliberal fiscal policies.[172] If Warhol was flattered

by his inclusion in the social set that commissioned his portraits, and gladly accepted all invitations and attended all parties, he wearied of painting them and adopted a monotonous, reductive approach to their production—making them "look ugly" and "grotesque," as Hilton Kramer observed (and Warhol admitted). Rendered in the same forty-by-forty format, Warhol's headshots were typically flat, blank, and superficial, tedious likenesses of glossy, insipid faces marked with a few hand-drawn lines "to interject more 'style.'"[173] Warhol was neoliberal America's Goya, both complicit with and contemptuous of the celebrity power and market-first mentality infesting late twentieth-century America.

He ruminated on this in *America* (1985), a scrapbook of his photos and his insights about the state of the nation in the late twentieth century:

> You don't hear about 'poor but honest' any more. It's like when you see somebody's poor you think, 'They're poor because they couldn't make it in the marketplace,' and we put a price tag on intelligence and talent, which really shouldn't have any. It should be okay to be an impoverished scholar without people wondering why you aren't making money. It should be okay to work on things that won't pay you for, because that's how inventions happen and things progress.[174]

Warhol's wistfulness for a non-incentivized culture echoed Kandinsky's appeal to spiritual modernism: to making a modern art of creative transcendence, beyond the limitations of "marketplace" and "price tag."

Last Supper

Papal audiences are held on Wednesdays, and on April 2, 1980, Warhol met Pope John Paul II in St. Peters Square. Expecting a private audience, and a private conversation about a possible portrait commission, he was miffed about the "5,000 other people" also waiting to meet the Pope and peevishly remarked afterward, "I didn't kiss his hand." A few months later, Warhol observed, "Everybody thinks I want to do the pope so badly. Well I do, but I'm not desperate."[175] Fifteen years after breathlessly recounting Paul VI's visit to New York and connecting the Pope to Pop, Warhol's view of Catholic Church hierarchy was decidedly less deferential. During the 1980s, he turned to explicitly Christian religious subjects in paintings of crosses (drawing on his personal collection of inexpensive crucifixes), in prints that appropriated images from religious pamphlets, and in scenes from the Bible. If he now acknowledged the symbols and stories of his religious faith, he also sustained—and amplified—the critical and interrogatory tone of his modern art regarding received Catholic dogma. His pictures of crosses, for example, were exhibited with pictures of guns and knives (figure 5.21).[176]

In 1984, gallerist Alexandre Iolas invited Warhol to make work based on



Figure 5.21. Andy Warhol, *Cross*, 1981–1982. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 90 × 70 × 1¼ in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.261.

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Leonardo's moldering masterpiece *The Last Supper*, painted between 1495 and 1498 for a Milan monastery. When Iolas directed the Hugo Gallery in New York, he gave Warhol his first solo show in 1952. In the 1980s, he commissioned him to make silkscreens of Alexander the Great and "details" of Italian Renaissance religious paintings, including Leonardo's *The Annunciation* (1472–1475).[177] Iolas arranged Warhol's *Last Supper* commission with Credito-Valtellinese, a Northern Italian bank then headquartered across the street from the church housing Leonardo's mural.

Continuing to mine the Western art historical canon, Warhol exceeded commission expectations by producing more than one hundred works, remaking Leonardo's depiction of Christ and his apostles in different colors, patterns, and designs (figure 5.22). In 1978, Italian authorities had begun a major restoration of Leonardo's mural, but as Donna De Salvo remarks, Warhol "preferred it in its deteriorated state."[178] The subject of the mural is the moment in John 13:21 when Christ announces that one of his twelve disciples (Judas) will betray him, and Leonardo's composition focused on the response of each man at the table. In his last major body of work, Warhol used the *Last Supper*'s depiction of faith and treachery, and its physically distressed, or wounded, state of decay, to work through his own anxieties about the body and belief in a neoliberal age of AIDS.

Warhol's serial projects were often suggested by others. In 1962, Henry



Figure 5.22. Andy Warhol, *The Last Supper*, 1986. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 9 ft., 8 in. × 32 ft., 6 in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.356.

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Geldzahler nudged the *Death and Disaster* series into being. In the late 1970s, gallerist Ronald Feldman suggested a series of "famous Jews," which led to *Ten Portraits of Jews of the 20th Century* (1980), rendered in the celebrity headshot style of his society portraits. Critics panned Warhol's superficial attention to Jewish history and identity, complaining that the portraits were "more immediately recognizable as 'Warhols'" than as the Jewish subjects he depicted.[179] Warhol had explored these tensions throughout his career, repeatedly prompting viewers to consider connections between seeing and belief, and their own agency in meaning making. The fact that many viewers did not recognize the Jewish figures he painted—among them Louis Brandeis, Martin Buber, Sarah Bernhardt, and Golda Meir—and saw them, instead, as "Warhols," signified neoliberal American preferences for the visibility of contemporary celebrity over cultural, intellectual, legal, and political achievements. It also suggested mainstream indifference to the religious bonds of modern Judaism. Warhol expanded on these tensions in the *Last Supper* series, employing his signature stylistic tropes of repetition, revision, and "mistakes" to examine the presence and meaning of Catholic sacramentality in the late twentieth century.

The paintings were first shown in Milan's Palazzo delle Stelline, a sixteenth-century Benedictine convent converted into an orphanage and then, in the 1980s, into a bank, conference center, three-star hotel, and art foundation. Warhol's pictures were a perfect fit for the convent's repurposing as a site of finance and tourism, especially as some canvases featured images of modern consumer goods and price tags. Blending sacred and secular subjects, Warhol updated Leonardo's *Last Supper* for contemporary viewers by showing capitalism's presence in all things. He further insinuated the threats that capitalist enchantment posed for Christianity, referencing consumer products—Dove soap, GE lightbulbs, Honda motorcycles, and Wise potato chips—whose trademarks and brand names mimicked traditional Christian symbols and metaphors but represented other values.[180] The big red price tag in *Raphael Madonna—$6.99* (figure 5.2) similarly evoked neoliberalism's market-first mentality. Warhol knowingly smudged these trademarks, showing his creative hand to avoid charges of copyright infringement, but also defacing them to question their capitalist authority in a religious context.



Figure 5.23. Andy Warhol, *Camouflage Last Supper*, 1986. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on canvas, 6 ft., 6 in. × 25 ft., 6 in. Menil Collection, Houston, TX; gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1989-03.

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Like many Christians, Warhol grew up with the *Last Supper*. His mother hung a reproduction of the painting in the kitchen of their Pittsburgh home, and, he told an Italian reporter, "when you passed by it you made the sign of the cross."[181] Decades later, he used Leonardo's painting to consider the relevance of Christ's teachings in a modern age marked by neoliberal self-interest and Catholic Church intolerance. Painted during an expanding gay-rights movement and AIDS crisis, Warhol's *Last Supper* expressed the reservations he felt as a Catholic man whose sexual practices were deemed immoral by the Church, and whose friends and acquaintances were dying in an epidemic blamed on social and sexual difference. Jessica Beck describes the series as his "confession of the conflict he felt between his faith and his sexuality, and ultimately a plea for salvation during the mass suffering of the homosexual community during the AIDS crisis."[182]

Warhol disclosed this conflict in the ways he painted the series and the details he included. He covered one *Last Supper* painting in camouflage, a military strategy used to hide or conceal and confuse (figure 5.23). Nearly obscuring the doubled image—printed in reverse—of the men gathered together for Christ's last meal, Warhol's use of military camouflage alluded to the battle over AIDS, which in 1985 was "the leading cause of death among men aged 25 to 44 in New York City."[183] Another picture in the series, *The Last Supper (The Big C)*, quoted the mainstream diagnosis of AIDS as a "gay cancer" in the early 1980s. If Warhol seemed to steal from Sister Corita Kent, who wrote "The Big G" on a 1960s serigraph to suggest God's goodness, his juxtaposition of Christ's face with price tags, motorcycles, and an epithet for AIDS disclosed rebuke, not reverence. The deteriorated physical state of Leonardo's mural, a scene of both spiritual fellowship and discord, framed Warhol's questioning of Catholic intolerance.

Religious questioning was a recurrent theme in Warhol's art, a way to test Catholicism's "deposit of faith." Beginning in the 1970s, this questioning centered on representations of the body, a subject of both lifelong personal anxiety and the metaphysical core of his religion's incarnational consciousness. Warhol's body-centric projects ranged from *Torsos* and *Sex Parts* (1976–1977), a series of "dirty pictures" focusing on male and female nudes, genitalia, and sex play, to *Skulls* (1976), a series that appropriated the *memento mori* theme of



Figure 5.24. Andy Warhol, *Skull*, 1976. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 11 ft., ¼ in. × 12 ft., 6¼ in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Dia Center for the Arts, 2002.4.24.

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religious still lifes (figure 5.24). He examined other bodily functions in *Oxidation* (1977–1978), a performative series of abstract canvases made with urine and metallic pigments that were, in effect, Warhol's version of drip painting.[184] In distorted and exaggerated compositions featuring erotic, transgressive, and mortal subjects—*Skull*, painted in thickly applied pink, yellow, and green acrylics, is over twelve feet high—he scrutinized Catholicism's corporeal dimensions.

From images of the Annunciation and the Madonna and Child to those of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Catholicism's incarnational sensibility has subsidized a long history of religious art focused on the body, some of it overtly homoerotic. "Given the fixation on Jesus's body in Catholic art," writes Mark Jordan, "and on that body as growing, suffering, dead, and resurrected, an impartial observer might wonder how Catholic art could avoid becoming intensely homoerotic."[185] In the mid-1980s, Warhol contributed to this corporeal legacy with canvases of bare-chested bodybuilders—images appropriated from postwar "he-man" magazines like Joe Weider's *Your Physique* and *Mr. America*—that he captioned "Be a Somebody with a Body." Whitening out the space around the bodybuilder's head, he fashioned a "halo-like aura."[186] In several *Last Supper* paintings, he blended these drawings of brawny musclemen with looming headshots of Leonardo's Jesus (figure 5.25). In one, he paired a bodybuilder with a picture of Christ extending his left hand in sacramental blessing. Juxtaposing secular and sacred figures drawn from popular culture and Catholic religious art, Warhol ruminated on the meaning of the body, and embodiment, in Catholic Church teachings. "The implication of transubstantiation," De Salvo observes, "is hard to escape."[187]

Likewise, the sacred dimensions of physical fitness. In the 1980s, many men—including Warhol—became obsessed with workout culture, lifting weights and following "fitness philosophies" to achieve bulging biceps, six-pack



Figure 5.25. Andy Warhol, *The Last Supper (Be a Somebody with a Body)*, detail, 1985–1986. Acrylic on linen, 50 × 56 × 1¼ in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.336.

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abs, and a "Michelangelo Muscle" (inguinal crease).[188] Fitness became a social and moral imperative, a narcissistic strategy of body fetishism, Christopher Lasch wrote, that centered on "personal well-being, health, and psychic security." For some, corporeal discipline was akin to a "secular state of grace."[189] The multi-billion-dollar fitness industry urged Americans to "take responsibility" for their bodies via the individual, exclusive terms of neoliberal privatization: by joining gyms and hiring trainers to hone physiques like the muscleman Warhol depicted. This charge was beyond the means of many and, consequently, complicit with ever-widening gaps of health and fitness inequality.

Pairing Christ and a bodybuilder in the *Last Supper*, Warhol illustrated the nation's fixation with physical discipline and strong bodies. But he also asked who could actually "be" that body, and what that body represented in late twentieth-century America. The moribund state of Leonardo's mural provided an ideal template for his reflections in the mid-1980s on neoliberal enchantment with capitalism, the Catholic Church's intolerance for homosexuality and the toll of AIDS, and the "salvation" seemingly promised in America's fitness culture.

Andy Warhol: Spiritual Modern

In 1999, Kolumba, the Art Museum of the Archdiocese of Cologne, mounted a large exhibit titled *Andy Warhol: Crosses*, blending Warhol's paintings with Christian religious art from different historical eras. In 2019, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh organized *Andy Warhol: Revelation*, contextualizing his religious upbringing with icons and prayer cards from St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church and juxtaposing them with Warhol's modern art, including his 1967 film *Sunset*.[190] Since his death in 1987, Warhol has been the



Figure 5.26. Andy Warhol, *Are You Different?*, 1985–1986. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 20 × 16 in. Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; founding collection, contribution of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1998.1.309.

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subject of countless exhibitions, books, and articles. But beyond the shows in Cologne and Pittsburgh, few have considered his religious faith as a source and inspiration for his vast and diverse production of modern art. One recent biographer largely discounts the influence of religion in Warhol's life, remarking that he "lived a less holy life, made more profane art and committed more mortal sins than should have been on the conscience of any devout Catholic."[191]

Yet Warhol's personal flaws hardly discount his religious beliefs: he was observant, not pious. By extension, refusing to consider Warhol's art on religious terms relates to misunderstandings about what it means to be religious in modern America, which for many Catholics includes wrestling with paradox, ambiguity, doubt, and the consequences of belief. Likewise, assumptions that artists who are religious are blinded by their faith, and hence incapable of the criticality demanded of modern art, are misguided. Warhol's Catholicism was grounded in a belief in God, in aspirations of grace, in a commitment to the virtue of charity, and in testing the deposit of faith by dissenting from the Church's teachings on homosexuality. His modern art was inflected by these beliefs and by his desire for a more tolerant Catholic faith in modern times.

Are You Different? (1984–1985) summarizes Warhol's spiritual modernism (figure 5.26). Concurrent with the *Last Supper* series, Warhol worked on a series of black-and-white acrylic and silkscreen canvases that appropriated ads and illustrations from postwar newspapers, magazines, and religious pam-

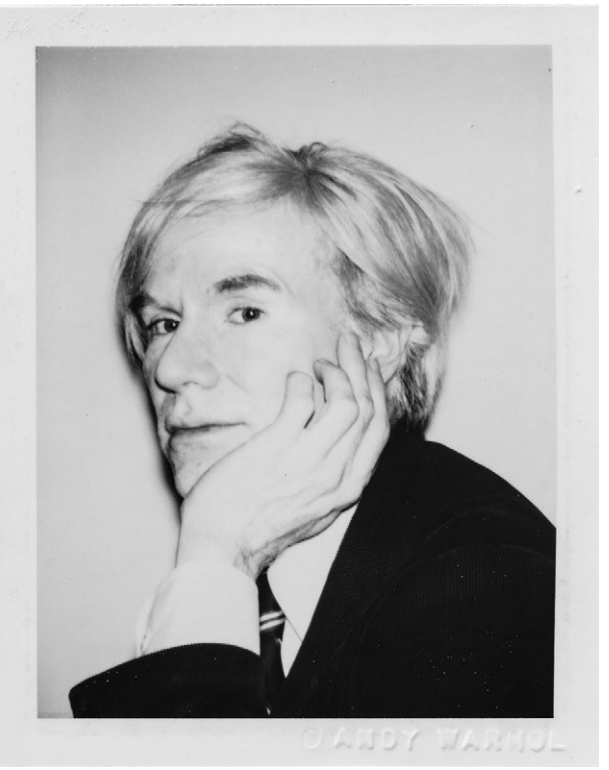


Figure 5.27. Andy Warhol, *Self-Portrait*, 1977. Polacolor type 108, 4 3⁄10 × 3 3⁄5 in. Bastian Gallery, Berlin and London.

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phlets. He traced the images by hand.[192] *Are You Different?* was based on an ad for the Astara Foundation, a New Age group organized by Earlyne and Robert Chaney in 1951. Focused on "unraveling the mystery of man" as revealed in Spiritualism, Theosophy, Lama Yoga, and Christianity, Astara offers spiritual healing through self-knowledge. Beckoning followers with provocative questions like "Do you possess inner powers?" "Do you believe in unseen guidance?" and "Are you different?" the Chaneys channeled answers in *Astara's Book of Life*, an eight-volume series of home-study "degree lessons" for "seekers on the spiritual path."[193] Warhol could have seen ads for the Astara Foundation in any number of postwar magazines, including *Horoscope Guide*.

In *Are You Different?* he depicted a pensive businessman, glancing down as if deep in thought and resting his right hand on his cheek as rays burst from a star in his forehead. The painting's title, based on the question in the Astara ad, no doubt appealed to Warhol's self-identification as a Catholic who was raised "differently" in the Byzantine Catholic Church, and who was also "different" because he was queer. Notably, the man's outfit and pose were similar to a number of Polaroid self-portraits Warhol shot in 1977, including one of himself in a dark business suit, white shirt, and striped tie, resting his left hand against his cheek (figure 5.27). Instead of pensively looking down, however, Warhol looks directly at the camera, at himself and his audience, with a bemused expression.

Informed by Catholicism's analogical imagination, sacramental consciousness, and "matrix of presence," Warhol's spiritual modernism reflected on the complementary terms of seeing and belief while repeatedly engaging issues of difference. Modern American Catholics are challenged with reenvisioning their faith in the context of changed cultural attitudes and social norms, with extending the Catholic imagination in different, previously excluded, and even unorthodox realms. Warhol's profuse and nuanced modern art underscored these interests.

6

Spiritual Moderns

Culture War Controversies & Enduring Themes



In 1997, Robert Gober exhibited a six-foot cast-concrete statue of the Virgin Mary, perched over a metal grate resembling a sewer drain and pierced through her midsection with a culvert pipe. Draped in heavy plaster robes, Gober's statue of the Virgin stood with her head bowed, her arms pressed against her body, and her palms turned up in the Orans posture, a gesture of prayer and supplication common in the early Christian era and popular again today among evangelical Christians and charismatic Catholics (figure 6.1).

Gober's statue was the centerpiece of an elaborate grotto-like installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles. In back of the Virgin, Gober designed a steep staircase with a waterfall flowing down its cedar risers (at 180 gallons a minute), filling a pool specially constructed underneath the gallery floor. At her sides were two old-fashioned, oversized, and open suitcases, also resting on grated metal drains. Peering into the drains, viewers saw—and heard—"a beautiful, tranquil day-lit tidal pool" inhabited by starfish, seaweed, colorful shells, rocks, and lichen.[1] Looking into the drain under the Virgin Mary, they saw scattered coins, mostly Lincoln-head pennies dating to 1954. Looking through the grates under the suitcases, they could glimpse the hairy legs and feet of a man and the smaller, smoother legs and feet of a diapered baby, held in front of the male figure (figure 6.2).

Amplified by spotlights hovering over each section, Gober's highly theatrical installation prompted multiple sensory responses. Museum visitors were compelled to both look and listen as they reflected on his combination of secular and sacred details. Intentionally making art that "yields so many different responses" and invites audiences to come to their own conclusions, Gober described their exploration of the installation as "a process of finding."[2]

Dedicated to a craft-based practice, to an intimate, physical interaction with materials and processes, each detail in the installation was made by hand. Spatially, the four parts followed the general cross-plan of a Christian church: the culvert pipe established the direction of the nave, the two suitcases marked the transepts on either side, and the staircase fountain represented the altar and the apse. Walking from one section to the next, audiences experienced Gober's deeply personal reconstitution of Catholic memories and beliefs.[3] Born in 1954 in Wallingford, Connecticut, Gober was raised in the Catholic Church. He was also, critic Dave Hickey observes, "the homosexual son of Catholic working people, the infant blessed and damned in the earliest memory with an awareness that his 'nature' is at odds with the 'nature' of the culture in which he lives."[4]

Growing up Catholic, Gober told MOCA curator Paul Schimmel in 1997, he

Figure 6.1. (*facing*) Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 1997. Mixed media, above ground: 35½ × 35½ × 40 in. Formerly exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; now permanently installed at the Schaulager, Basel, Germany.

Photograph: Hemis / Alamy Stock Photo.



Figure 6.2. Robert Gober, *Untitled*, detail, 1997 (view through suitcases).

© Robert Gober, courtesy of the Matthew Marks Gallery. Photograph: Russell Kaye.

experienced the Church as the "ultimate moral authority from which a lot of social mores emanated: it was part of a broader configuration of institutions that included the law, newspapers, criminality, family and even folklore."[5] His installation resonated with references to Catholic mores, including the duty and dignity of work as manifest in his affirmation of manual labor. It also critiqued Catholic attitudes about corporeality, sexual identity, and "difference," probing his conflicted relationship with a Church that has declared his sexuality "intrinsically disordered" and morally corrupt. Challenging idealized Marian imagery, Gober hired a female model "to give the figure the attributes of a real woman," and sandblasted the sculptural form of her body to make her appear weathered and worn-down.[6] Thwarting Mary's symbolic identification as the Mother of the Church, he pierced her womb with a culvert pipe, rendering her and the Church barren. Yet her physical violation also recalls Bernini's *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1645–1652), a Baroque sculpture in Santa Maria della Vittoria, a Catholic church in Rome, that depicts the Spanish nun being pierced (through her heart) with an angel's arrow, and the intense "spiritual pain" that she experienced in her rapturous love of God.[7] As such, Gober's installation engaged long-standing Catholic tropes, especially those revealed in images of its saints and the Passion of Christ, linking the mortification of the flesh with spiritual discipline and perfection.

The installation's two suitcases, symbols of contemporary cultural baggage, direct viewers to an antipodean paradise, a watery underground Eden inhabited by men and babies. The adult legs in the tidal pools were modeled on Gober's own; the pennies date to the year he was born and reference an

American icon of emancipation. Gober admits that his art is pointedly autobiographical: "Most of my sculptures have been memories remade, recombined and filtered through my current experience." Recollecting his Catholic memories in this installation, he imagined a different kind of faith "filtered" through a revised and reformed church, using water—a symbol of rebirth and regeneration in Catholicism and many other religions—as a connective, transformative, and transcendent force. "I have no problems with Catholicism in terms of faith," Gober observes. "I just object to the way it's taught. I wanted to ventilate that and complicate that, in terms of life."[8]

Engaged in modernist paradigms of media experimentation and self-criticality, Gober's artistic practice includes grappling with the symbols and metaphors of Catholic spirituality and reckoning with the persistent need for faith. His 1997 installation in Los Angeles was followed by an exhibition in 2005 that turned New York's Matthew Marks Gallery "into a chapel-like space where politics, sexuality, and religion converge."[9] Later that year, Gober cocurated *The Meat Wagon* at the Menil Collection in Houston, testing conventional art exhibition practices by mixing his work with the museum's diverse holdings. "My work and the work in the collection," he explained, "shared affinities and themes, Catholicism, Surrealism, race, and a belief in the everyday object." The exhibit's title, and its mindset, were prompted by the codicil to John de Menil's last will and testament, which outlined his funeral plans (he died in 1973) and concluded, "These details are not inspired by a pride, which would be rather vain, because I'll be a corpse for the meat wagon. I just want to show that faith can be alive."[10] Gober's attention to the currency of faith is analogous. In a 2015 interview, he remarked, "For decades it has been a high priority of contemporary art to exclude, or separate, art's very old relationship with religion. An interest in revisiting that possible relationship is hard to put into words."[11]

Gober's enduring interest in the bonds between modern art and religion is shared by other contemporary American artists, including many who similarly contend with their Catholic upbringing in terms of personal experience and identity. Given the incarnational beliefs at the core of Catholic consciousness, much of their art also focuses on representations of the body. Kiki Smith describes her bronze sculpture *Virgin Mary* (1993) as a "life-sized écorché," an anatomical figure whose skin has been stripped away to reveal the muscular structure underneath (figure 6.3).[12] Commensurate with her interests in abjection, trauma, and vulnerability, Smith's rendering centers on the physical reality of Mary's human, flesh-and-blood body: she is shown in the Orans posture but is naked and shorn, flayed from head to toe. Raised Catholic in a family of artists (her father was the modern sculptor Tony Smith), Smith observes that Catholicism, "as a visual tradition, is a tradition of manifesting things physically that aren't necessarily physical" and is "also a history of martyrdom—a religion of physical suffering."[13]

Andres Serrano's *Immersion* series, luminous and large-scale photographs



Figure 6.3. Kiki Smith, *Virgin Mary*, 1993. Bronze with silver, 66 × 25½ × 17 in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; collection of Vicki and Kent Logan, fractional and promised gift.

© Kiki Smith. Photograph courtesy SFMOMA.

of inexpensive Christian devotional objects (among other trinkets) submerged in bodily fluids like blood, milk, and urine, also highlights the physicality of Catholicism's incarnational sensibility, the concept of the "word became flesh." *Piss Christ* (1987), which depicts a thirteen-inch crucifix photographed inside a three-gallon Plexiglas tank of red-tinged urine, was intended as a provocative and reverential reminder of the physical degradation and suffering of the Passion of Christ (figure 6.4). As Serrano relates:

> The thing about the crucifix itself is that we treat it almost like a fashion accessory. When you see it, you're not horrified by it at all, but what it represents is the crucifixion of a man. And for Christ to have been crucified and laid on the cross for three days where he not only bled to death, he shat himself and he peed himself to death. So if *Piss Christ* offends you, maybe it's a good thing to think about what happened on the cross.[14]

Catholicism's explicit emphasis on the human body, Eleanor Heartney wrote in the 1990s, plainly inspired the blatantly corporeal and deeply transgressive work of contemporary artists such as Serrano and Smith.[15]

The body is central to Catholic religious beliefs: made in the image and likeness of God, human beings embody the unity of matter and spirit. Catholicism's incarnational—literally, "in flesh"—dogma emphasizes the impor-



Figure 6.4. Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ*, 1987. Cibachrome print mounted on Plexiglas, 60 × 40 in. Private collection.

Photograph © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images.

tance, and goodness, of the human body as the creation of God and the locus of divine revelation. From 1979 to 1984, Pope John Paul II gave a series of 129 catecheses (oral religious teachings) exploring fundamental questions about the body and sexual ethics. Compiled as the *Theology of the Body*, his papal teachings emphasized that human relationships with God are "intrinsically constituted by love (human and divine)" and that "the body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine."[16] Rather than reflecting on the actual conditions and experiences of modern bodies, and the complexities of human sexuality in the late twentieth century, John Paul II reasserted the Church's official position on heteronormativity, marriage, and conventional gender roles, arguing that sex must be procreative, birth control is immoral, and "chastity" is mandatory for homosexuals.[17]

Theology of the Body was contemporaneous with the work of queer Catholic artists in the United States who asserted their bodies and their sexuality in multiple cultural venues: consider Warhol's corporeal reflections in his *Oxidation* and *Last Supper* series. In the later 1980s and 1990s, at the height of the AIDS crisis in the US, Gober, Robert Mapplethorpe, and David Wojnarowicz



Figure 6.5. Renée Cox, *Yo Mama's Last Supper*, 1996. Cibachrome color print, 2 ft., 6 in. × 15 ft.; five color coupler prints, flush-mounted to aluminum, 19⅞ × 19⅞ in. Collection of the artist.

Image courtesy of the artist.

similarly produced queer body-centered sculptures, photographs, and paintings that aimed to counter American homophobic attitudes and the Catholic Church's condemnation of homosexuality. For these modern artists from Catholic backgrounds, the queer body was the central figure in a late twentieth-century "culture war" fought over issues and representations of sexual identity.[18]

In Catholicism's incarnational cosmology, the human body is a vessel of divine spirit. Challenging Church authority, confronting the paradoxes of difference, and identifying human dignity, mystery, and spirituality on more inclusive terms, these artists drew on images of queer bodies to bring archaic Catholic doctrine about the body into alignment with modern cultural and sexual realities. Following decades of liberal postwar Catholic reimagining, and consistent with long-standing American habits of inventing, renegotiating, and remaking religious ideas and institutions to fit shifting demographic and democratic needs, their art argued for an overhaul of Catholic Church assumptions and dictates about the body.

Americans hostile to their democratic reimagining whipped up a moral panic and denounced their art. In 1989, Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) ripped up a reproduction of *Piss Christ* on the floor of the US Senate, proclaiming, "This so-called piece of art is a deplorable, despicable display of vulgarity." Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) similarly called *Piss Christ* "religious bigotry" and joined D'Amato and Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) in attacking the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), blaming the federal agency for sanctioning religiously offensive art.[19] In 1997, a representative of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles called Gober's MOCA installation an "insulting" desecration of "sacred images."[20] In 2001, New York mayor Rudy Giuliani condemned Renée Cox's *Yo Mama's Last Supper* (1996), shown in the Brooklyn Museum exhibition *Committed to the Image: Contemporary Black Photographers*, calling it "disgusting," "outrageous," and "anti-Catholic" (figure 6.5). Casting the twelve apostles as Black men—except for Judas, depicted as White—and herself as Christ, standing nude at the center of the table with her arms raised in the Orans posture, Cox subverted dominant race and gender norms in Christian art and reimagined Leonardo's canonical mural on her own terms. "I have a right to interpret the Last Supper," she remarks, "just as Leonardo da Vinci created the Last Supper with people who look like him."[21]

These and other culture war controversies attracted considerable media

attention, with most critics focused on issues of free speech and artistic censorship. Few considered how religion, whether defined as an organized institution of faith or as the embodied rituals and attitudes that link believers with a transcendent reality, is a subject of keen, if conflicted, importance among many contemporary American artists. Few recognized how the reassessment of religion has been and remains a persistent practice in modern America, and that artistic interrogation of religious symbols and beliefs typically stems from aspirations of authenticity and inclusion, not from blasphemy and iconoclasm. Few questioned, by extension, authoritarian claims of entitlement to certain religious symbols and images as expressed by right-wing politicians and reactionary faith leaders. Giuliani's assertion, for example, that Cox's photograph was "anti-Catholic" implies that there is an officially sanctioned Catholic Church version of the Last Supper, and that some authority in the Vatican owns the rights to its representation.

Cox responds: "I don't know what they're talking about, anti-Catholic. I grew up Catholic and I feel that as a Catholic . . . I have the right to critique it. It has nothing to do with being anti-anything . . . this is a work dealing with issues of race and gender and stereotypes."[22] Her counternarrative representation of herself as Jesus, and of Jesus as a naked and self-confident Black woman, threatened Giuliani's assumptions of religious ownership and exposed his racist and sexist expectations about the body of Christ.

Relatedly remarking on the charges that his art is "religious bigotry," Serrano observed: "For me, *Piss Christ* was always an act of devotion. I was born and raised a Catholic and have been a Christian all my life . . . I am neither a blasphemer nor 'anti-Christian,' as some have called me, and I stand by my work as an artist and as a Christian."[23] His attention to religious subjects, Serrano explains, is based on "unresolved feelings about my own Catholic upbringing, which help me redefine and personalize my relationship with God. For me, art is a moral and spiritual obligation that cuts across all manner of pretense and speaks directly to the soul."[24]

Audiences open to religious revisionism, and to the interrogatory terms of modern art, responded accordingly. Defending Gober's 1997 MOCA installation, a *Los Angeles Times* letter writer who described herself as a "devout Roman Catholic," called it "breathtakingly beautiful and inspirational." She added, "Being confronted with the need for faith is disquieting. But then good art is never comfortable."[25] Challenging the Archdiocese of Los Angeles's condemnation of Gober's piece, letter writer Linda Ekstrom—who identified as "an artist, a practicing Roman Catholic and a feminist who is very much involved in the church and maintains a devotion to Mary"—called it "one of the most profoundly sacred spaces I have encountered in an art venue." Discussing the antagonism it generated in an article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Ekstrom observed, "Perhaps the controversy will be useful if it reminds believers that art is most useful to religion when it is free to reconsider and rethink symbols, rather [than] being condemned for performing this vital service."

She further speculated that "contemporary art might influence theological notions by challenging the status quo with new forms," adding: "The church has always been enriched by the tension that comes with diversity."[26]

Subject to the nation's coexistent and competing democratic interests, religion in America is dynamic and pluralistic, tense and contested. If, like democracy, religion in America is ideally an aspirational culture of becoming rather than being, it is also a contentious site of partisan politics. Drawing on their religious backgrounds, Gober, Smith, Serrano, and Cox responded to these tensions with critically engaged installations, sculptures, and photographs that scrutinized the meaning of religious identity. Examining the links between seeing and belief, they challenged the constraints of Church authority, including Catholic anti-modernism, sexism, and homophobia, and reimagined the possibilities of faith on their own terms. Their "right" to do so is fundamental to the First Amendment, which protects both American freedom of expression and religious freedom, including the right to religious belief and expression. As Heartney remarked in 1997, "An awareness of the influence which religion has had on certain highly visible artists might explode the myth of the necessary hostility between religion and contemporary art."[27]

Likewise, an awareness of religion's presence in American modernism challenges assumptions of their opposition and broadens our understandings of twentieth-century American art. As this book has detailed, multiple American moderns throughout the twentieth century were drawn to religious ideas and images. From Stieglitz Circle painters like Marsden Hartley and Georgia O'Keeffe to Dada pranksters like the Baroness, from interwar artists ranging from Tonita Peña to Thomas Hart Benton and postwar Abstract Expressionists including Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko, numerous American artists made use of religious images, beliefs, and cultures in their diverse styles and practices of modern art.

Some American moderns made art for religious institutions. In 1971, the Rothko Chapel, a nondenominational chapel featuring fourteen paintings by Rothko and *Broken Obelisk*, a Cor-Ten steel sculpture designed by Newman, was dedicated on the campus of the University of Saint Thomas in Houston. In the mid-1970s, Houston Conwill and his partner, Kinshasha Holman Conwill, were commissioned to design a series of murals and stained-glass windows for St. Augustine Catholic Church in Louisville, Kentucky, the city's oldest African American parish. Also in the mid-1970s, Louise Nevelson designed a series of layered wooden sculptures for the Chapel of the Good Shepherd in midtown Manhattan's Saint Peter's Church, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.[28] Unlike Warner Sallman, however, or Thomas Kincade, also a hugely successful evangelical Christian painter in the later twentieth century, Rothko, Newman, the Conwills, and Nevelson were not religious artists.

Rather, they were modern artists who worked with religious subjects, sources, and sites for different reasons. Rothko, for example, harnessed Chris-

tian "conventions of religious viewing" to induce the heightened emotional responses he felt while painting his abstract canvases, a range of feelings he described as "religious experience."[29] Spiritual seekers like Hartley tapped into different religious cultures and traditions for reasons related to self-realization and self-fulfillment. American moderns such as Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz employed regional religious symbols like Penitente crosses and natural elements like clouds in their paintings and photographs to locate differences and similarities in the nation's spiritual landscape, and to chart the depth of their own feelings. For American artists inspired by Kandinsky, religion was a resource that generated spiritually resonant forms of modern art. For American moderns raised Catholic, religion was a powerful cultural determinant to be critiqued and reimagined, revised and reinvented. Houston and Kinshasha Conwill, for example, deployed images of the Black Christ, Black saints (such as Martin de Porres, a mixed-race Dominican friar who was canonized in 1962), and Black parishioners in their art for St. Augustine's Catholic Church. As Serrano remarks, "I feel an affinity with many religious artists in the past. You have to see my work in that context. At the same time, I'm a contemporary artist. Contemporary artists often use unorthodox materials and ideas in their work."[30]

In the postwar era, many American artists were less direct. Although Newman, for example, was deeply engaged in the idea of a "spiritual dimension" in modern art, he was vague about explaining what he meant, telling Frank O'Hara in 1964, "Religious is a rough word to use today—because religion implies 'church' etcetera. Life is more complicated."[31] Likewise, while Rothko called his art "religious at its core," he denied specific religious references and was as equivocal about Judaism as he was about being stylistically pigeonholed in the art world. "To classify is to embalm," he protested in a letter to the editors of *ARTnews*, speaking as a true modernist and objecting to their labeling him an "Action Painter."[32]

The discomfort that Rothko and other Abstract Expressionists felt about being called, or named, religious or spiritual was hardly surprising given hostile political and mainstream media reactions to their avant-garde art, coupled with lockstep expectations of piety and patriotism during Cold War America's religious revival, and Greenbergian prohibitions regarding religion. Still, Rothko was determined to make modern art that challenged representational, decorative, and market conventions and communicated the emotions he associated with religious transcendence. He believed in the spiritual needs of others and, echoing Kandinsky, took up "the quest of an art that is spiritualizing in its effects."[33] As Rothko explained to curator Katherine Kuh, discussing a solo show of his work that she organized at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1954:

> If I must place my trust somewhere, I would invest it in the psyche of sensitive observers who are free of the conventions of understanding. I would have no apprehensions about the use they would make of these pictures for the needs

of their own spirits. For if there is both need and spirit, there is bound to be a real transaction.[34]

America's religious landscape today is diverse, evidence of both the nation's enduring foundational commitment to multiple religious beliefs and of how religion in America is a constantly shifting, constantly renegotiated subject. Changes to US immigration policy in 1965, for instance, opened the nation to millions of new residents from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa who identified with religions including Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism.[35] Although American artists today are, like Rothko, no less apprehensive about critical and historical misrepresentation, "modern and contemporary art is flooded with religious symbols, strivings, conceptions, and, yes, controversies," writes Brent Plate.[36]

The past few decades have seen an uptick in exhibitions, symposia, reviews, and scholarship focused on the intersections of modern American art and religion.[37] Recent shows including *Beyond Belief: 100 Years of the Spiritual in Modern Art* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2013), *Blessed Be: Mysticism, Spirituality, and the Occult in Contemporary Art* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, 2018), and *Transcendent: Spirituality in Contemporary Art* (Burlington City Arts, Vermont, 2019), as well as solo exhibitions highlighting spiritual moderns such as Hyman Bloom and Agnes Pelton, suggest that art museums and galleries are increasingly willing to recognize the religious impulses that suffuse American culture.[38] Factoring religion into the history of modern American art challenges monolithic accounts of both subjects and yields compelling understandings of their cultural exchange and influence. Further opportunities to translate religious beliefs in American modernism, and to develop critically informed histories of the connections between modern American art and religion, are plentiful.

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Spiritual Moderns got its start when I participated in the Visual Culture of American Religions (VCAR), a multi-year and multi-university project of research, presentations, exhibitions, and publications that focused on how images and objects inform and enable religious belief. My essay on contemporary artist Robert Gober's religious interests, included in the eponymous volume edited by David Morgan and Sally Promey, prompted this book's expanded consideration of the intersections of modern American art and religion, and why these intersections were generally unacknowledged in twentieth-century American art history. I thank David and Sally for inviting me to participate in VCAR and for advancing the study of visual and material cultures and religions.

While I do not identify with any of the religions discussed in *Spiritual Moderns*, I am deeply curious about the attraction and effect that they had for the American artists discussed in this book. Each chapter has benefited from the insights and observations of colleagues and friends, and from the expertise and generosity of staff at numerous archives, libraries, and museums. Art historians including Elissa Auther, Matthew Baigell, Samantha Baskin, Sarah Burns, Donna M. Cassidy, Charles Eldredge, Linda Dalrymple Henderson, Theresa Leininger-Miller, Leo Mazow, Wendy Owens, Andrea Pappas, Aaron Rosen, Kristen Schwain, Gail Scott, Monica Steinberg, and Leslie Umberger helped me articulate both select and broad themes tackled in this book. I similarly thank scholars in multiple fields including Marcus Berrey, Joe Boone, Gretchen Buggeln, Kathy Cummings, Fred Donner, Stephanie Malia Hom, Stewart Hoover, Tom O'Donnell, Josh Roiland, Lois Rudnick, and Thomas Tweed for their advice and suggestions about this project. A special thanks to Liza Kirwin, deputy director of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and Marisa Bourgoin, chief of reference services at the Archives, who guided my use of their collections. The vast holdings of the Archives have long nourished my scholarship in American art, and I am very grateful.

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Notes

Chapter One

1 Miranda Lash, "Kitsch You Can Believe In: Warhol's Incessant *Last Supper*," in *Andy Warhol: Revelation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Andy Warhol Museum, 2019): 19–20, exhibition catalogue; Jane Daggett Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 1998): 120.

2 David Bourdon notes Warhol's pocket missal and rosary in *Warhol* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989): 38.

3 Warhol's mother, who lived with him in New York from 1952 until the early 1970s, maintained a small shrine in the Lexington Avenue townhouse they shared; see Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003): 378.

4 Mark Rothko, quoted in Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1957): 93–94. Rodman was a sympathetic ear for Rothko, arguing in *The Eye of Man: Form and Content in Western Painting* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1955) that the modern artist was tasked with communicating "a vision of spiritual truth" (3).

5 Wassily Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, ed. Hilla Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1946): 13. Written in 1910, the book was initially published in Munich in late December 1911 as *Über der Geistige in der Kunst*, but given a publication date of 1912. The first English translation, by Michael T. Sadler, was published in 1914 and titled *Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. The Guggenheim's 1946 imprint was described as "the first complete English translation of Kandinsky's text."

6 Rothko, quoted in John Fischer, "The Easy Chair: Mark Rothko: Portrait of the Artist as an Angry Man," *Harper's* 241 (July 1970): 20. Rothko's reference to 57th Street indicated the location of some of New York's oldest and most prestigious art galleries, including Knoedler, Marlborough, and Galerie St. Etienne. On Rothko's interests in religious transcendence, see Wessel Stoker, "The Rothko Chapel Paintings and the 'Urgency of the Transcendent Experience,'" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 64, no. 2 (October 2008): 89–102.

7 Erika Doss, "Making a 'Virile, Manly Christ': The Cultural Origins and Meanings of Warner Sallman's Religious Imagery," in David Morgan, ed., *Icons of American Protestantism: The Art of Warner Sallman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996): 61–94, 214–18.

8 Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9 (October 1979): 54; Timothy J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001): 22; James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 20.

9 Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–29.

10 Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014): 394.

11 Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989): 210. For recent surveys, see Megan Brenan, "Religion Considered Important to 72% of Americans," *Gallup*, December 24, 2018, https://news.gallup.com/poll/245651/religion-considered-important-americans.aspx; Zach Hrynowski, "How Many Americans Believe in God?," *Gallup*, November 8, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/poll/268205/americans-believe-god.aspx; and the Pew Research Center 2014 US Religious Landscape Study, cited in Caryle Murphy, "Most Americans Believe in Heaven . . . and Hell," *Pew Research Center*, November 10, 2015, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/.

12 Caroline Kitchener, "What It Means to Be Spiritual but Not Religious," *Atlantic*, January 11, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/membership/archive/2018/01/what-it-means-to-be-spiritual-but-not-religious/550337/; Art Raney, Daniel Cox, and Robert P. Jones, "Searching for Spirituality in the U.S.: A New Look at the Spiritual but Not Religious," *PRRI*, November 6, 2017, https://www.prri.org/research/religiosity-and-spirituality-in-america/.

13 Jeff Sharlet, *Radiant Truths: Essential Dispatches, Reports, Confessions, and Other Essays on American Belief* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014): 9.

14 Sociologist Emile Durkheim defined religion on similar terms in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965): 62. Historian Jonathan Z. Smith, on the other hand, argued that religion was an academic invention; see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): xi.

15 Andrew M. Greely, "Protestant and Catholic: Is the Analogical Imagination Extinct?," *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 4 (August 1989): 485–86.

16 Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006): 54–55.

17 See, for example, Robert Fuller, *Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 1; John Corrigan, ed., *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Constance M. Furey, "Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 2012): 7–33; David Morgan, *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); and Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

18 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993): 54; see also Arvind-Paul S. Mandair and Markus Dressler, "Introduction: Modernity, Religion-Making, and the Postsecular," in Marcus Dressler and Arvind-Paul S. Mandair, eds., *Secularism and Religion-Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 3–36.

19 David Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Nancy T. Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998):

2–3; see also David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, eds., *The Visual Culture of American Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and David Morgan, "Introduction: The Matter of Belief," in David Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (London: Routledge, 2010): 1–17.

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21 Richard J. Callahan, Jr., "The Study of American Religion: Looming Through the Glim," *Religion* 42, no. 3 (2012): 428–29, Michael Warner, "Was Antebellum America Secular?," *Immanent Frame*, October 2, 2012, https://tif.ssrc.org/2012/10/02/was-antebellum-america-secular/.

22 Peter Manseau, *One Nation, under Gods: A New American History* (New York: Little, Brown, 2015): 225.

23 Callahan, "The Study of American Religion," 427.

24 Frederick Lynch, "Religion Run Riot," *Review of Reviews* (November 1929): 112–13.

25 Leigh Eric Schmidt, "Introduction: The Parameters and Problematics of American Religious Liberalism," in Leigh Eric Schmidt and Sally Promey, eds., *American Religious Liberalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012): 1–14.

26 Kristin Schwain, *Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008): 131.

27 Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); Olmsted, quoted in Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008): xiii.

28 John M. Giggie, *After Redemption: Jim Crow and the Transformation of African American Religion in the Delta, 1875–1915* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008): 16.

29 Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls*: *The Making of American Spirituality* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005): 162–64.

30 Michael Williams, "New America," *Van Norden Magazine* (1909), excerpted in "The New Spiritual America Emerging," *Current Literature* XLVI, no. 2 (February 9, 1909): 180–82. Williams's discussion was largely based on a 1907 essay by William James describing a "healthy-minded and optimistic" new "wave of religious activity" in "our American world"; see William James, "The Energies of Men," *Philosophical Review* XVI, no. 1 (January 1907): 1–20.

31 Schmidt, *Restless Souls*, 6–7.

32 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905): 31.

33 Robert D. Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006): 5; James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 387, noted in Lindsay V. Reckson, "Each Attitude a Syllable: The Linguistic Turn in William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*," in *American Religious Liberalism*, eds. Schmidt and Promey, 295–96.

34 Daniel Joseph Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," *American Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 7–26.

35 Singal, 14.

36 David Morgan, comments in "The Art Seminar," in James Elkins and David Morgan, eds., *Re-Enchantment* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 157–58, 168.

37 Thomas Crow, *No Idols: The Missing Theology of Art* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2017): 26.

38 For different models on how such an art history might be organized see Morgan and

Promey, eds., *The Visual Culture of American Religion*; Schwain, *Signs of Grace*, 1–11; and Matthew Baigell, *Jewish Art in America: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

39 For illustrations of these and related works see Robert L. Gambone, *Art and Popular Religion in Evangelical America, 1915–1940* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

40 On Peña's and Tsireh's art see Elizabeth S. Hawley, "Tonita Peña and the Politics of Pueblo Art," *American Art* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 62–93; and Sascha Scott, "Awa Tsireh and the Art of Subtle Resistance," *Art Bulletin* 95, no. 4 (December 2013): 597–622; on Bloch's 1932 painting *The Lynching*, see Helen Langa, "Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions: Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives, Gendered Constraints," *American Art* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 22–23; on Benton's *Year of Peril* series, see Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 282–300.

41 Deborah Martin Kao, "Radioactive Icons: The Critical Reception and Cultural Meaning of Modern Religious Art in Cold War America" (PhD diss., Boston University, 1999): 4, 32–51. Sponsored by Loew-Lewin Studios to promote the movie *The Private Affairs of Bel Ami*, the 1946 exhibit imitated the successful marketing tie-in between Ivan Albright's painting *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the 1945 movie starring Hurd Hatfield. Juried by Alfred Barr, Marcel Duchamp, and Sidney Janis, it featured eleven paintings including works by American artists Ivan Albright, Eugene Berman, Louis Guglielmi, Horace Pippin, Abraham Rattner, and Dorothea Tanning, and opened at Knoedler Gallery, New York, on September 16, 1946. For images, see the catalogue, *Bel Ami International Competition* (Washington, DC: American Federation of the Arts, 1947). The winning painting, Max Ernst's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, was briefly shown in the 1946 movie.

42 David Smith, "Symposium: Art and Religion," *Art Digest* 28, no. 6 (December 15, 1953): 11, see also the discussion in Kao, "Radioactive Icons," 50–51. Other symposium participants included Jacques Lipchitz, Germaine Richier, Henry Moore, Nicolas Calas, Ibram Lassaw, Anton Refregier, and Percival Goodman.

43 Edward Alden Jewell, "New O'Keeffe Pictures," *New York Times*, February 9, 1930: 118.

44 Marty Mann, "Exhibitions," *International Studio* 95 (March 1930): 76, 78. A journalist and public-relations executive, Mann founded the National Council on Alcoholism in 1944.

45 Henry McBride, "The Sign of the Cross: Georgia O'Keeffe's Impressions of the Taos Region Exhibited Here," *New York Sun*, February 8, 1930; reprinted in Daniel Catton Rich, *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticisms of Henry McBride* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1975): 260–62.

46 Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," *Art in America* (January 1990): 114–24, 177, 179.

47 See, for example, McBride's reviews of O'Keeffe's annual New York shows in the 1920s, including "Stieglitz-O'Keefe [sic] Show at Anderson Galleries," *New York Herald*, March 9, 1924: 13; "Fifty Recent Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe," *New York Sun*, February 13, 1926: 7; and "Paintings by Georgia O'Keefe [sic]: Decorative Art That Is Also Occult at the Intimate Gallery," *New York Sun*, February 9, 1929: 7, as reprinted in Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics, 1916–1929* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989): 199, 243, and 295, respectively. Italics added.

48 O'Keeffe, quoted in McBride, "The Sign of the Cross"; O'Keeffe, quoted in Charles Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993): 199.

49 Marsden Hartley, *Somehow a Past: The Autobiography of Marsden Hartley*, ed. Susan Elizabeth Ryan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997): 181; Marsden Hartley to Richard Tweedy,

July 10, 1901, as noted in Townsend Ludington, *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1992): 27.

50 Franklin Sanborn, "Green Acre," *New England Magazine* 34 (August 1906): 741–42, noted in Wakoh Shannon Hickey, *Mind Cure: How Meditation Became Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 45. On Hartley's religious interests, see Townsend Ludington, *Seeking the Spiritual: The Paintings of Marsden Hartley* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

51 Marsden Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, February 1913, in James Timothy Voorhies, ed., *My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Marsden Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002): 56.

52 Gail R. Scott, *Marsden Hartley* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988): 37–39; on Teresa of Avila's writings, see Teresa of Avila, *The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Jesus*, vol. 1, trans. Edgar Allison Peers (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002).

53 Schmidt, *Restless Souls*, 228.

54 Hartley, *Somehow a Past*, 84; Charles C. Eldredge, "Nature Symbolized: American Painting from Ryder to Hartley," in Maurice Tuchman, ed., *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1945* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986): 118.

55 Marsden Hartley to Franz Marc, May 13, 1913, as noted in Patricia McDonnell, "'Dictated by Life': Spirituality in the Art of Marsden Hartley and Wassily Kandinsky, 1910–1915," *Archives of American Art Journal* 29, nos. 1–2 (1989): 31; Marsden Hartley to Norma Berger, October 14, 1933, as noted in Gail Levin, "Marsden Hartley and Mysticism," *Arts Magazine* 60, no. 3 (November 1985): 21.

56 On Catholicism in Duchamp's work, see David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 60–62.

57 Maurice Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art," in *The Spiritual in Art*, ed. Tuchman, 45–47; on Duchamp and alchemy see John F. Moffitt, *Alchemist of the Avant-Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003); on Duchamp and the fourth dimension see Linda Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, rev. ed. (1985; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013).

58 Duchamp, quoted in Pierre Cabonne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987): 21; see also Michael North, *Machine-Age Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 87.

59 Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings," 47.

60 Sponsored by the San Francisco Art Association, the Western Round Table on Modern Art was held from April 8–10, 1949. Duchamp quoted in original transcript of the proceedings found in the Mark Tobey papers, accession no. 3593-2, box 10, folder 24, Special Collections, University of Washington (Seattle) Libraries.

61 Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors: Five Masters of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Viking, 1965): 18.

62 Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, 93.

63 Michael T. H. Sadler, letter to his wife, August 17, 1912, as quoted in *Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. Michael Sadler (London: Tate Publishing, 2006): x. On Kandinsky's religious interests and influences, see Sixten Ringbom, "Art in 'The Epoch of the Great Spiritual': Occult Elements in the Early Theory of Abstract Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 386–418; Rose-Carol Washton Long, "Kandinsky's Abstract Style: The Veiling of Apocalyptic Folk Imagery," *Art Journal* 34, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 217–28, and Sixten Ringbom, "Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers," in *The Spiritual in Art*, ed. Tuchman, 131–53.

64 "Chronology," *Kandinsky: A Selection from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the*

Hilla von Rebay Foundation (Victoria: International Cultural Corporation of Australia, Limited, 1982): 114.

65 Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, 10, 26.

66 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1896): 27. Although Blavatsky stated that Theosophy was not a "new-fangled religion" but "synonymous with EVERLASTING TRUTH," the society she cofounded with Henry Steel Olcott, an American author and lawyer, helped advance the new movement; see pp. 1, 254.

67 Parallels between scientific and spiritual understandings of phenomena such as light, heat, ether, vibrations, and electromagnetism were common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see Anthony Enns and Shelley Trower, eds., *Vibratory Modernism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Vibratory Modernism: Boccioni, Kupka, and the Ether of Space," in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, eds. Linda Dalrymple Henderson and Bruce Clarke (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002): 126–49.

68 Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbetter, *Thought-Forms* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1901); Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, 65; Ringbom, "Art in 'The Epoch of the Great Spiritual,'" 398. For a close reading of Kandinsky's attention to Theosophy, see Marian Burleigh-Motley, "Kandinsky's *Sketch for 'Composition II,'* 1909–1910: A Theosophical Reading," in Rosalind P. Blakesley and Margaret Samu, eds., *From Realism to the Silver Age: New Studies in Russian Artistic Cultures* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014): 189–200.

69 Gail Levin and Marianne Lorenz, *Theme & Improvisation: Kandinsky & the American Avant-Garde, 1912–1950* (Boston, MA: Bullfinch Press, 1992): 10, 22, 26, 51; Wassily Kandinsky, "Extracts from 'The Spiritual in Art,'" *Camera Work* 39 (July 1912): 34.

70 Theodore Roosevelt, "A Layman's View of an Art Exhibition," *Outlook* 103 (March 29, 1913): 718–20; Magdalena Dabrowski, "Vassily Kandinsky," in *Stieglitz and His Artists: Matisse to O'Keeffe: The Alfred Stieglitz Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. Lisa Mintz Messinger (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011): 25.

71 Alfred Stieglitz to Wassily Kandinsky, May 26, 1913, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, box 26, folder 627, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3777855.

72 Alfred Stieglitz to Israel White, March 19, 1913, from Stieglitz Archive in the Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. White was a writer for the *Newark Evening News*.

73 On *Spiritual America*, see Jay Bochner, *An American Lens: Scenes from Alfred Stieglitz's New York Secession* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005): 119; and Lauren Kroiz, "Breeding Modern Art: Criticism, Caricature, and Condoms in New York's Avant-Garde Melting Pot," *Oxford Art Journal* 33, no. 3 (2010): 339. The castration or gelding of male horses is typically done to control aggressive behavior. Mules—bred from female horses and male donkeys—are genetically sterile and cannot reproduce. Whether he depicted a gelded horse or a john mule, Stieglitz made his point.

74 Dove, quoted in Alfred Stieglitz to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 9, 1918, in Sarah Greenough, *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, 1915–1933* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011): 233. O'Keeffe and Stieglitz were married from 1924 to 1946.

75 Alfred Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," in *Stieglitz on Photography: His Selected Essays and Notes*, eds. Richard Whelan and Sarah Greenough (New York: Aperture, 2000): 235.

76 Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Rosenfeld, November 14, 1923, as noted in Kristina Wilson, "The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*: Spirituality in the 1920s Work of Stieglitz," *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 4 (2003): 752. See also Kate Stanley, "Unrarified Air: Alfred Stieglitz and the Modernism of Equivalence," *Modernism/Modernity* 26, no. 1 (January 2019): 185–212.

77 Wilson, "The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*," 749, 757, 763. Wilson notes that while Stieglitz never exhibited the *Equivalents* at the Intimate Gallery, the space was suffused by his discussion of these photographs, and other examples of American modernism, on spiritual terms.

78 See Wanda Corn's discussion of soil and spirit nationalism in *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 31–32; see also Donna Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005): 20–21.

79 Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Cubists and Post-Impressionists* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1914): 112; on Kandinsky, see especially pp. 110–38.

80 Raymond Jonson diary entry, August 4, 1921, p. 275, in Raymond Jonson Papers, 1910–1964, microfilm roll RJ 8, frame 6198, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; as noted in Herbert R. Hartel Jr., "The Art and Life of Raymond Jonson (1891–1982): Concerning the Spiritual in American Abstract Art" (PhD diss., CUNY, 2002): 54–55; Alfred Morang, "The Transcendental Painting Group: Its Origin, Foundation, Ideals, and Works," *New Mexico Daily Examiner* (August 21, 1938), magazine section: 3.

81 Barnaby Haran, "Modernism into America," *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 2 (2007): 335; Jennifer R. Gross, ed., *The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

82 Barnett Newman, "The Plasmic Image," as noted in Barnett Newman, *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): 140.

83 Lisa Florman, *Concerning the Spiritual and the Concrete in Kandinsky's Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014): 1, 6.

84 Marsden Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, December 20, 1912, in Townsend Ludington, *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of An American Artist* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998): 85–86.

85 Kandinsky, "Foreword to the First Original Edition," Munich, 1911, *On the Spiritual in Art*, 6.

86 Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010): 99–100.

87 Marcia Brennan, *Curating Consciousness: Mysticism and the Modern Museum* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010): 25.

88 On secularization and American higher education, see George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, eds., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Christian Smith, *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

89 William F. Buckley Jr., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of 'Academic Freedom'* (New York: Regnery, 1951). In his review, McGeorge Bundy called Buckley's book "dishonest in its use of facts, false in its theory, and a discredit to its author"; see "The Attack on Yale," *Atlantic* (November 1951): 50–52.

90 Brennan, *Curating Consciousness*, 22; see also Carol Duncan, "The Art Museum as Ritual," in *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995): 7–20.

91 Pope St. Pius X, "Pascendi Dominici Gregis, On the Doctrines of the Modernists," Sep-

tember 8, 1907, http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10pasce.htm; see also Peter Steinfels, "Fighting Modernists, a Decree Shaped Catholicism," *New York Times*, September 1, 2007: B5.

92 Marvin Richard O'Connell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994): 341–43.

93 Russell Shaw, "Under the Ban: Modernism, Then and Now," *Crisis*, September 2007: 10–17; David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007): 226–27.

94 *The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982): 23. On midcentury modern Catholic architecture, see Victoria M. Young, *Saint John's Abbey Church: Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) and Robert Proctor, *Building the Modern Church: Roman Catholic Architecture in Britain, 1955–1975* (London: Ashgate, 2014); on how the "spiritual" was discussed among postwar architects see Annie Pedret, "From the 'Spirit of the Age' to the 'Spiritual Needs' of People," in *Re-Humanizing Architecture: New Forms of Community, 1950–1970*, eds. Akos Moravanszky, Judith Hopfengärtner, and Karl Kegler (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017): 43–63.

95 Pope Pius XII, "Mediator Dei," papal encyclical, November 20, 1947, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html.

96 The comment, made by a "distinguished Dominican reverend father" (probably Marie-Alain Couturier), was noted in Jean Cassou, "Paris: Controversy and Quintessence," *ARTnews* 50, no. 2 (April 1951): 18, which also referenced hostile "Catholic opinion" about modern art by Chagall, Legér, Matisse, and Germaine Richier in the chapel of Assy, built from 1948 to 1950. See also William S. Rubin, *Modern Sacred Art and the Church of Assy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961): 51.

97 Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," a 1918 lecture delivered at Munich University, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans., eds., and introd. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946): 155, 139.

98 Vincent Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006): 2. See also Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig J. Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Philip S. Gorski and Ates Altinordu, "After Secularization?," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008): 55–85; and Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta, "Introduction," in Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta, eds., *Religion and Modernity: An International Comparison* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 1–12.

99 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007): 3. Some writers observe that academia's "rediscovery" of religion is indicative of religious commitment; Taylor, for example, is a professed Roman Catholic. See Kieran Flanagan, "A Secular Age: An Exercise in Breach-Mending," *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1036 (November 2010): 706–7; and Matthew Rose, "Tayloring Christianity," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life* 248 (December 2014): 25–30.

100 See Sally M. Promey's discussion of the impact and "dismantling" of the secularization theory of modernity in American art history in "The 'Return' of Religion in the Scholarship of American Art," *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 3 (September 2003): 581–603.

101 Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, 344.

102 Virginia Woolf quoted in Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* (London: Fount/HarperCollins, 1996): 25.

103 Richard Pousette-Dart's art discussed in Judith Higgins, "Pousette-Dart's Window into

the Unknowing," *ARTnews* 86, no. 1 (January 1987): 112; his comments about critical use of the word "spiritual" are noted in Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings," 18. Barnett Newman, "Response" to panel "Spiritual Dimensions of Art," in *Revolution Place and Symbol: Journal of the First International Congress on Religion, Architecture, and the Visual Arts*, ed. Rolfe Lanier Hunt (New York: International Congress on Religion, Architecture and the Visual Arts, 1967): 131; John Giorno quoted in Bradford R. Collins, "Dick Tracy and the Case of Warhol's Closet: A Psychoanalytic Detective Story," *American Art* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 71.

104 The trial took place in Dayton, Tennessee. The verdict (and fine of $100) was overturned. For Mencken's columns on the trial see H. L. Mencken, *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee: A Reporter's Account of the Scopes Monkey Trial*, introd. Art Winslow (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House Publishing, 2006).

105 Lately Thomas, *The Vanishing Evangelist: The Aimee Semple McPherson Kidnapping Affair* (New York: Viking Press, 1959).

106 Joseph Wood Krutch, "Mr. Babbitt's Spiritual Guide," *Nation* 124, no. 3219 (March 16, 1927): 291.

107 Richard R. Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2002): 301–3; H. L. Mencken, "The Library," *American Mercury* 10, no. 4 (April 1927): 506–10; "The Storm Over Elmer Gantry," *Literary Digest* (April 16, 1927): 28–29. Accepting the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1930, Lewis remarked, "There was one good pastor in California who upon reading my *Elmer Gantry* desired to lead a mob and lynch me." See Sinclair Lewis, "Nobel Lecture: The American Fear of Literature," December 12, 1930, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1930/lewis/lecture/.

108 Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6 (Fall 1939): 39, 41, 47.

109 Clement Greenberg, "Our Period Style," *Partisan Review* 11 (November 1949): 1138.

110 "An Interview with Robert Motherwell," *Artforum* 4, no. 1 (September 1965), as noted in Frank O'Hara, *Robert Motherwell, with Selections from the Artist's Writings* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965): 54.

111 Clement Greenberg, "Art," *Nation* 166, no. 17 (April 24, 1948): 448.

112 Clement Greenberg, "The Decline of Cubism," *Partisan Review* 10 (March 1948): 369.

113 On Greenberg's cultural nationalism, see Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum* 12, no. 10 (June 1974): 39–41; Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism*, especially chapters 5–6.

114 Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 127, 132.

115 Margaret Olin, "C[lement] Hardesh [Greenberg] and Company: Formal Criticism and Jewish Identity," in Norman L. Kleeblatt, ed., *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1996): 39–59.

116 Thierry de Duve, *Clement Greenberg between the Lines*, trans. Brian Holmes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 45, 48; Clement Greenberg, "Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism: Some Reflections on 'Positive Jewishness,'" *Commentary*, November 1950: 429, 432. See also Mark Godfrey, "Keeping Watch over Absent Meaning," *Jewish Quarterly*, autumn 1999: 17; Louis Kaplan, "Reframing the Self-Criticism: Clement Greenberg's 'Modernist Painting' in Light of Jewish Identity," in Catherine M. Soussloff, ed., *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 181–82; and Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses in Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001): 161–77.

117 Clement Greenberg, "Art," *Nation* 162, no. 4 (January 26, 1946): 109; on Bloom's art

and religious beliefs, see Henry Adams and Marcia Brennan, *Modern Mystic: The Art of Hyman Bloom* (New York: D.A.P., 2019), especially Brennan's essay "A Half-Smothered Glow to Light a Very Small Museum: The Mystical Artworks of Hyman Bloom," 127–63.

118 Musa Mayer, *Night Studio: A Memoir of Philip Guston by His Daughter* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988): 21.

119 "Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?," *Life*, August 8, 1949: 42–43; "The Wild Ones," *Time*, February 20, 1956: 75.

120 Terence H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, *Mona Lisa's Mustache: A Dissection of Modern Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947)" 150–51, 14–16; see also Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings," 18, n.8.

121 Clement Greenberg, "Calling All Philistines," *Nation* 166, no. 3 (January 17, 1948): 78.

122 Meyer Schapiro, "Religion and the Intellectuals," *Partisan Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1950): 331. On postwar American moderns and religion see, for example, Harry Hartoonian, "Postwar America and the Aura of Asia," in Alexandra Munroe, ed., *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009): 45–58.

123 Letter from Adolph Gottlieb and Marcus Rothko included in Edward Alden Jewell, "Globalism Pops into View," *New York Times*, June 13, 1943: 9; Newman, "The Plasmic Image," 151.

124 Janay Jadine Wong, "Synagogue Art of the 1950s: A New Context for Abstraction," *Art Journal* 53, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 37–43; Mark C. Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 5.

125 Erika Doss, "The Next Step?" in Elkins and Morgan, eds., *Re-Enchantment*, 298.

126 Debora Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for the Sacred* (New York: Macmillan, 2000):13. Silverman considers, for example, how Van Gogh's upbringing in Dutch Reformed Protestantism (his father was a pastor), and the deeply religious sentiments he expressed in letters to his brother, have been largely overlooked in modern art history.

127 For these approaches, see Daniel Seidel, *God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); and Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991).

Chapter Two

1 Peter L. Galison, "Scientific Forms of Sight," in Susanne Stemmler, ed., *Wahrnehmung, Erfahrung, Experiment, Wissen. Objektivitat und Subjektivitat in den Kunsten und den Wissenschaften* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2014): 24; see also Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

2 Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875; Boston: Christian Science Board of Directors, 2006): 269.

3 Later editions of Man Ray's sculpture can be seen in the University of Michigan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Tate, and the Israel Museum. Man Ray implied the "lack" was imagination; see Arturo Schwarz, *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977): 209.

4 Cornell's first solo show, "Objects by Joseph Cornell: Minutiae, Glass Bells, Shadow Boxes, Coups d'Oeil, Jouets Surréalistes," was held at the Julian Levy Gallery in New York City in November 1932.

5 Anne Reynes-Delobel and Céline Mansanti, "Americanizing Surrealism: Cultural Challenges in the Magnetic Fields," *Miranda* 14 (2017): 8.

6 Carolyn Burke, *Lee Miller: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005): 131; Kirsten A. Hoving, "The Surreal Science of Soap: Joseph Cornell's First *Soap Bubble Set*," *American Art* 20, no. 1 (2006): 30–31.

7 See the illustrations for figures 309 (Cornell) and 310 and 315 (Dalí) in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., ed., *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

8 On Cornell's evolution as an American modern, see Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007): 15–91; see also Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Joseph Cornell* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980): 91–119.

9 As noted in Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, *Joseph Cornell: Shadowplay . . . Eterniday* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003): 34, n.13; also see Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 105. In a 1936 biography for MoMA, Cornell wrote "Went to Andover, No Art instruction, Natural talent"; as noted in Dore Ashton, *A Joseph Cornell Album* (New York: Viking Press, 1974): 4. Toward the end of his life, Cornell enrolled in a life-drawing class taught by Mary Frank, but attended few sessions; see Deborah Solomon, *Utopia Parkway: The Life and Work of Joseph Cornell* (New York: Random House, 1997): 349–50.

10 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 107; Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896* (Boston: Christian Science Board of Directors, 1896): 95. For her biography, see Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1998).

11 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 513.

12 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 468, 123 (italics original).

13 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 127, 547.

14 Sandra Leonard Starr, *Joseph Cornell: Art and Metaphysics* (New York: Castelli, Feigen, Corcoran, 1982): 1.

15 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, October 10, 1952, as noted in the Joseph Cornell Papers, 1804–1986, bulk 1939–1972, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter, JCP), Diary Entries: September–October 1952, box 6, folder 15, frame 64. This collection has been digitalized; see http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/joseph-cornell-papers-5790/more.

16 Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 105; see also Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell's Explorations: Art on File," in *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp . . . in Resonance* (Houston, TX: Menil Foundation, Inc., 1998): 221–43, exhibition catalogue.

17 Paul E. Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999): 1, 50–52.

18 Precise membership data is unclear as the church does not release this information. Relying on the US Census of Religious Bodies, Rodney Stark cites 202,098 members in 1926 and 268,915 members in 1936; see his article "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 13, no. 2 (1998): 191. Craig Branch cites 350,000 members by 1932; see his article "Christian Science," *Profile*, 1994, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/christianscienceprofile.pdf.

19 Ivey, *Prayers in* Stone, 4, 97; Paul E. Ivey, "Christian Science Architecture in the American City: The Triumph of the Classical Style," in John M. Giggie and Diane Winston, eds., *Faith in the Marketplace: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002): 108–32; Stark, "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science," 193–94.

20 Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973): 289, 291; see also Stephen Gottschalk, *Rolling Away the Stone: Mary Baker Eddy's Challenge to Materialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

21 In 1907, a church spokesman observed that prominent Scientists in New York included the presidents of Otis Elevator company, Aetna National Bank, and Western Union; see Ivey, "Christian Science Architecture," 115; see also Ivey, *Prayers in Stone*, 23–26. Rolf Swensen,

"Pilgrims at the Golden Gate: Christian Scientists on the Pacific Coast, 1880–1915," *Pacific Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (May 2003): 229–63.

22 Martin E. Marty, "In the Mainstream," *Reviews in American History* 2, no. 3 (September 1974): 411.

23 Rosemary R. Hicks, "Religion and Remedies Reunited: Rethinking Christian Science," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 25.

24 Statistics from Bryan Wilson, *Sects and Society: A Sociological Study of the Elim Tabernacle, Christian Science, and Christadelphians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978): 214.

25 Amy B. Voorhees, "Mary Baker Eddy, the Woman Question, and Christian Salvation," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 10, 13, 15.

26 Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007): 5–6. There are crossovers among these categories, of course: the Church of Scientology, for example, is an aggressively evangelistic religion with no roots in Christianity.

27 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 146–47.

28 Mary Baker Eddy, "Seedtime and Harvest," in *Unity of Good* (Boston, MA: First Church of Christ Scientist, 1887, 1919): 9, italics original.

29 Frank Crane, "Christian Science and Insanity," *Methodist Review* 91, no. 3 (May–June 1909): 445–49; Mark Twain, from manuscript written ca. 1901–1902 titled "The Secret History of Eddypus, the World-Empire," as noted in Gottschalk, *Rolling Away the Stone*, 45. Twain's numerous essays on Christian Science and Mrs. Eddy were collected in his last major book, *Christian Science* (New York: Harper, 1909). Eddy herself was subject to considerable derision; see Jean A. McDonald, "Mary Baker Eddy and the Nineteenth-Century 'Public' Woman: A Feminist Reappraisal," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 89–111.

30 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 349.

31 Mary Baker Eddy, *Message to the Mother Church for 1901* (Boston, MA: Christian Science Board of Directors, 1901): 1.

32 See statistics in Rolf Swensen, "A Metaphysical Rocket in Gotham: The Rise of Christian Science in New York City, 1885–1910," *Journal of Religion & Society* 12 (2010): 12.

33 Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 97.

34 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 589, as noted in Kristen Hoving, *Joseph Cornell and Astronomy: A Case for the Stars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009): 46–47.

35 Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs Merrill, 1925).

36 Michael Lesy and Lisa Stoffer, *Repast: Dining Out at the Dawn of the New American Century, 1900–1910* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013): 12–13, 72.

37 Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 115; Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 371.

38 Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 16, 46; Richard Vine, "Eterniday: Cornell's Christian Science 'Metaphysique,'" in *Joseph Cornell: Shadowplay . . . Eterniday*, ed. Hartigan, 36. Betty, in fact, may have initiated the Cornell family's Christian Science orientation: on July 11, 1924, she received a book from a friend on Christian Science; see the Joseph Cornell Study Center Collection, Series 12, Printed Material, 1955–1972, box 60, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

39 "Errata," comments by Betty Benton about catalogue essay by John Bernard Myers in *Joseph Cornell* (New York: ACA Galleries, May 3–31, 1975), May 2, 1975, in JCP, Correspondence: ACA Galleries (Sidney and Pearl Bergen), 1975–1977, box 19, folder 23, frame 21. Emphasis original.

40 Ashton, *A Joseph Cornell Album*, 57, n.30.

41 These and other Christian Science books owned and read by Cornell are contained in boxes 60–61, the Joseph Cornell Study Center Collection, Series 12, Printed Material, 1955–1972.

42 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, December 8, 1948, JCP, Diary Entries: 1948, box 6, folder 5, frame 68.

43 Cornell mentions receiving Christian Science "treatment" on several occasions; see, for example, a diary entry for June 3, 1947, which reads: "C.S. treatment previous day & night—partial relief from claim(s)—touch of old depression," JCP, Diary Entries: 1947, box 6, folder 4, frame 54.

44 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 12.

45 Aspirations of clarity are not unique to Christian Science: a major goal of Scientology, for example, is "going Clear," which is defined as "a state achieved through auditing" and "describes a being who no longer has his own reactive mind." See "What is the State of Clear?," *Scientology.org*, http://www.scientology.org/faq/clear/what-is-the-state-of-clear.html, accessed January 25, 2022.

46 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 15.

47 Mary Baker Eddy, "Watching versus Watching Out" (1905), in *Miscellaneous Writings*, 232–33; Eddy, *Science and Health*, 1; William P. McKenzie, "Working, Watching, Praying," *Christian Science Sentinel*, June 8, 1918: 810. Notably, the original slogan of the in-house church magazine *Christian Science Sentinel* was from Mark 13:37, attributed to Jesus: "What I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH."

48 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, July 21, 1953, JCP, Diary Entries: July 1953, box 6, folder 20, frame 56.

49 Joseph Cornell, undated diary entry, JCP, Diary Entries: 1947, box 6, folder 4, frame 61. Emphasis original. Cornell also typed some of his notes.

50 Andrew Brink, *Desire and Avoidance in Art: Pablo Picasso, Hans Bellmer, Balthus, and Joseph Cornell* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007): 149.

51 Joseph Cornell, note, August 17, 1945, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writing and notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 14, folder 46, frame 5; diary entry, August 18, 1947, JCP, Diary Entries: 1947, box 6, folder 4, frame 74.

52 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, ca. April 1948, JCP, Diary Entries: 1948, box 6, folder 5, frame 10; diary entry, December 8, 1948, JCP, Diary Entries: 1948, box 6, folder 5, frame 68.

53 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, February 13, 1947, JCP, Diary Entries: 1947, box 6, folder 4, frame 18; diary entry, January 31, 1950, JCP, Diary Entries: 1950, box 6, folder 7, frame 6. Emphasis original.

54 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, September 11, 1957, JCP, Subject Source Files: Box Construction Material, 1884–1972, untitled, box 13, folder 3, frame 73. *L'humeur vagabonde* was a box Cornell made ca. 1955–1957; for an illustration see Hartigan, ed., *Joseph Cornell: Shadowplay . . . Eterniday*, 146.

55 See, for example, Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 97–98; Hartigan, *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination*, 35–36; Ashton, *A Joseph Cornell Album*, 55–57; Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 44–46, 69–70, 340–41; Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920–1950* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995): 239–40, 243, 259; Marci Kwon, *Enchantments: Joseph Cornell and American Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021): 7–8; and, more broadly, Lindsay Blair, *Joseph Cornell's Vision of Spiritual Order* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998); Starr, *Joseph Cornell: Art and Metaphysics*; and Vine, "Eterniday," 35–49.

56 Starr, *Joseph Cornell: Art and Metaphysics*, 1; Charles Simic, *Dime-Store Alchemy: The Art of Joseph Cornell* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1992): 72.

57 Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 105; see also Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell's Explorations: Art on File," 221–43; Joseph Cornell, diary entry, October 14, 1950 (recorded October 16), JCP, Diary Entries: 1950, box 6, folder 7, frame 97.

58 Marsden Hartley, *Adventures in the Arts: Informal Chapters on Painters, Vaudeville, and Poets* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921). In a diary entry dated August 3, 1947, Cornell mentioned reading Hartley's book "around 1926"; see JCP, Diary Entries: 1947, box 6, folder 4, frame 67. For references to "voyaging" and "pilgrimmage" [sic] see diary entries for July 15, 1941 and June 1954 in JCP, Diary Entries: 1941–1944, box 6, folder 1, frame 4, and Diary Entries: June 1954, box 6, folder 29, frame 8, respectively.

59 Philip Johnson, quoted in "Reminiscences," compiled by Lisa Jacobs, in Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs, eds., *Julien Levy: Portrait of An Art Gallery* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998): 172; on Surrealism's popularity in America, see Sandra Zalman, "The Vernacular as Vanguard: Alfred Barr, Salvador Dali, and the U.S. Reception of Surrealism in the 1930s," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 1, no. 1 (2007): 44–67; Isabelle Dervaux, *Surrealism USA* (New York: National Academy of Design, 2005); and Keith Eggener, "'An Amusing Lack of Logic': Surrealism and Popular Entertainment," *American Art* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 30–45. On Levy's affinity for Surrealism see Ingrid Schaffner, "Papering the Walls of a Dream," in *Accommodations of Desire: Surrealist Works on Paper Collected by Julien Levy* (Pasadena: Curatorial Assistance Inc., 2004): 21–29, exhibition catalogue.

60 Ingrid Schaffner, "Alchemy of the Gallery," in *Julien Levy: Portrait of An Art Gallery*, eds. Schaffner and Jacobs, 20–59; see also Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977). The first Surrealism exhibition in the United States, *Newer Super-Realism*, opened at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford in November 1931.

61 Cornell's initial encounters with Levy and comments about Ernst are recounted in Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 98–99; Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 55–60; and Diane Waldman, *Joseph Cornell: Master of Dreams* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002): 18–20. Hartigan notes that Levy's gallery issued a receipt for "6 'montages' for exhibition" to Cornell on November 11, 1931; see *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination*, 16.

62 As noted in Dickran Tashjian, "Paging Mr. Cornell: The Book and its Double," in Jason Edwards and Stephanie L. Taylor, eds., *Joseph Cornell: Opening the Box* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007): 169, n.21. Poyet's image is illustrated in Tom Tit [pseud. Arthur Good], *La science amusante: Cent nouvelles expériences par Tom Tit* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1892): 83. For Cornell's copy of the book see box 67, Joseph Cornell Study Center, Joseph Cornell Study Center Library, Smithsonian American Art Museum (hereafter JCSC, SAAM). Hartigan notes that Cornell repeatedly mined *La science amusante* as a source for his collages; see *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination*, 49. For examples, see the untitled collages illustrated in Donald Windham, *Joseph Cornell Collages 1931–1972* (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 1978): figs. 11 and 16; McShine, *Joseph Cornell*, figs. 25, 27, and 30; "Untitled (Seated Figure with Suspended Plates and Bottles), 1932–1938," fig. 1.13 in Rona Cran, *Collage in Twentieth-Century Art, Literature, and Culture: Joseph Cornell, William Burroughs, Frank O'Hara, and Bob Dylan* (London: Ashgate, 2014): 77; and collages illustrated in *Joseph Cornell: A New Surrealism, Works from the 1930's* (New York: Van Doren Waxter, 2014), exhibition catalogue.

63 Hoving observes that "references to Lautréamont are sprinkled throughout Cornell's notes" in *Joseph Cornell and Astronomy*, 20–21; on Ducasse and his influence on Surrealist artists, see Renée Riese Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 189–219; Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, 98, 103–6; Neil Matheson, ed., *The Sources of Surrealism* (Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2006): 9–10, 132–36; and Amy Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetic of Reconstruction in France*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 18–26. On Cornell's response to his class agent query, see Ashton, *A Joseph Cornell Album*, 6.

64 Benjamin Kahan, *Celibacies: American Modernism and Sexual Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013): 6–9.

65 On Cornell's sexual "sublimation," see Mary Ann Caws, ed., *Joseph Cornell's Theater of the Mind: Selected Diaries, Letters, and Files* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1993): 34–35; and Michael Moon, "Oralia: Hunger for Women's Performances in Joseph Cornell's Boxes and Diaries," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 39–59.

66 Richard Martin, *Fashion and Surrealism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987): 12; see also Linda A. Kinnahan's discussion of Cornell's collage in *Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography, and Contemporary Women Poets* (London: Routledge, 2017): 93–94, and Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, 251–52.

67 "The Pulse of Fashion," *Harper's Bazaar*, February 1937: 43. For further discussion of Cornell's appropriation of Surrealist themes in his graphic design work, see Kwon, *Enchantments*, 80–81.

68 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 403; see also Nellie B. Mace, "Perception and Impression," *Christian Science Sentinel* 19, no. 27 (March 3, 1917): 523.

69 Gilbert C. Carpenter and Gilbert C. Carpenter Jr., "Watching Point 64," in *500 Watching Points for Advancing Students of Christian Science* (Rumford, RI: private printing, 1942). Carpenter and his son collected and published previously unpublished texts, letters, and addresses by Mrs. Eddy like this one in limited private editions beginning in the early 1930s; see Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy*, 575–76. Carpenter, who was Eddy's secretary from 1905 to 1906, was also a popular Christian Science lecturer and author, and it is possible that Cornell heard him speak or read his work prior to making this 1931 collage. Hartigan suggests that Cornell's depiction of a spider web "embedded in a blossoming rose" was a "metaphor for the compass rose that sailors use to navigate"; see *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination*, 47.

70 André Breton, quoted in Matheson, "Introduction," *The Sources of Surrealism*, 3. Breton served as an army doctor during World War I.

71 André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, translated from the French by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969): 26.

72 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 14.

73 Reynes-Delobel and Mansanti, "Americanizing Surrealism," 12, n.12.

74 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 491.

75 Janine Mileaf, *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects After the Readymade* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010): 158; Cornell, in a note he titled "Approach #1," undated (possibly February 14, 1948), JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writing and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 14, folder 49, frame 3.

76 Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 101; Richard L. Feigen, "Collages: 1930s," in Windham, *Joseph Cornell Collages 1931–1972*, 27. Art dealer John Bernard Myers recalled that in 1946, "Cornell's largest objects" were still priced at $75 and $100; see John Bernard Myers, *Tracking the Marvelous: A Life in the New York Art World* (New York: Random House, 1983): 71.

77 The Commercial Textile Studio marketed and sold the designs of Traphagen School of Fashion students to industry professionals; see Ethel Traphagen, "The Background of the Traphagen School," in *The Silhouette*, ed. Ethel Traphagen (New York: Traphagen School of Fashion, 1933): 6, 9–10, and Cassidy Zachary, "Ethel Traphagen: American Fashion Pioneer," *Fashion Studies Journal* 5 (March 2018), https://www.fashionstudiesjournal.org/5-histories/2018/2/27/ethel-traphagen-american-fashion-pioneer.

78 Dickran Tashjian discusses Cornell's graphic design work at *Vogue* in "Discovering Joseph Cornell's Manual of Marvels," in *Joseph Cornell's Manual of Marvels: How Joseph Cornell Reinvented a French Agricultural Manual to Create an American Masterpiece*, eds. Analisa Leppanen-Guerra and Dickran Tashjian (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012): 27. Cornell may also have done graphic work for the motion picture industry; see Jodi Hauptman, *Joseph Cornell: Stargazing in the Cinema* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999): 227, n.47.

79 Alfred Tolmer, *Mise en Page: The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out* (London: Studio, 1931), as noted in Tashjian, "Paging Mr. Cornell," 168. Cornell may have also been familiar with other contemporary design manuals such as W. A. Dwiggins, *Layout in Advertising* (New York: Harper and Brothers) and Jan Tschichold, *Die Neue Typografie* (Berlin: Bildungsverband der Deutschen Buchdrucker), both published in 1928, but Tolmer's book was "graphic design's holy grail"; see Steven Heller, "First on Deco: A Parisian Printer's Opus from the '30s Contains the Origins of a Design Staple," *Print*, May 2007: 88–93, http://www.hellerbooks.com/pdfs/print_may_07_mise.pdf.

80 Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994): 215.

81 Herbert William Hess, *Productive Advertising* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1915): 74, as noted in Jennifer A. Greenhill, "Flip, Linger, Glide: Coles Phillips and the Movement of Magazine Pictures," *Art History* 40, no. 3 (June 2017): 600. Greenhill discusses the "fade-away" technique on p. 583 and discussed "blank" spaces in "Illustration without Illustration," a paper presented at the conference *Illustration Across Media: Nineteenth Century to Now*, held at Washington University in St. Louis, MO, March 21, 2019.

82 Donald Windham, "Joseph Cornell: No Need to Open," in *Joseph Cornell: Box Constructions and Collages* (New York: C&M Arts, 1996): n.p. On Surrealism and commercial art, see Rick Poynor, "Dark Tools of Desire," *Eye* 16, no. 63 (Spring 2007), http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/dark-tools-of-desire.

83 Tirza True Latimer, *Eccentric Modernisms: Making Differences in the History of American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017): 82.

84 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 27. Poe published "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion," a dialogue between two disembodied spirits following a comet-induced apocalypse, in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in December 1839. Following the appearance of the Great Comet of 1843, he retitled and republished the piece as "The Destruction of the World" in the Philadelphia *Saturday Museum*. His 1848 prose poem *Eureka* was subtitled "An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe." See the entries for his writing at the website of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, accessed February 10, 2022, https://www.eapoe.org/works/tales/eirosc.htm.

85 Joseph Cornell to Charles Henri Ford, September 25, 1940, as noted in Analisa Leppanen-Guerra, *Children's Stories and 'Child-Time' in the Works of Joseph Cornell and the Transatlantic Avant-Garde* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011): 5.

86 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, 78; Hartigan notes Cornell's undated description of the "world of surrealism—a golden age—one of white magic without which I don't know where in the world I'd be today," in "Joseph Cornell: A Biography," 99.

87 Joseph Cornell to Alfred Barr, November 13, 1936, as noted in Dawn Ades, "The Transcendental Surrealism of Joseph Cornell," in McShine, ed., *Joseph Cornell*, 19.

88 Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Missionary for the Modern* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989). Barr's attention to modern art and religion was wide ranging. In the 1930s, he and art historians Meyer Schapiro and Erwin Panofsky often met at MoMA to discuss the intersections between art history and religion. In 1948, he organized *Modern Church Art*, a MoMA exhibition that traveled to thirteen venues, and in 1962, he founded the Society

for Art, Religion, and Contemporary Culture with theologian Paul Tillich. See also Marcia Brennan, *Curating Consciousness: Mysticism and the Modern Museum* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010): 20, 42.

89 bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," in Ruth Frankenberg, ed., *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997): 340.

90 Brink, *Desire and Avoidance in Art*, 157.

91 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, 78.

92 Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996): 117.

93 Mina Loy, "There is No Life or Death," *Camera Work* (April 1914): 18, reproduced in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996): 3. On Loy's religious beliefs, see Richard Cook, "The 'Infinitarian' and her 'Macro-Cosmic Presence': The Question of Loy and Christian Science," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, eds. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1998): 457–65; and Tim Armstrong, "Loy and Cornell: Christian Science and the Destruction of the World," in *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, eds. Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson (London: Salt Publishing, 2010): 204–20.

94 On Loy's biography, see Burke, *Becoming Modern*; for discussion of her visual art, see pp. 96–101, 379–82, 399, 404–05, 412–13, 420–22, 433–35, and Suzanne Zelazo, "'Altered Observation of Modern Eyes': Mina Loy's Collages, and Multisensual Aesthetics," *Senses & Society* 4, no. 1 (2009): 47–74. See also the outstanding website *Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde*; eds. Suzanne W. Churchill et al., University of Georgia, 2020, https://mina-loy.com.

95 Joseph Cornell to Mina Loy, November 21, 1946, as noted in Burke, *Becoming Modern*, 405; Mina Loy, "Phenomenon in American Art," unpublished 7-page typewritten essay dated November 25, 1950; quotes from pp. 2, 4, in JCP, Writings about Cornell: Loy, Mina, box 19, folder 12. Emphasis original.

96 Loy, quoted in Burke, *Becoming Modern*, 377; Joseph Cornell to Mina Loy, ca. 1946, in Caws, *Joseph Cornell's Theater of the Mind*, 136. For illustrations of Loy's paintings, see Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover (Highlands, NC: Jargon Society, 1982); for discussion of *Teasing a Butterfly* see Christina Walter, *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2014): 157–58.

97 Joseph Cornell to Mina Loy, July 3, 1951, JCP, Archives of American Art.

98 On these assemblages, see Katherine Ware and Peter Barberie, *Dreaming in Black and White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006): 44, 248.

99 Mina Loy, "Apology of Genius," in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Conover, 77–78. Cornell's 1936 assemblage *Portrait of Mina Loy (Daguerreotype-Object)* features his handwritten inscription "imperious jewelry of the universe" from Loy's poem; see Carolyn Burke, "Loyalism: Julien Levy's Kinship with Mina Loy," in *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*, eds. Schaffner and Jacobs, 76.

100 Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 395.

101 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 248, 481, 4–5.

102 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, 1952, JCP, Diary Entries: September-October 1952, box 6, folder 15, frame 4; the quote comes from Eddy, *Science and Health*, 323.

103 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 263–64.

104 Cornell, quoted in Caws, *Joseph Cornell's Theater*, 311.

105 Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983): 84.

106 Daniel Louis Haxall, "Cut and Paste Abstraction: Politics, Form, and Identity in Abstract Expressionist Collage" (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2009): 1; Clement Greenberg, "Review of the Exhibition 'Collage,'" *Nation* 167, no. 2 (November 27, 1948): 612–14.

107 Christopher J. Lukasik, "The Meaning of Illustration in Early Nineteenth-Century America," in *A Companion to Illustration*, ed. Alan Male (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2019): 422; Michael Leja, "Fortified Images for the Masses," *Art Journal* 70, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 82–83.

108 Talia Schaffer, "Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39, no. 1 (2011): 284. See also Elizabeth Siegel, ed., *Playing with Pictures: the Art of Victorian Photocollage* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press, 2009).

109 Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 20, 49; see also Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Scissorizing and Scrapbooks: Nineteenth-Century Reading, Remaking, and Recirculating," in *New Media, 1740–1915*, eds. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003): 207–27.

110 Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell's Dance with Duality," in *Joseph Cornell: Shadowplay . . . Eterniday*, 15. For a splendid account of Cornell as an "archivist visionary," see Rachel Cohen, *A Chance Meeting: Intertwined Lives of American Writers and Artists, 1854–1967* (New York: Random House, 2004): 213–19.

111 Joseph Cornell to Charles Henri Ford, October 6, 1951, Charles Henri Ford Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, as noted in Don Quaintance, "Ephemeral Matter: Traces of Cornell and Duchamp," in *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp . . . in Resonance*, Menil Foundation, 249, n.12, 266; Joseph Cornell undated working notes, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, folder 4, frame 23, and box 14, folder 52, frame 8, respectively.

112 Hauptman makes this connection in *Joseph Cornell: Stargazing in the Cinema*, 37. Benjamin worked on the *Arcades Project* from 1927 until his death in 1940; posthumously edited, it was first published (in German) in 1982 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag).

113 Christopher Schmidt compares their affinity for collecting in "Warhol's Problem Project: The Time Capsules," *Postmodern Culture: Journal of Interdisciplinary Thought* 26, no. 1 (September 2015), http://www.pomoculture.org/2020/06/29/warhols-problem-project-the-time-capsules/. Dore Ashton remarks on the similarities between Cornell's collecting practices and Emily Dickinson's "pack-rat instinct" in *A Joseph Cornell Album*, 40–41.

114 Simic, *Dime-Store Alchemy*, ix; Joseph Cornell, undated note, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, folder 4, frame 111.

115 Joseph Cornell, "Garden Center '44 Random Notes, page #2," undated, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, folder 4, frame 23. See also Mileaf's discussion of Cornell's interest in method in *Please Touch*, 169–73.

116 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, July 11, 1953, JCP, Diary Entries: July 1953, box 6, folder 20, frame 27.

117 Joseph Cornell, undated note, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, folder 4, frame 92.

118 Joseph Cornell, "G. C. Cosmos," undated, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writing and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, folder 4, frames 44–45.

119 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, August 6, 1951, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 44, folder 52, frame 11.

120 Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 404.

121 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 199. On Cornell and Blondin, see Hoving, *Joseph Cornell and Astronomy*, 99, and Leppanen-Guerra, *Children's Stories*, 101, 104, 158.

122 Juan A. Suárez, *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007): 142, 144, 173–75.

123 Hauptman, *Joseph Cornell, Stargazing in the Cinema*, 36. In a diary entry dated August 30, 1945, Cornell wrote: "Feeling to translate this more into principle. *Meta-physique d'ephemera*." See JCP, Diary Entries: 1945, box 6, folder 2, frame 20. Caws suggests he took the phrase from nineteenth-century French poet Gérard de Nerval; see *Joseph Cornell's Theater*, 136; see also Hoving's discussion of Cornell and Nerval in *Joseph Cornell and Astronomy*, 42–44.

124 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, September 15, 1949, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 14, folder 50, frame 8.

125 Bonnie Costello discusses Cornell's interests in "the entropic nature of all matter" in *Planets on Tables: Poetry, Still Life, and the Turning World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008): 139.

126 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 597. Likewise, in a 1957 diary entry discussing his box construction *L'humeur vagabonde*, Cornell wrote "*pneuma*—breath," referencing the ancient Greek origin for the word "spirit." See Joseph Cornell, diary entry, September 11, 1957, JCP, Subject Source Files: Box Construction Material, 1884–1972, undated, box 13, folder 3, frame 73.

127 Cornell made two versions of *Bel Echo Gruyère*, one now owned by the Wadsworth Athenaeum; see Stephanie L. Taylor, "Constructing Cornell: Artistic Identity and the Invention of Joseph Cornell" (PhD diss., Boston University: 2001): 35–36 and 293, n.36.

128 Other pharmacies that Cornell made around the same time also contain stoppered jars filled with crumpled pieces of paper, fragments of architectural renderings, and tiny maps.

129 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 129. See also Cornell's 1930s collage *Untitled (The Inoculation)*, which blended three scenes: one of angry tigers and bears caged inside a circus train and being pulled on with ropes by circus workers, a second featuring a top-hatted doctor vaccinating a baby, and a third showing a young girl and an older man reaching to grab the baby. Conflating animal imprisonment with the bondage of medical intervention, Cornell indicated the actions needed to release spirit from the tether of matter. For an illustration, see Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, fig. 71.

130 Cornell "corrected" many books in the 1930s and 1940s, including *Untitled Book Object* (ca. 1933–mid-1940s), the subject of *Joseph Cornell's Manual of Marvels*, eds. Leppanen-Guerra and Tashjian. For an illustration of *Object* and five other book constructions, see McShine, *Joseph Cornell*, figs. 58–63; see also Jeffrey Wechsler, *Surrealism and American Art, 1931–1947* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Art Gallery, 1977): 73, fig. 21.

131 Dawn Ades, "Soap Bubble Set (1948)," in *Surrealist Art: The Lindy and Edwin Bergman Collection at the Art Institute of Chicago* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997): 50–51. Cornell exhibited four different *Soap Bubble Sets* in 1948 at Copley Galleries; see the exhibition catalogue *Objects by Joseph Cornell* (Beverly Hills, CA: Copley Galleries, 1948).

132 Carpenter, "Watching Point 363" and "Watching Point 416," in *500 Watching Points*, 165, 183.

133 Maurice Zolotow, *Marilyn Monroe: An Uncensored Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960). Cornell's notes on Monroe were jotted on sheets of paper found inside his copy of William Barrett's *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (1958), which he bought on the day of Monroe's funeral; see box 62, JCSC, SAAM. His notes also referenced Barrett's discussion of "The Flight from Laputa," a fantasy island in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*

(1726); see Erika Doss, "Joseph Cornell and Christian Science," in *Joseph Cornell: Opening the Box*, eds. Edwards and Taylor, 133–35.

134 Joseph Cornell to Irving Blum, August 11, 1965, in Ashton, *A Joseph Cornell Album*, 35–36.

135 Cornell made at least three versions of this box construction: *Custodian—M.M.* (1963), now in the Whitney Museum of Art (New York, NY); *Custodian (Silent Dedication to MM)*, also called *Construction II* (1963), formerly owned by the Southland Corporation and sold at auction by Locks Gallery (Philadelphia, PA) in 2018; and *Custodian—M.M.* (1963), owned by ACA Galleries until 1987 and sold at Bonhams Gallery (New York, NY) in 2018. Here, I discuss the box sold by Bonhams.

136 Now obsolete, both constellations were introduced by French astronomer Joseph Jerome de Lalande in 1775, with Custos Messium named after famed French starman Charles Messier; see John C. Barentine, *The Lost Constellations: A History of Obsolete, Extinct, or Forgotten Star Lore* (New York: Springer Praxis, 2016): 119–37 and Ian Ridpath, *Star Tales* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2018): 191. See also Ashton's discussion of Clifford Odets's astronomical reading of "Marilyn Monroe's soul" in *A Joseph Cornell Album*, 36–37.

137 Hartigan observes that Cornell began keeping a binder of clippings on art, music, and literature, mostly from the "Home Forum" section of the *Christian Science Monitor*, in 1926; see "Joseph Cornell's Explorations," 230–32. For other discussions of his explorations, see Joanna Roche, "Joseph Cornell's *Garden Center 44*: The Poetics of Memory," in *Joseph Cornell: Opening the Box*, eds. Edwards and Taylor, 189–202, and Jodi Hauptman, "Sweepings," in *Joseph Cornell and Surrealism*, eds. Matthew Affron and Sylvie Ramond (Charlottesville: Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, 2015): 85–103.

138 *GC 44* is housed in box 88, JCSC, SAAM; related source materials can be found in JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, boxes 14 and 15.

139 Joseph Cornell, "Garden Center '44 Random Notes," date unknown, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, box 15, folder 4, frame 12.

140 Joseph Cornell, "Approach #1," date unknown, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, box 14, folder 49, frame 3; Joseph Cornell, "Garden Centre '44," January 2, 1947, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 14, folder 48, frame 1; Joseph Cornell, "Approach #2," date unknown, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, folder 4, frame 82.

141 Joseph Cornell, "Approach #1," date unknown (possibly February 14, 1948), JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 14, folder 49, frame 3. Deletion in original.

142 "Cornell's Assembly of the Boîte Edition" in "*Duchamp Dossier* Inventory," noted in *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp . . . in Resonance*, Menil Foundation, 304; Caroline Cros, *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2006): 83–85; Blair, *Joseph Cornell's Vision*, 41.

143 *Duchamp Dossier* was contained in a cardboard valise that Duchamp rejected as an early *Boîte* prototype and gave to Cornell; see "*Duchamp Dossier* Inventory," entry 0, in *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp . . . in Resonance*, Menil Foundation, 305.

144 Marcel Duchamp, quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors* (New York: Viking, 1965): 60.

145 Joseph Cornell, undated note, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writings and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 15, Folder 4, frame 63.

146 Joseph Cornell, working notes, May 5, 1954, JCP, Subject Source Files: "The Caliph of Bagdad," 1952–1967, undated, box 13, folder 9, frame 10. Emphasis original.

147 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, April 15, 1946, JCP, Diary Entries: 1946, box 6, folder 3, frame 15. Emphasis original.

148 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, October 8, 1952, JCP, Diary Entries: September–October 1952, box 6, folder 15, frame 78.

149 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, March 20, 1952, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writing and Notes, 1944–1961, undated, box 14, folder 53, frame 5.

150 Moon, "Oralia," 42; Robert Motherwell, quoted in Blair, *Joseph Cornell's Vision of Spiritual Order*, 74.

151 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, August 20, 1951, JCP, Diary Entries: June–September 1951, box 6, folder 9, frame 38.

152 Joseph Cornell to Elizabeth Fairbank, March 12, 1967, as noted in Hauptman, "Sweepings," 85. Cornell's comment to Mann is noted in Blair, *Joseph Cornell's Vision*, 19. Mann worked at the Hugo Gallery in the 1940s and directed the Bodley Gallery beginning in the 1950s; both galleries showed Cornell's work.

153 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, October 1952, JCP, Diary Entries: September–October 1952, box 6, folder 15, frame 77.

154 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, August 24, 1945, JCP, Diary Entries: 1945, box 6, folder 2, frames 18–19; partial quote from Eddy, *Science and Health*, 327. The full passage in *Science and Health* reads: "Mortals are hastening to learn that Life is God, good, and that evil has in reality neither place nor power in the human or the divine economy." Despite Cornell's efforts to "erase" Guggenheim's words, her letter is still readable.

155 On Cornell's infatuation with Dickinson, see David Porter, "Assembling a Poet and Her Poems: Convergent Limit-Works of Joseph Cornell and Emily Dickinson," *Word & Image* 10, no. 3 (July–September 1994): 199–221.

156 Dickinson did not title her poems. They are identified by numbers in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958). The poem with the phrase "My Blue Peninsula" (1863) is identified as P-405. For one analysis of the poem, see Suzanne Juhasz, "Emily Dickinson," in *Modern American Women Writers*, eds. Elaine Showalter, Lea Baechler, and A. Walton Litz (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991): 65–70.

157 Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 258.

158 Dickran Tashjian, *Joseph Cornell: Gifts of Desire* (Miami Beach, FL: Grassfield Press 1992): 17, 30.

159 Marcel Duchamp to Joseph Cornell, April 3, 1955, JCP, General Correspondence: Duchamp, Marcel and Teeny, 1955–1968, undated, box 2, folder 10, frame 1.

160 Robert Cozzolino, "Every Picture Should Be a Prayer: The Art of Ivan Albright" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2006): 9; Clyfford Still's comments about the art market come from a 1951 letter he wrote to Clement Greenberg, as noted in John O'Brian, *Ruthless Hedonism: The American Reception of Matisse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 216, n.6.

161 Joseph Cornell, diary entry, August 20, 1951, JCP, Diary Entries: June–September 1951, box 6, folder 9, frame 36.

162 Joseph Cornell, "GC 44 random notes," ca. 1951, JCP, Subject Source Files: "GC 44," Writing and Notes, undated, box 14, folder 52, frame 8.

163 Hoving notes that Cornell owned over two dozen copies of Herbert S. Zim and Robert H. Baker's *Stars: A Guide to the Constellations, Sun, Moon, Planets, and Other Features of the Heavens* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), a pocket paperback (4 × 5") in the *Golden Nature Guide* series; see *Joseph Cornell and Astronomy*, 2, and also 149–50. The details in these

1959 collages are taken from pp. 21, 33, and 53 in *Stars*. Copies of these books can be found in the Joseph Cornell Study Center Collection, Series 12, Printed Material, 1955–1972.

164 Windham, *Joseph Cornell Collages 1931–1972*, 86; Blair, *Joseph Cornell's Vision*, 123.

165 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 584.

166 Eddy, *Science and Health*, 368. Blair also connects Cornell's use of Copley's portrait to his brother Robert in *Joseph Cornell's Vision*, 122–23.

167 Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Horizon Press, Inc., 1959): 18, 14, 21. "The Parable of American Painting" was first published in *ARTnews* 52, no. 9 (January 1954): 60–63.

168 Robert Morris, "American Quartet," *Art in America* 69, no. 10 (December 1981): 92–105, at 96; Brian O'Doherty, *Joseph Cornell, December 5, 1986–January 31, 1987* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1986): n.p.

169 Estill Pennington and Lynda Hartigan, "Oral History Interview with Perkins Harnly, October 15, 1981," *Archives of American Art*, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-perkins-harnly-13338. See also Sarah Burns, *The Emphatically Queer Career of Artist Perkins Harnly and His Bohemian Friends* (Seattle: Process, 2021): 104, 108.

170 See the windows dated from February to November 1956 in Display Window Photographs, Gene Moore, Tiffany & Company Photographs, AC1280-0000028, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Anna Dezeuze, "Unpacking Cornell: Consumption and Play in the Work of Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, and George Brecht," in *Joseph Cornell: Opening the Box*, eds. Edwards and Taylor, 219–42.

171 Walter Hopps, "Introduction: Robert Rauschenberg's Art of Fusion," in Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, eds., *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective* (New York: Guggenheim, 1997): 23.

172 Hopps, "Introduction: Robert Rauschenberg's Art of Fusion," 23; Rauschenberg, quoted in Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 237.

173 Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 212.

174 "Playful Objects," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 10, 1939: VI-8; Howard Devree, "Many, New, Diverse," *New York Times*, December 15, 1946: II-9; Thomas Hess, "Joseph Cornell," *ARTnews* 49 (January 1950): 45.

175 Joseph Cornell to Thomas M. Messer, Guggenheim Museum, ca. 1967, JCP, series 2.1: General Correspondence, 1909–1982, box 3, folder 13, frame 12.

176 Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 271; Hilton Kramer, "The Poetic Shadow-Box World of Joseph Cornell: Large Exhibit Opens at the Guggenheim," *New York Times*, May 6, 1967: 27.

177 Solomon, *Utopia Parkway*, 345–47.

178 Hilton Kramer, "Great Joseph Cornell Was Shadow Player, Christian Mystic," *New York Observer*, January 12, 2004. Kramer referred in particular to Richard Vine's essay "Eterniday" in the catalogue *Joseph Cornell: Shadowplay . . . Eterniday*. New York exhibitions commemorating the centenary of Cornell's birth included *Joseph Cornell: The 100th Birthday* at Richard L. Feigen and Co. (October 28, 2003–January 16, 2004) and *Objects for Joseph Cornell* at ZieherSmith (December 11, 2003–January 24, 2004).

Chapter Three

1 Clement Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Mark Tobey and Juan Gris," *Nation* 158, no. 12 (April 22, 1944): 495.

2 Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Mark Tobey and Juan Gris," 495.

3 Clement Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Pollock," *Nation* 160, no. 14 (April 7, 1945): 397; Judith S. Kays, "Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock: Set-

ting the Record Straight," in Kosme de Barañano and Matthias Bärmann, eds., *Mark Tobey* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1997): 91–114. In 1944, Tobey and Pollock were shown together in *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America/50 Paintings by Outstanding Artists*, organized by Sidney Janis at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery (New York, November 29–December 30, 1944), and in *40 American Moderns* at Howard Putzel's 67 Gallery (New York, December 4–30, 1944).

4 Mark Tobey, "Autobiographical Sketch," n.d., Muriel Draper Papers, Series IV, Subject Files, 1921–1976, box 22, folder 715, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereafter Draper Papers, Beinecke). See also William Chapin Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962): 89.

5 Steven Watson, *Prepare for Saints: Gertrude Stein, Virgil Thompson, and the Mainstreaming of American Modernism* (New York: Random House, 1998): 185. Draper hosted salons at her 24 East 40th Street apartment from the late teens through 1928, and then at 312 East 53rd Street from the later 1920s through the 1930s; see Cecily Swanson, "Conversation Pieces: Circulating Muriel Draper's Salon," *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 37, n.5.

6 John I. H. Baur, *Revolution and Tradition in Modern American Art* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1951): 28–29; see also Joan Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004): 21.

7 Tobey's personal writing and musical scores can be found in the Mark Tobey Papers, accession no. 3592-002, box 6, folders 25–69 and boxes 7–10; and accession no. 3592-003, box 3, folder 13, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, Seattle, WA (hereafter Tobey Papers, UW); much of this material is reproduced in the Mark Tobey papers, [ca. 1920] –1977, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, microfilm reels 3200–3210 (hereafter Tobey papers, AAA). See also the Mark Tobey Papers, Beyeler Foundation, Basel, Switzerland. Tobey's 1928 painting *George May* (Museum of Modern Art, New York) may be a mistitled portrait of American composer George Frederick McKay, who began teaching at the University of Washington in 1927 and mentored Cage in the late 1930s. On Tobey's relationship with Cage, see Wulf Herzogenrath and Andreas Kreul, eds., *Sounds of the Inner Eye: John Cage, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

8 Wieland Schmied, *Tobey* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966): 7.

9 Belle Krasne, "A Tobey Profile," *Art Digest* 26, no. 2 (October 1951): 26.

10 Betty Gordon Funke, *Tweed Curtain Pioneers* (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford, 2004): 16.

11 Beginning in the 1940s, Tobey's affiliation with Bahá'í was mentioned, if briefly, in articles and reviews. More sustained discussions are found in Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, and in two dissertations: Frederic Gordon Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey: A Contribution towards an Understanding of a Psychology of Consciousness (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1977), and Edward Rulief Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith: New Perspectives on the Artist and His Paintings" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1984). In 1984, Arthur L. Dahl, a follower of Bahá'í who met Tobey at the Geyserville (California) Bahá'í Summer School in the early 1940s and shortly thereafter began collecting his paintings, published *Mark Tobey: Art and Belief* (Oxford: George Ronald), explicitly linking Tobey's art with his faith; see also *Mark Tobey: Paintings from the Collection of Joyce and Arthur Dahl* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Art Gallery, 1967).

12 Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 7.

13 Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'ís of America: The Growth of a Religious Movement* (New

York: NYU Press, 2015)" 22–23; Abdu'l Bahá, *Paris Talks*: *Addresses Given By 'Abdu'l Bahá in Paris in 1911–1912*, 11th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969): 130.

14 Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 26–27.

15 Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (1857; Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985): 52; Abdu'l Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (1912; Wilmette, IL: US Bahá''i Publishing Trust, 1982): 470.

16 Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 191.

17 Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Edward G. Browne, "Introduction," in Abdu'l Bahá and Edward G. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative: Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, vol. 2, trans. Edward G. Browne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891): xl.

18 Abdu'l Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 102–3, and quoted in Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, "Extract from Letter from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab," *Reality* 4, no. 11 (November 1921): 7.

19 Shoghi Effendi, "World Commonwealth" (March 28, 1941), in *The Promised Day Is Come*, rev. ed. (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980): 124.

20 Abdu'l Bahá, quoted in Christopher Buck, *God and Apple Pie: Religious Myths and Visions of America* (Kingston, NY: Educator's International Press, 2015): 297; on the concept of America's redemptive global mission, see Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

21 Mark Tobey, "Mark Tobey," in Dorothy C. Miller, ed., *Fourteen Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946): 70.

22 Robert H. Stockman, "The Bahá'ís of the United States," in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, vol. 4: *Asian Traditions*, eds. Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006): 186, 192; William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005): 93.

23 McMullen, *The Baha'i*, 57; on Weber's theory of charismatic authority, see Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947): 358–92.

24 Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 196–98.

25 Locke converted to Bahá'í in 1918. In *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2005), author Christopher Buck remarks on p. 196, "There was never a reconciliation between Locke's homosexual private life and his Bahá'í identity. The two stood in unresolved tension."

26 Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America*, 39.

27 Morris Graves to Celia Graves, October 12, 1939, in *Morris Graves: Selected Letters*, ed. Vicki Halper and Lawrence Fong (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013): 49.

28 On Tobey's 1933 visit to Haifa, see Julie Oeming Badiee, "Mark Tobey and the 'Two Powers,'" *World Order: A Bahá'í Magazine* 20, nos. 3–4 (Spring/Summer 1986): 50–51. Tobey's poem was written in the "travel record" of Raymond Frank Piper, a philosophy professor at the University of Syracuse who met Tobey in Haifa and discussed his art in an unpublished three-page typed manuscript entitled "Mark Tobey: Picture Interpretation," ca. 1955–1960, in the Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-002, box 9, folder 49. The manuscript may have been prepared for Piper's book *The Hungry Eye: An Introduction to Cosmic Art* (Los Angeles: DeVorss, 1956), or for later related publications. Piper was Bahá'í and wrote a typology of the religion's principles of unity in the 1940s; see Christopher Buck, "Fifty Baha'i Principles of Unity: A Paradigm of Social Salvation," *Bahá'í Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (June 2012): 13–17.

29 Shoghi Effendi, "Feasts," *Directives from the Guardian* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing

Trust, 1973): 30. Established by the Báb, the Bahá'í calendar consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, and four additional "intercalary" days.

30 Tobey is listed in "Current Baha'i Activities" in *The Bahá'í World 1934–1936*, vol. 6 (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1937): 37, 90, 110, 126, 509.

31 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleaning from the Writing of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990): 278.

32 Arthur L. Dahl, "Mark Tobey, 1890–1976," in *Mark Tobey: Art and Belief*, 12; "Tobey: In Memoriam," *World Order: A Bahá'í Magazine* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 10–42; Bernard Leach, quoted in Marzieh Gail, "The Days with Mark Tobey," *World Order*: *A Bahá'í Magazine* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 26, also published in Marzieh Gail, *Other People, Other Places* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1982): 195–223; Brad Pokorny, "Mark Tobey: A Retrospective Exhibition: Review," *One Country* 9, no. 4 (1997), https://bahai-library.com/pokorny_tobey_sofia_1997.

33 On Thompson, see Christopher G. White, "Discovering Imageless Truths: The Baha'i Pilgrimage of Juliet Thompson, Artist," in *American Religious Liberalism*, eds. Leigh E. Schmidt and Sally M. Promey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012): 97–115, and Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson*, published from the 1947 typescript prepared and annotated by Thompson, with a preface by Marzieh Gail (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1983).

34 On Gibran's relationship with Day, see Robin Waterfield, *Prophet: The Life and Times of Kahlil Gibran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998): 33–52; on examples of his art, see *The Art of Kahlil Gibran at Telfair Museums* (Savannah, GA: Telfair Museum of Art, 2010).

35 Kahlil Gibran, quoted in Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999): 252, 125–26, respectively; see also Marzieh Gail's 1943 interview with Juliet Thompson, "Juliet Remembers Gibran," in Gail, *Other People*, 227–31.

36 Mark Tobey, quoted in interview with Arthur L. Dahl, September 21, 1963, as noted in Dahl, "Mark Tobey, 1890–1977," 2. Christopher Reed observes that Tobey's recollection of a photograph of Abdu'l Bahá in Thompson's apartment may have been her "much admired painted portrait" of the Bahá'í leader; see his book *Bachelor Japanists: Japanese Aesthetics and Western Masculinities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017): 362, n.8.

37 Mark Tobey to Muriel Draper, ca. summer 1918, written on letterhead from the Rockingham Hotel, Portsmouth, New Hampshire (seven miles from Green Acre), Draper Papers, Beinecke, Series I Correspondence, box 9, folder 308.

38 Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith," 18.

39 Mark Tobey in conversation with Arthur Dahl, September 21, 1963, as noted in Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey," 125. Tobey's illustrations for *Fleurs du Mal* remain undiscovered. Knoedler sales books indicate that Gibran sold at least three drawings for prices ranging from $225 to $300 in his 1917 show; see the Getty Research Institute's M. Knoedler & Co. records, no. 2012.M.54 (box 71), Series II Sales book 11, 1916 May–1920 December, frames 169, 177, and 179, http://primo.getty.edu/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=GRI&afterPDS=true&institution=01GRI&docId=GETTY_ROSETTAIE821991.

40 Mark Tobey, "Conversation with Mark Tobey," transcript of interview by Arthur L. Dahl, September 21, 1963, Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-003, box 3, folder 5.

41 Abdu'l Bahá to Mark Tobey, July 16, 1919, Tobey papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3201, frame 143; see also Badiee, "Mark Tobey and the 'Two Powers,'" 49.

42 Abdu'l Bahá to Juliet Thompson, 1919, "Additional Tablets, Extracts, and Talks" from the Bahá'í Reference Library, https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/search?q=mark+tobey#s=additional-tablets-extracts-talks-abdul-baha.

43 Abdu'l Bahá to Mark Tobey and other New York Bahá'í, December 9, 1920, Tobey papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3205, frame 740. Tobey is listed as a member of the Bahá''í Li-

brary "Consulting Committee" in "Baha'i Activities," *Reality* 4, no. 7 (July 1921): 43, and a member of the "Decoration Committee" for the Eleventh Annual Bahá'í Congress in Joseph H. Hannen, "The Convention of Abdul-Baha," *Star of the West* 10, no. 4 (May 17, 1919): 55. He was listed as a member of the 1934 National Teaching Committee in Nellie S. French, "United States and Canada," in *The Bahá'í World 1934–1936*, vol. 6 (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1937): 110. On Tobey's Bahá'í donations, see Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-002, box 22, folders 1–3; see also Tobey's November 10, 1964 letter to the National Spiritual Assembly (Wilmette, IL) offering to donate twelve paintings including *Lost World* (1954) and *Homage a Rameau* (1960), in box 6, folder 8. On Tobey's marriage, see Reed, *Bachelor Japanists*, 206.

44 Mark Tobey, quoted in interview with Arthur L. Dahl, Pebble Beach, CA, 1962, at the website "Bahá'í World Community: Historical Photos and Recordings by Greg Dahl," https://dahls.net/historical/tobey/.

45 Tobey family details noted in "Chronology," *Mark Tobey: Paintings (1920–1960)*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Yoshii Gallery, 1994): 67. Tobey's State of Wisconsin birth certificate shows that he was born in the village of Centerville in Trempealeau County on December 11, 1890, and that his father (age 42) was a carpenter, and his mother (29) a housewife.

46 Mark Tobey, "Evangelist," unpublished short story ca. 1930s, in the Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593–2, box 9, folder 11.

47 Mark Tobey, "The Dot and the Circle," *World Order: A Bahá'í Magazine* 14, no. 12 (March 1949): 412; this essay is an autobiographical account of Tobey's art interests, written for a Bahá'í readership.

48 Tobey mentions "Billiken gods" in "The Dot and the Circle," 412.

49 On Tobey's Bahá'í books and other Bahá'í materials, see the Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593–2, boxes 22–26; Mark Tobey to Lyonel Feininger, May 1946, in *Feininger and Tobey, Years of Friendship 1944–1956, The Complete Correspondence*, ed. Stephen E. Hauser (New York: Moeller Fine Art, Ltd., 1991): 32, 34; Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith," 47.

50 Julia and Lyonel Feininger, "Comments by a Fellow Artist," *Mark Tobey: November 13–December 8, 1945*, exhibition brochure (New York: Willard Gallery, 1945), in the Willard Gallery records, 1917–1973, microfilm reel N69–118, frame 24, Archives of American Art (hereafter Willard Gallery records, AAA). On this specific parable, Meister Eckhart's Sermon 83, see Robert J. Dobie, *Logos and Revelation: Ibn 'Arabi, Meister Eckhart, and Mystical Hermeneutics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010): 71–72.

51 Mark Tobey to Muriel Draper, Draper Papers, Beinecke, Series I Correspondence, box 9, folder 304.

52 Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker and Scott Lawrimore, eds., *Mark Tobey/Teng Baiye, Seattle/Shanghai* (Seattle: Frye Art Museum, 2014). As David Clarke details in his essay "Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Artistic Innovation: Teng Baiye and Mark Tobey" in this volume, Teng Baiye was the "courtesy name" of Teng Gui, a Chinese artist variously referred to in English as T'eng Kwei, Teng Kuei, Teng Kroi, and Kwei Dun. He studied at the University of Washington and taught art in Seattle from 1924 to 1928; see pp. 48–50.

53 Mark Tobey, quoted in Dahl, "Mark Tobey, 1890–1976," 2. Duchamp lived at 33 West 67th Street from the fall of 1916 until August 1918, in a studio located on the same floor and down the hall from the Arensberg apartment; see Calvin Tomkins, "Duchamp and New York," *New Yorker*, November 25, 1996: 97.

54 On the gay world Tobey inhabited in New York, see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); on letters from Tobey to Mark Turbyfill written from the 1920s to the 1960s,

see Selected Mark Turbyfill Letters, 1907–1966, box 2, folder 6, in the Southern Illinois University Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, IL (hereafter Turbyfill Letters, SIU). Tobey recalled celebrating the 1918 Armistice with "his friend Janet Flanner"; see Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 45.

55 Mark Tobey to Muriel Draper, ca. summer 1918, Draper Papers, Beinecke, Series I Correspondence, box 9, folder 308.

56 Reed, *Bachelor Japanists*, 205–6; Morris Graves to Charles Krafft, April 12, 1992, in *Morris Graves: Selected Letters*, ed. Halper and Fong, 101.

57 Matthew Kangas, "Prometheus Ascending: Homoerotic Imagery of the Northwest School," *Art Criticism* 2, no. 3 (1986): 91.

58 Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006): 54.

59 Mark Tobey, quoted in Gail, *Other People*, 209. On her play in *Smart Set*, a monthly magazine edited by George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, see Dorothy Kirchner Earle, "You're Such a Respectable Person, Miss Morrison," *Smart Set* 46, no. 4 (August 1915): 87–94. Tobey's biographical erasure of his marriage endures in many exhibition catalogue chronologies and discussions of his life and career.

60 Mark Tobey to Muriel Draper, ca. 1923–1924, Draper Papers, Beinecke, Series I Correspondence, box 9, folder 301.

61 Mark Tobey to Muriel Draper, ca. 1927, Draper Papers, Beinecke, Series I Correspondence, box 9, folder 307; see also Reed, *Bachelor Japanists*, 210. A French artist and Golden Age illustrator, Castaigne's etchings accompanied E. G. Waite's article "Pioneer Mining in California" in *Century Magazine* 42, no. 1 (1891): 127–41.

62 Mark Tobey to Muriel Draper, 1925, Draper Papers, Beinecke, Series I Correspondence, box 9, folder 307; Mark Tobey to Julia and Lyonel Feininger, May 15, 1945, in *Feininger and Tobey*, ed. Hauser, 21.

63 Arguing on behalf of an indeterminate conceptual art, Duchamp often discussed the restraints of a purely retinal painting; see, for example, his 1961 talk "Where Do We Go from Here?" published in *Studio International* 189 (January–February 1975): 28.

64 Mark Tobey, quoted in Katherine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962): 236, 240.

65 Mark Tobey, quoted in "Oral History Interview with Wesley C. Wehr, 1983 May 26–September 22," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-wesley-c-wehr-12660; on Tobey's comments about Shoghi Effendi and art, see Badiee, "Mark Tobey," 61.

66 Mary Hanford Ford, "The Current Art," *Reality* 4, no. 6 (June 1921): 20; *Reality* 4, no. 8 (August 1921): 22; and *Reality* 3, no. 3 (March 1921): 36, respectively.

67 Knoedler sales books indicate that Tobey had no sales in the November 1917 exhibition. In his "Biographical Outline," Seitz mistakenly states that Tobey also drew portraits of actors for the *New York Times* in the early 1920s, but these were by *Times* staff cartoonist Edwin Marcus; see *Mark Tobey*, 91. Tobey's portrait of Chicago painter Rudolph Weisenborn was included in his 1928 show at the Chicago Arts Club; see Eleanor Jewett, "Mark Tobey's Art Makes You Laugh with It, or at It," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 25, 1928: 38.

68 Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 33.

69 Grace Glueck, "The Architect and the Sculptor: A Friendship of Ideas," *New York Times*, May 19, 2006: E34.

70 From the 1910s to the 1950s, restaurateur Romany Marie (Marie Marchand) operated eleven popular bistros in Greenwich Village that were frequented by artists and writers including Constantin Brancusi, Will and Ariel Durant, Edna St. Vincent Millay, e. e.

cummings, John Sloan, Isamu Noguchi, and Stuart Davis; she also occasionally hosted art exhibitions at the restaurants. See Robert Schulman, *Romany Marie: The Queen of Greenwich Village* (New York: Butler Books, 2006).

71 "Paintings and Drawings by Mark Tobey" (New York: Romany Marie Café Gallery, December 2–31, 1929), exhibition brochure, unpaginated, in the Willard Gallery records, AAA, microfilm reel N69–118, frames 3–6.

72 "Le monde au temps des surrealists" was published in *Variétés* (June 1929): 26–27; for various critiques see Denis Hollier, "Surrealism and Its Discontents," *Papers of Surrealism* 7 (2007): 4, and David Roediger, "Plotting Against Eurocentrism: The 1929 Surrealist Map of the World," in *Colored White* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 169–76.

73 Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, Jacques Baron, Joë Bousquet, J.-A. Boiffard, André Breton, Jean Carrive, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, et al., "A Surrealist Manifesto," January 27, 1925, quoted in Katharine Harman, *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004): 118.

74 Mark Tobey, "Reminiscence and Reverie," *Magazine of Art* 44, no. 6 (October 1951): 229; Mark Tobey, quoted in Wesley Wehr, *The Eighth Lively Art: Conversations with Painters, Poets, Musicians, and the Wicked Witch of the West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000): 44. Tobey was included in Surrealist shows throughout his career, including *Surrealist American Art* at the Art Institute of Chicago (1947–1948).

75 Tobey's paintings are listed on p. 18 of *Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1930); see also Muriel Draper, "Mark Tobey," *Creative Art* 7, no. 4 (October 1930): 42–44. Tobey's *Blue Nude* was also included in his December 1928 show at the Chicago Arts Club.

76 Marsden Hartley, "Mark Tobey, 1931" (never published), in Marsden Hartley, *On Art*, ed. Gail R. Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982): 182–84, 297–98.

77 *Mark Tobey: Retrospective Exhibition, October 4–November 4, 1951, Whitney Museum of American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1951); for examples of Tobey's sumi portraits see Edward B. Thomas, *Mark Tobey: A Retrospective Exhibition from Northwest Collections*, exhibition catalogue (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1959): catalogue nos. 196–97, and *Rétrospective Mark Tobey*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1961): catalogue nos. 161–66.

78 Paul Cummings, "Mark Tobey: Lines, Memories, Celebration," in *Mark Tobey: Works on Paper*, exhibition catalogue (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Museum of Art, 1990): 8; William Cumming, *Sketchbook: A Memoir of the 1930s and the Northwest School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984): 106; and Gail, *Other People*, 202, 208.

79 Mark Tobey, undated writing, ca. 1940s-1950s, Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-002, box 22, folder 7.

80 Wesley Wehr, *The Accidental Collector: Art, Fossils, & Friendships* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004): 205.

81 Eliza E. Rathbone, *Mark Tobey, City Paintings* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1984): 39; Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 44. Tobey reproduced many of his Pike Place drawings in *The World of a Market* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

82 On Tobey's 1921 mural, later destroyed in a fire, see Edna Woolman Chase, *Always in Vogue* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1954): 146, and the Wyner Mills article "La rénovation de la décoration murale," *Vogue Paris* 4, no. 5 (March 1, 1922): 32–33; Repard Leirum [Muriel Draper], "In and About the House," *New Yorker*, October 23, 1926: 57.

83 William Brevda, *Harry Kemp: The Last Bohemian* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1986): 149–51; Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in Amer-*

ican Nightlife, 1885–1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 158. The *Quill* was published from 1917 to 1929, and Tobey was listed as a contributing editor on its masthead beginning in October 1921.

84 Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 41, 53, 10, respectively.

85 Mark Tobey to Mark Turbyfill, July 6, 1927, Turbyfill Letters, SIU, box 2, folder 6.

86 Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith," 4.

87 Gail, *Other People*, 201.

88 Mark Tobey, quoted in *Tobey's 80: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, foreword by Richard E. Fuller, introduction by Betty Bowen (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum and University of Washington Press, 1970): unpaginated.

89 Mark Tobey to Mrs. Helen Bishop, San Francisco, July 1938, Papers of Mrs. Helen Bishop, as noted in Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey," 253, and 413, n.105.

90 Mark Tobey, "The Arena of Civilization," 1947, one-page manuscript in files of Willard Gallery, as noted in Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey," 250–51.

91 "Mark Tobey," *ARTnews* 46, no. 9 (November 1947), Willard Gallery records, AAA, microfilm reel N69–114, frame 340. Thomas B. Hess worked at *ARTnews* from 1946 to 1978.

92 Mark Tobey, quoted in Tobey-Seitz interview, 1962, tape 1, side 2, 13–14, and Tobey-Seitz interview, tape 4, side 1, 6, in Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-002, box 10, folder 23.

93 Grace Glueck, "Marian Willard Johnson, 81, Dealer in Contemporary Art," *New York Times*, November 7, 1985; see also Sharyn R. Udall, *Inside Looking Out: The Life and Art of Gina Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1994): 66–74. A 1952 exhibition catalogue of David Smith's art included a poem by Howard Nemerov; see *David Smith, Sculpture and Drawing* (New York: Kleeman Gallery-Willard Gallery, April 1–26, 1952): n.p.

94 Sidney Janis, "Mark Tobey," in *Mark Tobey, April 4–29, 1944* (New York: Willard Gallery, 1944), in the Willard Gallery records, AAA, microfilm reel N69–144, frame 243. Patricia Junker suggests that Tobey's friend Elizabeth Bayley Willis, who worked as an assistant at Willard Gallery from 1943 to 1946, coined the term "white writing" when she helped organize his April 1944 show at the gallery; see *Modernism in the Pacific Northwest: The Mythic and the Mystical* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014): 58.

95 Marian Willard bought *Broadway* from Tobey in the late 1930s for $350, but agreed to show it in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1942–1943 *Artists for Victory* show, where it won a purchase prize and entered the museum collection; see Paul Cummings, "Oral History Interview with Marian Willard Johnson, 1969 June 3," p. 37, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-marian-willard-johnson-12811.

96 Mark Tobey, quoted in Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, 237, 243–44.

97 Mark Tobey, quoted in Alexander Watt, "Paris Commentary," *Studio International Art Magazine* 162, no. 824 (December 1961): 223.

98 Michael Young, *The Elmhirsts of Dartington: The Creation of an Utopian Community* (London: Routledge, 1982): 98.

99 Bernard Leach, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1978): 167.

100 Leach, *Beyond East and West*, 171.

101 Clarke, "Cross-Cultural Dialogue," 86. On Tobey's 1934 trip to East Asia, see Rathbone, *Mark Tobey: City Paintings*, 23–26; Bert Winther-Tamaki, "Mark Tobey: White Writing for a Janus-Faced America," *Word & Image* 13, no. 1 (January–March 1997): 77–90; Clarke, "Cross-Cultural Dialogue," 57–59; and Reed, *Bachelor Japanists*, 225–37.

102 Mark Tobey, "Japanese Traditions and American Art," *College Art Journal* 18, no. 1 (Fall

1958): 22; Mark Tobey, quoted in *Mark Tobey*, exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1966): unpaginated.

103 Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 85, n.47; Joshua C. Taylor, "Looking at Tobey's Pictures," in Dahl, *Mark Tobey: Art and Belief*, 28.

104 Mark Tobey, quoted in Alexander Watt, "Paris Commentary," *Studio* 162, no. 184 (December 1961): 224. Tobey made these remarks at a 1961 summit in Vienna that brought together "Artists from Eastern and Western Countries" in the spirit of Cold War modernist détente.

105 See also Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith," 92–105.

106 Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahaí Faith* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000): 294–95; Robert H. Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 38–39.

107 Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá''i Publishing Trust, 1988): 269; Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 346.

108 Julie Oeming Badiee and Heshmatollah Badiee, "The Calligraphy of Mishkín-Qalam," *Journal of Baha'i Studies* 3, no. 4 (1990–1991): 10; on bird images, see also Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith," 124.

109 *The Bahá'í World 1932–1934*, vol. 5 (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1936); Tobey's activities are noted on 55, 74, and 96; the page he dog-eared is 489.

110 Tobey wrote on both of these paintings for shows at the Willard Gallery. His writing on *The Dormition of the Virgin* was published in "Mark Tobey Writes of His Painting on the Cover," *ARTnews* 44, no. 18 (1946): 22, which deleted the phrase "as dimensions spoken of in the Father's Kingdom," and *Mark Tobey: Retrospective Exhibition, Paintings and Drawings 1925–1961* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1962): 16. His writing on *Threading Light* was included in William Seitz, "Spirit, Time, and 'Abstract Expressionism,'" *Magazine of Art* 46, no. 2 (February 1953): 85.

111 Junker, *Modernism in the Pacific Northwest*, 12.

112 Marsden Hartley to Adelaide S. Kuntz, August 27, 1941, as noted in Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey," 81; Seitz, "Spirit, Time, and 'Abstract Expressionism,'" 85; "Mystic Painters of the Northwest," *Life* 35, no. 13 (September 28, 1953): 84–89; Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957): 5.

113 "Modern Art Argument," *Look*, November 8, 1949: 80–83. Organized by Douglas MacAgy, director of the California School of Fine Arts, in response to a round table on modern art sponsored by *Life* magazine at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1948, San Francisco's symposium was held from April 8 to 10, 1949. For an overview, see the website organized by Colby Ford at http://www.ubu.com/historical/wrtma/about.htm; for excerpts from the proceedings, see Douglas MacAgy, ed., "The Western Round Table of Modern Art (1949)," in Robert Motherwell and Ad Reinhardt, eds., *Modern Artists in America* (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, 1951): 24–38; and "Appendix A" in Bonnie Clearwater, ed., *West Coast Duchamp* (Miami Beach, FL: Grassfield Press, 1991): 106–14; see also Clearwater's essay in this volume, "Trying Very Hard to Think: Duchamp at the Western Round Table on Modern Art, 1949," 46–59. For a transcript of Tobey's remarks, see the Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-2, box 10, folder 24.

114 Biographical accounts mistakenly credit Tobey with winning the 1956 award, which went to English artist Ben Nicholson; see the March 25, 1957 Guggenheim Foundation press release at https://www.guggenheim.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/25march1957.pdf.

115 Tobey was only the second American artist to win the Venice Biennale's grand international prize for painting, first awarded to James McNeil Whistler for *Symphony in White No. 2* in 1895.

116 Irving Sandler quoted in 1987–1988 conversations with Jeffrey Wechsler, in Jeffrey Wechsler, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Dimensions* (Rutgers, NJ: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 1989): 77; Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract* Expressionism (New York: Praeger,1970).

117 Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997): 54.

118 Clement Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of the American Abstract Artists, Jacques Lipchitz, and Jackson Pollock," *Nation* 162, no. 15 (April 13, 1946): 445.

119 William Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition, Part III," *Artforum* 5, no. 8 (April 1967): 28; Wechsler, *Abstract Expressionism*, 65.

120 Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition, Part III," 26.

121 Thomas B. Hess, *Abstract Painting: Background and American Phase* (New York: Viking Press, 1951): 121; see also Winther-Tamaki, "Mark Tobey," 85–87.

122 Sam Hunter, quoted in 1987 conversation with Jeffrey Wechsler, in Wechsler, *Abstract Expressionism*, 71.

123 See, for example, Robert M. Coates, "The Art Galleries," *New Yorker*, October 13, 1951: 96–99, and Sidney Tillim, "Month in Review," *Arts Magazine*, October 1962: 48–51.

124 Sam Hunter, "Among the New Shows," *New York Times*, January 30, 1949, as noted in Pepe Karmel, ed., *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999): 61; see also James Johnson Sweeney, "Introduction," *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Art of This Century, 1943): n.p., as noted in Helen A. Harrison, ed., *Such Desperate Joy: Imagining Jackson Pollock* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000): 103.

125 Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 1, 153–55; see also Michael Leja's discussion of Abstract Expressionism's "aura of masculinity" in *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993): 256. On the American art press and Tobey's 1958 award, see Michael Russell Freeman, "'The Eye Burns Gold, Burns Crimson, and Fades to Ash': Mark Tobey as a Critical Anomaly" (PhD diss., Indiana University, Bloomington: 2000): 65–86.

126 Henry McBride, *New York Sun*, March 4, 1949, as noted in Thomas Lawson, *Norman Lewis: A Retrospective* (New York: City University of New York, 1976): n.p.

127 Kosme de Barañano, "Mark Tobey: Tangle of Colour on Line," in *Mark Tobey*, eds. Barañano and Bärmann, 83.

128 Mark Tobey to Marian Willard, January 7, 1952, *Rétrospective Mark Tobey* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1961): n.p.; Mark Tobey to Pehr Hallsten, postmarked May 6, 1953, in Kelley, "Mark Tobey and the Baha'i Faith," 53–54.

129 Shoghi Effendi, "Letters to the American Baha'i Community, American Baha'i's in the Time of World Peril," July 28, 1954, Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-002, box 22, folder 1.

130 Mark Tobey, *Tobey* (Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1970).

131 Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey," 66. Even the sixteen years Tobey spent in Basel were marked by his frequent travels elsewhere.

132 Hilton Kramer, "Art Exhibition at MoMA," *Nation* 195, no. 10 (October 6, 1962): 206.

133 Patrick Heron, "London," *Arts* 32 (January 1958): 18–19; Frank G. Spicer III, "Just What Was It That Made U.S. Art So Different, So Appealing?: Case Studies of the Critical Reception of American Avant-Garde Painting in London, 1950–1964" (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2009): 201–02.

134 Françoise Choay, *Mark Tobey* (Paris: Tudor Publishing Co., 1961): n.p.

135 Krasne, "A Tobey Profile," 34.

136 On humanism and postwar American art, see Frances K. Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War Climate, 1947–1954* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989): 5, 103–7; and Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002): 238–56.

137 Harold Rosenberg, "Community Critics vs. Modern Painting," *ARTnews* 54, no. 10 (February 1956): 59, 33.

138 John Russell, "Mark Tobey," *Vogue*, November 1, 1965: 201–02.

139 Theodore W. Adorno, "Theses upon Art and Religion Today," *Kenyon Review* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1945): 677, 681.

140 Tillim, "Month in Review," 48; Harold Rosenberg, "The Art Galleries: A Risk for the Intelligence," *New Yorker*, October 27, 1962: 163.

141 Clement Greenberg, "Our Period Style," *Partisan Review* 11 (November 1949): 1138.

142 Mark Tobey, *Tobey* (Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1970).

143 Mark Tobey to Marian Willard, June 1950, in Hoffman, "The Art and Life of Mark Tobey," 33.

144 Freeman discusses Tobey's handwritten letter to Rubin in "The Eye Burns Gold," 196–97; for a copy, see Tobey Papers, UW, accession no. 3593-001, box 1, folder 3.

145 Mark Tobey, quoted in Dahl, "The Fragrance of Spirituality: An Appreciation," in Dahl, *Mark Tobey, Art and Belief*, 40.

Chapter Four

1 Pelton wrote "Illumination" and "Black Starr & Frost, Star Sapphire Window" on the back of this photograph, which is stamped "Photograph from Old Masters Studio, Inc., 112 West 42nd St., New York." From the Agnes Pelton Papers, 1885–1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter AP Papers, AAA), Series 7: Photographic Material, 1886–1955, box 3, folder 12. Much of this material is available on AAA microfilm reels 3426 and 3427, and specific frames are referenced in endnotes below. Other materials are referenced as per their inclusion in one of the collection's seven series; for specifics see Judy Ng, *A Finding Aid to the Agnes Pelton Papers*, May 13, 2015, AAA, https://www.aaa.si.edu/files/resources/finding-aids/pdf/peltagne.pdf. Pelton's papers consist of intermingled scrapbooks, journals, and sketchbooks that contain her personal writing as well as sketches, newspaper clippings, letters, cards, photographs, and other materials.

2 Founded in 1810, Black, Starr & Frost merged with Gorham Manufacturing Company in 1929 and was renamed Black, Starr & Frost-Gorham; in 1940, it was renamed Black, Starr & Gorham; in 1962, it reinstated its original moniker. For consistency, I refer to the company as Black, Starr & Frost. The firm first installed plate-glass windows in 1833 and moved to Fifth Avenue and 48th Street in 1912. See Landon J. Napoleon, *1810: Celebrating Two Centuries of American Luxury* (Newport Beach, CA: Black, Starr & Frost, 2014): 15–16, 95, 107.

3 "'Lucky' Baldwin Ruby Sold to New Yorker," *New York Times*, December 7, 1930: 5. Black's remarks about the acquisition are noted in Napoleon, *1810*, 96 and "Nearby Ruby," *New Yorker*, January 10, 1931: 12.

4 See William Leach's discussion of shop windows and the manufacture of consumer desire in *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993): 39–70.

5 Massimo Introvigne, "'Theosophical' Artistic Networks in the Americas, 1920–1950," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 19, no. 4 (2016): 33–56; Michael K. Schuessler, "Transcultural Modernists as Bicultural Bridges: Anita Brenner, Alma

Reed, and Francis Toor," in Barbara Haskell, ed., *Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2020): 199–201.

6 Johanna Drucker, "Paulina Peavy: An Etherian Channeler," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, September 4, 2021, https://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/sight-and-insight-paulina-peavy-an-etherian-channeler/.

7 Agnes Pelton, "To Introduce My Oil Painting *Illumination*," January 12, 1957, Raymond Jonson Archive, University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque (hereafter Jonson Archive, UNM), AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Correspondence file; Dane Rudhyar, "An Experience in Light," catalogue essay in *Agnes Pelton Paintings* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, November 16–December 7, 1943): n.p.; reproduced in Dane Rudhyar, "Artist Pelton to Exhibit Work at Museum Here Starting Tuesday, Noted Figure of Art World Sums Up Meanings," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, November 14, 1943, in AP Papers, AAA, microfilm roll 3427, frames 606–07.

8 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, September 27, 1929, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 575; *Illumination*'s poem is noted in Edward Ainsworth, "Agnes Pelton: The Woman Who Found Wonders in the Sky," *Palm Spring Villager* 11, no. 11 (June–July 1957): n.p.

9 Pelton noted her studies with Whiting in "Publicity," Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Biographical Narrative file. Her biography is also detailed in Michael Zakian, *Agnes Pelton: Poet of Nature* (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Desert Museum, 1995).

10 On Pamela Colman Smith, see Kathleen Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008): 47–61. Pyne notes that Käsebier studied painting at Pratt from 1894–1896, when Pelton was also enrolled; see p. 20.

11 Pelton, quoted in Annie Laurie Hopkins, "Story of Well Known Artist," *Keyport* [New Jersey] *Weekly*, December 17, 1926; on Field, see Wendy Jeffers, "Hamilton Easter Field: The Benefactor from Brooklyn," *Archives of American Art Journal* 50, nos. 1–2 (Spring 2011): 26–37, and Doreen Bolger, "Hamilton Easter Field and His Contribution to American Modernism," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1988): 78–107.

12 Charles Musser, "1913: A Feminist Moment in the Arts," in *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution*, eds. Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt (New York: New-York Historical Society, 2013): 173.

13 In 1915, for example, Pelton showed her Imaginative paintings *Romance* and *Persephone* in the Women's Suffrage Exhibition at Macbeth Gallery; showed *Sea Shell*, *The Strong*, *China Asters*, and *Chalk Drawing* in the Association of Women Painters and Sculptors Exhibition of Small Pictures and Sculptures at Arlington Art Galleries (274 Madison Avenue); and had a solo show of two dozen Imaginative canvases at Dora Brophy, Inc. (13 East 36th Street). See *American Art News* 14, no. 10 (December 11, 1915): 9.

14 Henry McBride, "News and Comment in the World of Art," *New York Sun*, November 16, 1919: 7. Pelton's review of Nadelman's sculptures and drawings, titled "Her Crowning Moment in Evening Dress," followed McBride's comments about Knoedler's exhibit.

15 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, January 7, 1935, AP papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 723.

16 Maurice Tuchman, ed., *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986); Pelton's work is discussed and illustrated on pp. 43–45. The exhibit began at LACMA in 1986 and traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Gemeentemuseum in the Hague in 1987.

17 Margaret Stainer, *Agnes Pelton* (Fremont, CA: Ohlone College Art Gallery, 1989); Zakian, *Agnes Pelton: Poet of Nature*. Stainer published the first scholarly assessment of Pelton's art in 1981; see Margaret Stainer, "Agnes Pelton," in Jan Rindfleisch, ed., *Staying Visible: The*

Importance of Archives: Art and "Saved Stuff" of Eleven 20th Century California Artists (Cupertino, CA: Helen Euphrat Museum of Art, De Anza College, 1981): 8–15. Other early scholarship includes Susan Ehrlich, "Agnes Pelton," in Paul J. Karlstrom and Susan Ehrlich, eds., *Turning the Tide: Early Los Angeles Modernists, 1920–1950* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1990): 147–49; Penny Perlmutter, "Agnes Pelton: Images of the Sublime and Female Patrons Who Permitted Them" (MA thesis, San Francisco State University, 1994); and Nancy Strow Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life: The Art of Agnes Pelton, 1881–1961" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2000).

18 Amanda Cruz, "Director's Foreword," in Gilbert Vicario, ed., *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2019): 15; Karen Moss, ed., *Illumination: The Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe, Agnes Pelton, Agnes Martin, and Florence Miller Pierce* (London: Merrell Publishers; Newport Beach, CA: Orange County Museum of Art, 2009); Christopher Knight, "Forget Georgia; Agnes Finally Gets Her Due," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1995: 52.

19 Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West. Volume 1. Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004): 1–3.

20 Erik Davis, *The Visionary State: A Journey through California's Spiritual Landscape* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006): 154; Laurence Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Communities in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973): 270–73.

21 *Theodore Tilton vs. Henry Ward Beecher, Action for Crim. Con. Tried in the City Court of Brooklyn*, vol. 1 (New York: McDivitt, Campbell & Co, Law Publishers, 1875): 47; see also Richard Wightman Fox, *Trials of Intimacy: Love and Loss in the Beecher-Tilton Scandal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

22 Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006); William G. McLoughlin, *The Meaning of Henry Ward Beecher: An Essay on the Shifting Values of Mid-Victorian America, 1840–1870* (New York: Knopf, 1970): 84–96.

23 Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981): 18; Thomas Campanella, *Brooklyn: The Once and Future City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019): 216.

24 Paxton Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait* (New York: George H. Doran, 1927): 225; Fox, *Trials of Intimacy*, 204; Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998): 165. Page's portrait of Beecher was shown at the National Academy of Design in 1869; see Joshua C. Taylor, *William Page: The American Titian* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957): 189.

25 Leon Oliver, *The Great Sensation: A Full, Complete and Reliable History of the Beecher-Tilton-Woodhull Scandal* (Chicago: Beverly Company, 1873): 135, 342. In another account, Tilton removed Page's portrait of Beecher from his house and gave it to his friend Frank Moulton; see Charles F. Marshall, *The True History of the Brooklyn Scandal* (Philadelphia: National Publishing, 1874): 530.

26 David W. Bulla and David B. Sachsman, eds., *Sensationalism: Murder, Mayhem, Mudslinging, Scandals, and Disasters in 19th-Century Reporting* (Edison, NJ: Transaction, 2013): xxv; see also Suzanna Krivulskaya, "Disgraced: How Sex Scandals Transformed American Protestantism, 1833–1987" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2019), especially ch. 2, "The Beecher-Tilton Scandal." The civil trial followed Plymouth Church's investigation of the charges in 1874, which exonerated Beecher of any wrongdoing. The church's investiga-

tion, initiated by Beecher, was prompted by rumors about the scandal leaked to the press starting in 1872.

27 Fox, *Trials of Intimacy*, 105; Ann-Janine Morey, "Blaming Women for the Sexually Abusive Male Pastor," *Christian Century*, October 5, 1988: 867.

28 Charles Mumford, "A Great Lecturer Lost," *Talent* 17, no. 3 (September 1906): 9; Mumford was Tilton's Lyceum Bureau manager for fourteen years.

29 Nancy Green, *The Other Americans in Paris: Businessmen, Countesses, Wayward Youth, 1880–1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 41; Mary Bacon Ford, "American Society in Paris," *Cosmopolitan* 15 (May 1893): 79; "The Two Dromios, Frederick Douglass and Theodore Tilton in Paris," *Washington Post*, January 25, 1887: 7. Shortly after Douglass died, Tilton published *Sonnets to the Memory of Frederick Douglass* (Paris: Brentano's, 1895), which opens with the line "I knew the noblest giants of my day."

30 "Elizabeth R. Tilton Dead," *Indianapolis News*, April 16, 1897: 1.

31 "Obituaries, American: Tilton, Elizabeth Richards," *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1897*, Third Series, vol. II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898): 623.

32 Agnes Pelton to Dane Rudhyar, September 5, 1934, in Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Correspondence with Dane Rudhyar file.

33 See notice in *Buffalo Evening News*, June 29, 1899: 14, which names Florence T. Pelton, Nellie M. Barnum, and Joseph H. Richards as directors of the company.

34 See, for example, Charles F. Taylor, *Theory and Practice of the Movement-Cure* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1861), and George H. Taylor, *An Illustrated Sketch of the Movement-Cure, Its Principles, Methods and Effects* (New York: Movement-Cure Institute, 1866). George Taylor was also interested in spiritualism and medium Kate Fox practiced her "spirit drawings" at his Movement-Cure Institute in New York in the 1860s; see W. G. Langworthy Taylor, *Katie Fox: Epochmaking Medium and the Making of the Fox-Taylor Record* (New York: Putnam's, 1933).

35 Agnes Pelton to Dane Rudhyar, September 5, 1934, in Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Correspondence with Dane Rudhyar file.

36 Agnes Pelton to Dane Rudhyar, September 5, 1934.

37 "Alimony for Mrs. Taylor," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 27, 1901: 2; "Divorce Suit Withdrawn," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 28, 1901: 3.

38 See, for example, "The Scandals of Massage: I," *British Medical Journal*, November 3, 1894: 1003–04.

39 Agnes Pelton to Jane Levington Comfort, December 8, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence, 1930–1932, box 1, folder 1. The friend mentioned was Helen Hudson.

40 Marjorie Hillis, *Live Alone and Like It: A Guide for the Extra Woman* (New York: Sun Dial Press, Inc., 1936); see also Joanna Scutts, *The Extra Woman: How Marjorie Hillis Led a Generation of Women to Live Alone and Like It* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

41 On Pelton's sexual orientation, see Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 224–25. In a 1934 letter to Rudhyar, Pelton mentioned feelings of "romantic attachment" for one of her mother's piano students when she was fourteen, adding that "her interest in me was very impersonal." See Pelton to Rudhyar, September 5, 1934, in Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II Folder, Agnes Pelton Correspondence with Dane Rudhyar file.

42 Elizabeth Stoddard to Helen Hunt Jackson, April 7, 1870, in *The Selected Letters of Elizabeth Stoddard*, eds. Jennifer Putzi and Elizabeth Stockton (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012): 136; Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, August 18, 1874, in *The Letters of Henry Adams, Vol. II, 1868–1885*, ed. J. C. Levenson, Ernest Samuels, Charles Vandersee, and Viola Hopkins Winner (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1982): 204.

43 Dorothy Gillespie to Laura Gardin Fraser, July 21, 1961 and July 29, 1961, in James Earle and Laura Gardin Fraser Papers, box 19, Business Records, Pelton, Agnes 1958–1962-estate, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries, Syracuse, NY (hereafter Fraser Papers, Syracuse). Both women were Agnes Pelton's first cousins: Dorothy Gillespie was the daughter of Theodore Tilton's son Ralph, and Laura Gardin Fraser was the daughter of Pelton's aunt, Alice Tilton Gardin.

44 Theodore Tilton, "The Fly" (1859) and "The Silver Bell of Stuttgart" (1870–1880), *The Complete Poetical Works of Theodore Tilton in One Volume* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897): 24–28 and 262–78.

45 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, March 29, 1946, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 75. The gift of Kate Morgan's portrait is noted in a July 18, 1905 letter from Dane Fuller to Agnes Pelton, written from Theodore Tilton's Paris address; see Fraser Papers, Syracuse, box 19, Business Records, Pelton, Agnes 1958–1962-estate. For a view of Morgan's portrait and further discussion of the Tilton family, see Jan Rindfleisch, "Making the Desert Flower: An Alternative Look at Rarely Seen Agnes Pelton Paintings," *Californiadesertart.com* (November 2, 2019), https://www.californiadesertart.com/making-the-desert-flower-an-alternative-look-at-rarely-seen-agnes-pelton-paintings/.

46 Agnes Pelton to Dane Rudhyar, September 5, 1934, in Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Correspondence with Dane Rudhyar file.

47 Agnes Pelton to Dane Rudhyar, September 5, 1934.

48 George M. Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia), Its Symptoms, Nature, Sequences, Treatment* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1894): 157; David G. Schuster, *Neurasthenic Nation: America's Search for Health, Happiness, and Comfort, 1869–1920* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011): 21. On neurasthenia and anorexia, see Joan Jacobs Brumbrerg, *Fasting Girls: A History of Anorexia Nervosa* (New York: Vintage, 1988): 147–48. James helped popularize the term "neurasthenia" in a review of Annie Payson Call's 1891 book *Power Through Repose*, as noted in Liah Greenfield, *Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013):606.

49 Agnes Pelton, "Artist's Statement," in *Imaginative Paintings by Thirty Young Artists of New York City* (New York: Knoedler Galleries, 1917): n.p. Various authors write that Pelton showed twelve canvases in this exhibition, but the catalogue lists only six of her paintings.

50 Charles C. Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, 1979): 15.

51 Marsden Hartley, *Adventures in the Arts: Informal Chapters on Painters, Vaudeville, and Poets* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1921): 71; Sadakichi Hartmann, "On the Elongation of Form," *Camera Work* 10 (April 1905): 34–35, as noted in Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996): 192.

52 Michael Zakian, "Agnes Pelton: Transcendental Symbolist," in *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist*, ed. Vicario, 41; Eldredge, *American Imagination*, 15.

53 Agnes Pelton, "Publicity Personal," ca. 1938, Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Biographical Narrative.

54 Sharyn R. Udall, *Sensory Crossovers: Synesthesia in American Art* (Albuquerque, NM: Albuquerque Museum of Art, 2010): 4–5, 49; Greta Berman, "Synesthesia and the Arts," *Leonardo* 32, no. 1 (1999): 15–22, and Anna Gawboy, "Agnes Pelton and the Musicalization of Colour," in *Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, the Arts and the American West*, ed. Sarah V. Turner (Somerset: Fulgur Press, 2019): 68–78; Agnes Pelton, color scale notations dating to 1917, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frames 481, 487.

55 Wassily Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, ed. Hilla Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1946): 64–65.

56 Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, 35–36, 80.

57 Marianne Lorenz, "Kandinsky and Regional America," in Gail Levin and Marianne Lorenz, *Theme & Improvisation: Kandinsky & the American Avant-Garde, 1912–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1992): 125.

58 Robin Veder, "Arthur B. Davies' Inhalation Theory of Art," *American Art* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 58; Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, especially 1–61.

59 Megan Fort, "The Overwhelming Appeal of Odilon Redon," *The Armory Show at 100: Modern Art and Revolution*, blog post, September 10, 2013, http://armory.nyhistory.org/the-overwhelming-appeal-of-odilon-redon/. Redon was the Armory Show's "best seller with 13 paintings and pastels and more than 20 prints" purchased by Katherine Dreier, Robert Chanler, Lillie Bliss, John Quinn, and others; see *1913 Armory Show 50th Anniversary Exhibition* (Utica, NY: Munson-Proctor Institute, 1963): 37. On art historical disinterest in American Symbolist and Imaginative art, see Eldredge, *American Imagination*, 24, and Emily Gephart, "A Dreamer and a Painter: Visualizing the Unconscious in the Work of Arthur B. Davies, 1890–1920" (PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2014): 10–13.

60 Pelton exhibited *Calm* and *Awakening* at the Macdowell Club of New York, October 16–28, 1913; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frames 89–90.

61 On Käsebier's "signature image," see Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminist Voice*, 21.

62 Agnes Pelton, description of *Vine Wood*, ca. 1913, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 456; Edgar Fawcett, "Maidenhair," *Atlantic Monthly* 45, no. 272 (June 1880). The word "maidenhair" may designate several types of ferns and is slang for female public hair. Fawcett, like many of the Gilded Age poets that Pelton quoted in her journals during her Imaginative painting phase, published his poems in the same magazines as her grandfather, Theodore Tilton.

63 Eldredge, *American Imagination*, 81, 70.

64 For reproductions of these and other Imaginative paintings, see Zakian, *Agnes Pelton: Poet of Nature*, 24–37.

65 Henry McBride, "Agnes Pelton's Pictures," *New York Sun*, March 26, 1913; Forbes Watson, "Review," *New York Evening Post*, March 29, 1913; "News and Notes of the Art World, Ideal Visions," *New York Times*, March 30, 1913: SM15.

66 Homer Saint-Gaudens, untitled review, *New York Herald Tribune*, November 30, 1915, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 400.

67 Elizabeth Chase Akers Allen (pen name Florence Percy), "Morning Glories," *Littell's Living Age* 129, no. 1667 (1876): 450; Nell Brinkley, "The Spirit of Earth and Heaven, from One of Agnes Pelton's Paintings, Exhibited Now in New York City," *Buffalo Enquirer*, November 26, 1915: 13.

68 Trina Robbins, *Nell Brinkley and the New Woman in the Early 20th Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2001): 39–40.

69 Fae Brauer, "'Moral Girls' and 'Filles Fatales': The Fetishisation of Innocence," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 10, no. 1 (2009): 139.

70 Brinkley, "The Spirit of Earth and Heaven." An interview with Brinkley ca. 1938 by Boyden Sparkes suggests that Arthur Brisbane may have authored her columns; see Brisbane Family Papers, February 2001 addition, box 1, Nell Brinkley, Bird Library, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

71 Alice Brisbane Thursby (1856–1953) was raised in Paris, where she met Henry James and John Singer Sargent. In 1888, she married Charles Radcliffe Thursby, an English engineer

who worked in Argentina; he died in 1903. Dodge mentions Thursby and Pelton in her 1936 memoir *Movers and Shakers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985): 524. On her relationship with John Quinn, see Janis Londraville, *On Poetry, Painting, and Politics: The Letters of May Morris and John Quinn* (London: Associated University Press, Inc., 1997): 198, n.6. On Sargent's portrait of Thursby, see Julia Rayer Rolfe, et al., *The Portrait of a Lady: Sargent and Lady Agnew* (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 1997), exhibition catalogue: 75; see also Holly Pyne Connor, ed., *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent* (Newark, NJ: Newark Museum of Art, 2006): 46–47.

72 See, for example, Florence Pelton's notes from October 14, 1914, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 106.

73 See Florence Pelton's notes, including her transcription of Gale's comments, in AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frames 85, 103, and 159. For Pelton's interior decoration flyer, see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 357. Brisbane commissioned Pelton's *Room Decoration in Purple and Gray* (1917) for his apartment in Washington.

74 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, January 21, 1917, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 485. On Pach's lecture, given at the Parish Church of the Ascension, 12 West Eleventh Street in New York on January 21, 1917, see the Walter Pach papers, 1857–1980, box 6, folder 13: Lecture Announcements, Pach, 1906–1951, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. On Pach's writing on modern art, see Laurette E. McCarthy, *Walter Pach (1883–1958): The Armory Show and the Untold Story of Modern Art in America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011): 105–12. On Covert's attention to religious subjects, see Michael R. Taylor, "From Munich to Modernism: John Covert, New York Dada, and the Real Smell of War," in Leo G. Mazow, ed., *John Covert Rediscovered* (University Park, PA: Palmer Museum of Art, 2003): 29.

75 Agnes Pelton, "Autumn in Killingworth 1918," October 26, 1918, AP papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 496.

76 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1902): 92.

77 Dell deChant, "The American New Thought Movement," in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America, Volume I: History and Controversies*, eds. Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006): 69.

78 J. Gordon Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins: A Feminist of the 1880s and Mother of New Thought," in Catherine Wessinger, ed., *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993): 88–101; Paul Tyner, "The Metaphysical Movement," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 25, no. 3 (March 1902): 312–13, as noted in Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 79–80.

79 Gail M. Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002): 74–78; Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2013): 17–18.

80 Fenwicke L. Holmes, *Ernest Holmes: His Life and Times* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1970): 196; Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 92.

81 deChant, "The American New Thought Movement," 82; Dodge, *Movers and Shakers*, 467–68.

82 Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 8, 15.

83 Sheley discusses their correspondence in "Bringing Light to Life," 197, n. 411. Comfort and Dodge corresponded between 1914 and 1924; see the Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers,

YCAL MSS 196, Series I Correspondence, box 7, folder 194–95, Beinecke Library, Yale University (hereafter, Luhan Papers, Yale); Will Levington Comfort, *Midstream: A Chronicle at Halfway* (New York: George H. Doran, 1914): 234–36.

84 Comfort, *Midstream*, 317.

85 Jane Levington Comfort, *From These Beginnings* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1937): 213–14.

86 Joseph E. Ross, *Krotona of Old Hollywood, 1914–1920*, vol. II (self-published, 2004): 340–41, 457; Deniz Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar: His Music, Thought, and Art* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009): xx; James Shere, *Dane Rudhyar 1895—: A Brief Factual Biography with a Listing of His Works* (Berkeley, CA: International Committee for a Humanistic Astrology, 1972): 6; Will Levington Comfort, *The Letters of Will Levington Comfort, Book One, Containing the First Nineteen Letters called The Mystic Road* (Los Angeles: Will Levington Comfort, 1920): 46; Alice Bailey, *From Intellect to Intuition* (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1932): 227–28.

87 One magazine, *The Glass Hive*, which Comfort promoted as a "group book," had about 1,500 subscribers; see Veysey, *The Communal Experience*, 42. Ida Cassa Heffron termed Comfort's spiritual community the "Comfort Group" and described her experiences and Comfort's ideas in *Will Comfort, Man of Vision* (Los Angeles: Ivan Deach, 1936): 58.

88 Comfort, *Midstream*, 268; Pelton's quotes from Comfort's book, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 498. Agnes Pelton, journal entry, January 13, 1929, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 565.

89 Agnes Pelton to Mabel Dodge Luhan, September 27, 1928, Luhan Papers, Yale, YCAL MSS 196, Series 1: Correspondence, box 28, folder 808. The friend she mentioned was Emma Hart Newton. Jane Levington Comfort (1903–1996) married Howard Allison Sturtzel in 1920; both wrote books and articles under their pen names Jane and Paul Annixter.

90 Pelton visited Dodge in Taos from January to April 1919 and stayed at the "Arthur Manby house," which Dodge rented until construction on Los Gallos was completed later that year; see Lois Palken Rudnick, *The Suppressed Memoirs of Mabel Dodge Luhan: Sex, Syphilis, and Psychoanalysis in the Making of Modern American Culture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012): 134. Dodge sent Hopkins $100 for train tickets to visit her in New Mexico, and Hopkins stayed with her in Taos from February to March 1919; see Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 102–03.

91 Dodge purchased *The Willow* for $50 at an "informal exhibition" hosted by Alice Brisbane Thursby on May 17, 1912; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 94. Dodge also visited Pelton's studio at 19 East 59th Street on November 16, 1914; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 108.

92 Agnes Pelton to Mabel Dodge Luhan, November 21, 1938, Luhan Papers, Yale, YCAL MSS 196, Series 1: Correspondence, box 28, folder 808.

93 Hopkins to Mabel Dodge, quoted in Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 113; Agnes Pelton to Mabel Dodge, 1921 (month unknown), Luhan Papers, Yale, YCAL MSS 196, Series 1: Correspondence, box 28, folder 808.

94 Agnes Pelton, "Knowledge," AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 482. Her quotes are from Annie Rix Militz, *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing* (Los Angeles: Master Mind Publishing Co., 1904): Lesson V., "Knowledge and Good Judgment," 54–57.

95 On her sketch for *Being*, see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 620; see also frame 526 where Pelton writes: "1923, Began Abstraction 'Being' shown at Buffalo."

96 Agnes Pelton, sketch for *Mother of Silence*, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 685; Agnes Pelton, diary entry, October 1939, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 4, italics in original.

97 Zakian, "Agnes Pelton: Transcendental Symbolist," 49.

98 David Morgan, *Images at Work: The Material Culture of Enchantment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 119; Bernard Faure, "The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 768–69.

99 Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, 20; Rudhyar, "An Experience in Light," n.p. In the late 1920s, Pelton made notes on "Ikons and Santos" in her journals; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 557.

100 Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 141.

101 Pelton, sketchbook page for *Mount of Flame*, March 28, 1931, in Jonson Archive, UNM, AP III folder, Agnes Pelton Artwork & Images file. *Mount of Flame* is in the collection of the University of New Mexico Art Museum. Pelton's sketch references Geoffrey Hodson, *The Angelic Hosts* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1928): 2.

102 Gauri Viswanathan, "In Search of Madame Blavatsky: Reading the Exoteric, Retrieving the Esoteric," *Representations* 141, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 88.

103 H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889): 39.

104 Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 167, 63.

105 Robert Ellwood and Catherine Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood': Women in the Theosophical Movement," in *Women's Leadership's in Marginal Religions*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993): 68–87; see also Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

106 H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, vol. I (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, Ltd., 1888): 136; H. P. Blavatsky, *The Esoteric Writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky* (1897; Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980): 366; Joy Dixon, "Sexology and the Occult: Sexuality and Subjectivity in Theosophy's New Age," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 3 (January 1997): 417, 430.

107 In *The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the Myth of the Great White Lodge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), Kenneth Paul Johnson posits the historical sources for Blavatsky's "adept sponsors."

108 Sydney Ahlstrom discussed the "harmonialism" of metaphysical religions in *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972): 1019.

109 Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, 90–91; and Christopher Partridge, "Lost Horizon: H. P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism," in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, eds., Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 310, 314; see also Christopher White's critique of Theosophy in *Other Worlds: Spirituality and the Search for Invisible Dimensions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018): 89.

110 Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007): 7.

111 Agnes Pelton, diary entry, November 5, 1941, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 23; Agnes Pelton, "Abstraction in Color," in *Exhibition of Paintings, Abstractions by Agnes Pelton, November 11th to 23rd, 1929, Montross Gallery* (New York: Montross Gallery, 1929): n.p.

112 Agnes Pelton, diary entry, January 9, 1957, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 257.

113 On practice and religious belief see, for example, Courtney Bender, "Practicing Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, ed. Robert A. Orsi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 273–96; Agnes Pelton to Jane Comfort, September 8, 1943, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence, 1942–1943, box 1, folder 9.

114 Agnes Pelton, "Dream," October 23, 1945, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 72; for her sketch of *Ascent* see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 79.

115 Agnes Pelton to Jane Comfort, August 11, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence, 1930–1932, box 1, folder 1; Agnes Pelton, August 22, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 662.

116 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, 14–16.

117 Annie Besant, *Study of Consciousness: A Contribution to the Science of Psychology* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904): 58–59; see also Julie Hall, "The Saptaparna: The Meaning and Origins of the Theosophical Septenary Constitution of Man," *Theosophical History: A Quarterly Journal of Research* 13, no. 4 (October 2007): 5–38.

118 Agnes Pelton, April 30, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 646; emphasis original; Reputedly an ancient Tibetan text, the *Book of Dzyan* forms the basis for *The Secret Doctrine*.

119 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (Krotona, CA: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973): 314. The concept of the "silver cord" is also found in Ecclesiastes 12:6–7.

120 On Theosophy's splintering following Blavatsky's death in 1891, see Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980): 100–78; Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, "Introduction," in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 4–5, and Tim Rudbøg, "Point Loma, Theosophy, and Katherine Tingley," in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, eds. Hammer and Rothstein, 51–72. On membership statistics, see Robert Ellwood, "God and the Great Angel," *Quest* 99, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 30. On perennial philosophy, see Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy: An Interpretation of the Great Mystics, East and West* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945). On Theosophy's New Age influence, see Olav Hammer, "Theosophical Elements in New Age Religion," in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, eds. Hammer and Rothstein, 237–58.

121 Sixten Ringbom, "Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers," in *The Spiritual in Art*, ed. Tuchman, 131–53; and Tracey Bashkoff, *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2018).

122 Roald Nasgaard and Gwendolyn Owens, *Higher States: Lawren Harris and His American Contemporaries* (New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 2017); Michael Stoeber, "Theosophical Influences on the Painting and Writing of Lawren Harris: Re-Imagining Theosophy through Canadian Art," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 81–103; Jenny McFarlane, *Concerning the Spiritual: The Influence of the Theosophical Society on Australian Artists: 1890–1934* (Northern Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Press, 2012); and Zoe Alderton, "Colour, Shape, and Music: The Presence of *Thought Forms* in Abstract Art," *Literature and Aesthetics* 21, no. 1 (June 2011): 236–58.

123 Zama Vanessa Helder was an active member of the Theosophical Society; a pencil sketch she made of Helena Blavatsky (working from a photograph dated ca. 1870) was featured as the frontispiece in C. Jinarajadasa, *The Personality of Madame Blavatsky* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1930).

124 Hilla Rebay, "The Beauty of Non-Objectivity," in Solomon R. Guggenheim and Hilla Rebay, *Second Enlarged Catalogue of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection of Non-Objective Paintings, On Exhibition from February 8, 1937 through February 28, 1937* (New York: Bradford Press, 1937): 13.

125 Sherrye Cohn, "Arthur Dove and Theosophy: Visions of a Transcendental Reality," *Arts* 58 (September 1983): 86–91; Cynthia Fowler, "The Intersecting of Theosophy and Feminism: Katherine Dreier and the Modern Woman Artist," *Oculus* 3, no. 1 (2000): 2–15; Ilene

Susan Fort, "Altered State(s): California Art and the Inner World," in *Reading California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900–2000*, ed. Stephanie Barron (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): 31–49; and *Enchanted Modernities*, ed. Turner. For more on the TPG, see Michael Duncan, ed., *Another World: The Transcendental Painting Group* (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 2021) and Tiska Blankenship, *Vision and Spirit: The Transcendental Painting Group* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); on the unrealized TPG exhibition at the Museum of Non-Objective Art, see Agnes Pelton to Raymond Jonson, April 15, 1940, Raymond Jonson Papers, 1910–1964, Archives of American Art (hereafter, Jonson Papers, AAA), microfilm reel RJ4, frames 2601, 2652.

126 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, 444. Blavatsky became a naturalized US citizen in 1878.

127 Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 64, 87; on Newton's attendance at one of the "teas," see AP Papers, April 1, 1917, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 159. Nathan K. Rees states that Newton introduced Pelton to Will Comfort; see "Synthesizing Transcendental Painting: Race, Religion, and Aesthetics in the Art of Emil Bisttram, Raymond Jonson, and Agnes Pelton" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2010): 64.

128 Helena Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892): 191; Agnes Pelton, description of *Divinity Lotus*, ca. December 1928, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 578. Newton's name is inscribed on the stretcher bars of the painting.

129 See Pelton's list of the owners of her paintings in AP Papers, date unknown, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 578. In a letter to Mabel Dodge, Pelton noted that Emma Newton's nickname was "Ahmi"; see Agnes Pelton to Mabel Dodge, September 26, 1932, Luhan Papers, Yale, YCAL MSS 196, Series 1: Correspondence, box 28, folder 808. "Ahmi" is also translated as "I am" in Zoroastrian texts that Blavatsky consulted.

130 Matthew S. Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 4.

131 See Ann Braude, "News from the Spirit World: A Checklist of American Spiritualist Periodicals, 1847–1900," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 99 (1989): 399–462; David K. Nartonis, "The Rise of 19th-Century American Spiritualism, 1854–1873," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 2 (June 2010): 361–73; and John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

132 John K. Simmons, "The Forgotten Contribution of Annie Rix Militz to the Unity School of Christianity," *Novo Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 2, no. 1 (October 1998): 76–92.

133 Christopher Partridge, "Occulture is Ordinary," in *Contemporary Esotericism*, eds. Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm (London: Routledge, 2014): 113–33; for ads see, for example, *Occult Life*, June 1929.

134 "'Cheiro' Tells How He Read the Hands of the Great," *New York Times*, September 22, 1912: 97. Cheiro was also known as Count Louis Hamon. By the mid-1980s, 71 percent of US dailies carried the syndicated astrology columns of Jeanne Dixon and Sydney Omarr; see Penelope McMillan, "40 Million Readers: Horoscopes: Fans Bask in Sun Signs," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1985.

135 Louise McWhirter, *Astrology and Stock Market Forecasting* (New York: Astro Book Company, 1938); Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality: A Re-Formulation of Astrological Concepts and Ideals, in Terms of Contemporary Psychology and Philosophy* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1936): xii; Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*, vol. II, *The Medieval and Modern Worlds* (London: Continuum, 2009): 261.

136 Ingvild Saelid Gilhus and Lisbeth Mikaelsson, "Theosophy and Popular Fiction," in

Handbook of the Theosophical Current, eds. Hammer and Rothstein, 455; Mark S. Morrison, "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity, and Counter-Public Spheres," *Journal of Modern Literature* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 9.

137 Algernon Blackwood, *The Bright Messenger* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1922): 342, 349; Agnes Pelton, ca. 1930, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 604. Pelton commenced her comments with the inscription "GMP abt O'Keefe" [sic], leading to speculation that she may have paraphrased them; see Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 95; Michael Zakian, "Agnes Pelton and Georgia O'Keeffe: The Window and the Wall," in *Illumination*, ed. Moss, 84; and Rees, "Synthesizing Transcendental Painting," 123.

138 Michael Zakian wrote that they "probably never met" in his essay "Agnes Pelton and Georgia O'Keeffe," 69. For other comparisons of Pelton and O'Keeffe, see Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 92–116; Sharyn R. Udall, "O'Keeffe and Pelton: Releasing the Imagination's Natural and Mystical Impulses," in *Illumination*, ed. Moss, 51–66; and Nira Tessler, *Flowers and Towers: Politics of Identity in the Art of the American 'New Woman'* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015): 104–05.

139 Agnes Pelton, August 19, 1935, sketch for *Day*, in AP Papers, Series 6: Artwork 1885–1957, sketchbook VI, 1930–1935, box 2, folder 8. *Fountain—Source of Occultism* was based on seminars de Purucker held at the Theosophical Society from 1929 to 1933, and circulated privately among followers. Pelton may have accessed it during a visit to Point Loma in the early 1930s.

140 Douglas Kahn, "Ether Ore: Mining Vibrations in American Modernist Music," in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, ed. Veit Erlmann (New York: Berg, 2005): 124. Thanks to Linda Dalrymple Henderson for sharing this reference.

141 Carol J. Oja, "Dane Rudhyar's Vision of American Dissonance," *American Music* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 129–45; see also Oja's book *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and especially ch. 6 on Rudhyar.

142 Dane Rudhyar, "Agnes Pelton," *Exhibition of Paintings by Agnes Pelton, February 16–March 7* (New York: Argent Galleries, 1931): n.p.; Rudhyar, "An Experience in Light," n.p.

143 Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar*, xiv-xx, 147; on Rudhyar and the Transcendental Painting Group, see Herbert R. Hartel Jr., *Raymond Jonson and the Spiritual in Modernist and Abstract Painting* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 99–101. Rudhyar's comparison of Pelton and Kandinsky is noted in Levin and Lorenz, *Theme & Improvisation*, 124.

144 *Hamsa* was published from 1932 to 1934 and featured articles by Rudhyar (including those penned under his pseudonym "Zahaz"), Marc Edmund Jones, Edward Weston, and Bo Yin Ra (the spiritual moniker of German painter Joseph Anton Schneiderfranken); for a synopsis and digital copies, see "Hamsa," *International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals*, http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/hamsa/.

145 Helen Asrael, "Winged Thoughts," *Hamsa* 3 (1933): 42.

146 Called the "Dean of American Astrology" during the interwar era, Marc Edmund Jones (1888–1980) was a Presbyterian minister and screenwriter who with clairvoyant Elsie Wheeler devised the Sabian Symbols in 1925. Prior to publishing his theory of astrological "shapings" in *Guide to Horoscope Interpretation* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1941) and *The Sabian Symbols in Astrology* (New York: Sabian Publishing Society, 1953), Jones shared his ideas with Sabian Assembly students in mimeograph copies.

147 Dane Rudhyar, "Foreword to the Third Edition," *The Planetarization of Consciousness* (New York: ASI Publishers Inc., 1976): v; Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age Movement* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012): 62.

148 On Bailey, see Catherine Wessinger, "The Second Generation Leaders of the Theo-

sophical Society (Adyar)," in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, eds. Hammer and Rothstein, 43.

149 Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality*, 222.

150 Dane Rudhyar, "Preface to the 3rd Edition," *The Astrology of Personality: A Reformulation of Astrological Concepts and Ideals, in Terms of Contemporary Psychology and Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970): xii.

151 Agnes Pelton to Dane Rudhyar, September 5, 1934, in Jonson Archive, UNM, AP II folder, Agnes Pelton Correspondence with Dane Rudhyar file.

152 Agnes Pelton to Raymond Jonson, September 2, 1933, Jonson Papers, AAA, microfilm reel RJ4, frame 2567; Agnes Pelton, August 1, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 654.

153 On studies of religion and emotion, see John Corrigan, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Robert C. Fuller, *Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 152–53.

154 Agnes Pelton to Jane Levington Comfort, September 22, 1933, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence, 1933–1934, box 1, folder 5, frame 12; Agnes Pelton, September–October 1939 journal entries, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 427, frame 4; Rudhyar (1936), *The Astrology of Personality*, 303, 355. See also Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 246, n.545.

155 Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 117–18; Pelton, notebook page with sketch and description of *Orbits*, July 1934, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 688. For other modern artists who turned to astrology for inspiration, see Sarah K. Rich, "François Dallegret's Astrological Automobiles: Occult Commodities for France in the 1960s," *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 1 (2008): 27–49.

156 Natasha Lyovich, "Exile and Utopia: Nicholas Roerich's Shortcut to Promised Land," *Montréal Review*, January 2018, https://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Exile-and-Utopia-Nicholas-Roerich-Shortcut-to-Promised-Land.php; Alexandre Andreyev, *Myth of the Masters Revived: The Occult Lives of Nikolai and Elena Roerich* (London: Brill, 2014).

157 Andreyev, *Myth of the Masters Revived*, xiv; Helena Roerich, *Fiery World I* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1933): 79. Nicholas Roerich also claimed to receive texts from the Masters.

158 Helena Roerich, October 25, 1936, in *Letters of Helena Roerich*, *1935–1939*, vol. II (New York: Agni Yoga Society, Inc., 1967).

159 Helena Roerich, *Leaves of Morya's Garden II* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1925): verse 136.

160 Helena Roerich, September 10, 1938, in *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. II.

161 Helena Roerich, *Letters of Helena Roerich, 1929–1938*, vol. I (New York: Agni Yoga Society Inc., 1954): 411.

162 Andreyev, *Myth of the Masters Revived*, 448.

163 Charles Webster Leadbeater, *The Chakras: An Authoritative Edition of the Groundbreaking Classic*, 2nd ed., foreword by Anodea Judith (1927, Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 2013): 7, 55. On Western occulture's use of chakras, see Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 452–64.

164 Helena Roerich also translated Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* into Russian in 1937.

165 Susan Aberth, "Women, Modern Art, and the Esoteric: Agnes Pelton in Context," in *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist*, ed. Vicario, 185–88; see also Zakian, *Agnes Pelton: Poet of Nature*, 73. The title *Barna Dilae* remains a conundrum, although "dilae" may be an anagram for "ideal."

166 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, June 25, 1934, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frames 712–14.

167 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, April 20, 1932, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 644, and

January 6, 1935, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 723. Her reference to the "consciousness of Infinity" is from *Infinity II* (New York; Agni Yoga Society, 1931): entry 210.

168 Drayer, *Nicholas & Helena Roerich*, 266–67. The property fell into receivership in 1932.

169 "Programs," *Roerich Museum: A Decade of Activity, 1921–1931* (New York: Roerich Museum Press, 1931): 116–17; "Colleagues," *Emil Bisttram*, accessed March 8, 2022, https://www.emil-bisstram.com.

170 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, October 16, 1929, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 0575; Agnes Pelton to Jane Levington Comfort, January 22, 1930, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence 1930-1932, box 1, folder 1. The print that she sent Jane was probably a reproduction of Roerich's painting *Padma Sambhava* (1924).

171 Agnes Pelton, "To Roerich," eight-page handwritten talk given in late 1930 at the Roerich Museum, Jonson Archive, UNM, AP I folder, Agnes Pelton, Philosophy of Painting file. Pelton's lecture is noted in Nettie S. Horch, "Roerich Society," *Message of 1930* (New York: New Era Library, Roerich Museum Press, 1931): 134, and "Programs," *Roerich Museum: A Decade of Activity, 1921–1931*, 116.

172 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989): 284–85.

173 Agnes Pelton to Jane Levington Comfort, January 22, 1930 and June 3, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence, 1930-1932, box 1, folder 1. In her letter, Pelton paraphrased Helena Roerich, *Agni Yoga II* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1929): entry 572.

174 Agnes Pelton, journal entry, February 7, 1926, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 161.

175 Jane Corby, "Windmill Home of Artist Inspires Unique Paintings," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (February 20, 1931): 23.

176 Zakian, "Agnes Pelton: Transcendental Symbolist," 50. Pelton sketched *Spirals of Silence* on October 2, 1940; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 13.

177 "Salons of America Open an Exhibition Filled With Color," *New York Herald*, October 17, 1922: 8. Pelton showed work in fourteen of the seventeen exhibitions organized by the group, from 1922 to 1936; see her entry in Clark S. Marlor, *The Salons of America 1922–1936* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1991): 171–72; and the reproduction of her 1925 flower painting *A Cup of Gold* in *Modernism at the Salons of America 1922–1936* (New York: Richard York Gallery, 1995): 8. Pelton sketched *Harmony* and discussed its red and green details in September 1922, but later destroyed the painting for unknown reasons; see AP Papers, AAA, Series 6: Artwork 1885–1957, sketchbook IV, ca. 1917–1929, box 2, folder 6.

178 C. W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925): 281.

179 "Theosophy and the World," *Theosophical Forum* 6, no. 1 (May 1900): 15. Gottfried de Purucker, who succeeded Katherine Tingley as head of the Theosophical Society in Point Loma in 1929, expounded on this theme in his book *Fountain—Source of Occultism*.

180 Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 63; Agnes Pelton, "Being," in "Introduction to Paintings," AP Papers, AAA, Series 3: Writings, 1913–1956, Poetic Introductions, box 1, folder 19.

181 Agnes Pelton, November 1928, AP Papers, AAA, Series 6: Artwork, 1885–1957, sketchbook IV, ca. 1917–1929, box 2, folder 6.

182 Agnes Pelton to Raymond Jonson, October 9, 1934, Jonson Papers, AAA, microfilm reel RJ4, frame 1595.

183 Agnes Pelton to Mabel Dodge, January 3, 1923 and May 27, 1923, Luhan Papers, Yale, YCAL MSS 196, Series 1: Correspondence, box 28, folder 808.

184 Agnes Pelton to Jane Comfort, January 22, 1930, AP Papers, AAA, Series 2: Correspondence, 1930–1932, box 1, folder 1.

185 Jan Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue Lantern Inn: A Social History of the Tea Room Craze in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002): 98.

186 Pelton discussed her plans for the windmill teahouse in 1926; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 349.

187 "Exhibit by Miss Pelton," *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, April 13, 1919: 2.

188 In 1924, Pelton stayed with relatives (her cousin Theodore Richards) in Honolulu and painted portraits of local children including *Sylvian Li* (the daughter of Chinese doctors K. F. Li and Kong Tai-Heong). In 1926, she traveled in the Middle East with Alice Brisbane Thursby and painted portraits of the children of Bayard Dodge, president of American University in Beirut. See "Pelton Child Pastels Shown at Cross-Roads," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, February 2, 1924: 5, and "Keyport," *Asbury Park Press*, August 31, 1926: 3.

189 Sheley, "Bringing Light to Life," 128; AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 549.

190 "Eyes of Art World Center on Many Striking Exhibits at Independent Artists' Salon," *Buffalo Courier*, November 15, 1925: 84.

191 "1926, Intimate Record," AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 161.

192 See Pelton's list of the paintings in her exhibition at Jake Zeitlin in AP Papers, June 1929, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 572.

193 "Agnes Pelton," *New York Evening Post*, February 21, 1931; "Agnes Pelton, Contemporary Modernists, Argent Gallery," *ARTnews* 29, no. 21 (February 21, 1931): 10; Doug Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo! The Religious Roots of the Secular Press* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002): 88–101.

194 Henry McBride, "Variety Marks Art Displays, Miss Pelton and Modernists at Argent Gallery," *New York Sun*, February 19, 1931.

195 Henry McBride, "The Sign of the Cross: Georgia O'Keeffe's Impressions of the Taos Region Exhibited Here," *New York Sun*, February 8, 1930; reprinted in Daniel Catton Rich, *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticisms of Henry McBride* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1975): 260–62; Henry McBride to Mabel Dodge, June 28, 1933, in *An Eye on the Modern Century: Selected Letters of Henry McBride*, eds. Steven Watson and Catherine J. Morris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000): 238–39.

196 Corby, "Windmill Home," 23. The windmill's owner also wanted to sell it.

197 "California Cults," *Time*, March 31, 1930: 60; on the state's spiritual appeal, see Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946); Sandra Sizer Frankiel, *California's Spiritual Frontiers: Religious Alternatives to Anglo-Protestantism, 1850–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and W. Michael Ashcroft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle: Point Loma Theosophists and American Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002).

198 "Women Artists Open Exhibition," *New York Sun*, August 5, 1939. Pelton showed *Day* in an exhibition organized by the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, a group she showed with for twenty-four years, beginning in 1914.

199 Leo Katz, *Understanding Modern Art* (Chicago: Delphian Society, 1936): 733–34.

200 Hartel, *Raymond Jonson*, 103. The TPG was organized in June 1938.

201 Alma Reed to Agnes Pelton, May 11, 1932, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 650.

202 Agnes Pelton, August 1948, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 89; Agnes Pelton, July 6, 1947, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 84; Agnes Pelton, May 26, 1946, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 78.

203 Agnes Pelton, December 1944, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 68. *Lost Music II*, owned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, is dated "late 1950." But in her index of sketchbook pages, Pelton listed *Lost Music II* among works dating to 1950, and

noted that an Abstraction titled "Lost Music I" was sketched in 1949; see AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 166.

204 Agnes Pelton, December 1950, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 102. In her sketch for *Lost Music II*, Pelton cited Nora Wydenbruck's 1950 biography *Rilke: Man and Poet* (New York: Appleton, 1950) and quoted her translation of the ninth sonnet on p. 316.

205 Alma May Cook, "Transcendental Painting Group Holds Attention of the Art World," *Los Angeles Evening Herald*, April 8, 1939.

206 Agnes Pelton, June 1934, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3426, frame 711.

207 Agnes Pelton to Raymond Jonson, October 6, 1933, Jonson Papers, AAA, microfilm reel RJ4, frame 2570; Agnes Pelton to Raymond Jonson, December 31, 1933, Jonson Papers, AAA, microfilm reel RJ4, frame 2582.

208 Sheley notes Künkel's request in "Bringing Light to Life," 189–90; Agnes Pelton, August 1, 1943, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 57; Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 3. In 1940, Pelton agreed to have color reproductions made of some of her desert paintings but was displeased with their poor quality; see Sheley, 252–53.

209 Agnes Pelton, January 31, 1960, AP Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3427, frame 165. Pelton also wrote "David and Goliath" in her notes, referencing one of Roberts's famous postwar sermons.

210 Alice Francis Kennedy, March 31, 1961 (Good Friday), Fraser Papers, Syracuse, box 19. Kennedy, who was Pelton's second cousin, took care of Pelton during her last months and relayed details about her funeral and estate in letters to other relatives. On the distribution of Pelton's estate, see Vicario, "Introduction," in *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist*, 26–27.

211 In 2006, the New Mexico Museum of Art (Santa Fe) paid $130,000 for Pelton's *Awakening* (1943); see Elizabeth Cook-Romero, "Museum Purchases New Painting with Insurance Money," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 13, 2006: C001. The Whitney acquired *Ahmi in Egypt* (formerly *Untitled*) in 1995 and *Sea Change* in 1999; the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco acquired *Challenge* (1940) in 2000; the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, AR) acquired *Divinity Lotus* (1929) in 2007 and *Sandstorm* (1932) in 2012; Boston's Museum of Fine Arts acquired *Prelude* (1943) in 2009; the Phoenix Art Museum acquired *Messengers* (1932) and *Day* (1935) in 2014; the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens (San Marino, CA) acquired *Passion Flower* (ca. 1945) in 2016; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art acquired *Lost Music II* (1950) in 2017. In February 2018, Pelton's *Fires in Space* sold at auction for $242,000.

Chapter Five

1 John Richardson, "Eulogy for Andy Warhol," reprinted in Jane Daggett Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 1998): 13.

2 Grace Glueck, "Warhol is Remembered by 2,000 at St. Patrick's," *New York Times*, April 2, 1987: B-10.

3 John Giorno, *You Got to Burn to Shine* (New York: High Risk Books, 1994): 157–58.

4 Richardson, "Eulogy," 13; Dillenberger notes that Warhol's bedside table included the 1954 book *Heavenly Manna: A Practical Prayer Book of Devotions for Greek Catholics* in *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*, 33; see also Bradford R. Collins, "Warhol's Modern Dance of Death: Work and Text," *American Art* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 39.

5 Natasha Fraser-Cavassoni, quoted in Nick Ripatrazone, "'After Andy': Getting Warhol's Religion," *Rolling Stone*, August 2, 2017, https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture

-features/after-andy-getting-warhols-religion-195120/; on her memoir, see *After Andy: Adventures in Warhol-land* (New York: Blue Rider Press, 2017).

6 The catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that homosexual orientation is not a sin but an "objective disorder" and that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered." Homosexual persons are "called to chastity." See Jozef D. Zalot and Benedict Guevin, *Catholic Ethics in Today's World* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011): 276.

7 The Deposit of Faith refers to Catholic teachings that are based on sacred scripture and tradition as interpreted by the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church as constituted by the Pope and his bishops.

8 For biographies, see Victor Bockris, *Warhol: The Biography* (originally published in 1989 in the UK; New York: Da Capo Press, 2003) and Blake Gopnik, *Warhol* (New York: Harper Collins, 2020).

9 David Bourdon, *Warhol* (New York: Abrams, 1989): 26.

10 Barbara Rose, "In Andy Warhol's Aluminum Foil, We Have All Been Reflected," *New York*, May 31, 1971: 55. On the WASP-centric values of Madison Avenue, see Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) and Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

11 For an overview of Warhol's commercial art, see Paul Maréchal, *Andy Warhol: The Complete Commissioned Magazine Work 1948–1987: Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Prestel Verlag, 2014); on his early commercial art, see Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986): 13–80; Benjamin Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956–1966," in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001): 1–46; Donna M. De Salvo, ed., *"Success Is a Job in New York . . .": The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, and Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art, 1989); Thomas Crow, "Warhol Among the Art Directors," in *Andy Warhol Enterprises*, eds. Sarah Urist Green and Allison Unruh (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010): 99–113; John J. Curley, *A Conspiracy of Images: Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, and the Art of the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013): 53–81; and Nicholas Chambers, ed., *Adman: Warhol Before Pop* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2017).

12 "Crazy Golden Slippers," *Life*, January 21, 1957: 12–13. The article reproduced drawings included in *Andy Warhol: The Golden Slipper Show* or *Shoes Shoe in America* at Bodley Gallery, New York, December 3–22, 1956. Other shoe personalities included Elvis Presley, Kate Smith, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and James Dean. Nathan Gluck, Warhol's studio assistant in the 1950s, recounted that Warhol actually used bronze leaf (called Dutch metal) which was less expensive; see "Nathan Gluck," in Patrick S. Smith, *Warhol: Conversations About the Artist* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988): 25.

13 Tony Scherman and David Dalton, *Pop: The Genius of Andy Warhol* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009): 48–49.

14 John W. Smith, ed., *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol and Collecting* (Pittsburgh, PA: Andy Warhol Museum, 2002): 17.

15 On his art collecting, see Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*, 27; Bourdon, *Warhol*, 69; and Scherman and Dalton, *Pop*, x, 56–57. Julia Warhola's home altar is described by her son Paul Warhola in Rudo Prekop and Michael Cihlár, eds., *Andy Warhol and Czechoslovakia* (Prague: Arbor Vitae, 2012): 64–65.

16 Henry T. Hopkins, "Andy Warhol, Ferus Gallery," *Artforum* 1, no. 4 (September 1962): 15.

17 Warhol, quoted in 1963 interview with Swenson, as noted in Jennifer Sichel, "'What is

Pop Art?' A Revised Transcript of Gene Swenson's 1963 Interview with Andy Warhol," *Oxford Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (March 2018): 14. Swenson's heavily edited interview with Warhol was originally published in *ARTnews* in November 1963 and February 1964. The January–February 1964 exhibit in Paris was simply titled *Warhol*.

18 *Artforum* 3, no. 3 (December 1964).

19 Bourdon, *Warhol*, 10, 13; Robert Rosenblum, "Andy Warhol: Court Painter to the 70s," in *Andy Warhol: Portraits of the 70s*, ed. David Whitney, exhibition catalogue (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979): 9–20; Eugene McCarraher, *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

20 David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), and Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

21 Jessica Beck, "Warhol's Confession: Love, Faith, and AIDS," in Donna De Salvo, *From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2018): 93; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1997).

22 Today, there are twenty-four Catholic churches grouped into eight different rites; see Kevin R. Yurkas, "The Other Catholics: A Short Guide to the Eastern Catholic Churches," *Crisis*, July 2005, https://www.crisismagazine.com/2005/the-other-catholics-a-short-guide-to-the-eastern-catholic-churches.

23 "Byzantine Christianity," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2003): 746–47; Raymond M. Herbenick, *Andy Warhol's Religious and Ethnic Roots: The Carpatho-Rusyn Influence on His Art* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997): 1.

24 Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop, eds., *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002): 138.

25 Andrew Greeley, "'An Ugly Little Secret' Revisited: An Analytical Reflection," *US Catholic Historian* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 79; see also Mark Massa, *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (New York: Crossroads, 2003).

26 Joseph A. Loya, "'Cum Data Fuerit' Fallout: The Celibacy Crisis in the Byzantine Catholic Church, 1930–1940," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 106, no. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 1995): 151. The ban was lifted in 2014; see Catholic World News, "Vatican Lifts Ban on Married Priests for Eastern Catholic Churches in US, Canada, Australia," *Catholic Culture*, November 17, 2014, https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=23254.

27 Andy Warhol, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, ed. Pat Hackett (New York: Warner Books, 1989): 568. Warhol's "diaries" were actually phone conversations he had with Hackett from 1976 until just before he died. Hackett distilled some twenty thousand pages of recorded conversations in this volume.

28 Paula Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994): 2–3.

29 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995).

30 Warhol, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, 568.

31 Adam A. J. DeVille, "When It Comes to Liturgy, We're All Mutually-Enriching Mongrels," *Catholic World Report*, February 10, 2017, https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2017/02/10/when-it-comes-to-liturgy-were-all-mutually-enriching-mongrels/.

32 Robert Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016): 16.

33 David Gentry-Akin, "Fundamental Catholic Theology," in John J. Piderit, SJ and Melanie M. Morey, eds., *Teaching the Tradition: Catholic Themes in Academic Disciplines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 16–17, 21.

34 Louise Timko, "The Epitaphion: Its Use in the Byzantine Catholic Ruthenian Rite in the United States," *Worship* 70, no. 2 (March 1996): 154.

35 Casimir Kucharek, *Our Faith: A Byzantine Catechism for Adults* (Allendale, NJ: Alleluia Press, 1966): 307–12.

36 Observations from Warhol's brother John Warhola, in Kathryn M. Duda, "At Home in Pittsburgh: Andy Warhol's Youth," *Carnegie Magazine Online* LXIII, no. 4 (July/August 1996), https://carnegiemuseums.org/magazine-archive/1996/julaug/feat2.htm; Reverend Nicholas Reed, quoted in Richard Johnson, "Andy Warhol's Eulogy 'Wrong,'" *Hour* (Norwalk, CT), March 8, 1987: 21.

37 Warhol, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, 777, 120, 643, 215.

38 Mark M. Morozowich, "The Liturgy and the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States: Change Through the Decades," *US Catholic Historian* 32, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 54–56.

39 Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002): 32.

40 Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (December 2006): 631–55.

41 "Ruska Dolina: Church and Community," in *Andy Warhol: Revelation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Andy Warhol Museum, 2019): 34.

42 Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000): 65. Written in 1922, Florensky's essay was first published in 1972.

43 David M. Petras, "Eschatology and the Byzantine Liturgy," *Liturgical Ministry* 19 (Winter 2010): 32.

44 Clare Elliott, "A History of Icons in the Menil Collections," in *Imprinting the Divine: Byzantine and Russian Icons from the Menil Collection*, ed. Annemarie Weyl Carr, exhibition catalogue (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011): 9–14.

45 Margaret E. Kenna, "Icons in Theory and Practice: An Orthodox Christian Example," *History of Religions* 24, no. 4 (May 1985): 359.

46 As noted in Herbenick, *Andy Warhol's Religious and Ethic Roots*, 18.

47 Bockris, *Warhol*, 152.

48 Gerard Malanga, quoted in Smith, *Warhol: Conversations About the Artist*, 167, 170, 178.

49 Jennifer Sichel, "'Do You Think Pop Art's Queer?' Gene Swenson and Andy Warhol," *Oxford Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (2018): 59–83,. at 67; Jonathan Flatley, "Like: Collecting and Collectivity," *October* 132 (Spring 2010): 72.

50 McCarraher, *Enchantments of Mammon*, 573; see also Jewell Homad Johnson, "Medieval Pop: Warhol's Byzantine Iconography," in *Art and Mysticism: Interfaces in the Medieval and Modern Periods*, eds. Helen Appleton and Louise Nelstrop (New York: Routledge, 2018): 128–48.

51 Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol 1960s* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980): 39. Wynn Chamberlain, Gerard Malanga, and Taylor Mead were his companions on this trip. Blake Gopnik argues that Hackett was Warhol's "ghostwriter" and that Warhol's comments "may in fact" be hers; see his biography *Warhol*, 654.

52 On the insider/outsider analogy see, for example, Jonathan Flatley, "Warhol Gives Good Face: Publicity and the Politics of Prosopopoeia," in *Pop Out, Queer Warhol*, eds. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996): 101–2. For another perspective on Warhol's negotiation of difference, see Edward D.

Powers, "'All Things That I Didn't Want to Change Anyway': Andy Warhol and the Sociology of Difference," *American Art* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 48–73.

53 "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching," in *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (Washington, DC: United States Conference on Catholic Bishops, 1998). Modern Catholic social teachings date to Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, on the meaning of work in the industrial age.

54 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (from A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975): 92; John Cale, "My 15 Minutes," *Guardian*, February 11, 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/feb/12/artsfeatures.warhol. In their 1990 album *Songs for Drella* (a nickname for Warhol), Cale and Lou Reed explicitly focused on Warhol's Catholic understanding of work in the song "Work," which included the lyrics "Andy was a Catholic / The ethic ran through his bones" and "Every Sunday when he went to Church / He'd kneel in his pew and say / It's work / All that matters is work."

55 Rainer Crone, *Andy Warhol* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1970): 55. The Factory moved to three different locations between 1962 and 1984.

56 Guy Flatley, "How to Be Very Viva—A Bedroom Farce," *New York Times*, November 9, 1969: D-17; Viva, quoted in Jean Stein, *Edie, An American Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982): 226.

57 Douglas Crimp, "Getting the Warhol We Deserve," *Social Text* 59 (Summer 1999): 64.

58 The "superstars," for example, were not paid and drug use was rampant; see Bockris, *Warhol*, 227–28; Stein, *Edie*, 314–15; and Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* (New York: Pantheon, 2003). For an alternative view on Warhol and work, see Gilad Reich, "Lazy Warhol: Strategies of Work Refusal in Andy Warhol's Early Films," *Parse* 9 (Spring 2019), https://parsejournal.com/article/lazy-warhol-strategies-of-work-refusal-in-andy-warhols-early-films/.

59 Scott Herring, *The Hoarders: Material Deviance in Modern American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 145; see also Michael Lobel, "Warhol's Closet," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 42–50; Jonathan Flatley, "Like: Collecting and Collectivity"; and Jonathan Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017): 53–88.

60 Rita Reif, "Auctions; Warhol's World on View: Gems and Cookie Jars," *New York Times*, April 15, 1988: C-1, John Taylor, "Andy's Empire: Big Money and Big Questions," *New York* 21, no. 8 (February 22, 1988): 35; on his *Time Capsules*, see *Andy Warhol's Time Capsule 21* (Pittsburgh, PA: Andy Warhol Museum, 2003) and Matt Wrbican, "Warhol's *Time Capsule 51*," *Criticism* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 686–99.

61 Warhol, quoted in Sichel, "'Do You Think Pop Art's Queer?'," 67.

62 Herbenick, *Andy Warhol's Religious and Ethnic Roots*, 21.

63 Andy Warhol, quoted in Gerard Malanga, "A Conversation with Andy Warhol," *Print Collector's Newsletter* (January-February 1971), as noted in *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2004): 193.

64 Robert Rosenblum, "Saint Andrew," *Newsweek*, December 7, 1964: 100–106; Philip Leider, "Saint Andy," *Artforum* 3, no. 5 (February 1965): 26–29; Bob Colacello, *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990): 9.

65 Michael Fried, "New York Letter," *Art International* 6, no. 10 (December 20, 1962): 57.

66 Nicolas Calas, "Why Not Pop Art?" *Art and Literature* 4 (March 1965): 180–81; Nicholas Calas, "Pop Icons," in Lucy Lippard, *Pop Art* (New York: Praeger, 1966): 163–71.

67 Frank O'Hara, *Standing Still and Walking in New York*, ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1983): 20. O'Hara wrote "For James Dean" shortly after the movie star died in 1955. In 1959, he wrote "The Day Lady Died," an elegy to jazz singer Billie Holiday, and in

1962, he wrote "Lana Turner Has Collapsed" in response to a tabloid newspaper headline about the Hollywood actress.

68 James Romaine, "The Transfiguration of the Soup Can: Andy Warhol's Byzantine Orthodox Aesthetic," in *Beauty and the Beautiful in Eastern European Christian Culture*, ed. John McGuckin (New York: Theotokos, 2013): 235; Leider, "Saint Andy," 27.

69 See, for example, reviews and essays written between 1962 and 1988 by Sidney Tillim, Alan Solomon, Lawrence Alloway, Donald Kuspit, and Umberto Eco in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, ed. Carol Ann Mahsun (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989); see also Benjamin Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art"; Benjamin Buchloh, "The Andy Warhol Line," in *The Work of Andy Warhol: Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, no. 3, ed. Gary Garrels (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989): 52–69; and Rainer Crone, "Form and Ideology: Warhol's Techniques from Blotted Line to Film," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Garrels, 70–92. For an overview of these approaches, see Paul Mattick, "The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Summer 1998): 965–87.

70 Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz, "Introduction," in *Pop Out, Queer Warhol*, 1.

71 Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," *Art in America* (May 1987), reprinted in Serge Guilbaut, ed., *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945–1964* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990): 322, 324.

72 Joseph Masheck, "Yours Faithfully," *Artforum* 32, no. 1 (September 1993): 124; see also James Elkins's discussion of Masheck in *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 21, 120–21. Masheck was editor-in-chief at *Artforum* from 1977 to 1980.

73 Barry King, "Becoming Iconic," *International Journal of Communication* 12 (2018): 3390–408.

74 Gretchen Berg, "Andy Warhol: My True Story," *East Village Other*, November 1, 1966, reprinted in Goldsmith, *I'll Be Your Mirror*, 85–96. Warhol Foundation archivist Matt Wrbican detailed Berg's fabrication of Warhol's answers, using the evidence of her tape recordings; see Matt Wrbican, "The True Story of 'My True Story,'" in *On&By Andy Warhol*, ed. Gilda Williams (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016): 226–28. On the "fifteen minutes" quote see Gopnik, *Warhol*, 605; see also Gopnik's discussion at his blog, *Warholiana*, https://warholiana.com/post/81689862604/in-the-future-everyone-will-be-world-famous-for.

75 "Toward a Hidden God," *Time*, April 8, 1966: 82, 87; see also Leigh Eric Schmidt, "Is God Dead? A TIME Cover Turns 50," *Religion and Politics*, April 5, 2016, https://religionandpolitics.org/2016/04/05/is-god-dead-a-time-cover-turns-50/.

76 J. Ronald Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (New York: December, 1986): 319. Expenditures for the construction of new church buildings were enormous, rising from $500 million per year in 1950 to more than $1.2 billion by 1965; see Robert Wuthnow, *Experimentation in American Religion: The New Mysticisms and Their Implications* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978): 120–21.

77 Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015): 4, 7; Amanda Porterfield, *Corporate Spirit: Religion and the Rise of the Modern Corporation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 157–59.

78 Robert S. Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997): 1; Dianne Kirby, "Religion and the Cold War—An Introduction," in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 4.

79 James Fisher uses the term "spiritual front" to describe a postwar "postdenominational

spiritual revival" among "utopian radicals" formerly aligned with a left-leaning "cultural front" of the 1930s and 1940s; see *On the Irish Waterfront: The Crusader, the Movie, and the Soul of the Port of New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009): 131–33; Daniel Bell noted the key terms dominating this postwar sensibility in *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960): 300.

80 Kane, *Separatism and Subculture*, 10; see R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), on the insider/outsider paradigm in American religious history.

81 Albert Gelpi, "The Catholic Presence in American Culture," *American Literary History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 202.

82 Norman Mailer, "Catholic and Protestant" in "The Hip and the Square," in *Advertisements for Myself* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959): 426.

83 Anthony Burke Smith, *The Look of Catholics: Portrayals of Popular Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010): 137–41.

84 Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2011): 30.

85 Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, eds. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969): 44; Flannery O'Connor to Elizabeth Hester, July 20, 1955, quoted in Flannery O'Connor, *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979): 90.

86 Mary R. Reichardt, "Introduction," in *Between Human and Divine: The Catholic Vision in Contemporary Literature*, ed. Mary R. Reichardt (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010): 5.

87 Pamela G. Smart, *Sacred Modern: Faith, Activism, and Aesthetics in the Menil Collection* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012): 7.

88 See, for example, Heather Renee Read, "Canonizing Modernism: An Avant-Garde Legacy in France's Sacred Art Movement, 1937–1958" (PhD diss., Washington University, 2018).

89 José Carlos Diaz, "Into the Sunset," in *Andy Warhol: Revelation*, 11; Smart, *Sacred Modern*, 9, 50.

90 On their cultural patronage and art interests, see Smart, *Sacred Modern*; Mark Loiacono, "Out of the Shadows: Andy Warhol's Abstractions" (PhD diss., New York University, 2016); and Ryan Dohoney, *Saving Abstraction: Morton Feldman, the de Menils, and the Rothko Chapel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

91 Diaz, "Into the Sunset," 8–17. *Sunset* is a segment from a twenty-five-hour, eighty-three-reel film of sunsets shot in New York and California, each segment lasting approximately thirty-three minutes. The entire film was titled ****. In 1972, Warhol made a series of prints of sunsets for guest rooms in the Marquette Hotel in Minneapolis; see Diaz, "Into the Sunset," 16.

92 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*; Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity, 1950–2005* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006): 417.

93 Gelpi, "The Catholic Presence," 211; Orsi, *History and Presence*, 251.

94 David Tracy, "Presidential Address: The Catholic Analogical Imagination," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 32 (1977): 235; Orsi, *History and Presence*, 160.

95 Orsi, *History and Presence*, 25.

96 Paul Giles, *American Catholic Arts and Fiction: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 21. See also Eleanor Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 2004).

97 On Warhol's use of New York Public Library's Picture Collection, see Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*, 39–42, and Bourdon, *Warhol*, 33; on his greeting cards, see John Loring, *Greetings from Andy: Christmas at Tiffany's* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004).

98 In a promotion for Champion Papers, Art Kane photographed Warhol covered in gold paint; see Thomas Crow, "Warhol Among the Art Directors," in *Andy Warhol Enterprises*, eds. Green and Unruh, 100–102.

99 Ivan Vartanian, ed., *Andy Warhol: Drawings and Illustrations of the 1950s* (New York: D. A. P./Goliga Books. 2000): 13; see also Michael Dayton Hermann, *Andy Warhol: Early Drawings of Love, Sex, and Desire* (Taschen: 2020).

100 Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 121.

101 Trevor Fairbrother, "Tomorrow's Man," in "*Success Is a Job in New York,*" 60.

102 Bradford R. Collins, "Jokes and Their Relation to Warhol's '13 Most Wanted Men,'" *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 45.

103 Ondine, quoted in Warhol, *POPism*, 118.

104 Mildred Constantine, "Visit New York Visit New York," *Art in America* 52, no. 3 (March 1964): 126–27. Warhol made at least four versions of *Crowd*; for details, see Georg Frei and Neil Printz, eds., *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonne*, vol. 1, *Paintings and Sculpture 1961–1963* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2002): 340–41.

105 Warhol, *POPism*, 134–35.

106 See Jennifer Dyer's overview of various critical positions in "The Metaphysics of the Mundane: Understanding Andy Warhol's Serial Imagery," *Artibus et Historiae* 25, no. 49 (2004): 33–47.

107 Richard Hell, "Andy Warhol: Everything is Good," *Gagosian Quarterly* (Spring 2019), https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2019/04/30/essay-andy-warhol-everything-is-good/; Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp,'" *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (1964): 515–30. Andrew Ross discusses Warhol's "Pop camp" sensibility on materialist terms but defines it "as a *cultural economy* at work"; see Andrew Ross, "The Uses of Camp," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 21.

108 Erika Doss, "Grant Wood's Queer Parody: American Humor during the Great Depression," *Winterthur Portfolio* 52, no. 1 (2018): 3–45; on Warhol's lack of irony see, for example, Douglas Crimp, '*Our Kind of Movie': The Films of Andy Warhol* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012): 132.

109 Tony Smith, quoted in oral history interview with Paul Cummings, August 22, 1978, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

110 Smith made several sketches and a three-dimensional model; see Robert Storr, "A Man of Parts," in Robert Storr, *Tony Smith, Architect, Painter, Sculptor* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998): 16; Catherine R. Osborne, *American Catholics and the World of Tomorrow: Building Churches for the Future, 1925–1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018): 59; and Eileen Elizabeth Costello, "Beyond the Easel: The Dissolution of Abstract Expressionist Painting into the Realm of Architecture" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2010): 114–27.

111 Barnett Newman, "Statement," in *Barnett Newman: The Stations of the Cross, Lema Sabachthani* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966): 9; see also "Barnett Newman and Thomas Hess in Conversation, May 1, 1966," *Guggenheim Online Resources*, June 23, 2018, https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/barnett-newman-and-thomas-hess-in-conversation-1966. Newman commented on being a "pilgrim" in a *Newsweek* interview; see "The Unanswerable Question," *Newsweek* 67 (May 9, 1966): 100.

112 Newman, "Statement," 9; Lawrence Alloway, "Stations of the Cross and the Subjects

of the Artist," in *Barnett Newman*, 15. Alloway notes the addition of *Resurrection* in note 6, p. 16 and describes it as a "supplement" and "affirmation." See also Sarah K. Rich, "Seriality and Difference in the Late Work of Barnett Newman" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1999):, 147–68, and Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, "Barnett Newman's Pilgrimage in Paint," in *Reconsidering Barnett Newman*, ed. Melissa Ho (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005): 67–81.

113 Matthew Baigell, "Newman's *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani*," *Art Criticism* 19, no. 1 (2004): 52, 57. See also Matthew Baigell, "Barnett Newman's Stripe Paintings and Kabbalah: A Jewish Take," *American Art* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 32–43, and Samantha Baskind, *Jewish Artists and the Bible in Twentieth-Century America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014): 146–47.

114 "The Unanswerable Question," 100; John Canaday, "Arts: Pretty Thorough Execution," *New York Times*, April 23, 1966: 26. Canaday's comments were also retributive: in 1961, Newman and forty-nine other artists protested the critic's conservative views in a letter to the *New York Times*; see Rich, "Seriality and Difference in the Late Work of Barnett Newman," 195–96.

115 Dore Ashton, "Barnett Newman and the Making of Instant Legend," *Arts and Architecture* 83, no. 4 (June 1966): 4–5; Max Kozloff, "Art," *Nation* 202, no. 20 (May 16, 1966): 598.

116 Reverend Thomas E. Mathews, "The Problem of Religious Content in Contemporary Art," in *Revolution Place and Symbol: Journal of the First International Congress on Religion, Architecture, and the Visual Arts*, ed. Rolfe Lanier Hunt (New York: International Congress on Religion, Architecture and the Visual Arts, 1967): 119. Mathews's paper was followed by responses from Newman, Nemesio Antuñez, Ben Shahn, and Philip Johnson; see pp. 129–40.

117 Barnett Newman, "Reply to Mathews," in *Revolution Place and Symbol*, ed. Hunt, 131, 133.

118 Walter Barker, "The Passion without the Image: Barnett Newman Paints Metaphors of Stations of the Cross," *St. Louis Dispatch*, June 12, 1966: 4, as noted in Rich, "Seriality and Difference," 187. The Vatican sale never took place. Today the series is on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

119 Michael Duncan, "Someday is Now: The Art of Corita Kent," in *Someday is Now: The Art of Corita Kent*, eds. Ian Berry and Michael Duncan (New York: Prestel, 2013): 6.

120 April Dammann, *Corita Kent, Art and Soul, The Biography* (Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 2015): 37.

121 Source of *fiat* quote: "Sister Corita Kent Rare 1953 Abstract Serigraph 'Fiat' Listed Pop Artist," Worthpoint.com, accessed February 5, 2022, https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/sister-corita-kent-1953-abstract-1784804484; Corita Kent, quoted in Julie Ault, *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita* (London: Four Corners Books, 2006): 16; see also Cynthia Burlingame, "A Very Democratic Form: Corita Kent as a Printmaker," in *Someday is Now*, eds. Berry and Duncan, 24–30.

122 On her early exhibition history, see Susan Dackerman, "Corita Kent and the Language of Pop," in *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop*, ed. Susan Dackerman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015): 18; and Dorothy Townsend, "Sister Corita Draws the Line," *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 1966: C-1; on her 1950s commercial art, see Carl Spielvogtel, "Advertising: Nun's Art is Doubly Practical," *New York Times*, December 30, 1959: 36. *Liturgical Arts* editor Maurice Lavanaux rejected Kent's print as "too avant-garde for his readership"; see Sasha Carrera, "Corita Kent: The Big G Stands for Goodness," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 24, 2015, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/corita-kent-the-big-g-stands-for-goodness/. Money from art sales went to Immaculate Heart College.

123 Dackerman, "Corita Kent and the Language of Pop," 15, 20.

124 Dackerman, "Corita Kent and the Language of Pop," 18.

125 Warhol's mural was quickly censored and ordered removed, but Warhol "painted them over in silver, thereby creating his first abstract painting," Rainer Crone wrote in *Andy Warhol*, 11. On the history of the commission and its censorship, see Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, 128–57.

126 On her 1967 exhibit, see her statement in *Revolution Place and Symbol*, ed. Hunt, 229–30; Steven V. Roberts, "Religion: Churches and Slums," *New York Times*, September 3, 1967: 130; and "Survival With Style," *Together* (March 1968): n.p. The exhibit was purchased by the Methodist Board of Missions and traveled to the World Council of Churches Assembly in Sweden in 1968; see "The Nun: A Joyous Revolution," *Newsweek*, December 25, 1967: 45–48.

127 This 1964 print, titled *for eleanor*, was made in honor of a student in one of her summer screen printing workshops; see Jennifer Quick, "*for eleanor*," in *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop*, ed. Dackerman, 146.

128 "The Nun: A Joyous Revolution," 45–46. On Sister Corita's teaching and archdiocese backlash, see McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 132–47, and Thomas Crow, *No Idols: The Missing Theology of* Art (Sydney: Power Publications, 2017): 125–31.

129 Henry Geldzahler, quoted in Bockris, *Warhol*, 169.

130 Gerard Malanga, quoted in Bockris, *Warhol*, 171. Malanga added that each painting in the series "took about four minutes." For more on the series, see Neil Printz, "Painting Death in America," in *Andy Warhol, Death and Disasters* (Houston: Houston Fine Art Press, Menil Collection, 1988): 10–23.

131 Ernst Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963); Geoffrey Gorer, "The Pornography of Death," *Encounter* (October 1955): 49–52. On the sociology of death, see Philippe Ariès, "The Reversal of Death: Changes in Attitudes toward Death in Western Societies," *American Quarterly* 26 (December 1974): 536–60; on the history of the death-denial thesis, see Martin Robert and Laura Tradii, "Do We Deny Death? A Genealogy of Death Denial," *Mortality* 24, no. 3 (2019): 247–60.

132 Statistic cited in Marilyn J. Field and Christine K. Cassel, eds., *Approaching Death: Improving Care at the End of Life* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 1997): 39.

133 Arnold Toynbee, "Changing Attitudes toward Death in the Modern Western World," in *Man's Concern with Death*, ed. Arnold Toynbee, A. Keith Mant, Ninian Smart, John Hinton, Simon Yudkin, Eric Rhode, Rosalind Heywood, and H. H. Price (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968): 131.

134 Orsi, *History and Presence*, 163; Sarah K. Nytroe, "An American Catholic Culture of Death and Dying, 1900–1955," *American Catholic Studies* 124, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 37.

135 Leo J. Trese, "It Will Happen to You," *Ave Maria* 93, no. 25 (February 1961): 14, as noted in Orsi, *History and Presence*, 168. A parish priest and chaplain in Michigan, Trese (1902–1970) supported the postwar liturgical movement advocating the reform of worship in the Roman Catholic Church and wrote for multiple Catholic magazines, including a weekly "Father Jim Says" column for the *Young Catholic Messenger*; see James D. Bratt, *By the Vision of Another World: Worship in American History* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012): 163.

136 John J. Curley argues that Warhol's paintings of atomic bombs may "have a source" in *Life* photos of tests conducted at Yucca Flats, Nevada in 1952 ("Close-Up to the Blast," *Life*, May 30, 1955: 42); see *A Conspiracy of Images*, 176–78.

137 Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were scheduled for execution on January 14, 1953, but a series of appeals delayed their executions until June 13, 1953. On the Wide World photo Warhol used for the *Electric Chair* series, see Frei and Printz, eds., *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonne*, vol. 1, 342, 348. On Warhol's series and the national debate over capital punishment,

see Bennett Capers, "On Andy Warhol's 'Electric Chair,'" *California Law Review* 94, no. 1 (January 2006): 243–60.

138 Ivan Karp, quoted in Tony Scherman and David Dalton, *Pop: The Genius of Andy Warhol* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009): 139. Alex J. Taylor details Warhol's continuous engagement in commercial art in *Forms of Persuasion: Art and Corporate Image in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021): 25–80.

139 Klaus Honnef, *Andy Warhol, 1928–1987, Commerce into Art* (Köln, West Germany: Taschen, 1990): 58.

140 Warhol's *Tunafish Disaster* series was based on an April 1, 1963 story in *Newsweek* on the deaths of two Detroit women who ate contaminated tuna fish; see Frei and Printz, eds., *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonne*, vol. 1, 369–79. On the photo source for *Gangster Funeral* in "The Abiding Truths of 'Our Town,'" *Life* 53, no. 10 (September 7, 1962): 64–65, see the same volume, p. 367.

141 Warhol, quoted in David Bailey, *Andy Warhol, Transcript of David Bailey's ATV Documentary* (Paris: Givaudian Import, 1973); see also David Bailey, *Bailey on Andy Warhol*, DVD (London: Network, 2006).

142 Warhol, *POPism*, 38.

143 See, for example, Bockris, *Warhol*, 45–46, 433; Collins, "Warhol's Modern Dance of Death," 37–39, 53–54; Gopnik, *Warhol*, 742, 890–91.

144 Warhol, *POPism*, 91.

145 Gopnik, *Warhol*, 295; Paul Bergin, "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine," *Art Journal* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1967): 360–61; Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," *Artforum* 16, no. 1 (November 1977): 46–51. In a conversation broadcast on New York radio station WBAI in June 1964 (and published in 1966), Warhol told Claes Oldenburg that his death and disaster paintings, and the race riot pictures in particular, were an expression of "indifference." See Bruce Glaser, "Oldenburg, Lichtenstein, Warhol: A Discussion," *Artforum* 4, no. 6 (February 1966): 24.

146 John R. Blakinger, "*Death in America* and *Life* Magazine: Sources for Andy Warhol's *Disaster* Paintings," *Artibus et Historiae* 33, no. 66 (2012): 269; Roland Barthes, "That Old Thing, Art" (1980), in *Pop Art: A Critical History*, ed. Steven H. Madoff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 370–74; Crow, "Saturday Disasters," 313; Hal Foster, "Death in America," *October* 75 (Winter 1996): 42; Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the* Century (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996): 128–32.

147 Jean-Jacques Lebel, "Constat d'accident" and Alain Jouffroy, "Warhol," in *Warhol* (Paris: Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, 1964): n.p.; John Ashbery, "Pop Artist's Horror Pictures Silence Snickers," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 15, 1964.

148 Warhol, *POPism*, 113.

149 Bischofberger, noted in Colacello, *Holy Terror*, 110. Gallerist Bernd Klüster inspired Warhol's portrait of Lenin; see Mark Alan Burger, "Andy Warhol and Vladimir Lenin Walk into an Art Gallery," *Interview*, September 26, 2019, https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/andy-warhol-lenin-phillips-gallery. For examples, see David Whitney, ed., *Andy Warhol Portraits of the 70s* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979), and Tony Shafrazi, *Andy Warhol Portraits* (London: Phaidon, 2007).

150 Warhol, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, 474, 477, 479; the Bass commissions are noted in Gopnik, *Warhol*, 808–09.

151 Hilton Kramer, "Art: Whitney Shows Warhol Works," *New York Times*, November 33, 1979: C-19; Warhol's comment about Kramer's review is noted in Bockris, *Warhol*, 432–33.

152 Robert Hughes, "The Rise of Andy Warhol, *New York Review of Books*, February 18, 1982, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1982/02/18/the-rise-of-andy-warhol/; Alexan-

der Cockburn, James Rideway, and Jan Albert, "Beautiful Butchers: The Shah Serves Up Caviar and Torture," *Village Voice*, November 14, 1977: 15.

153 Peter Schjeldahl, "Warhol and Class Content," *Art in America* 5 (May 1980): 117; McCarraher, *The Enchantments of Mammon*. For perspectives on neoliberalism, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Philip Mirowski and Diewter Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); and Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).

154 An illustration in the January 1954 issue of *Dance Magazine*, for example, depicted a sack marked "GOLD" and coins of various denominations; see Bourdon, *Warhol*, 34. On his *Dollar Bill* series, see Neil Printz, "Making Money/Printing Painting: Warhol's Dollar Bill Paintings," *Criticism* 56, no 3 (Summer 2014): 535–57; and Sophie Cras, *The Artist as Economist: Art and Capitalism in the 1960s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019): 62–83; on the *Dollar Signs* series, see Nicky Marsh, "Seeing is Believing: Looking at the Gold Standard," in *Credo Credit Crisis: Speculations on Faith and Money*, eds. Laurent Milesi, Christopher John Müller, and Aidan Tynan (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017): 139–43. Warhol is quoted in Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 133, 92.

155 Devin Singh, *Divine Currency: The Theological Power of Money in the West* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

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