



1. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., in front of Picasso's *Guernica*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1962

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., as a Writer of Allegory: Art History in a Literary Context

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The writings of critics and historians of modern art are often presented as detached and objective, concerned only with sober analysis and logical argument. When examined closely, however, the word-by-word texture of their language can seem quite otherwise. Even during the decades of so-called formalist analysis, modes of writing that can fairly be called “poetic” or even “allegorical” in their purposeful deployment of metaphor played an important part in how artworks were discussed and understood. In this regard, the writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., make surprisingly significant use of metaphorical language. And to understand this extra dimension of their meaning, I believe, they need now to be read within not only an art-historical but a literary context—read, that is, from within the culture of modernist literature. The purpose of the present essay, therefore, is to explore the poetic, metaphorical side of Alfred Barr’s critical writing, identifying several characteristic uses of figurative language and their effect on his way of presenting the history of art, a way, I will argue, that sometimes opens out toward the allegorical. Figurative language offers the critic precisely that power, the ability to suggest an allegory—in this instance, letting the writer step outside the confines of a single, narrowly defined discipline and gather into narrative form the scattered hints of a broadly humanistic view of an era. Used this way, such language can suggest—lightly and delicately, without polemics—how historic changes in thinking cross the boundaries between disciplines and alter how we all can speak of the world we hold in common.

The Uses of Metaphor

The reason for bringing out this intriguing feature of Barr’s writings is obvious enough: Barr played a central role in shaping the definition of modern art that was widely accepted by mid-century. Founding Director of The Museum of Modern Art and, from 1947 to 1967, Director of the Museum Collections, he pursued an active, multifaceted career in which the writing of books and articles was only a part; yet while building the collection, organizing exhibitions, and, for many years, dealing with myriad administrative duties, he nonetheless became a major voice in the developing criticism of this century’s art. In the thirties and forties Barr had transformed



the exhibition catalogue, notably with *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936), while his books on Picasso set the standard for monographs on twentieth-century artists. Among the most widely read and influential of all the proselytizers for modern art then writing in English, he could be compared perhaps only with Roger Fry, earlier in the century, or with Herbert Read. After two decades of eminence, Barr reached the zenith of his career as an author in 1951, with the publication of his most ambitious monograph, *Matisse: His Art and His Public*. And throughout the 1950s the influence of his accumulated writings broadened, as his best-selling *What Is Modern Painting?*, first issued in 1943, went through three new editions and two translations.¹

Barr's publications on modern art proved effective for many reasons, including their painstaking research and rigorous method. But what we notice at once about his writing is its cool clarity. Barr's prose often seems the quintessence of objectivity—almost scientific in its dispassionate pursuit of the origin of the species of modern art, and high-mindedly academic in its commitment to limpid, meticulous exposition. When art historians speak of his writing, what they praise most often is its rigor—its “detachment and objectivity,”² even its “willed selflessness, in which the demands of historical truth and internal coherence override the author's private persona.”³ But the verbal texture of Barr's writing is not quite as austere as we sometimes think. A more personal note is often struck, frequently through witty wordplay. For example, at one point in *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, Barr quotes the artist on the “terror of microbes”; shortly after, in his account of Matisse's brief association with the Neo-Impressionists, Barr reminds us that they are “commonly called ‘pointillists’ because they painted in little points or spots,” and then on the next page he mischievously has the “spots” still in mind, telling us that “when Matisse returned to Paris from Toulouse he had not yet recovered from his first attack of pointillism”⁴—as if Neo-Impressionism were a contagious childhood disease, like the measles, that made young artists break out in spots. Or, in discussing Picasso's *Night Fishing at Antibes* (fig. 2), Barr describes the fishermen at work: “One of them, in a striped jersey, with a four-tined spear pierces a sole (most Picassoid of fishes!) lying on the bottom”;⁵ we cannot help but smile at learning that even in nature, some creatures do indeed have both eyes on one side of the face—an alien configuration captured perfectly by the word “Picassoid.”

Left:

2. Pablo Picasso. *Night Fishing at Antibes*. 1939. Oil on canvas, 6' 9" x 11' 4" (205.7 x 345.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

Right:

3. Henri Matisse. *Le Bonheur de vivre*. 1905–06. Oil on canvas, 68 1/2" x 7' 9 1/4" (174 x 238.1 cm). The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania

Barr's delight in words led him to a lively appreciation of poetry, and of the value of poetic figures in writing about art. He often goes out of his way to remark on the value of figurative language when talking about artworks. He points out, for instance, that the works in the 1936 exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" reflect "the deep-seated and persistent interest which human beings have in the fantastic, the irrational, the spontaneous, the marvelous, the enigmatic," and notes that "these qualities have always been present in the metaphors and similes of poetry."⁶ Or he proposes poetic language as a model, explicating the "similes and metonymies"⁷ of Joan Miró's *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* (1923–24). Again using a figure of speech as a model, he describes the piper and the two overlapping figures at the lower center and right of Matisse's *Le Bonheur de vivre* (fig. 3): "The pair of lovers . . . together form a shape which approximately repeats that of the piping girl. This repetition, emphasized by the fact that the lovers appear to have only one head, is a remarkably ingenious pictorial simile, comparable indeed to a poetic simile which might liken the lovers to the double pipes animated by a single breath."⁸ What Barr is describing here is not so much a visual simile as a visual "conceit," a special kind of comparison—remote, surprising, yet powerful—that T. S. Eliot and others admired in seventeenth-century Metaphysical poetry, as in John Donne's likening of a pair of separated lovers to the two legs of a drawing compass,⁹ which is parallel to Barr's likening of Matisse's two lovers to the two pipes animated by a single breath. Barr himself came close to defining the conceit when he said that "a cubist picture is not only a *design* but a precisely controlled and far-fetched metaphor."¹⁰ A connection with Donne would be no accident: in his introduction to a catalogue of Abstract Expressionist artists, *The New American Painting*, published in 1959, Barr tries to find a poetic figure for the autonomous creativity of artists working to free themselves from influences or schools; in that instance, seeking to portray the independence of those diverse artists from one another, their "uncompromising individualism," he writes: "For them, John Donne to the contrary, each man is an island."¹¹

In understanding Alfred Barr as at times a poetic writer, we let his figurative language play out its own role to the fullest extent. By so doing, we can see more clearly why in certain noteworthy passages in his books and articles, the prose becomes almost wholly figurative in character. In such passages, which occasionally find the author at the limit of what he can say by conventional means, poetic devices can go further, and sketch out a novel thought by effectively relating it to what is more securely known. Indeed, some of an artist's concerns can be discussed perhaps more sympathetically in figurative language than in mundane prose, because an artist, too, like a poet, is often trying to render concrete an emerging new insight not yet ready or able to be framed in strictly analytical terms. When Wallace Stevens came to the Museum in 1951 to speak on "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting," he saw the two as closely allied, both arising from "the typical function of the imagination which always makes use of the familiar to produce the unfamiliar."¹² In this, he would have agreed with Aristotle, who held that metaphors were in fact not mere ornaments, tacked on to a text, but were instead constitutive of new meaning: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars. . . .

Ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something new."¹³

Using what he called a "precisely controlled and far-fetched metaphor" to get hold of something new, concerning the passage of time, Barr in 1933 presented the evolving nature of the Museum's collection in these terms: "The Permanent Collection may be thought of graphically as a *torpedo moving through time*, its nose the ever advancing present, its tail the ever receding past of fifty to a hundred years ago . . . with a propeller representing 'Background' collections. . . ." ¹⁴ This striking image, as notable for its military character as for its resemblance to a Metaphysical conceit, is high on immediate illustrative value—a picture of the collection's passage or "voyage" through time. It helps Barr represent the collection's movement into the future in a vivid, economical way. Without recourse to such an image or poetic figure, the "story" part of history, the overall direction of its "plot," would be exceedingly difficult to convey.

The need for a metaphorical model is felt not only when he talks about the evolution of the collection; Barr uses figurative language also to describe the course of art history itself. The metaphor of time as a river, for example, permeates an important summarizing statement in *Cubism and Abstract Art*:

*At the risk of grave oversimplification the impulse towards abstract art during the past fifty years may be divided historically into two main currents. . . . The first and more important current finds its sources in the art and theories of Cézanne and Seurat, passes through the widening stream of Cubism and finds its delta in the various geometric and Constructivist movements. . . . The second—and, until recently, secondary—current has its principal source in the art and theories of Gauguin and his circle, flows through the Fauvisme of Matisse to . . . the pre-War paintings of Kandinsky. After running underground for a few years, it reappears vigorously among the masters of abstract art associated with Surrealism.*¹⁵

The metaphor was familiar in contemporaneous fiction, such as Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and the River* (1935). Another version would manifest itself in Clement Greenberg's notion of the "mainstream," the "aquatic metaphor" that is, as Robert Storr has pointed out, "Greenberg's signature trope."¹⁶ Though common enough in history writing, this particular figure carries considerable dangers with it, implying as it does a sense of historical teleology, as every tributary joins the river's set course toward one foreknown end. For Greenberg, it implies as well a hierarchy, the mainstream being the one central current, with everything else left marginal to drift off in aimless eddies.

For Barr, however, what the metaphor pictures is not one central, dominant mainstream, but rather two contrary, competing currents; first one is stronger and then the other. It is a dramatist's view of historical process, as a dialectic between two opposing forces. Fifteen years later, in his 1951 Matisse book, Barr rewrites the "two currents" passage largely in terms of the relation between two great artworks, and between two great personages, Picasso and Matisse:

Whatever the similarities and differences between the two paintings [Le Bonheur de vivre and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon], they represent moments of climactic achieve-

ment in the careers of the two artists and they are both landmarks in the history of modern painting. Both are signposts pointing in the same general direction, toward abstraction, but by very different routes: Matisse, with the brilliant, singing color and organic, curving, fluid forms of the *Joy of Life*, opens the way to Kandinsky and, after him, to Miró and the more recent masters of color-cloud-and-flowing-line abstraction; Picasso's austere, stiff, angular structure leads on to cubism—in fact the *Demoiselles* has justly been called the first cubist picture—and beyond cubism to Malevich, Mondrian and “geometric” abstraction.¹⁷

Here, the two artists do not simply exemplify the two ways of the imagination, they embody them. And in general, Barr often elaborates ideas about history through this sort of dualistic (almost, one might say, Manichaeic) arrangement. Much of his language displays the same basic pattern: It searches out the drama of opposing forces; and it wants to personify those forces in major artists. This subtly pervasive scheme, which is perhaps the principal consequence of how Barr uses poetic devices, especially personification, takes on great significance. Such configurations keep making themselves felt as he leads us through the history of objects: They throw events into highly suggestive patterns of significance, and thereby play a part in the readability of his prose. We can see this in those arresting passages where Barr's pleasure in lan-



4. Frederick Kiesler. *Galaxy*. 1948–51. Wood and rope, 12 x 14 x 14' (365.8 x 426.7 x 426.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mrs. Nelson A. Rockefeller

guage leads him more openly to adopt a poet's voice—passages where, instead of tracing continuous lines of temporal succession like those in the passage above, as we expect of a historian, he chooses instead a different, more elliptical, more daring kind of storytelling, one in which the impulse toward narrative metaphor takes over, producing a story about modern times that is rich in ramifications and allusive in structure.

A possible ending of this story can be foreseen in a piece Barr wrote in 1952. That year, Dorothy C. Miller organized the exhibition "Fifteen Americans" at the Museum. Along with work by artists such as William Baziotis, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still, the show included Frederick Kiesler's environmental sculpture *Galaxy* (fig. 4). Heralding the exhibition in the April issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, Barr wrote about the sculpture, rather than about any work of those leading painters. What he gives us is not a sober historical analysis but a prose poem, "Kiesler's *Galaxy*." Based on metaphors of shipwreck and debris, it offers a return to an earlier, simpler life, and to ideas about mythic storytelling:

Galaxy is architecture for star-gazers; its plan is a cross with arms raised in amazement; its major axis slopes abruptly toward a vanishing point like Borromini's false perspective in the Palazzo Spada; its four caryatids are a dolphin's spine, a hippocampus, a lobster claw and an ichthyosaur caressed by a boomerang; its lintels are driftwood and a comb-finned gar.

Galaxy is a four-poster in which Sinbad, Jonah, Crusoe and Ahab may sit eternally, back to back, telling each other their stories, slowly, with low voices and credulous ears.

Galaxy is a pergola built of jetsam where refugees from the compass and the ruler may dry their nets in peace.

Galaxy is a drifting raft where common sense, watched by the skeletons of the four winds, will die of thirst.

Galaxy is a conspiracy for discrediting Cadillacs.

Galaxy is the tomb of know-how, the supreme anti-technological gazebo.¹⁸

The text may look like an anomaly, but if so it is an instructive one. Serious art historians generally refrain from publicly indulging their poetic fancy to this extent, even in a squib for the popular press; elaborate poetizing risks professional disapprobation. Yet even more striking that the language itself is its content, its *narrative* content, for with his poetic images what Barr conjures up is a dramatic story of shipwreck—like Jonah, Crusoe, and Ahab "telling each other their stories" of disaster at sea—and of castaways marooned on a remote desert island. His images imply a calamitous turn in some unspecified plot: Modern inventions, and all they stand for, have somehow run aground. The story that Barr seems to be telling is about what happens next—about how to keep the imagination alive amid the ruins of a lost world.

What could have led the man who for many Americans had defined modern art in the thirties and forties apparently to change his mind by 1952, and speak of a favorite contemporary artwork in terms of driftwood and wreckage—of "refugees" and a structure "built of jetsam"? Why would he speak of modernism's rationalist enterprise as a lost lifeboat, "a drifting raft where common sense . . . will die of thirst," and where navigators and their astral instruments have been replaced

by fortune-tellers and astrologers—"star-gazers"? We might well ask. For it should be noted that the verbal images here are pervasively anti-modern—seeking to overturn the logic of the modern Machine Age. The drift of the imagery undercuts our era's preoccupation with the latest technological advances; *Galaxy* thus participates in "a conspiracy for discrediting Cadillacs," rendering absurd the most ostentatious of streamlined luxury machines. Moreover, it is "the tomb of know-how, the supreme anti-technological gazebo." In preferring quaint gazebos and pergolas to, say, the light shells and rectilinear volumes of International Style architecture, *Galaxy* rejects a coolly logical "machine for living"¹⁹ for the remains of marvelous beasts; the shapes of the gar and the ichthyosaur are hewn from wood to construct a castaway's dwelling, like Robinson Crusoe's, built of hospitable debris. A product of rude carpentry, and not industrial metal and glass, it gives shelter to the survivors of a ship lost at sea, a foundered vessel, which—like Crusoe's or Captain Ahab's—is very often an emblem of a wayward civilized world, a ship of fools. In these many ways, "Kiesler's *Galaxy*" seeks refuge from the mechanical advances we have come to understand as defining the twentieth century. By the end of this essay, I hope to suggest some of the reasons why.

Part of the answer lies precisely in the kind of literary narrative Barr suggests—a story told with metaphors. Through its extravagantly figurative language, "Kiesler's *Galaxy*" evokes a number of well-known stories that are also based on metaphors, including myths and other symbolic tales, some of them dating to antiquity. Such a story can be offered to the reader as an allusive, poetic counterpart to the austere art history narrative we might have expected. It suggests, in other words, something that can be called an allegory. The word *allegory* is meant in the sense of a thematically rich narrative whose plot conforms to the structure of a familiar model; related literary forms include the parable, the fable, and the prophecy. Barr once wrote that Picasso "originally conceived [the *Demoiselles*] as a kind of *memento mori* allegory."²⁰ And he described the enigmatic etching *Minotauromachy* (1935) as "a kind of private allegory"²¹—the sort of symbolic story we tell ourselves in order to make sense of experience. It will be possible, ultimately, to see a personal notion of allegory at work in Barr's prose.

Inscribed in the metaphors of Barr's great exhibition catalogues, of his popular-audience books such as *What Is Modern Painting?* and *Masters of Modern Art* (1954), and of his magazine pieces such as "Kiesler's *Galaxy*" (1952) and "Will This Art Endure?" (1957), there are traces of this nascent, symbolic story. They may hint at the shape the twentieth century sometimes assumed in his imagination. To a remarkable extent, Barr's metaphors construct an allegory on the compelling political drama of the century's middle years. He tells a fable of art's participation in certain world events that haunted his thinking in the forties and fifties.

With this larger use of metaphor in mind, we can now look in Barr's published writings for the kinds of figurative language that specifically set up a narrative framework—poetic figures that suggest a story about the contending forces and figures surrounding modern art. As Panofsky tells us, "Allegories . . . may be defined as combinations of personifications and/or symbols"; he goes on to observe, "A story may convey . . . an allegorical idea . . . conceived as the 'prefiguration' of another story."²² Two particular poetic devices can therefore be especially useful in writing an allegory. The first is what I have been calling personification, in which an idea or a

quality or even an inanimate object is identified with a person. The second is the notion of “typology,” in which one individual prefigures another. In pursuing Barr’s use of these two devices, we will see him building up metaphorical structures, framing the conflicted history of the mid-twentieth century in figurative terms. After considering these devices, we then can turn to the larger allegory they make possible.

Personification in the Machine Age

In fiction, and in real life, individuals often come to stand for abstract qualities. The characters in the medieval morality play *Everyman*, for example, with names like Friendship and Good Deeds, make the drama a straightforward allegory of everyone’s journey through life and preparation for death. At the same time, an object can take on a personal, human existence, and this, too, is personification. When Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes of “The one red leaf, the last of its clan / That dances as often as dance it can,” he gives the leaf the human characteristic of belonging to a family, or “clan,” and the human ability to dance. John Ruskin cited these lines from Coleridge as an example of the “pathetic fallacy,” or the kind of personification that ascribes human feelings to the inanimate.²³

When Alfred Barr speaks of Picasso’s creating a mutant “race”²⁴ of tripod sculptures, he employs the same trope Ruskin pointed to in Coleridge’s leaf, the last of its “clan.” Personification is a versatile device in Barr’s published writings, but above all, it is a principal means of talking about the new visual forms of the modern era, whether in abstract art or in the industrial aesthetic of the Machine Age. For example, personification makes a conspicuous contribution to how we understand the passage quoted earlier from *Cubism and Abstract Art*. Of the two great currents Barr discerned in abstract art—the geometric and the non-geometric (or biomorphic, including shapes that Barr described as resembling, for instance, “a liver or an amoeba”²⁵)—it is not surprising that the biomorphic would be endowed with human characteristics. But it is indeed surprising that geometric forms as well take on lives of their own. We are told that “a square is as much an ‘object’ or a ‘figure’ as the image of a face,”²⁶ and that “the Surrealists . . . would, as conscientious Freudians, maintain that even squares and circles have symbolic significance.”²⁷ This is not unrelated to the way in which Vasily Kandinsky saw the triangle as emblematic of the soul and its aspirations. In such modes of thought, “the cylinder, the sphere, the cone”²⁸ become little characters, like the “figures” in El Lissitzky’s story *About Two Squares* (1920). And so when, in summarizing at the end of the “currents” passage, Barr brings together his “two main traditions of abstract art,” he arranges them in a *tableau vivant*: “The shape of the square confronts the silhouette of the amoeba.”²⁹

Apparently, the intent of Barr’s distinction between geometric and biomorphic abstraction is thus to make them *both* biomorphic. He quotes Picasso’s statement, “Nor is there any ‘figurative’ and ‘non-figurative’ art. Everything appears to us in the guise of a ‘figure.’ Even in metaphysics ideas are expressed by means of symbolic figures. . . . A person, an object, a circle are all ‘figures.’”³⁰ Barr’s reasons for endorsing the personalization of geometry are stated forthrightly: Geometric perfection is beautiful, but it can be boring. In *Cubism and Abstract Art*, he quotes Plato on “the beauty of shapes . . . made . . . by the lathe, ruler and square. . . . These are not beautiful for any particular reason or purpose, as other things are, but are always by their very nature beautiful.”³¹ But three years before, he had written: “By 1915 some

painters had achieved such purity of design that they were working with ruler and compass. By 1920 several of these purists had (literally) painted square canvases in pure white or black, thrown them (figuratively) out the window and turned to something really interesting such as photography or architecture.”³² Perhaps they are the ones Barr has in mind when in “Kiesler’s *Galaxy*” he speaks of “refugees from the compass and the ruler,” who shun the perfect forms made by mechanical-drawing instruments. He addresses this problem with geometric abstraction again in *What Is Modern Painting?* Defining in his conclusion three key terms—“Truth, Freedom, Perfection”—he notes that of all modern artists perhaps Mondrian comes the closest to perfection; yet “artistic perfection . . . can be, but should not be, ‘too’ perfect,” because “complete perfection in art would probably be as boring as a perfect circle, a perfect Apollo, or the popular, harp-and-cloud idea of Heaven.”³³ But it is not only sheer geometric perfection that makes it possible to speak of God as a circle, or the Trinity as a triangle, or indeed for Walt Whitman to speak of God as a square—his “square deific” and “square entirely divine”—as Meyer Schapiro tells us: “The capacity of these geometric shapes to serve as metaphors of the divine arises from their living, often momentous, qualities for the sensitive eye.”³⁴ The stability of the square, the floating self-enclosure of the circle, the upward indication of the triangle can give them distinct personalities. Hence the urge to personify, to endow with life, the little square and not just the squirming amoeba.

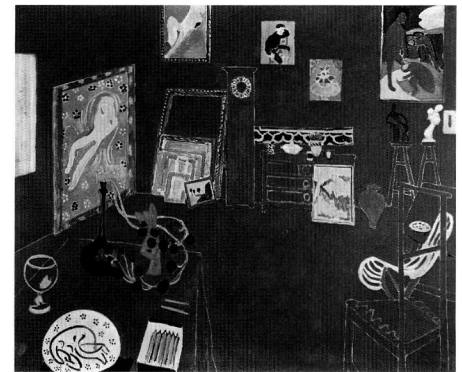
Throughout Barr’s writings, there is a related insistence on the lives of other sorts of inanimate things. The grandfather clock in the center of Matisse’s *Red Studio* (fig. 5) is not simply a timepiece: It is “a one-eyed monitor”³⁵ who stands guard over the scattered paintings and sculpture, keeping them from harm. Artworks themselves have living bodies, as when Cubist pictures are said to have a “skeleton”³⁶—unlike “boneless” Impressionist works,³⁷ but like an International Style building with its “skeleton enclosed by . . . a thin light shell.”³⁸ Barr quotes Picasso as saying of a painting’s genesis that “a picture is not thought out and settled beforehand. . . . A picture lives a life like a living creature, undergoing the changes imposed on us by our life from day to day. This is natural enough, as the picture lives only through the man who is looking at it.”³⁹ When the work later becomes part of a museum collection, Barr himself writes, that life continues:

You may feel that the works of art in our care should be allowed to live their own lives undisturbed by research or other educational activity. Yet I believe that works of art, like human beings, thrive on the attention paid them.

Consider, for instance, a newly acquired painting. It enters the museum collection on a wave of excitement. . . . Other museums want to borrow it, and painters want to copy it. Thus for a time it leads a gala life. . . . But . . . a little later the new painting takes its normal place in gallery 34 B and the honeymoon is over.

*Whether the work of art subsequently lives or dies depends partly on its intrinsic qualities, partly on the attention we are able to give it by our continued interest.*⁴⁰

Promised gifts are, in a sense, betrothed to the museum; when they enter the collection, it is as if the museum has married them, and thereafter always needs to remain on guard against taking them for granted. They must be loved and honored. Only if paintings live and breathe and conduct lives involved with our own does it



5. Henri Matisse. *The Red Studio*. 1911. Oil on canvas, 71 ¼" x 7' 2 ¼" (181 x 219.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

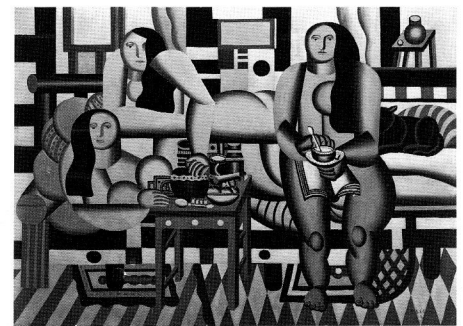
make sense for Barr, as he does in his preface to *Italian Masters*, to wish a group of them safe passage on the dangerous journey back to their home in the fascist Italy of 1940: "Welcome, then, to these great works of art—and after we have enjoyed them may they return safely to the land which gave them life."⁴¹ And only if paintings can feel pain does it make sense to "rescue"⁴² them from their Nazi captors, to "ransom" them, as was Matisse's *Blue Window* (1913) when it was purchased "privately . . . out of the cellar of Göring's *Luftministerium*"⁴³ by The Museum of Modern Art, its escape to a new life in a free country assured—just as many European refugees seeking asylum in the United States were indeed helped by the Museum at that time.⁴⁴ (These were the fortunate ones; Barr, continuing his metaphor, mentions "the handsome group of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings in the Neue Staatsgalerie [in Munich], some of which survived the Nazi purge.")⁴⁵ The suppression of avant-garde art, particularly in the Soviet Union and in Nazi Germany, but also closer to home, was much on Barr's mind at the time of *Cubism and Abstract Art* in 1936. In his closing remark in the introduction to the catalogue, there is a paradoxical sense that those artists, by giving life to harmless geometric forms, have put themselves at risk: "This essay and exhibition might well be dedicated to those painters of squares and circles . . . who have suffered at the hands of philistines with political power."⁴⁶

To a remarkable extent, Alfred Barr presents us with an animated universe, where objects of contemplation live lives closely intertwined with the lives of men and women. This impulse toward personification is not an isolated rhetorical device, useful for explaining how lively visual forms interact; it is instead a view of the nature of modern life and what is needed to live it. With the coming of the Machine Age and with the development of abstract art, especially the geometric varieties, human beings were confronted to an unprecedented degree with alien forms that bore no resemblance to what had been understood as living, handmade forms—as forms that are seen to be alive not only because they depict living things but because they show the touch of the living maker's hand. Barr pointed out, "Malyevitch, Lissitsky, and Mondriaan have used technicians' tools, the compass and the square, to achieve 'abstract' geometrical paintings of a machine-like precision."⁴⁷ In everyday living, too, one could now encounter stark, undisguised geometric shapes, in anonymous, mass-produced objects of daily life. During the first century after the Industrial Revolution, some industrialized design therefore continued to appear "inhuman" to writers such as John Ruskin and William Morris. But Barr did not want people to turn away from these developments and retreat into a medieval-craft notion of handwork, as Morris had.⁴⁸ Instead, he wanted them to learn to live productively in a new, modern world. And if people were to deal with these new, "dehumanized" forms, they needed to understand how such forms did in fact relate to what was human—to understand not only how such things worked within a mechanical system, but also how they served human needs and ends. Personification facilitated that human connection.

This was especially necessary with chromium and steel. So much could the modern era be defined as the Machine Age that in 1926, Barr had intended to write a thesis with the title "The Machine in Modern Art,"⁴⁹ and his fascination with the living machinery of the modern world remained strongly in evidence, whether in

his advocacy of the influential “Machine Art” exhibition of 1934, organized by Philip Johnson, which inaugurated the Museum’s design collection; or in his writings about the humanoid machines envisioned by Francis Picabia and Fernand Léger; or in his frequent praise of the modern artist’s role as a kind of “engineer.” Barr wanted people to see that machines can be beautiful, in the same way as geometric abstract art, because “Machines are, visually speaking, a practical application of geometry.”⁵⁰ When Barr wrote of “Léger’s love of the beauty of machinery,” he was talking about *Three Women* (fig. 6), with its three lounging figures “drawn, modeled and, as it were, polished as if they were an assembly of crank shafts, cylinders, castings and instrument boards.” He lavished this description on them not just for the fact that “the *Three Women* may be compared to the beauty of a superb motor running smoothly, powerfully,” but also for a larger reason: “Léger has been attacked by several varieties of ‘humanists’ for ‘dehumanizing’ art by mechanizing its figures; but has he not at the same time helped to humanize the machine by rendering it esthetically assimilable?”⁵¹ And that was the point, to humanize the machine and fold it into the story of our aesthetic, and our organic, life. Thus it was that Barr could write in his foreword to the catalogue for “Machine Art”: “If . . . we are to ‘end the divorce’ between our industry and our culture we must assimilate the machine aesthetically as well as economically. Not only must we bind Frankenstein—but we must make him beautiful.”⁵² Much of the personification evident throughout Barr’s writing has that aim, to make the modern Machine Age more fit for human habitation. The process of working out a relationship with new mechanical inventions is an overall plot line for his nascent allegory of the modern era.

Barr’s playful allusion to *Frankenstein* reminds us that there is a difference between personification as applied to abstract shapes and as applied to mechanical devices: With machines, we are no longer in the realm of imaginative projection or of mere descriptive analogies, but rather in a realm of the increasingly literal. In a sense that Marshall McLuhan would popularize, beginning with his book *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), certain machines were *already* partly human, both through their intimate involvement with human beings when in use, as with prosthetic extensions of the body, and through their quasi-autonomous functioning, as with an airplane’s “automatic pilot.” Usurping the proper role of the artist, and of the God of Genesis, Mary Shelley’s Dr. Frankenstein had undertaken to invent a lifelike representation of the human form. The fictional character is thus understood as a danger signal, a forecast of that technological hubris which would afflict the future—as Barr recognized in writing about the Futurists, whose devotion to modern machinery and the concept of speed was allied to a worship of modern warfare and its supposed therapeutic effects, and was later linked with fascism. When Filippo Tommaso Marinetti said that “a roaring motor-car, which runs like a machine gun, is more beautiful than the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*,” he demonstrated the negative inversion of an attempt like Barr’s to associate the beauty of the mechanical with the beauty of the organic: ending the “divorce” could result in dehumanization perhaps as easily as it could in humanization. Frankenstein might remain unbound. New inventions could produce a world like the one depicted in Karel Capek’s robot drama, *R.U.R.* (1923), for which Frederick Kiesler had designed sets. The robot in human form, and the human-devouring dynamo called Moloch, at the heart of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*



6. Fernand Léger. *Three Women*. 1921. Oil on canvas, 6' ½" x 8' 3" (183.5 x 251.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

(1927), a film Barr admired,⁵³ come immediately to mind as the malign adversaries of Barr's efforts at humanization. In a different vein, so does the industrial age as presented in Charles Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936). They all convey the enormity of what in the wake of the mechanized combat of 1914–18, with its tanks, machine guns, and biplanes, was sometimes seen as the machine's war against the human.

In light of this, it is significant that when Barr in *Cubism and Abstract Art* quoted Marinetti's famous sentence about the racing automobile and the *Winged Victory*, he carefully omitted the words about the machine gun.⁵⁴ Perhaps Barr's reasons for leaving out the machine gun were like those given by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design from 1956 to 1986, in explaining the exclusion of arms from the design collection: "Some things are inherently uncollectible . . . because their functions are antisocial. Deadly weapons are among the most fascinating and well-designed artifacts of our time, but their beauty can be cherished only by those for whom aesthetic pleasure is divorced from the value of life—a mode of perception the arts are not meant to encourage."⁵⁵

Messianic Time

At the beginning of the twentieth century, one of Barr's favorite writers, Henry Adams, had established the larger metaphorical terms in which the Machine Age might be understood. Adams visited the Gallery of Machines at the Paris World's Fair of 1900 and was struck with a kind of fearful wonder at the immense electrical generator on display there. In "The Dynamo and the Virgin," the chapter of his autobiography that presents the generator as the very embodiment of the modern age, he would write, "Before the end, one began to pray to it."⁵⁶ He was not thinking simply of the old Enlightenment analogy of the machine as a model of the universe, the cosmos conceived as a vast clockworks mechanism, its rotating and revolving parts the work of some divine clockmaker. More than that, for Adams the generator's unprecedented, almost terrifying power made manifest the fact that the world had entered a wholly novel era, a kind of mechanical millennium. Machines had utterly transformed life; the dynamo's all-pervasive, energizing presence was what now animated the modern world, even as the cult of the Virgin Mary and all it symbolized had animated the Middle Ages and raised the great cathedrals. Thus to Adams, the opposition between a figure (or "type") from theology and a great invention from technology defined the nature of the modern; an old symbol was losing its hold and a new one, made of metal, was taking its place as the faith of the emerging era. In the twentieth century, he suggested, industrial technology would become a new kind of Messianic religion—one whose advent could be cause for alarm.

For, as Adams saw, the epoch-making impact of machines on modern life is often ambiguous, having the potential for great harm as well as great benefit. To some in the nineteenth century, it had still seemed that the dawning Machine Age might turn out to be a golden one; in the burgeoning Industrial Revolution, mechanical inventions were expected to free workers from tedious labor and radically improve daily life. As one Victorian writer put it, "Are not our inventors absolutely ushering in the very dawn of the millennium?"⁵⁷ But to many in the twentieth century, especially after World War I, the prospects for global improvement did not look so rosy. Technology might indeed change the world, but not always for the better. As Barr himself wrote in 1934, "Today man is lost in the . . . wilderness of . . . indus-

trial civilization. On every hand machines literally multiply our difficulties and point our doom.”⁵⁸ Or, as Adams had written much earlier, “The engines [man] will have invented will be beyond his strength to control. Some day science may have the existence of mankind in its power, and the human race commit suicide by blowing up the world.”⁵⁹

In dealing with these portentous aspects of the Machine Age, Barr, like Adams, had recourse to millennial metaphors—another feature of his language that we should examine. Sometimes, Barr looked back to Christian “types” and allegories—back, so to speak, from the Dynamo to the Virgin—in constructing a narrative about modern art. His prose goes out of its way to allow for a reading of events in terms of a New Testament time scheme. As in a biblical allegory, the plot points toward a final conflict between two great, symbolic, contending forces. For Barr, as for Henry Adams, it is a conflict between a mechanical invention and a theological “type.” That is to say, on the one hand Barr’s use of personification defines our potential adversary, in machine form. And on the other, it creates a hero—the sort of millennial figure developed in the New Testament through the device of typology. With these special uses of literary language, Barr sometimes articulates a new, modern sense of Messianic time.

We can see how this happens by further exploring Barr’s uses of personification, this time its extension into biblical typology. In this regard, all Christian narrative is potentially allegorical; the Incarnation is simply the theological version of personification, understood in this case as a person’s embodying divine attributes. Typological allegory along these lines is familiar to students of medieval and Renaissance art, and it is well to remember that Barr had studied medieval art with the eminent Charles Rufus Morey at Princeton and had specialized in the Italian Renaissance as a graduate student. He would have been intimately acquainted with typology also through the work of his father, the Reverend Alfred H. Barr, Sr., who, as a distinguished member of the Presbyterian clergy, wrote two books on homiletics, the art of presenting such thematic analogies to a popular audience in sermons. Through the notion of typology, it is understood that one biblical individual or event can prefigure or recapitulate another. Adam falls by eating the fruit of a tree, and is saved by Christ, the Second Adam, who mounts another “tree.” Jonah—mentioned in “Kiesler’s *Galaxy*,” in connection with storytelling—is swallowed by a whale; emerging after three days, he prefigures Christ, who will be swallowed by the earth, to emerge after three days. In each case, the earlier figure or event, the one that prefigures, is technically called the *type*, while the second, culminating figure or event, the one that fulfills the promise of the first, is called the *antitype*. The type turns out to have been a prophetic allegory of the antitype. We could, in a less technical and more familiar vocabulary, call the first, preparatory figure the prototype, and the second, climactic figure the archetype.

The type/antitype scheme extends to future time, indeed, to the end of time, through the projection of a third figure. For example, Eve, through whom humankind falls, is the type, and Mary, through whom humankind will be redeemed, is the antitype—and she in turn prefigures the Woman Clothed with the Sun, in Revelations, the apocalyptic figure who helps bring the whole cosmic pattern of redemption to its ultimate, eschatological conclusion. When Meyer Schapiro interprets Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night* (1889), he gives it a specifically typolog-

ical reading, and sees “in the coiling nebula and in the strangely luminous crescent—an anomalous complex of moon and sun and earth-shadow, locked in an eclipse—a possible unconscious reminiscence of the apocalyptic theme of the woman in pain of birth, girded with the sun and moon and crowned with stars, whose newborn child is threatened by the dragon (Revelations 12, 1 ff.).”⁶⁰

This anticipated third occurrence is highly illuminating, and in a unique way. As in fairy tales, the third is a charm. In particular, the third—the apocalyptic—occurrence can provide a key to the operative symbolism, by showing the “shaping ends” that organize events. A typological plot works “in anticipation of a terminal structuring moment of revelation.”⁶¹ In other words, to the writer it is a means of showing the true, final significance of present events. Indeed, in Romantic and modern versions of this scheme, the apocalyptic crisis becomes not a global or cosmic catastrophe, but rather a revelatory moment of almost preternatural understanding, like William Wordsworth’s vision on Mount Snowdon, or James Joyce’s “epiphanies.”⁶² In Christian and Christian-derived allegories of this sort, based on ideas of Messianic expectation, it is in some sense always the end of the world: The conflated time scheme makes the end (and the beginning) always present in the here and now.

The example of Joyce is important in understanding Barr, for such allegory is not confined to the Middle Ages or the Renaissance; it has been a leading feature of much modern literature. T. S. Eliot’s review of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), titled “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth,”⁶³ appeared in *The Dial* in 1923, at a time when the young Alfred Barr was avidly reading that same magazine, in which hard-to-find reproductions of modern artworks often appeared.⁶⁴ Commenting on the structure of *Ulysses*, with its episode-by-episode recasting of Homer (Odysseus is the type, Leopold Bloom the satirical antitype, and his heavenly city of the “New Bloomusalem” a millennial culmination), Eliot said that “Mr. Joyce’s parallel use of the *Odyssey* has a great importance. It has the importance of a scientific discovery.” Comparing it to the discoveries of Einstein, he wrote that “in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him.” What makes this method so important is that it enables the writer to impose a kind of rough plot-outline on the bewildering diversity and fragmentation of modern life. As Eliot says: “It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.”

Instead of presenting time as a string of merely serial happenings, the use of allegorical types offers a way of making a leap of significance across a large span of time; it becomes possible to see a specific part of the past as not only reflected, but fulfilled—consummated—in the present. As Walter Benjamin wrote in this regard, a historian who conceives history this way “stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the ‘time of the now’ which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.”⁶⁵

Such concepts of Messianic time are invoked on those occasions when, for example, Barr quotes with approval Fernande Olivier’s characterization of Matisse as “the type of the great master.”⁶⁶ And indeed, in his discussions of “great masters,” metaphors from typology permeate Barr’s writing. For Barr, too, most especially during the 1940s, the present is shot through with chips of Messianic time. This is per-

haps most evident in the formula of artistic influence, centered on a dominating figure, that Michael Baxandall has called the “prophet–savior–apostles” form.⁶⁷ We do sometimes think of, say, Cézanne, Picasso, and Juan Gris in the respective roles of the John the Baptist, the Messiah, and the Beloved Disciple of Cubism. The formula is simply a variant of the typological precursor, or prefiguration, pattern, wherein the major artist is foretold by a prophet who, like the Baptist, is a type of the savior that is to come.

This verbal formula has been applied to artists before, of course. In this respect Barr follows a venerable line of allegorists going back to John Ruskin and *Modern Painters*. Like others of his generation, born around the turn of the century, Barr still at times referred to Ruskin’s way of mixing visual analysis with moral sermonizing. Reviewing an exasperating book by Dr. Albert C. Barnes in 1926, Barr finally threw his hands up and said that “Mr. Barnes will yet drive us to re-reading Ruskin.”⁶⁸ It has been pointed out that Barr was reacting on that occasion against the almost hedonistic formalism of Barnes’s focus on plastic means and values, as derived from Roger Fry and Clive Bell.⁶⁹ A similar reaction would be articulated by Edmund Wilson in 1931: “Such a critic as Clive Bell writes about painting so exclusively and cloyingly from the point of view of the varying degrees of pleasure to be derived from the pictures of different painters that we would willingly have Ruskin and all his sermonizing back.”⁷⁰ What Wilson—as well as Barr, I think—invokes is the popular critic’s “prophetic” mode; when Ruskin wanted to introduce to a general Victorian audience the work of “the greatest living artist,”⁷¹ J. M. W. Turner, he had found it natural to rely on a familiar language of biblical allegory:

*Turner—glorious in conception—unfathomable in knowledge—solitary in power— . . . [is] sent as a prophet of God to reveal to men the mysteries of His universe, standing, like the great angel of the Apocalypse, clothed with a cloud, and with a rainbow upon his head, and with the sun and stars given unto his hand.*⁷²

Of its very nature, this is where the typology leads. And, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, such allegorical themes of the artist-prophet and the apocalypse find expression, as we shall see, in Barr’s own writings, particularly with respect to Picasso.

Though the verbal formula is an old one, it has rarely been used with such consistency and purposefulness as Barr’s: He employs this language to identify those he considers the most important modern artists. Perhaps, recalling the “two currents” passage from *Cubism and Abstract Art* and Barr’s recasting of it in his Matisse book, quoted earlier, it may seem as if Picasso and Matisse will become two rival Messiahs. Elaborating their potential conflict, Barr often gives his typology this special ecclesiastical twist, emphasizing divisive issues of heresy. At his art school the mature Matisse is said to have not just students but “disciples” (after having himself been dubbed by the critics in his younger days an “apostle of ugliness”); more than forward-looking, his works are “prophetic”; as a radical artist, his views are considered “heresy” by the establishment, and it threatens to “excommunicate” him from the Salons.⁷³ When his followers André Derain and Georges Braque alter their styles in 1907 under the influence of Picasso, these are not mere changes of manner, they are “conversions” as if to a new cult.⁷⁴ Following new models, in his L’Estaque landscapes Braque paints “in a more pious disciple with chips of Messianic time: his new friend

Picasso.⁷⁵ And when Picasso in 1915 begins to make realistic drawings, he does not just depart from his Cubist style for a time: He commits “apostasy.”⁷⁶ Yet there are also “heretic” Cubists, such as Robert Delaunay.⁷⁷ In fact, in 1912 Delaunay’s “heresy [runs] riot”; he feels he is “rebell[ing] against intricate cubist scholasticism.”⁷⁸ (This despite the fact that in *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, “obviously Picasso was interested in other than homiletic problems.”⁷⁹) Cubism threatens to become a new orthodoxy.

This dramatic metaphor of heresy versus orthodoxy, of conflict between two rival masters, a true and a false Messiah, complicates the whole idea of the great, individual artist-savior who forever alters how art can be made. Ultimately, we will have to address the problem of rival Messiahs more fully, especially with Picasso, for it is he who is finally treated in true Messianic terms. He transforms the nature of art, bringing about a change that can be deemed “epoch-making”—one of Barr’s favorite terms. Picasso paints the *Demoiselles*, which Barr calls “one of the few pictures in the history of modern art which can be called ‘epoch-making.’”⁸⁰ It is the first step in “the radical, epoch-making development of cubism,”⁸¹ and, as he quotes Jacques Lipchitz: “Cubism . . . was not a school, an aesthetic, or merely a discipline—it was a new view of the universe.”⁸²

From such metaphorical conceptions, a poetic view of modern times begins to emerge. It is the story of a recurring type: the tale of the great, almost Messianic individual artist who, accomplishing an epoch-making breakthrough, seems to embody the revolutionary new age he initiates. It is conceived also as a fable of the Machine Age and of the sometimes inhuman products of modern creativity—the negative as well as the positive outcomes of mechanical inventiveness. A tragic view of history emerges, in which lofty aspirations often lead to disaster. And it becomes possible to plot out a specific allegory: It is an ambiguous story of the creative artist as a counterpart to the scientist and the inventor—one who produces a device that makes it possible to fly, but also to crash back to earth. Unexpectedly, the modern era takes shape as an allegory of Icarus.

The Allegory of Flight

Modern artists are not only painters or sculptors; they are also what Barr calls them at the opening of *What Is Modern Painting?*:

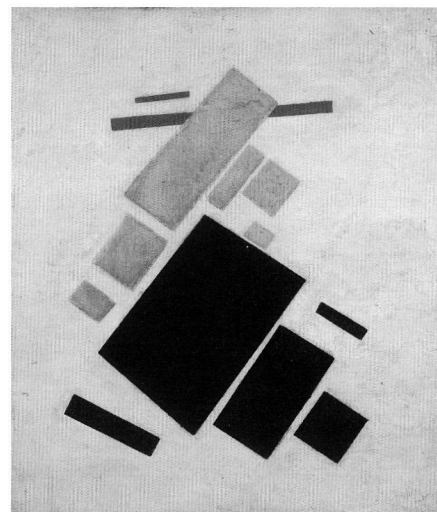
*The greatest modern artists are pioneers just as are modern scientists, inventors and explorers. This makes modern art both more difficult and more exciting than the art we are already used to. Galileo, Columbus, the Wright brothers suffered neglect, disbelief, even ridicule.*⁸³

This is one of Barr’s master metaphors, and the one I shall pursue through the rest of this essay: Modern artists are scientists and inventors, like the Wright brothers, or perhaps like Leonardo with his anatomical diagrams, his siege-weapon designs, and his suggestive sketches of machines for flight.⁸⁴ In the twentieth century, the term *scientist* encompasses “atom scientists” (Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein, among others), a group Barr mentions on the first page of his text, as well as artists who use a “scientific system,” as Georges Seurat did, so that people “looked on his paintings as complicated laboratory demonstrations.”⁸⁵ Modern artists are scientific also in the hands-on,

practical sense of being mechanical draftsmen and technicians; Mondrian's paintings, for instance, are "put together and adjusted to a hair's breadth, with the conscience and precision of an engineer."⁸⁶ Barr quotes with approval Antoine Pevsner's remark that "we shape our work as the engineer his bridge, the mathematician his formula of a planetary orbit."⁸⁷

It is in this context that Barr on numerous occasions calls Picasso's *Demoiselles* an "experimental" painting—"an imposing laboratory experiment," conducted in "the alchemical laboratory of Picasso's mind."⁸⁸ Cubism resembles a scientific experiment: it breaks objects down, like a chemical analysis, into their constituent elements. And like a diagnostic X-ray, it shows views into bodies, penetrating through surface contours; it dissects the object, revealing the very structure of matter. Indeed, the notion of Picasso the advanced research scientist leads Barr to mention under the heading of Cubism "some relationship to Einstein's theory of relativity," and "interesting analogies between cubism and the space-time continuum of modern physics."⁸⁹ It is not, of course, that Barr takes fourth-dimensional interpretations of Cubism very seriously. On the contrary, after speaking of the "cubist vestiges" and the "general flatness" of Matisse's *Piano Lesson* (1916), he jokes that "only the metronome (*pace* Einstein!) seems solidly three-dimensional."⁹⁰ It is not the fourth dimension Barr is seeking, I believe, but the special nature of the creative mind—its ability to see things in a different way, to reconfigure the familiar elements of the world through the imagination, and from them invent something new. Einstein was renowned for the way he arrived at revolutionary scientific theories largely intuitively—by visualizing objects in space, in his remarkable "thought experiments" (there is the well-known example of picturing the movement of articles within a falling elevator), rather than relying on the more customary computations. In such experiments, it has been observed, Einstein was "working at the very limits of physical imagination."⁹¹ Artists, too, envision the objects of the world radically altered for the purposes of "research." An artist like Picasso and a scientist like Einstein are brothers under the skin; to make their respective breakthroughs, both conduct experiments in visual intuition.

I shall later return to Einstein as the type of the advanced scientist, but first let us consider more closely the other prototype Barr cites for the modern artist: the inventor. Barr's mentioning the Wright brothers should remind us that throughout the early years of the century, there was a natural association between the invention of flying machines and the upward aspirations of modern artists.⁹² Kazimir Malevich's *Suprematist Composition: Airplane Flying* (fig. 7), though abstract, looks at the new visual facts revealed by aviation; as Barr wrote, Malevich "drew inspiration for some of his compositions from airplane views of cities with their interesting patterns of rectangles and curves."⁹³ But from this aerial perspective Malevich glimpsed not a terrestrial but a non-objective world, and he sought to convey a sense of flight through the dynamics of abstract forms floating in empty space; inventing Suprematism, he seemed to reenact the invention of the airplane, what he termed the "great yearning for space . . . for flight . . . which, seeking an outward shape, brought about the birth of the airplane."⁹⁴ Working along different lines, Marinetti would inaugurate "aeropainting" and "aerosculpture"; Carlo Carrà, too, pursued such goals with his collage *Manifesto for Intervention* (1914), a view from the air of a demonstration. And Constantin Brancusi sought "the essence of flight";⁹⁵ his *Bird*



7. Kazimir Malevich. *Suprematist Composition: Airplane Flying*. 1915 (dated 1914). Oil on canvas, 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19" (58.1 x 48.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

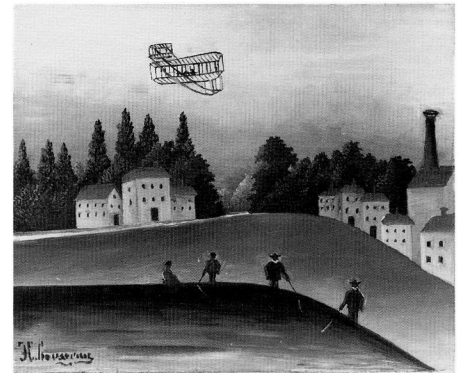
in Space (1928) allowed pure, clean, polished metallic forms to soar free of gravity. As William Carlos Williams wrote: “The *Bird in Space* gives an undoubted sense of flight, of the surrounding air, which is difficult for a sculptor to depict with the weight of his materials always before him. Most do not succeed but find their pieces anchored heavily at their feet, even the best of them—the wind in the clothes of the *Nike of Samothrace* [is a case] in point.”⁹⁶

Henri Rousseau featured aircraft in a number of paintings, basing his depictions on images that appeared in the popular press; above magical landscapes, he placed craft notable for their accuracy and precise detail. The dirigible in *The Quay of Ivry* and *View of the Bridge of Sèvres* (both 1908) is painted with such clear features that it can be identified as the *Patrie*—recognizable by the ailerons, with which it was the first lighter-than-air craft to be equipped—the first dirigible to be ordered by the French army.⁹⁷ *View of the Bridge at Sèvres* shows in addition Wilbur Wright’s 1907 aircraft, identifiable by its lack of landing gear, as does *The Fishermen and the Biplane* (fig. 8). Robert Delaunay painted *Homage to Blériot* (c. 1914) to honor the French flyer Louis Blériot, and the celestial *Astra (The Cardiff Team)* (1912–13).⁹⁸ When Le Corbusier, in *Towards a New Architecture* (1923), sought a model for all that rational, elegantly functioning modern design could be, he chose the airplane, devoting a twenty-two-page chapter with sixteen photographs to the subject, and writing: “The airplane is indubitably one of the products of the most intense selection in the range of modern industry. . . . The airplane mobilized invention, intelligence and daring: *imagination* and *cold reason*. It is the same spirit that built the Parthenon”; for him, the ascent of the flying machine figured forth a certain kind of creative imagination: “The man who is intelligent, cold and calm has grown wings on himself.”⁹⁹ The aeronautical ascent continued into the century: In 1927, when Barr was a young man beginning his career, Charles Lindbergh flew *The Spirit of Saint Louis* solo across the Atlantic.

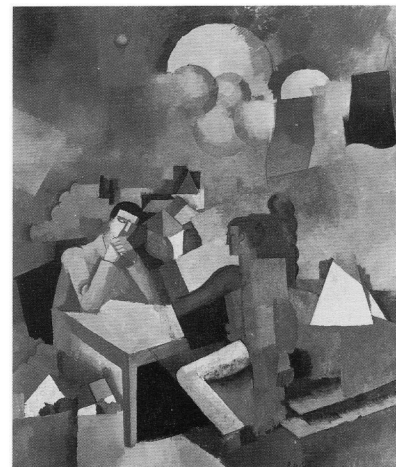
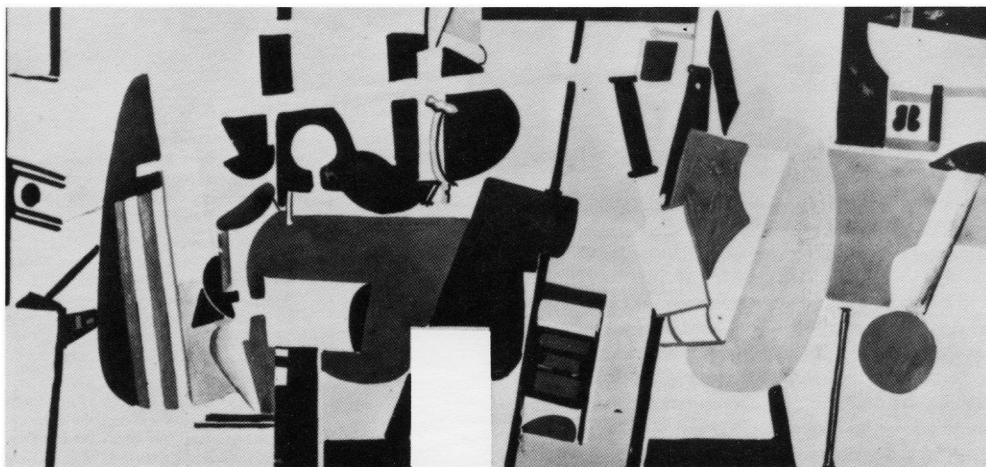
In the same spirit of the romance of engineering, Arshile Gorky painted his Cubist-derived WPA mural *Aviation: Evolution of Forms Under Aerodynamic Limitations* (see fig. 9), a work that Barr championed. Gorky wrote of his designs that “the engine becomes in one place like the wings of a dragon and in another the wheels, propeller and motor take on the demonic speed of a meteor cleaving the atmosphere.”¹⁰⁰ In recommending Gorky’s project, Barr as a member of the jury praised its unconventional methods and meanings; superior to a competing proposal; “the Gorky project is better anyway from almost every point of view except a purely conventional or academic [one]. I think the public would be much more interested in it than in the conventional allegories of [the other] project.”¹⁰¹

Barr would seek ways to link the practices of painters with the technological feats of aviators. When Matisse painted the Barnes Foundation mural, he did much of his preliminary work at full scale, rather than enlarging a small model, in order to preserve, he said, a direct “physical encounter between the artist and some fifty-two meters of surface.” Citing this, Barr then quotes Matisse’s figurative explanation for going beyond an earthbound, small-scale study: “A man with his searchlight who follows an airplane in the immensity of the sky does not traverse space in the same way as an aviator.”¹⁰²

Among these many affinities between modern artists and aeronautical engineers, perhaps the most significant ones connect the invention of the flying machine



8. Henri Rousseau. *The Fishermen and the Biplane*. 1908. Oil on canvas, 18 1/4 x 21 1/2" (46 x 55 cm). Musée National de l'Orangerie, Paris. Collection Jean Walter et Paul Guillaume



with the rise of Cubism. It is now well known, for example, that in the years they were inventing Cubism together, Picasso sometimes called Braque “Wilbourg,” for Wilbur (Wright),¹⁰³ since the creative collaboration of the two inventor brothers was much like the collaboration of the two “brothers in Cubism.”

Generally, Barr seeks to transmute the technical triumph of Cubism into something more human. In his commentary on Roger de La Fresnaye’s *The Conquest of the Air* (fig. 10), Barr discusses Wilbur Wright’s record flight of 1908, but, as in “Kiesler’s *Galaxy*,” he betrays some reservations about purely technical progress. He prefers instead to dwell on the gentler notion of conquest La Fresnaye depicts:

La Fresnaye does not insist upon technological triumphs—though the abstract parallels in the right foreground possibly refer to a biplane. Instead the air is gently conquered by a sailboat, the French tricolor and, in the distant empyrean, a balloon. Perhaps the chief conquest takes place in the minds of the men at the table who, with cubist indifference to gravity, float high above the roofs of the village.¹⁰⁴

A puff of wind propels a sailboat, the tricolor flutters in the breeze, and a balloon levitates into the heavens. Through these airy means the painting depicts the ability of the inventive mind to master the most elusive of elements.

Part of the attraction of flight for artists was the excitement of seeing the world from a new point of view, from above.¹⁰⁵ Ascending to the heavens and covering great distances quickly, at high speeds, the power of flight made it truly seem that humankind had conquered time and space. So much did the Cubist revolution seem a matter of learning how to fly—“with cubist indifference to gravity”—that at the end of her book on Picasso, published in 1938, Gertrude Stein would say:

When I was in America I for the first time travelled pretty much all the time in an airplane and when I looked at the earth I saw all the lines of cubism made at a time when not any painter had ever gone up in an airplane. I saw there on the earth the mingling lines of Picasso, coming and going, developing and destroying themselves . . . as everything destroys itself in the twentieth century . . . Picasso . . . has that strange quality of an earth that one has never seen and of things destroyed as they have never been destroyed.¹⁰⁶

Left:

9. Arshile Gorky. *Activities on the Field*. Panel for the left side of the mural *Aviation: Evolution of Forms Under Aerodynamic Limitations*, 1936–37, commissioned for the Administration Building, Newark Airport, New Jersey. From a model (now lost) created for the exhibition “New Horizons in American Art,” The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936

Right:

10. Roger de La Fresnaye. *The Conquest of the Air*. 1913. Oil on canvas, 7' 8½" x 6' 5" (235.9 x 195.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

Her association of an aerial view with the idea of Cubist decomposition or deformation of objects was more than a fanciful comparison. In 1943, a war-related show at The Museum of Modern Art, “Airways to Peace: An Exhibition of Geography for the Future,” organized by Monroe Wheeler, examined the many meanings of aviation, from Leonardo to the current hostilities. It had a special section on aviation’s implications for mapping, “How Man Has Drawn His World.” The catalogue answered the question “How much does Mercator distort?” by aligning a globe with a Mercator-projection map, and thus showing how the flat projection deformed the earth by pulling the continents seriously out of shape. Therefore, the catalogue urged, “man must re-draw his world.”¹⁰⁷ Alfred Barr in his 1939 Picasso catalogue had allowed a recent portrait (fig. 11) to pass without comment, but in his second Picasso book, in 1946, three years after “Airways to Peace,” he unexpectedly uses a particular geographical figure, describing the same portrait as a kind of navigational map of the head:

*The heads of this period are popularly called “double-faced.” Actually in this magnificently painted Portrait Picasso has kept the usual number of features: he has merely drawn the face in profile with the mouth and one eye in front view and both ears and both nostrils visible, liberties which he has taken since cubism. After all, Mercator in his commonly used flat projection of the map of the world distorts the physiognomy of his spheroid more than Picasso does when he creates on a flat canvas his projection of a woman’s head.*¹⁰⁸

His use of Mercator to describe Cubist “distortion” confirms how closely Barr observed the “Airways” show. Its attendant theme, the technology of aviation in war and peace, will come to the fore elsewhere in his writings.

The dawn of flight was a high point of the twentieth century’s romance with the machine. The flying machine personified a dream humans had had for millennia, allowing them to soar like birds, like angels—or, perhaps, like Icarus. At the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Joyce’s improbably named Stephen Dedalus goes off to the continent—in 1903, the year of the first Wright brothers flight—to seek the “fabulous artificer,” his namesake; he crashes back to earth shortly after, we learn at the beginning of *Ulysses*, and returns to Dublin and to his dying mother in a fall that shows he has failed to live up to his name, and is not the father, Daedalus, but the son, Icarus.¹⁰⁹ The myth of Icarus figured in T. S. Eliot’s fascination with the way Joyce manipulated a parallel between the mythic and the modern; it tells something of what Eliot, and presumably his young reader, Alfred Barr, could understand the myth of the modern to be. If flight was modernist technical experiment par excellence, it was also a premonition of possible disaster. The plane’s test flight provided a metaphor for progress—trying out an advanced way of getting from here to there, say from New York to Paris—and its pulsing machinery was thus an engine that drove the experimental “plot” of modern history forward into future time. Yet the test could fail, and thereby become a metaphor also for aspiration’s collapse—for rise and fall, as with the Roman Empire, or the myth of Icarus.

This sense of failed aspiration makes itself felt, in an ironic way, even with Picasso and “Wilbur” Braque. As Picasso continued to think about flight, in 1912, the year of Wilbur Wright’s death, he incorporated into some works the painted representation of a brochure with the printed slogan “*Notre avenir est dans l’air*” (“Our



11. Pablo Picasso. *Portrait (Seated Woman)*. 1938. Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 23 3/4" (73 x 60 cm). Collection William and Donna Acquavella

future is in the air”).¹¹⁰ Though apparently a hopeful statement of the glorious future, the booklet in fact urged France to develop a military air corps, with the kinds of airborne munitions that within two years would buzz in the skies over Flanders.

The “downside” of modern inventiveness was evident in the mechanical weapons of World War I, such as the tank and the machine gun, and was symbolized by the sudden collapse of aviation’s hopes into the grim reality of aerial combat and Zeppelin raids on London. The liabilities would be revealed on a much larger scale in the second war. Gertrude Stein was right: After the conquest of the air, things would be destroyed as they had never been destroyed before. And she was not being whimsical in seeing this somehow reflected in artists’ work. It was becoming common to speak of modern art, with its “deformations” and its often “dehumanized” forms, as not only highly creative but also highly destructive. Picasso had called a painting a “sum of destructions,”¹¹¹ laying waste the familiar world in order to create a new one. Picking up his tone, Barr would find the *Demoiselles* “a purely formal figure composition,” but one “which as it develops becomes more and more dehumanized.”¹¹² The deformation or dissection, the visual violation, of the abstracted human form in the *Demoiselles*, and as seen in even more radical form in the attack of a late 1930s picture such as *Weeping Woman* (fig. 12), with its “taste for paroxysm,”¹¹³ was among the prime characteristics that made Picasso’s work modern. The *Weeping Woman* studies are a series of almost clinical experiments in evoking the utmost expressions from the specimen subjects. This quasi-scientific attitude toward the analysis of forms seemed to arouse the last vestiges of the Romantic fear of scientific research, a fear that Wordsworth, for one, had articulated long before:

*Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: —
We murder to dissect.*¹¹⁴

Thinking of Cubism’s analytical impulses, struggling to take the world apart and reveal its inner stresses, Barr could speak of the *Demoiselles* as “a laboratory or, better, a battlefield.”¹¹⁵ He would point out that Cubism is “a process of breaking up” an object systematically “until a fragment of the visual world is completely conquered.”¹¹⁶ The military metaphor comes to play a central role, growing by the time of World War II into something that could be read as an allegory of the modern period. If Meyer Schapiro saw *Starry Night* as an apocalyptic revelation of the Woman Clothed with the Sun, Barr saw its visionary stars as “bursting bombshells.”¹¹⁷ A little later, Barr’s view of the *Demoiselles*, too, became more militarized: Beyond “epoch-making,” by the 1950s he could call the picture “the first detonation of a great historic movement”¹¹⁸—as if it were like the first atomic bomb, which recently had inaugurated the Nuclear Age.

But we are getting ahead of our story. To return to the interwar period: Aviation temporarily regained its luster after World War I, and went on to the great era of expansion that fostered the extraordinary careers of Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, two almost superhuman beings who were to the popular imagination “like gods from outer space,” as Gore Vidal has remarked, and who came to embody “the gospel of flight.”¹¹⁹ Yet the progress of aviation would still be marred by the occasional spec-



12. Pablo Picasso. *Weeping Woman*. 1937. Oil on canvas, 23 3/4 x 19 1/4" (60 x 49 cm). The Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London



13. Pablo Picasso. *Guernica*. 1937. Oil on canvas, 11' 5½" x 25' 5¾" (349.3 x 776.6 cm). Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. On permanent loan from the Museo del Prado, Madrid

tacular failure: not only Earhart's mysterious disappearance over the Pacific in 1937, but also, in the same year, and more ominously, the crash of the *Hindenburg*, the dirigible whose fiery descent has sometimes been retold in fiction as premonitory of the disaster of its Nazi owners.¹²⁰ An even more serious downward turn came in April of that same year. When German bombers flying for General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War devastated the Basque town of Guernica, it was, Barr carefully noted, "the first 'total' air raid."¹²¹ An epoch-making change in the nature of warfare, this was the first calculated mass attack on a defenseless population, behind the lines, and it prefigured the fate of many other cities, in England, Germany, and Japan, during the coming world war—through its systematic execution, its use of experimental incendiary weapons, and its deliberate targeting of civilians, who were strafed by machine-gun fire as they fled the attack. *Guernica* (fig. 13) becomes an allegory of that atrocious event—and an allegory as well of artists' fighting back, for in painting it, Picasso "took an artist's revenge," bringing to bear "the special weapons of modern art."¹²² Barr quotes Picasso: "No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war."¹²³ If advances in scientific techniques could be put to political purposes in war, then advances in artistic techniques could be put to political purposes, too—in propaganda. This was never more evident than at the 1937 Paris World's Fair, for which *Guernica* was commissioned; at the same fair, Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will* (1935) was awarded a gold medal.¹²⁴

Consider for a moment the ramifications of juxtaposing these two famous works. The contrast between them represents a conflict between two opposed allegories of flight—and between two opposed ideas of a Messiah. *Triumph of the Will*, the record of the 1934 Nazi Party congress, opens with the notorious sequence of Adolf Hitler's arrival, his private airplane descending noiselessly from the billowing clouds above Nuremberg, as if its passenger were a god borne gently to earth.¹²⁵ This is the sequence, "the sea of clouds at the start of the film, the spires and gables of Nuremberg looming through," that Riefenstahl particularly evokes in her autobiography.¹²⁶ The words flashed on the screen to introduce this sequence make its Messianic pretensions explicit: "Twenty years after the outbreak of the World War, sixteen years after Germany's Passion, nineteen months after the beginning of the German Rebirth, Adolph Hitler again flew to Nuremberg to review the assembly of

his faithful followers."¹²⁷ The airplane—gliding high above the earth in an ethereal, otherworldly realm, then descending to the human world—is the vehicle of a debased theology. That is, its flight comprises in effect an allegory of the Party line, comparable (though much more aesthetically sophisticated) to the infamous painting by Otto Hoyer of Hitler delivering a speech early in his career, a picture flagrantly titled *In the Beginning Was the Word* (1937). Barr clearly understood, and attacked, these Messianic pretensions, specifically identifying the Hoyer painting as among the most blatant of “Aryan allegories.”¹²⁸ The idea of Hitler as a “savior” self-consciously exploits the aspect of Christian tradition that looks for a “savage Messiah” and recalls the militant words in chapter 10 of Matthew: “I came not to send peace, but a sword.” But if to the Nazis the Führer descending appeared like the Messiah, to everyone else he looked more like the Anti-Christ. To a large extent, the massive, geometrically organized crowd scenes that fill the rest of *Triumph of the Will*, including endless ranks and files of troops marching with obediently mechanical precision, manifested the worst of the dehumanizing tendencies so long feared in the developing Machine Age.

The co-opting of the role of artist to promote the goals of the state was implicit in totalitarian thinking, in its various forms among the Soviets, the Italians, and the Germans. As an extreme example, Josef Goebbels in 1933 said that politics is “the highest and most comprehensive art there is, and we who shape modern German policy feel ourselves to be artists.”¹²⁹ And Hitler considered himself not only a painter, and capable of being “as great an architect as Michelangelo,”¹³⁰ but also, in his selection of works for the annual National Socialist exhibitions in Munich, a curator and a connoisseur, a judge of physical beauty. Barr had seen the danger firsthand when, on leave from the Museum, he happened to be in Germany as the Nazis came to power in 1933 and witnessed their growing mastery of propaganda.¹³¹ In reaction Barr would write, “We detest the policy of the totalitarian state that rigidly controls all thought and creative expression in order to make them serve its own ends.”¹³²

This monstrous appropriation of art was allied to a general aesthetics of the racially “pure” and “perfect”; as Susan Sontag has observed, “Fascist art displays a utopian aesthetics—that of physical perfection.”¹³³ When Hitler campaigned against modern art, especially through the exhibition “Degenerate Art” (*Entartete Kunst*), which opened in July 1937,¹³⁴ he was propounding a reactionary notion of ideal physical beauty, supposedly to be achieved in actuality, through eugenics. What he specifically found “degenerate” was the apparent deformation of the figure in advanced art—primarily by the German Expressionists but also, as Barr noted, by Picasso, “the painter of *Guernica* and the chief of all *entarteten Kunstbolschewisten*” and “the most renowned and formidable master of ‘degenerate’ art.”¹³⁵ Such artists were accused of violating the beauty of utopian and racial perfection. National Socialist propaganda pretended that the world could be a work of art if only the ugliness represented by its enemies were stamped out. Barr icily condemned such gross abuses of art, pointing out that the Führer’s “personal hatred of modern art” arose from the fact that “Hitler himself was a disappointed, mediocre, academic painter.”¹³⁶

When in Barr’s writing Picasso comes to play the role of hero in an allegorical tale about modern art, he does so by taking up a position directly opposite to that of Hitler, the Anti-Christ as failed artist. Not only does Picasso make “a public statement intended to arouse public feeling against the horrors of war and implicitly, at

least, against Franco and his German bombers,” and thereby create “the most famous of all anti-Axis propaganda pictures.”¹³⁷ But also, by becoming the painter of that work, Picasso embodies in general *the idea of modern art*, which the Nazis had set out to eliminate. For *Guernica* is a further instance of the deformation, or violation, of the female form as seen since the *Demoiselles* and as seen in *Weeping Woman*—one of the very attributes that had first defined Picasso’s work as “modern,” and the feature of modern art that the Nazis found most repellent.

As the foremost master of the kind of challenging, sometimes distressing figural art the Nazis despised, Picasso carries its standard in an allegorical tale about the fate of modernism. Barr quotes him as saying in 1937, while painting *Guernica* and after being accused of harboring fascist or reactionary sympathies, “My whole life as an artist has been nothing more than a struggle against reaction and the death of art.”¹³⁸ Defending art, in *Guernica*, he takes a rebarbative style the fascists hate and throws it in their faces, in the name of their victims. This modern Slaughter of the Innocents owes its effect to what Barr calls its “modern techniques,” “the special weapons of modern art”¹³⁹—to how its aggressive deformations and distortions of the female figure, so closely associated with this particular artist, here function as an act of defiance *against* aggression. Like the *Minotauromachy* etching, *Guernica* is to this extent what Barr termed “a kind of private allegory”—in this instance a psychomachy, a struggle between the forces of life and death, acted out within the artist’s creative psyche. That inner drama is a microcosm of the struggle going on in the world at large.

This is perhaps why Matisse, for example, did not undertake similar subjects: they were too remote from his intrinsic sensibility. Barr points out that Matisse’s *Woman in Blue* (1937) “was finished a few days before Picasso began his *Guernica*. No one of course thought of comparing them. But even Matisse’s major works of the 1930s . . . can scarcely compete with the black and white fury of *Guernica*.”¹⁴⁰ Matisse was exempt from mortal combat on grounds of being incorrigibly life-affirming. Barr intimates as much; after quoting Clement Greenberg’s assertion that “Matisse is the greatest living painter,” Barr goes on to say:

*Greenberg’s enthusiasm may be balanced by a remark made by another young American painter and writer, Robert Motherwell: “Matisse may be the greatest living painter but I prefer Picasso: he deals with love and death.” To which one might reply, on the same level, yes, but Matisse deals with love and life.*¹⁴¹

The Typology of Armageddon

Themes of the potential destructiveness of modern inventions, whether technical or aesthetic, and of the artist as ambiguous Messiah permeate *Guernica* and Barr’s discussions of it. They indicate some reasons why this particular picture plays a central role in a story about modern times that is clearly taking on tragic, even apocalyptic, overtones. Perhaps we can define that sense of looming catastrophe, of art’s implication in the disasters of the mid-twentieth century, by continuing with our specific allegory, which sees the flight of Icarus as a symbol of modernism’s aspirations and failures.

The allegory of flight makes a journey of three stops across Barr’s writings. The first stop is Cubism, with its liberating inventiveness evident, like the Wright brothers’, in its disregard of gravity and its view from the air. The second stop is *Guernica*

and the calamitous turn that ingenuity took in the conflict surrounding it. The third and last stop is in certain works of the postwar period, with their ominous new permutation of the relations among science, politics, and the creative arts, seen especially in another work Barr favored, the sculpture *Spectre of Kitty Hawk* by Theodore Roszak (see fig. 21). In this story, each inspired modern experiment tends to go somehow awry, yielding the most surprising and devastating consequences. In the artistic realm, the advances typified by Picasso evoke the ferocious retaliation of “Degenerate Art.” In the technological realm, the Wrights’ homemade contraption unexpectedly gives rise to the attack aircraft. We can retrace how modern inventions went wrong by following the imaginative movement from *Guernica* to *Kitty Hawk*.

Guernica came to the United States in 1939, to be exhibited for the benefit of the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign, at the Valentine Gallery in New York in May and at the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles in August. It then came to The Museum of Modern Art, in November, to be shown, like the newly acquired *Demoiselles*, in the Picasso retrospective exhibition of that year. It remained for more than forty years, decades during which it became arguably the best-known of all modern paintings. In Barr’s 1946 book on Picasso, *Guernica* is a main structural principle—mentioned first in the introduction, touched upon in the pages on the *Demoiselles*, foreshadowed in the passages about *Minotauremarchy* and *Dream and Lie of Franco* (1937), discussed at length late in the book, and then recalled one last time at the end, in the page on the “postscript” painting *The Charnel House* of 1944–45 (fig. 14).¹⁴² It also became the centerpiece of *What Is Modern Painting?*, where Barr discusses it at greater length than any other work, and under the explicit section-heading “Allegory and Prophecy.” The painting forms the center of the allegory of flight: The airplane, which had embodied aspiration, became in aerial bombardment an instrument of the defeat of modernism’s hopeful visions of the future—the way that totalitarian governments, as Barr had seen in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, crushed the aspirations of advanced artists along with the freedom of everyone. If the warplane is emblematic of technical ingenuity gone desperately wrong, it suggests also a wider indictment of the uses to which modern science could be put. This we see at the end of the Picasso book, when, after referring to *Guernica* in his discussion of *The Charnel House*, Barr relates the latter painting to “Buchenwald, Dachau and Belsen.”¹⁴³ Those appalling names should remind us that not only artists thought of themselves as inventors and scientists—so did the Nazis, whose vicious “scientific” theories of eugenics were used to rationalize their policy of racial experiment.

The biological sciences were perverted by the Nazi regime in tandem with the aeronautical sciences. Indeed, in presenting themselves to the world, the Nazis sometimes made the technical advancement signaled by the airplane function as a code for their experimental ideas of biological and societal “advancement” and “triumph.” We see this in their use of striking aerial imagery in propaganda, even before the war. In *Triumph of the Will*, the divine descent of Hitler’s airplane through the enveloping clouds is a sequence as visually arresting as it is disturbing. There was a specific reason, other than sheer megalomania, why Hitler was portrayed as a god come down to earth: The Nazi regime liked to think of itself as inaugurating the “third age” of sacred history, which is to bring on a cleansing apocalypse, as in the eschatological writings of Joachim of Flora.¹⁴⁴ The Age of the Father and the Age of the Son are followed by the pentecostal



14. Pablo Picasso. *The Charnel House*. 1944–45. Oil and charcoal on canvas, 6' 6¼" x 8' 2½" (199.8 x 250.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn Bequest (by exchange) and Mrs. Marya Bernard Fund in memory of her husband, Dr. Bernard Bernard, and anonymous funds



15. José Clemente Orozco. *Dive Bomber and Tank*. 1940. Fresco, 9 x 18' (275 x 550 cm), on six panels, 9 x 3' (275 x 91.4 cm) each. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Commissioned through the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Age of the Holy Spirit (symbolized by the flight of the dove). In this third age, there is no law: mere terrestrial law is crumbling, while the Redeemed—also called the Perfect—need no laws.¹⁴⁵ A third age of the triumphant Perfect, who are above earthly law, was implicit in the term “Third Reich.”

This imagery of heavenly descent—to be made credible by the hard evidence of aeronautical triumph—is one of the reasons why the Nazis cultivated Charles Lindbergh in his prewar trips to Germany and awarded him a medal. In retrospect, however, Lindbergh’s Nazi contact tarnished his silver wings and made him seem not the demigod he had been to the public, but rather an Icarus fallen to earth. In 1936, Lindbergh visited Berlin, met with Air Marshal Hermann Göring, and inspected aircraft factories. As he later wrote: “I knew theoretically what modern bombs could do to cities,” but “in Nazi Germany, for the first time, war became real to me . . . and I realized how destructive my profession of aviation might become. . . . Now I began to think about the vulnerability of men to aircraft carrying high-explosive bombs.”¹⁴⁶

The kind of aerial bombardment he began to think about has been a powerful image in literature at least since H. G. Wells’s science-fiction story *The War in the Air* (1908), which told of the destruction of New York by aerial bombing.¹⁴⁷ Wells returned to this theme in *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), which envisioned a twenty-five-year global war (imagined as beginning in 1940), punctuated by periodic air raids; the film version, *Things to Come*, released in 1936, would seem unnervingly prophetic only a few years later. When that vision did become a reality, during the London Blitz, T. S. Eliot chose to see German bombers in theologically charged terms:

*The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre —
To be redeemed from fire by fire.*¹⁴⁸

Incendiary bombs spew what Eliot earlier in the poem had called “pentecostal fire,” and the planes’ flaming forward guns “discharge” the “tongues” of sacred fire that hovered above the apostles’ heads at Pentecost. It is apocalyptic imagery displaced into modern technology, purging the world in a second, fiery deluge, a baptism of fire, and giving the details of aerial destruction a sense of divine participation in them. This is comparable in some ways to the strange light-form in *Guernica*, at the top, left of center: is it only a modern electric bulb, juxtaposed to the kerosene lamp of the watcher in the window? Or is it a bomb bursting, with rays of shrapnel? Or is it the eye of God, who sees but remains as remote and aloof as the bull? A great, unnaturally blazing sun (related to the Woman Clothed with the Sun, in Revelations, and the typological culmination of the *fiat lux* from the Creation) has often been a feature of apocalyptic scenes. The nocturnal “sun” in *Guernica* may perhaps be read as one of these.¹⁴⁹ To describe it, Barr composes a metaphor: “And over all shines the radiant eye of day with the electric bulb of night for a pupil.”¹⁵⁰ This doubling of human inventiveness (Edison’s light bulb) with God’s own radiance makes it hard to tell whether the calamity we witness is merely manmade or participates in some way in a larger story—the working out of a divine “plot” that requires us to pass through the refiner’s fire.

Many artists focused on aerial bombardment as the essence of barbaric, modern warfare. For example, during the Blitz, Henry Moore made drawings of people sheltering in the Underground during air raids. In their wanton devastation, such attacks on cities and noncombatants struck at the fabric of civilization. This was seen also in attacks on museums and works of art: not only the fascist bombing of the Prado,¹⁵¹ for instance, but the combat that ruined the frescoes of the Camposanto in Pisa in 1944,¹⁵² or the U.S. air raid that destroyed Mantegna’s great fresco cycle in the Ovetari Chapel in Padua. And in Milan, the refectory housing Leonardo’s *Last Supper* was largely destroyed, though the fresco, behind sandbags, was spared.¹⁵³ Within The Museum of Modern Art, the response of artists to the new circumstances of aerial attack was conveyed through *Guernica*’s continuing exhibition, as well as through the commissioning of José Clemente Orozco to paint, on the Museum’s premises, the multiple-panel *Dive Bomber and Tank* (fig. 15). Barr records that Orozco painted the work “in the Museum before the eyes of the public during the last days of June, 1940 while the world was still reeling from the fall of France,” and calls it a “sinister grey allegory.”¹⁵⁴ Referring to “the shock of the mechanical warfare that had just crushed western Europe,” he says that Orozco “makes us feel the essential horror of modern war—the human being mangled in the crunch and grind of grappling monsters ‘that tear each other in their slime.’”¹⁵⁵ This was the Machine Age with a vengeance.

In 1943, Monroe Wheeler’s “Airways to Peace” exhibition tried to shift the focus somewhat, from the importance of air power for the war then in progress to its importance for the peace to come. Nonetheless, a sharp awareness of the Frankenstein aspect of many modern inventions, their potential for great destructiveness as well as great good, underlay this exhibition. The United States had been brought into the war by the aerial attack on Pearl Harbor. Now, though looking ahead to peacetime, the exhibition still began on an allegorical note, with a large photomontage depicting a surreal combination of an airplane and the Fall of Icarus (fig. 16), while inside, a sequence of photographs in the section “The Progress of Flight” traced an evolution from Icarus (here termed, only half in jest, “the first air



Left:

16. Photomontage in the exhibition "Airways to Peace: An Exhibition of Geography for the Future," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1943. From *The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art* 11, no. 1 (1943), p. 2

Right:

17. Photograph in the exhibition "Power in the Pacific," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1945. From Edward J. Steichen, ed., *Power in the Pacific* (New York: U.S. Camera Publishing Corporation, 1945), p. 137

casualty"),¹⁵⁶ through Leonardo's birdlike "ornithopter," to Lindbergh.

Other wartime exhibitions at the Museum sometimes deciphered the meaning of the hostilities explicitly with the tools of biblical exegesis, seeing the heroic casualties as martyred "types." The exhibition "Power in the Pacific," organized by Edward Steichen in 1945, included a dramatic photograph of a badly wounded Navy flyer being dragged out of his plane's cockpit by fellow servicemen (fig. 17). The spontaneous, momentary poses of the figures look something like a Deposition, and the picture was in fact captioned (in Old English lettering): "—took him down and wrapped his body in clean linens."¹⁵⁷

In these allegories of flight, it is not just the town of Guernica or even the target cities of World War II that are implicated. Commenting on *Guernica* at both the beginning and end of his 1946 Picasso book, Barr speaks of specific grief but also of a larger suffering. At the outset he says:

*Guernica was damned and praised as propaganda. We see now that it was not so much propaganda as prophecy. Like all great prophecy the language of Guernica was allegorical. . . . Now when humanity may be forging its own doom on a scale which dwarfs the puny bombs of Guernica, Picasso might be moved to paint an apocalypse.*¹⁵⁸

On the last page of his text Barr writes:

*Guernica was a modern Laocoon, a Calvary, a doom picture. Its symbols transcend the fate of the little Basque city to prophesy Rotterdam and London, Kharkov and Berlin, Milan and Nagasaki—our dark age.*¹⁵⁹

The last phrases are the telling ones. It took courage to write those words in 1946 and mention in the same breath the fascist atrocity at Guernica and the American atomic bombing of Japan.¹⁶⁰ John Hersey's moving account based on the testimony of survivors, *Hiroshima* (1946), had been published in *The New Yorker* while the Picasso book was being prepared, but even so, this was still a time when the narrator of an American newsreel, in his commentary on aerial footage of Hiroshima, could joke that the city looked "like Ebbets Field after a doubleheader."¹⁶¹ In certain quarters, compassion was in short supply, and taking a critical attitude toward the

morality of the act was not encouraged. Yet some remained disturbed by the possibility that, like the German use of experimental ordnance at Guernica, the American bombing of Japan had been pursued as an experiment, a rare opportunity to test the effects of a powerful new weapon on an actual city under controlled conditions.

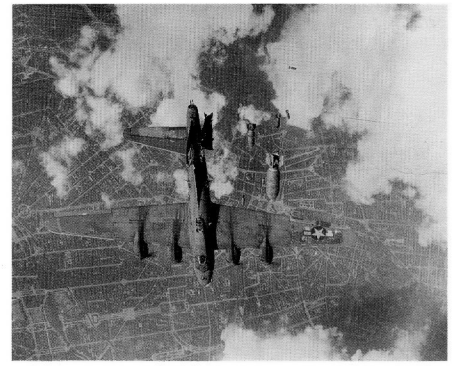
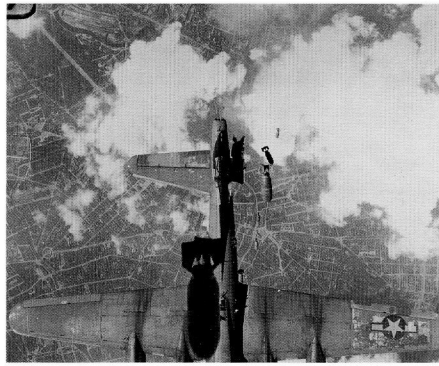
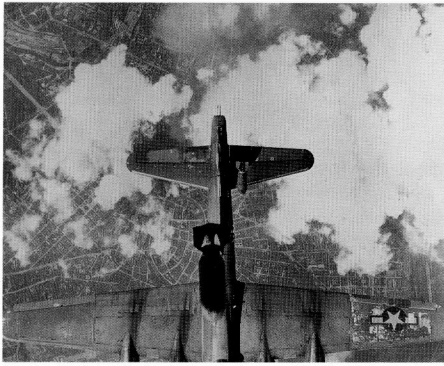
In the postwar edition of *What Is Modern Painting?* Barr expanded his litany of bombed-out cities and again cast Picasso in the role of apocalyptic prophet:

*Picasso employed these modern techniques [in Guernica] not merely to express his mastery of form or some personal and private emotion but to proclaim publicly through his art his horror and fury over the barbarous catastrophe which had destroyed his fellow countrymen in Guernica—and which was soon to blast his fellow men in Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, Coventry, Chungking, Sebastopol, Pearl Harbor and then, in retribution, Hamburg, Milan, Tokyo, Berlin, Dresden, Hiroshima.*¹⁶²

There is a disturbing moral crux in these lines. Of course they condemn Axis aggression, especially against civilians; yet they seem uneasy with the eye-for-an-eye morality of the Allied “retribution” that took a toll on noncombatants every bit as horrible as the acts that provoked it. In either case, the innocent are made to suffer, and in immense numbers. (Even the U.S. Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, had worried about the morality of saturation-bombing Japanese cities; he told President Harry S. Truman that he “did not want to have the United States get the reputation of outdoing Hitler in atrocities.”¹⁶³) By describing Hiroshima as the climax of a series of “barbarous catastrophes” that have befallen humankind, Barr seems to question the moral basis of the assertion that the atomic bombing was “necessary,” or somehow justified, as a “humane” way to end the war quickly, the official argument made at the time. For even if the bombing could be understood as in a strange sense necessary, that would render the U.S. action not guiltless, but rather something disquietingly ambiguous.

Perhaps the word for it is “tragic,” for again, a literary model seems most apposite. A tragedy, in the classical or Elizabethan sense, is a high moral allegory carried to an absolute conclusion; its catastrophic ending can be explicitly a type of the apocalypse, as when characters rhetorically ask at the end of *King Lear*, “Is this the promised end?” / “Or image of that horror?” In the present case, the closest analogue might be the Elizabethan “revenge” tragedy, of which *Hamlet* is the most highly developed example. That drama (like World War I) is set in motion by the murder of a royal person, which the play’s hero must put right by taking revenge. But it is virtually inevitable that in the bloodbath of retribution in the final scene, many of the good and the innocent will be destroyed along with the evil. The demand for primal justice, the moral imperative to take an eye for an eye, sets off a chain reaction of lethal reprisals and retaliations, until the stage is littered with corpses. It is this unexpected link between moral motives and cataclysmic consequences—an honorable intent somehow triggering an avalanche—that makes the fateful ending fit to be called “tragic.” Perhaps this particular sense of fate (Barr spoke of “doom”)—of a predictably deadly outcome for the innocent that one could thus “prophesy”—lies behind the action-and-reaction mechanism by which wars, including so-called just ones, escalate to their disastrous conclusion.

A few years after World War II, during the Korean conflict, Americans would be disturbed when Picasso painted *Massacre in Korea* (1951), a work purportedly showing atrocities committed by U.S. troops (although the robotic soldiers’ nation-

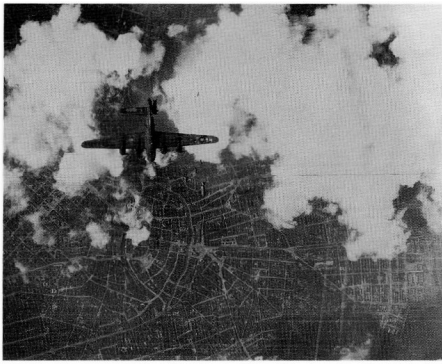


ality is not obvious). And in the sixties, Picasso would again become the instrument of criticism of America's conduct of foreign wars, as *Guernica* was reproduced on many antiwar posters condemning the bombing of Vietnam; the incendiary weapons of *Guernica* were equated with the napalm attacks in Southeast Asia.¹⁶⁴ Some who reproduced the painting may have remembered that at the very beginning of the post-World War II era, Barr had seen *Guernica* as a way to recall his victorious fellow citizens to a sense of their common humanity.

Among physicists, it was not uncommon to speak figuratively about the development of nuclear weapons in a manner comparable to Barr's, and to use literary models, as he did, to suggest what history had come to. The metaphors used by physicists tend to confirm the aptness of Barr's comparison of scientists with modern artists. Most notably, the cautionary type for the modern artist—the ambiguous model for the twentieth century, as Leonardo was for the Renaissance, of the artist-scientist or artist-inventor who seeks beauty but also invents weapons of war—might indeed be one of the “atom scientists” Barr alluded to in *What Is Modern Painting?*, Einstein foremost among them, with his love of the elegant calculations of theoretical physics. Though Einstein was a pacifist, it was nonetheless his 1939 letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that brought to the government's attention the possibility of building weapons of unprecedented power, based on his formulations about energy and matter. Shortly after the war, Einstein was quoted as saying, “Let my hand be burned for writing that letter,” and he put the consequences of scientific research in these terms:

*Penetrating research and keen scientific work have often had tragic implications for mankind, producing, on the one hand, inventions which liberated man from exhausting physical labor, making his life easier and richer; but on the other hand, introducing a grave restlessness into his life, making him a slave to his technological environment, and—most catastrophic of all—creating the means of his own mass destruction. This, indeed, is a tragedy of overwhelming poignancy!*¹⁶⁵

But perhaps an even better example of the artist-inventor would be not the grandfatherly Einstein but the more conflicted and unsettling figure of J. Robert Oppenheimer, who, as head of the Los Alamos laboratory during the wartime



18. Unknown photographer (automatic camera). Accident, B-17 Raid over Berlin. 1944–45. Five gelatin-silver prints, 18 x 22½" (45.7 x 55 cm) each. The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Manhattan Project, in practical terms the true father of the atomic bomb, his masterpiece.¹⁶⁶ The long-awaited Trinity test was an event whose unearthly nature he implicitly recognized in advance in the code name he gave it. In a letter to General Leslie Groves, his military commander on the Project, Oppenheimer later tried to explain his choice of the name Trinity. He gave a poet's reasons:

I did suggest it. . . . Why I chose the name is not clear, but I know what thoughts were in my mind. There is a poem of John Donne, written just before his death, which I know and love. From it a quotation:

. . . As West and East

In all flatt Maps—and I am one—are one,

So death doth touch the Resurrection.

This still does not make Trinity; but in another, better known devotional poem Donne opens, "Batter my heart, three person'd God."¹⁶⁷

Donne's poetry of resurrection is framed within the traditional typology of apocalypse. Recall that when Joachim of Flora in his eschatological writings divided the history of the earth into three periods, with the third—the Age of the Holy Spirit—ushering in the Final Days, he did so on the tripartite model of the Trinity. It was from within such a trinitarian tradition that Kandinsky spoke of our time as an era of "the revelation of the spirit, Father–Son–Spirit" and of "receiving the 'third' revelation, the revelation of the spirit," connecting it to his apocalyptic works, such as *Composition 6* (1913).¹⁶⁸

And so, on the day of the Trinity test, when Oppenheimer witnessed what could be called "the first detonation of a great historic movement," for him the world was shown the image of its final end. When the brilliant fireball illuminated the pre-dawn sky like a new sun and slowly rose in a mushroom cloud, he later recounted,

A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita: Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him he takes on his multi-arm form and says, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."¹⁶⁹

Precisely in his role as a leading scientist of the age, Oppenheimer suddenly saw himself as a personification of death, and a bringer of global cataclysm.¹⁷⁰ A few moments

after the blast, as if in confirmation, his friend Ken Bainbridge came up to him, took his hand, and said, "Oppie, now we're all sons of bitches."

After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Oppenheimer would learn in detail—as Lindbergh had—just how destructive his once otherworldly and idealistic profession could be. There are perhaps no more compelling exemplars of the ambitions and failures of the modern inventor—of symbolic, allegorical disasters akin to those of the fire-bringing Prometheus and the winged Icarus.

Following World War II, the potential for mass destruction that marked the onset of the Nuclear Age continues to be mentioned in Alfred Barr's writings, even in remote or ironic contexts. In what he termed "our dark age," he finds opportunities to remind us of the ever-present possibility that the Cold War could become a nuclear war. Discussing John Marin's 1922 overhead view of New York (fig. 19), with its yellow starburst at the bottom center, Barr says, "*Lower Manhattan* looks like an explosion—ominous simile—but the radiant nucleus . . . was inspired by the gold leaf on the dome of the old World Building."¹⁷¹ About one of Adolph Gottlieb's Burst paintings (fig. 20), he says: "*Blast!* Does the red disc suggest apocalyptic doom glowing over the world's charred ruins? Is this a succinct 1957 version of *Guernica*? Don't jump to conclusions—the disc may be the rising sun."¹⁷² Since the rising sun is the national emblem of Japan, Barr's remark about "charred ruins" takes on strange, but perhaps unintended, overtones.¹⁷³

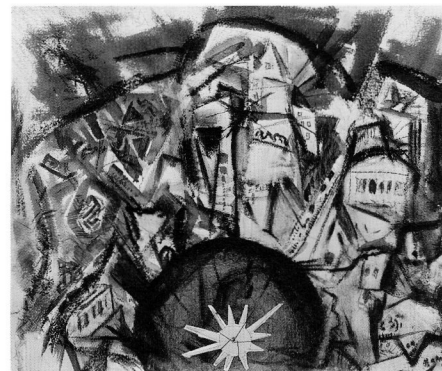
Artists, too, continued to see in the advent of the Nuclear Age a historical turning point as "epoch-making" as those inaugurating the modern age itself. But some of them were not always as soberly compassionate as Barr. During a symposium at The Museum of Modern Art in 1951 titled "What Abstract Art Means to Me," Willem de Kooning struck a visionary note:

*Today, some people think that the light of the atom bomb will change the concept of painting once and for all. The eyes that actually saw the light melted out of sheer ecstasy. For one instant, everybody was the same color. It made angels out of everybody. A truly Christian light, painful but forgiving.*¹⁷⁴

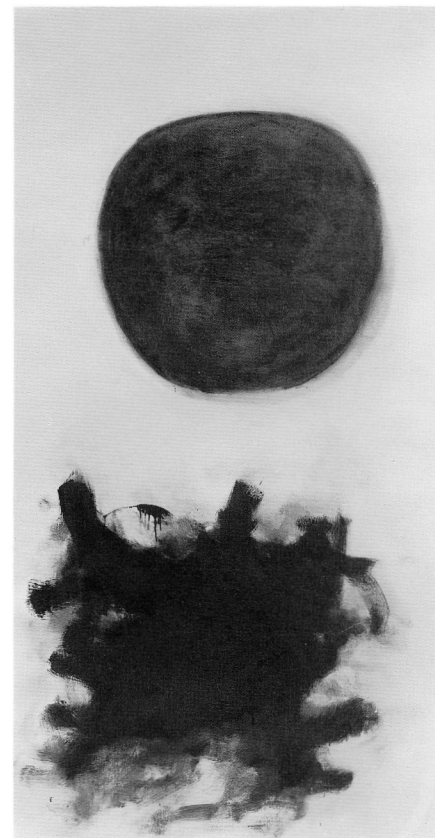
Barr would later quote other things de Kooning said at the symposium—his remark "I do not think of inside or outside, or of art in general, as a situation of comfort"¹⁷⁵ would appear in the next edition of *What Is Modern Painting?*—but not the comment about the bomb, with its uncertain and perhaps insensitive mixture of Messianic themes from T. S. Eliot and William Blake, and its apparent attempt to ascribe to heat radiation the qualities of the Beatific Vision.

In 1954, in *Masters of Modern Art*, Barr would quote at length Theodore Roszak about the welded sculpture *Spectre of Kitty Hawk* (fig. 21), and thus return to the nuclear issue by means of the Wright brothers (Orville having died in 1948) and the myth of Icarus. He quotes Roszak as saying:

In the same way that the forms of a sculpture try to reconcile the ambiguities that are within it and that produce it . . . the subject metaphorically tries to relate at once several things in remote periods of history. The Spectre is the pterodactyl, an early denizen of the air both savage and destructive. Present day aircraft has come to resemble this beast of prey, hence the re-incarnation of the pterodactyl at Kitty Hawk. . . . I think it is inter-



19. John Marin. *Lower Manhattan (Composition Derived from Top of Woolworth)*. 1922. Watercolor on paper, 21 1/4 x 28 1/2" (55.4 x 73.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest



20. Adolph Gottlieb. *Blast, I*. 1957. Oil on canvas, 7' 6" x 45 1/2" (228.7 x 114.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Philip Johnson Fund

*esting and relevant that Orville Wright in the last days of his life mused about his brain-child with apprehension and misgivings. He died a disillusioned man, and the Myth of Icarus completes another circle, tangent to pragmatic America.*¹⁷⁶

In his concern with relating “several things in remote periods of history” to each other, and relating the myth of Icarus to “pragmatic America,” Roszak takes up the allegorical themes and typological configurations that Barr had been pursuing for some time. When he sees the “re-incarnation” of a prehistoric type in the warplane, its antitype, there seems little doubt that his modern “beast of prey” includes the *Enola Gay*, in its flight over Hiroshima.

Three years later, in 1957, Barr and several museum directors were each invited to select and write briefly about a postwar American artwork that they thought would “endure”; it was natural that Barr’s thoughts again turned to Roszak’s *Spectre of Kitty Hawk*, and he wrote the following commentary. His text in “Will This Art Endure?” is a culminating statement of the allegory of flight:

*A million years after the last pterodactyl flapped to the cretaceous earth, forty-three years after the Wrights first flew their contraption over the Carolina sands, one year after the bomb fell on Hiroshima, a sculptor set to work. Thoughts of these disparate events haunted his mind along with the recollection that Daedalus’ ingenuity had led to his own son’s fatal crash and that even Orville Wright, before he died, had suffered some misgivings. Imagining the convulsed forms of the giant flying reptile, he welded and hammered this image in steel, then braised it with bronze and brass. I think it will endure.*¹⁷⁷

Welded metal sculpture had developed in part from the work of Julio González, and Barr in *Masters of Modern Art* quoted with approval González’s statement that “the age of iron began many centuries ago by producing very beautiful objects, unfortunately, for a large part, arms. Today, it provides as well, bridges and railroads. It is time this metal ceased to be a murderer. . . . Today the door is wide open for this material to be, at last, forged and hammered by the peaceful hands of an artist.”¹⁷⁸

We note that the “ingenious” artist-inventor Daedalus, Joyce’s “fabulous artificer,” through misguided creativity becomes implicated in the death of his own son, associated here by Roszak to the deaths of aerial-bombing victims. The idea of excessive inventiveness or ingenuity causing the death of a blood relative, and the notion of metal as a “murderer,” may remind us that in the story of Cain and Abel, the murderous brother’s offspring go on to develop metallurgy (Cain’s name being related to the word for “smith”),¹⁷⁹ the technological advance that later makes possible the forging of iron knives and swords as more efficient instruments of death. In the Old Testament, metalworkers are therefore often associated with destructiveness, with the fiery furnace, in contrast to the helpful constructiveness of, say, carpenters.

The remote past and the Messianic present are conflated in Barr’s specific choices of words. The Fall of Icarus is spoken of not in the language of classical mythology, in which flying too close to the sun can be said to melt the wax of wings, but instead in the language of mechanical technology: It is only pilots, not feather-winged legends, who can “crash.” The unbirdlike clatter of that fall extends the sense of improvised, wired-together construction first suggested by the word “contraption” (with its overtones of the crackpot inventor). Yet the final word, “endure,”

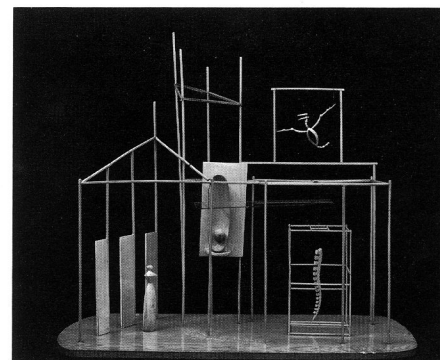


21. Theodore Roszak. *Spectre of Kitty Hawk*. 1946–47. Welded and hammered steel braised with bronze and brass, 40 ½ x 18 x 15" (102.2 x 45.7 x 38.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

refers back in ironic contrast to the opening mention of another flying species—one that has, on the contrary, been dead for aeons. It thus places recent events in a framework of vast geological time, through the extinct flying reptile, the pterodactyl, recalled also from Alberto Giacometti's *The Palace at 4 A.M.* (fig. 22) and from the ichthyosaur in "Kiesler's *Galaxy*." Barr's carefully gauged equivocation, "I *think* it will endure," puts everything in the particular state of historical suspense characteristic of the Cold War and its nuclear standoff; at the time it was, after all, a commonplace that if there ever were an all-out atomic war, the next war after that would be fought with clubs. In a world bombed back to the Stone Age, the *Enola Gay* would give way to the pterodactyl.

As Roszak had himself said in a 1952 symposium at the Museum: "The forms that I find necessary to assert, are meant to be blunt reminders of primordial strife and struggle, reminiscent of those brute forces that not only produced life, but threaten to destroy it"; they expressed his "all-consuming rage against those forces that are blind to the primacy of life-giving values."¹⁸⁰ Roszak was explaining his own abrupt change, around 1945, from clean, pure, Machine Age forms to the harsher, rougher appearance of works like *Kitty Hawk*. "The work that I am now doing constitutes an almost complete reversal of ideas and feelings from my former work. . . . Instead of sharp and confident edges, its lines and shapes are now gnarled and knotted, even hesitant. Instead of serving up slick chromium, its surfaces are scorched and coarsely pitted." He was marking the imaginative changeover from the "smooth" aesthetics of a Machine Age to the "rough" aesthetics of a Nuclear (or Stone) Age, and reflecting on an epoch-making transformation. (It is a change to which Kiesler, too, was reacting, in making not a shiny, ultra-modern stage set like his design for *R.U.R.*, but instead what Barr had described as "the supreme anti-technological gazebo," made of "jetsam.") Not the gleaming futuristic invention, but the pitted refuse it produces, like bomb debris.

A similar sense of a failed "experimental" age, soon to be replaced by another, underlies the allegory of Icarus that Barr had constructed with Roszak's work as a late episode. It was an allegory of the utopian aspirations of the early modernists, who perhaps put too much confidence in notions of social and artistic progress and perfection, and eventually saw some of their ideas fall victim to a totalitarian element, which twisted to its own ends the longing to bring about the millennium and make a "perfect" world. The discussion of "perfection" that closes *What Is Modern Painting?* is therefore restrained, chastened by the knowledge of what had actually been brought to pass during the middle years of the century by a ruthless pursuit of so-called progress and perfection in the social, political, and technological realms. It carefully keeps its distance from thinking that tries to achieve what Barr calls the "too' perfect." The hubris of some inventive modern minds (even those of humane disposition), in believing they had the power to bring about a more perfect world, had been shown to be akin to the hubris of the tragic hero, who tries to achieve good but ultimately brings about terrible suffering as well. In its essentials, this is the vision of Shakespearean tragedy that A. C. Bradley had offered at the beginning of the century: "We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, along with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture. And this fact or appearance is tragedy."¹⁸¹



22. Alberto Giacometti. *The Palace at 4 A.M.* 1932–33. Construction in wood, glass, wire, and string, 25 x 28 1/4 x 15 3/4" (63.5 x 71.8 x 40 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

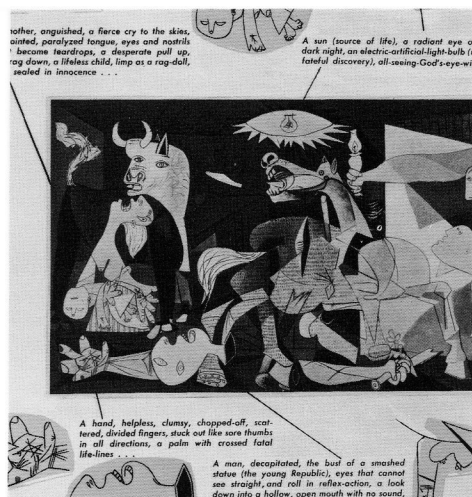
Postscript

The 1960s would write a postscript to this allegorical tale. In that decade, the Nuclear Age would touch the life of the Museum in a very personal way. At several critical junctures in its history, the institution's aspirations have seemed to be plagued by coincidental disaster in the larger world. In October 1929, ten days before the Museum opened its doors to the public, the stock market crashed. In 1939, the Museum unveiled its new, permanent building—and World War II broke out while the inaugural exhibition was still on the walls. In the autumn of 1962, the Museum was nearing the end of the most ambitious fund-raising drive in its history, to finance its largest expansion to date and create space to show much more of the collection; then, as Barr chillingly records in his "Chronicle of the Collection," the Cuban missile crisis erupted:

OCTOBER 22: *The Cuban crisis broke; two days later twenty-eight of the Museum's best paintings were sent to prepared vaults over a hundred miles from the city. Soon seventy-four others, almost as valuable, followed—and then still more, including drawings and prints. Other works were substituted on the gallery walls. The crisis was terrible but short.*¹⁸²

As the nation feared a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union, there was a strange irony at work: Having given safe haven to *Guernica* and honored it as a "prophecy" of the Nuclear Age, the Museum would now see that prophecy nearly fulfilled, and be forced to send its own collection to fallout shelters.

There were, however, other ways of looking at these ominous events. By the sixties, the Nuclear Age had been with us a long time, long enough for apocalyptic anxiety to become available as an object of parody. The tragic model gave way to the comic. This was the decade that saw *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964).¹⁸³ It saw a Manhattan Project alumnus, Edward Teller—the leading proponent of the newer, more powerful hydrogen bomb—in the grotesquely hilarious caricature created by Peter Sellers in the movie's title role. His comic-book performance satirizes another noted scientist, too; his accent and origins recall the German-born rocket scientist Dr. Wernher von Braun. In the burgeoning Pop culture of the late fifties and early sixties, this was what antiwar art could look like. And at the same time, a vast, serious, high modernist allegory on the scale of *Guernica* could increasingly seem to some viewers not only ponderous and overdone but also, for those very reasons, like a gigantic cartoon. Although Henry Moore said in 1961 that *Guernica* "was like a cartoon, just laid in in black and grey,"¹⁸⁴ apparently he meant it was like the cartoon, or full-size preliminary drawing, for a fresco. Others, though, meant cartoon in the other sense. In a 1967 panel discussion, Ad Reinhardt, speaking of the mother and dead child at the left of the painting, said to Leon Golub, "They're like cartoons. . . . They have no effectiveness at all."¹⁸⁵ Reinhardt had in fact turned *Guernica* into a literal comic strip twenty years earlier, when he made his cartoon-collage *How to Look at a Mural* (see figs. 23, 24), published in the magazine *P.M.* in January 1947; there he had pointed out that "the mural is an allegory," then proceeded to label and identify somewhat anticlaim each element, such as "a sun (source of life), a radiant eye of the dark night, an electric-artificial-light-bulb (man's fateful discovery), all-seeing-



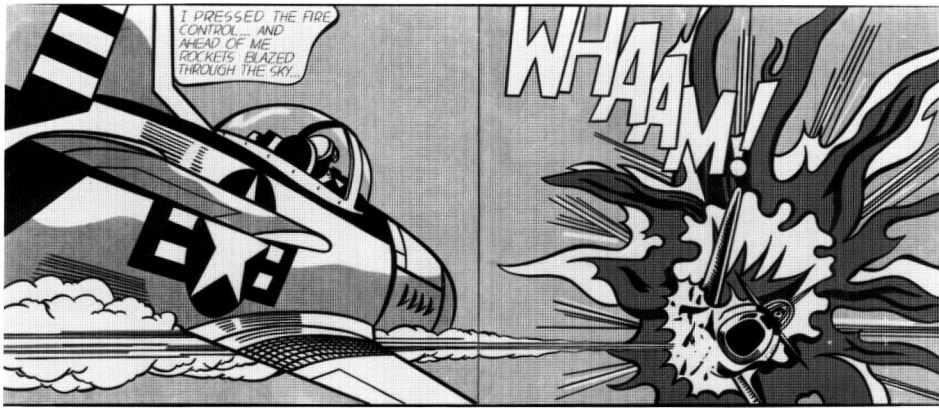
Left:
23. Ad Reinhardt. *How to Look at a Mural*. Cartoon collage, published in *P.M.*, January 5, 1947

Right:
24. Ad Reinhardt. *How to Look at a Mural* (detail)

God's-eye-witness." In 1971, Darby Bannard would assert that because of Picasso's problems with working on the large scale of *Guernica*, "the unfortunate effect is that of vulgar cartooning. The bright lamp at the top of the picture, for example, gives off a jagged body of light just like a 'kaboom' in a war comic."¹⁸⁶ By this time, Thomas B. Hess wrote in the same year, "*Guernica* was sneered at."¹⁸⁷ And Peter Saul felt free to parody it since, he said, it was already "Pop Art, before Pop."¹⁸⁸ What Barr had called its "special weapons of modern art" seemed as obsolete as the biplane.

When Barr revised and expanded *What Is Modern Painting?* again, in the sixties, he took into account the changed sensibility of the times. He had long before said that of Picasso's "three extraordinary allegories" (*Minotauromachy*, *Dream and Lie of Franco*, and *Guernica*), the second was a "nightmare comic strip."¹⁸⁹ In the sixties, he added a section on Pop and Op art that included a work by Roy Lichtenstein. Noting its war subject and commenting that "*Flatten—Sand Fleas!*" was originally an exclamatory 'comic' book incident of U.S. Marines landing on a beach," he invited the reader to make a surprising comparison: "In character and quality of violence compare it with . . . Picasso's *Guernica*."¹⁹⁰ But to what end he did not say. Perhaps in encouraging the comparison he was to some extent overturning what had been a long-standing bias in conservative taste against a specific kind of art. When U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld spoke at the Museum's twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition, in 1954, the diplomat had observed with relief that the works in the collection were not "modern" in a particular pejorative sense of the word: "Nor is [the art] modern in the sense of the comic strips."¹⁹¹ Yet not everyone saw comics as without interest, and not everyone thought they were completely incompatible with works of grandiosity elsewhere in the Museum, even *Guernica*.

In a freewheeling new era, it was rarely possible to speak of apocalyptic themes in the same elevated language of allegory and prophecy that Barr had been using since the forties. Even when addressing similar subjects, young poets studiously avoided Barr's quasi-religious tone. Frank O'Hara wrote of Reuben Nakian's sculpture, "When tragedy is implied, as in . . . *Hiroshima*, it is the tragedy of physical, not metaphysical death," and he praised the work for "natural reticence."¹⁹² Lawrence



25. Roy Lichtenstein. "Whaam!" 1963. Magna on canvas; two panels, overall 68" x 13' 4" (172.7 x 406.4 cm). The Trustees of The Tate Gallery, London

Ferlinghetti went so far as to make light of *Guernica* in his "Special Clearance Sale of Famous Masterpieces."¹⁹³ The tone altered for artists as well. To pick an absurd example of how drastically attitudes changed in postwar America: Already in 1957, when Larry Rivers appeared on the TV quiz show "The \$64,000 Challenge," following weeks of intense study, he entered the isolation booth only to be asked, after a drumroll, "Mr. Rivers, for four thousand dollars, what's the name of the Spanish painter who painted *Guernica* and whose last name begins with the letter P?"¹⁹⁴ This was not to be an age of heroic prophecy.

In this new time of the increasingly Pop, Barr therefore had to recast his old themes into different terms if he was, for instance, to talk about Lichtenstein. He also recast his allegorical rhetoric in order to talk about a Neo-Dada kinetic work of Jean Tinguely, in 1960 (fig. 26), a piece made of old motors, washing-machine parts, baby-carriage wheels, metal tubing, and various other bits of detritus, and designed, when activated, to demolish itself. Indeed, in his remarks delivered in the Museum's Sculpture Garden before *Homage to New York* was set in motion, Barr used Tinguely's self-destroying contraption as an opportunity to reconsider, even parody, his own apocalyptic metaphors. For openers, the angst evident in some Abstract Expressionism (by then well into its second generation) is deflated into amiable absurdity, as Barr points out that the artist "has devised machines . . . which at the drop of a coin scribble a moustache on the automatist Muse of Abstract Expressionism." Belying the title Tinguely gives one of these machines, with that scribbling gesture his works do not pay "homage" to New York, but instead mock the New York School. Then Barr looks on with eager anticipation as—through an animated mechanical device that personifies it—the Machine Age is at last to be overthrown (in a garden, appropriately enough)¹⁹⁵ and reduced to a pile of spare parts. *Homage to New York* is:

. . . (wipe that smile off your face) an apocalyptic far-out breakthrough which, it is said, clinks and clanks, tingles and tangles, whirrs and buzzes, grinds and creaks, whistles and pops itself into a katabolic *Götterdämmerung* of junk and scrap.¹⁹⁶

A far-out breakthrough that parodies those in art as well as science, it is, in a sense they had not anticipated, a "self-consuming artifact" (a model later proposed for

what would come to be understood as postmodernist critical analysis).¹⁹⁷ The willful disorder of the collapsed “junk and scrap” here, like the “jetsam” of “Kiesler’s *Galaxy*,” comes almost as a relief to certain sorts of neat, orderly, but now exhausted modernists, “refugees from the compass and the ruler.” And like *Galaxy*, this is a “tomb of know-how.” Barr therefore fittingly calls on the great tinkerers of the past and present—his confraternity of artist-scientists and artist-inventors—to witness this final experiment:

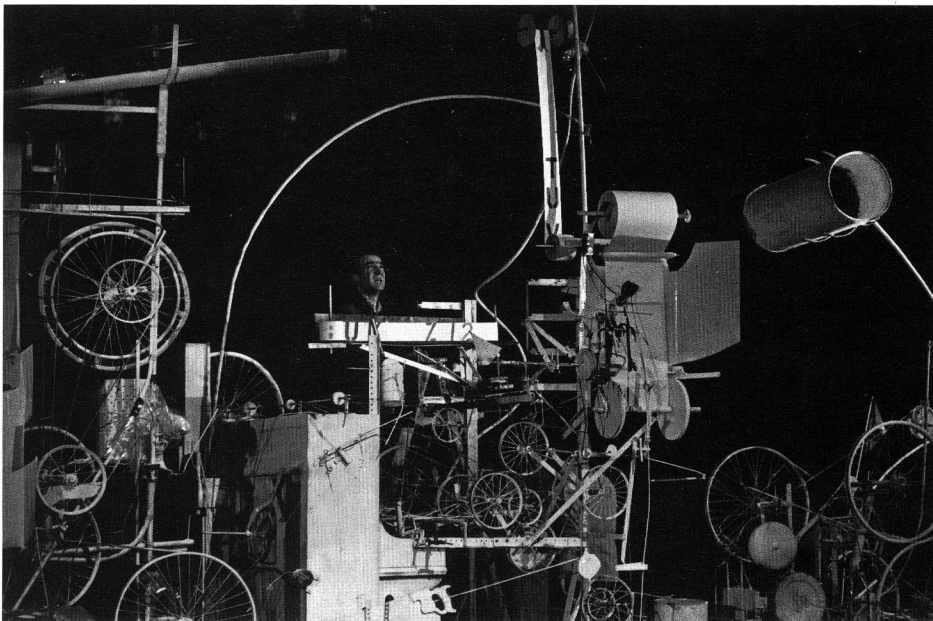
Oh great brotherhood of Jules Verne, Paul Klee, Sandy Calder, Leonardo da Vinci, Rube Goldberg, Marcel Duchamp, Piranesi, Man Ray, Picabia, Filippo Morghen, are you with it?

TINGVELY EX MACHINA

MORITVRI TE SALVTAMVS

Hilariously, he sends the sputtering machine off to its ritual death with the words proclaimed by Roman gladiators to the Emperor at the Colosseum: “We who are about to die salute you.”

It is the fate of literary apocalypses, being only figures of speech, however illuminating, to find themselves disconfirmed by continuing events; the world will not stop, and it outruns our images of its end. In Barr’s high-flown rhetoric of the forties, the allegory of the modern inventor seemed headed for a tragic ending, with no *deus ex machina* in sight. Abstract Expressionism, too, in its grave lyricism and its “tragic and timeless” themes,¹⁹⁸ could partake of that lofty, pessimistic view. Yet Barr came somewhat belatedly to Abstract Expressionism, and by the time he wrote about these crisis-ridden artists in the introduction to *The New American Painting* of 1959, perhaps he was weary of such concerns and ready to move on to other developments; a year earlier, he had supported the acquisition of four works by Jasper Johns. As



26. Jean Tinguely. *Homage to New York*, in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, March 17, 1960

Barr had pointed out, "After the war, painters in general turned away from destruction and horror,"¹⁹⁹ and ultimately so did he, turning away not only from the war itself, but from the Messianic view of history that it had helped foster.²⁰⁰ The events he wrote about in the late forties continued to affect some of his central metaphors for more than a decade, notably those of "Will This Art Endure?" in 1957, but the residual sense of crisis eventually did pass, in his writing no less than in the national mood.²⁰¹ By 1962, Frank O'Hara could view the change of mood flippantly, saying that "abstract expressionism is the art of serious men," while "in a capitalist country fun is everything."²⁰² Perhaps what was needed to endure the day-to-day life of a new era was not only a grand sense of the tragic and timeless, but also the thing that some Abstract Expressionists so conspicuously lacked: a self-deprecatory sense of humor. In daring to write a mock rhapsody on *Homage to New York*, a work destined to "pop" itself into oblivion, Barr at the beginning of his fourth decade at the Museum remained open-eyed, and young enough to poke a little fun at his own apocalyptic ruminations.

Notes

1. The following books by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., all published by The Museum of Modern Art, will be cited in abbreviated form: *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936, rpt. 1966, 1974, 1986); *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* (1939, rev. c. 1939–40, 1941); *Italian Masters* (1940); *What Is Modern Painting?* (1943; rev. c. 1952, 1956, 1959, 1963, 1966; rpt. 1968, 1975, 1980, 1988); *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (1946, rpt. 1966, 1974); *Matisse: His Art and His Public* (1951, rpt. 1966, 1974); *Masters of Modern Art*, ed. (1954); and *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967* (1977), which includes his “Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture.” Whenever possible, briefer writings, such as catalogue prefaces and magazine articles, will be cited from *Defining Modern Art: Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, ed. Irving Sandler and Amy Newman (New York: Abrams, 1986), instead of from their scattered original sources. Writings not included there will be cited in full.

A short list of sources for the study of Alfred Barr's life and work would begin with Margaret Scolari Barr, “Our Campaigns: Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and The Museum of Modern Art—A Biographical Chronicle of the Years 1930–1944,” and Rona Roob, “Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Chronicle of the Years 1902–1929,” both in the special issue titled “Alfred Barr at MoMA” of *The New Criterion*, Summer 1977, with an Introduction by Hilton Kramer. The Chronology by Jane Fluegel in *Defining Modern Art* should also be consulted. The only biography of Barr, by Alice Goldfarb Marquis (*Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Missionary for the Modern* [Chicago and New York: Contemporary Books, 1989]), is inadequate and unreliable; its shortcomings are reviewed in Brian Wallis, “The Man Who Made the Modern Modern,” *Art in America* 77 (December 1989), pp. 39–43; and Helen M. Franc, “Alfred Barr at the Modern,” *Art Journal* 49 (Fall 1990), pp. 325–29. More useful are A. Conger Goodyear, *The Museum of Modern Art: The First Ten Years* (New York: [privately printed], 1943); Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1973); *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Memorial Tribute* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1981); Sam Hunter, Introduction to *The Museum of Modern Art, New York: The History and the Collection* (New York: Abrams in association with The Museum of Modern Art, 1984); and Sybil Kantor, “Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and the Establishment of the Culture of Modernism in America” (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1993).

Specifically on Barr's writings, see Irving Sandler, Introduction to *Defining Modern Art*, and John Elderfield, “Matisse: Myth vs. Man,” *Art in America* 75 (April 1987), pp. 13–21. Meyer Schapiro's brief remarks in *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Memorial Tribute* are also of considerable interest. There are illuminating discussions of Barr's *Cubism and*

Abstract Art in Robert Rosenblum's Foreword to the Belknap Press reprint of that volume (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “From Faktura to Factography,” in Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp, and Joan Copjec, eds., *October: The First Decade, 1976–1986* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1987); Susan Noyes Platt, “Modernism, Formalism, and Politics: The ‘Cubism and Abstract Art’ Exhibition of 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art,” *Art Journal* 47 (Winter 1988); and W. J. T. Mitchell, “*Ut Pictura Theoria*: Abstract Painting and Language,” in his *Picture Theory* (New York and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 230–39. “Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Bibliography of Published Writings,” compiled by Rona Roob and printed in *Defining Modern Art*, is indispensable; copies of the works it lists are available in the Museum Archives.

2. Elderfield, “Matisse: Myth vs. Man,” p. 13.
3. Rosenblum, Foreword to *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 3.
4. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, pp. 35, 47, 48.
5. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 93. Barr is apparently referring to the fact that a flatfish such as the sole begins life with one eye on each side of its face's ridge, and it swims in a vertical position; as the fish matures, it begins to swim in a horizontal position, and the eye on what has become the lower side migrates across the ridge, joining the other eye on the upper side.
6. “A Brief Guide to the Exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” (1936), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 93.
7. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 142.
8. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 89.
9. “If they be two, they are two so / As stiff twin compasses are two; / Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show / To move, but doth, if th'other do. . . / Such wilt thou be to me, who must / Like th'other foot, obliquely run; / Thy firmness draws my circle just, / And makes me end where I begin.” John Donne, “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” in J. William Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson, eds., *Poetry of the English Renaissance, 1509–1660* (New York: Crofts, 1929, rpt. 1947), pp. 474–75. Eliot's influential essay “The Metaphysical Poets,” with its talk of the conceit as an antidote to “a dissociation of sensibility,” and its reference to these same lines in Donne, was published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in October 1921, while Barr was a student at Princeton. (The essay is reprinted in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975], pp. 59–67.) Later discussions of how the Metaphysical poets used this kind of figure include K. K. Ruthven, *The Conceit* (London: Methuen, 1969).
10. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 74.
11. “The New American Painting, as Shown in Eight European Countries, 1958–1959: Introduction” (1959), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 231. Barr is of course referring to the well-known passage from Donne's *Devotions*: “No man is an island, entire of

itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee” (Donne, Meditation XVII, in *Devotions, upon Emergent Occasions—Together with “Death's Duel”* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959, rpt. 1969], pp. 108–09).

12. Wallace Stevens, “The Relations Between Poetry and Painting” (lecture delivered at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 15, 1951), in Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 1951; rpt. New York: Random House, n.d.), p. 165.
13. *Poetics*, 1458b; *Rhetoric*, 1410b. On figurative meaning, see, for example, Carl R. Hausman, “Figurative Language in Art History,” in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, eds., *The Language of Art History* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). On related aspects of writing about art, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986); David Carrier, *Artwriting* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); and Carrier, *Principles of Art History Writing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991). A literary approach is taken in Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); and James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
14. Excerpted in “Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture,” in *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967*, p. 622. The italics are Barr's.
15. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 19.
16. Robert Storr, “No Joy in Mudville,” in Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, eds., *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low* (New York: Abrams in association with The Museum of Modern Art, 1990), p. 170.
17. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 86. Although one might want to go less far in associating Picasso's work of that time with geometric abstraction, Barr does nonetheless take the trouble to point out that Picasso did “play with ruler and compass” in a notebook of these years (*Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 67).
18. “Kiesler's *Galaxy*,” *Harper's Bazaar*, no. 2885 (April 1952), pp. 142–43. *Galaxy* originally formed part of Kiesler's stage set for Darius Milhaud and Jean Cocteau's *Le Pauvre Matelot*, performed at the Juilliard School of Music, New York, in 1948.
19. Barr cites Le Corbusier's “slogan”—“the house as a *machine à habiter*”—in his preface to Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* (New York: Norton, 1932), reprinted as *The International Style* (New York: Norton, 1966), pp. 13–14; and in his Foreword to *Machine Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1934), n.p.

20. He added: ". . . though probably with no very fervid moral intent" (*Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 57).
21. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
22. Erwin Panofsky, "Introductory," in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 6.
23. *Modern Painters*, vol. 3 (1856); in *The Works of John Ruskin (Library Edition)*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–12), vol. 5, p. 205. The poem is Coleridge's "Christabel," ll. 49–50.
24. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 156.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
26. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 11.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
28. Cézanne's remark is quoted in *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 30.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
30. "Statement by Picasso: 1935," in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 273.
31. *Philebus*, 51c; quoted in *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 14. Not only these mechanically drawn shapes were beautiful; so were the devices for making them: Barr and Johnson included a number of mechanical-drawing instruments in *Machine Art* (cat. nos. 344–348).
32. Letter to the editor, *The New Republic* (1933), quoted in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 25.
33. *What Is Modern Painting?* p. 48. Similarly, in his eulogy at the memorial service for Mondrian in 1944, Barr had referred to the artist's single-minded pursuit of artistic purity as making him a painter of "quiet and complete fanaticism" (quoted in "Memorial Service," *Knickerbocker Weekly*, February 14, 1944, p. 23).
34. Meyer Schapiro, "On the Humanity of Abstract Painting" (1960), in his *Modern Art: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries—Selected Essays* (New York: Braziller, 1979), p. 230.
35. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 49.
36. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 73.
37. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 20.
38. Foreword to *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (1932), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 79.
39. "Statement by Picasso: 1935," in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 272.
40. "Research and Publication in Art Museums" (1946), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 209.
41. *Italian Masters*, p. 7.
42. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 166.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
44. These efforts are described in Margaret Scolari Barr, "Our Campaigns," p. 60; and in Varian Fry, *Surrender on Demand* (New York: Random House, 1945).
45. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 109.
46. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 18.
47. Foreword to *Machine Art*, n.p.
48. Philip Johnson criticized Morris along these lines in his text for *Machine Art*, and the "Short List of Books" in *Machine Art* includes not only volumes on the Bauhaus and Van de Velde and the like, but also Lewis F. Day's *Of William Morris and His Work* (1899).
49. See *Defining Modern Art*, p. 8.
50. Foreword to *Machine Art*, n.p.
51. *Masters of Modern Art*, pp. 84–85. Similarly, Hart Crane wrote that "unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e., acclimatize it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles . . . [it] has failed of its full contemporary function" (Crane, "Modern Poetry," in *Collected Poems of Hart Crane*, ed. Waldo Frank [New York: Liveright, 1946], p. 177).
52. Foreword to *Machine Art*, n.p. It can be noted that James Whale's film *Frankenstein*, with Boris Karloff, had been released in 1931, three years before *Machine Art*. On relations between modern art and horror films, see David J. Skal, *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror* (New York and London: Norton, 1993), especially the chapters "You Will Become Caligari: Monsters, Mountebanks, and Modernism" and "1931: The American Abyss"; the latter touches on predecessors of the visual style of the *Frankenstein* film in, for example, Bauhaus design.
53. See, for example, "Nationalism in German Films" (1934), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 161.
54. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 54. The phrase "which runs like a machine gun" is restored when Marinetti's statement, from the "Manifesto of Futurism," reappears, in Barr's contribution to *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* (reprinted in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 179) and in *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 100.
55. Arthur Drexler, "Architecture and Design," in *The Museum of Modern Art, New York: The History and the Collection*, p. 388.
56. Henry Adams, "The Dynamo and the Virgin (1900)," in *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (1918; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p. 380. Barr's reading of Adams's *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* is noted in Roob, "Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Chronicle of the Years 1902–1929," p. 2.
57. Quoted in Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 198. Marx discusses Adams's dichotomy of the Dynamo and the Virgin at some length, pp. 345–50.
58. Foreword to *Machine Art*, n.p.
59. Quoted in Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, p. 350.
60. Meyer Schapiro, *Van Gogh* (New York: Abrams, 1950, rpt. 1983), p. 45. For a related discussion of Franz Marc's reference to the Woman Clothed with the Sun, in his cataclysmic *Tyrol* (1914), see Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 145.
- The central figure can also reappear at the third stage, as with the Second Coming of Christ, instead of being replaced by a new figure. It is the third occurrence of the typological configuration that is important.
61. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984; rpt. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 313. Brooks is here discussing "endgames" in fiction such as Samuel Beckett's, and is concerned with those final moments of revelation that are postponed indefinitely and in fact never come.
62. See M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971).
63. Reprinted in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, p. 177.
64. In "Boston Is Modern Art Pauper" (1926), in *Defining Modern Art*, pp. 52–53, Barr especially praises facsimiles and photographs, of paintings, drawings, and watercolors, published in *The Dial* in 1923, the same year as Eliot's review.
65. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940), in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 263. On this aspect of Benjamin's thought, see the sections headed "Messianic Time Versus Historical Time" and "Allegory" in Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (2nd ed., Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994).
66. "Matisse, Picasso, and the Crisis of 1907" (1951), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 196.
67. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 71 ff., 117. For a somewhat different approach, see the section "The Typology of Artists' Lives" in George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 86–92.
68. "Plastic Values" (review of Albert C. Barnes, *The Art in Painting*), *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 24, 1926, p. 948.
69. See Sandler, Introduction to *Defining Modern Art*, p. 12.
70. Edmund Wilson, "T. S. Eliot," in his *Axel's Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870–1930* (New York: Scribners, 1931, rpt. 1969), p. 123.
71. *Modern Painters*, vol. 1 (1843); in *The Works of John Ruskin (Library Edition)*, vol. 3, p. 3.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 254. In quoting this passage, George P. Landow notes that some contemporaneous reviewers found it blasphemous, and Ruskin deleted it from the third edition of *Modern Painters*; see Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 434. Landow's chapter "Ruskin and Allegory" is of great interest.
73. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, pp. 11, 49, 51, 53, 81, 115.
74. "Matisse, Picasso, and the Crisis of 1907" (1951), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 198. The next year, in his essay "The American Action Painters," Harold Rosenberg would write that "based on the phenomenon of conversion the new movement is, with the majority of painters, essentially a religious move-

ment. In every case, however, the conversion has been experienced in secular terms. The result has been the creation of private myths" (Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51 [December 1952]; reprinted in David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro, eds., *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990], p. 80).

75. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 63.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

77. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, pp. 17, 73.

78. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 76.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Elsewhere, a conflict among Constructivist factions will be a "schism" (*Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 17), and later, Russian artists will witness "recurrent heresies and pathetic repentances" ("Is Modern Art Communist?" [1952], in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 217). André Breton of course becomes known as "the surrealist pontiff," like a schismatic pope in residence at Avignon (*Masters of Modern Art*, p. 141). Ultimately, Barr fears that a movement such as Abstract Expressionism may harden into "an orthodoxy of abstraction" ("The New American Painting, as Shown in Eight European Countries, 1958-1959" [1959], in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 234), or even a "dogma" (*Masters of Modern Art*, p. 174).

80. "Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture," in *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929-1967*, p. 626.

81. "Matisse, Picasso, and the Crisis of 1907" (1951), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 201.

82. Quoted in *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 78.

83. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 5.

84. Among recent general studies, see Giancarlo Maiorino, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Daedalian Mythmaker* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), especially the chapters "The Art of War and the Inventor's Rhetoric of Power" and "The Daedalian Artificer: Myth, Technology, and Doom"; and A. Richard Turner, *Inventing Leonardo* (New York: Knopf, 1993), especially the chapter "Leonardo the Harbinger of Modernity."

85. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 27.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

87. Quoted in *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 126.

88. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 28; *Art in Our Time* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1939), cat. no. 157; *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 68. Picasso himself is said to have scoffed at the notion of artistic "research"; see the statement in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, pp. 270-71.

89. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 31.

90. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 53. His other comments on *Piano Lesson* are in *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 174.

91. Simon Blackburn, "What If . . . ? The Uses and Abuses of Thought Experiments" (review of Roy A. Sorenson, *Thought Experiments*), *Times Literary Supplement*, June 18, 1993, p. 10.

92. See the comprehensive study by Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908-1918* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

93. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 124. One might also mention here Gustav Klucis's design for the cover of *The Daily Life of Airplane Pilots* (1928).

94. Kazimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, trans. Howard Dearstyne (Munich: Bauhaus Books, 1927), p. 96.

95. Brancusi, quoted in Sidney Geist, *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture* (New York: Hacker, 1983), p. 38.

96. William Carlos Williams, "Brancusi" (1955), in *A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978), p. 249.

97. See Carolyn Lanchner, William Rubin, et al., *Henri Rousseau* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), pp. 194-99, where the three paintings mentioned here are reproduced with commentary on Rousseau's interest in aviation.

98. *Homage to Blériot* is in the Kunstmuseum Basel; *Astra (The Cardiff Team)* is in the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. For a brief discussion of the airplane imagery of *Astra (The Cardiff Team)*, under the rubric of advertising, see Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, *High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990), pp. 247-48.

99. Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture* (1923); English ed., *Towards a New Architecture* (London: John Rodker, 1931; rpt. New York: Dover, 1986), pp. 109, 127. Another passage in the chapter titled "Airplanes" (pp. 105-27) suggests the origin of Le Corbusier's famous phrase about the house as a "machine for living," in a move from the organic to the inventively mechanical: "The lesson of the airplane is not primarily in the forms it has created, and above all we must learn to see an airplane not as a bird or a dragon-fly, but as a machine for flying; the lesson of the airplane lies in the logic which governed the enunciation of the problem. . . . The problem of the house has not yet been stated" (p. 110). Just as the "problem" of designing an airplane was how to conceive it not as a bird but as a "machine for flying," so the problem of designing a house was how to conceive it not as a nest but as a "machine for living."

100. Most of Gorky's statement about the airport murals is reprinted in Ethel K. Schwabacher, *Arshile Gorky: Memorial Exhibition* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1951), pp. 24-26; and in Schwabacher, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Published for the Whitney Museum of American Art by the Macmillan Company, 1957), pp. 70, 73-74. It is reprinted in full in Ruth Bowman, *Murals Without Walls: Arshile Gorky's Aviation Murals Rediscovered* (Newark, N.J.: The Newark Museum, 1978), pp. 13, 15-16, which also reprints Frederick Kiesler's 1936 *Art Front* article on the murals (pp. 30-33).

101. Letter to Mrs. Audrey McMahon, December 3, 1935; printed in Schwabacher, *Arshile Gorky* (1957), p. 70. In a subsequent letter, to Olive M. Layford of the Federal Art Project, October 14, 1936, Barr writes: "I think they [Gorky's murals] would form magnificent decorations of great appropriateness to an airport, for an airport should be one of the

most modern architectural projects. Any conservative or banal or reactionary decorations would be extremely inappropriate. It is dangerous to ride in an old-fashioned airplane. It is inappropriate to wait and buy one's ticket surrounded by old-fashioned murals" (*ibid.*, pp. 76-78).

102. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 242.

103. See William Rubin, *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1989), pp. 32-34. See also Kirk Varnedoe, "Overview: The Flight of the Mind," in his *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Abrams, 1990), pp. 270-73.

104. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 74. The two figures in the painting are generally considered to be the artist and his brother Henri, who was the director of the Nieuport airplane factory. See the catalogue entry in *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929-1967*, p. 557.

105. See the discussion of the overhead view in Varnedoe, "Overview: The Flight of the Mind." See also the discussion of La Fresnaye's *The Conquest of the Air* in Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art* (1960; rev. New York: Abrams, 1976), p. 180.

106. Gertrude Stein, *Picasso* (London: Batesford, 1938; rpt. New York: Dover, 1984), p. 50.

107. Catalogue, including transcription of the wall-panel texts by Wendell L. Willkie, in *The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art* 11, no. 1 (1943). The passages just cited are on pp. 4-6. The exhibition took place July 2-October 31, 1943. President Roosevelt was among the lenders.

108. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 215. In *Forty Years of His Art*, the portrait appeared on p. 187 (cat. no. 349).

109. Late in the novel, as Richard Ellmann tells us, Stephen "throws off sonhood and becomes his own father. . . . At this stage he remembers his dream of having flown . . . and it seems that he is now Daedalus *père*, successful airman, rather than Icarus *filii*" (Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* [London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972], p. 88). Joyce's flight pattern would become highly significant to a young World War II pilot, Joseph Beuys, who, having been shot down over the Crimea in 1943 and fallen to earth as a *Luftwaffe* Icarus, would later undertake an elaborate *Ulysses* project; see Bernice Rose, "Joseph Beuys and the Language of Drawing," in Ann Temkin and Bernice Rose, *Thinking Is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993), pp. 95-96.

Other contemporary reminders of the myth of Icarus for Barr during the period under discussion would include the *Icarus* plate (designed during the war) that comes at the end of the "Aeroplane" section of Matisse's *Jazz* (1947), and which has sometimes been interpreted as a parachuting airman falling amid bursts of anti-aircraft fire. And earlier there is W. H. Auden's well-known poem "Musée des Beaux-Arts" (1938).

On various allegories of flight depicted in

Western art, based not only on Icarus but on such Christian subjects as the Fall of the Rebel Angels and on the failed flight of Simon Magus, see Peter Greenaway, *Flying Out of This World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See also several books by the Joyce scholar Clive Hart, including *The Prehistory of Flight* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1985) and *Images of Flight* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988).

110. See Varnedoe, "Overview: The Flight of the Mind," pp. 270–71; *The Scallop Shell* ("Notre Avenir est dans l'air") is reproduced on p. 272.

111. In his statement to Christian Zervos, reprinted in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 272.

112. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 57.

113. Paul Haesaerts's phrase is quoted in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 206.

114. William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," from *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

115. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 56.

116. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 29.

117. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 29.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

119. Gore Vidal, interview in *Amelia Earhart* (1993), a documentary film by Nancy Porter for the PBS television series *The American Experience*.

120. Perhaps there is something of this in the choice of image for Emmett Williams's *Brandenburg Gate and the "Hindenburg"* (1981); reproduced in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Berlin Art, 1961–1987* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art; Munich: Prestel, 1987), p. 156; the volume reproduces as its frontispiece Helmut Middendorf's *Airplane Dream* (1982), a work that "expresses an urban angst particular to our own time, and especially meaningful to Berlin" (p. 18). One could perhaps mention also Anselm Kiefer's large lead sculpture of an airplane, *Poppies and Memories* (1989).

121. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 39. In this connection, it should be noted that military history was one of Barr's special interests. At the memorial service for Barr in 1981, Philip Johnson pointed this out: "How many of you know that he knew the strategy, the tactics, the logistics of three-quarters of the great battles of the whole world? Not just the simple, ordinary battles we all have read about in the schoolbook—he knew the technical language. And I remember the time he had to give up that interest because of his fantastic amount of work here. I gave him General Fuller's three-volume work on the great battles of the world, and he almost cried because he would never have time to read that book all the way through" (*Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Memorial Tribute*, n.p.).

122. *What Is Modern Painting?*, pp. 39, 40.

123. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 250.

124. Leni Riefenstahl makes much of this award in the section "The Paris World's Fair" of her autobiography, *A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 208–09; the certificate of the award is reproduced between pp. 338 and 339.

125. The presence of *Triumph of the Will* in the

Museum's Film Library collection is specifically pointed out in *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 199, while the section of Barr's book headed "The Film of Fact and Opinion," p. 212, includes a still from Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938). In *A Memoir*, p. 218, Riefenstahl recounts the following conversation she says she had with the director Josef von Sternberg on New Year's Eve, 1938, at Saint-Moritz:

"... the film you made of him [Hitler], *Triumph of the Will*, is first class."

"Where did you see it?" I asked in surprise.

"In New York, at the Museum of Modern Art."

"Do you really like it?"

"My dear girl," said Sternberg, "it will make film history—it's revolutionary. . . ."

126. Riefenstahl, *A Memoir*, p. 164.

127. As translated in the subtitled print now circulated in the United States on videotape by Film Preserve Ltd. The thousand years of the millennium are also evident in Hitler's idea of his "Thousand-Year Reich."

128. "Is Modern Art Communistic?" (1952), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 219.

129. Quoted in Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism" (1975), in her *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980; rpt. New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 92.

130. Quoted in Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), p. xiii.

131. See "Nationalism in German Films" (1934) and "Art in the Third Reich—Preview, 1933" (1945), in *Defining Modern Art*, pp. 158–75.

132. "It Can Happen Here," *The Art Digest* 23 (August 1, 1949), p. 23.

133. Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," p. 92.

134. See Stephanie Barron et al., *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New York: Abrams, 1991).

135. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 257; *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 226; see also "Is Modern Art Communistic?" (1952), p. 218.

136. "It Can Happen Here" (1949), p. 23.

137. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, pp. 202, 226.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

139. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 41.

140. *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 263.

141. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

142. See *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, pp. 12, 57, 193, 196, 200–07, 226, 250.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 250. Barnett Newman, too, saw certain art of the time as "prophetic." In an unpublished essay of 1945, he wrote: "The surrealists' work was in the nature of prophecy. For the horror they created and the shock they built up were not merely the dreams of crazy men; they were prophetic tableaux of what the world was to see as reality. They showed us the horror of war; and if men had not laughed at the surrealists, if they had understood them, the war might never have been. No painting exists [that is better surrealism] than the photographs of German atrocities. The heaps of skulls are the reality of Tchelitchev's vision. The mass of bone piles are the reality of Picasso's bone composi-

tions, of his sculpture" (Newman, "Surrealism and the War," in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O'Neill and Mollie McNickle [New York: Knopf, 1990], p. 95).

144. See Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 12–13.

145. Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (documenting the 1936 Berlin Olympics, with Hitler in attendance), though less obviously political than *Triumph of the Will*, nonetheless conveys a similar message; both are intended to illustrate ideas of physical perfection. *Olympia* draws attention to the fact that the games' original "patrons" were the Greek gods. The film's worship of athletes' perfect bodies is prefaced by an opening sequence in which the camera wanders through classical Greek ruins before finding its way, across a map of Europe, to the second Mount Olympus of Berlin.

146. Charles A. Lindbergh, *Autobiography of Values* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1976, rpt. 1992), p. 147.

147. Some of Jules Verne's tales, notably *Robur-le-conquérant* (1886) and *Le Maître du monde* (1904), also predict a malevolent future for aviation.

148. T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *Four Quartets* (1943; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace, n.d.), ll. 200–06.

149. See Robert Rosenblum's discussion of sun imagery in the chapter "The Pastoral and the Apocalyptic" in *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*.

150. *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art*, p. 174. Compare the variations in *Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 200, and in Barr's Introduction to Juan Larria, *Guernica/Pablo Picasso* (New York: Curt Valentin, 1947), p. 11, where the sentence is simplified to read, "And over all shines the radiant eye of night with an electric bulb for a pupil."

151. Picasso's comments on "the barbarous bombardment of the Prado Museum by rebel airplanes" appear in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 264.

152. The underdrawings of the ruined frescoes are now displayed in the Museo delle Sinopie del Camposanto Monumentale.

153. By coincidence, *Guernica*, the painting inspired by an air raid, when shown in Milan after the war, would be examined by the same conservator who had just inspected *The Last Supper* for damage after the removal of its wartime covering; recounted in Douglas Cooper, "Picasso's *Guernica* Installed in the Prado," *The Burlington Magazine* 124 (May 1982); reprinted in Ellen C. Oppler, ed., *Picasso's "Guernica"* (New York and London: Norton, 1988), p. 322.

154. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 155. See also *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967*, p. 634.

155. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 8.

156. *The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art*, 11, no. 1 (1943), p. 11.

157. In the accompanying booklet, the photograph appears on a dramatic two-page spread with a

caption in Old English type reading: "—took Him down and wrapped Him in clean linens"; see Edward J. Steichen, ed., *Power in the Pacific* (New York: Published for The Museum of Modern Art by Wm. E. Rudge's Sons, 1945), pp. 26–27. In the book-length version of *Power in the Pacific* (New York: U.S. Camera Publishing Corporation, 1945), the photograph appears on p. 137 with somewhat less ornate type and slightly different wording: "—took him down and wrapped his body in clean linens."

158. Picasso: *Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 12.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

160. Picasso was quoted to the effect that accounts of the Allied bombing of Nazi Europe put him in mind of *Guernica*; see Oppler, ed., *Picasso's "Guernica,"* p. 102.

161. Included in *The Atomic Café* (1982), a compilation documentary about the Cold War, directed by Kevin Rafferty, Jane Loader, and Pierce Rafferty.

162. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 41.

163. Quoted in Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), p. 37. J. Robert Oppenheimer recounted another statement of Stimson's about the bombing of cities: "He didn't say that the air strikes shouldn't be carried on, but he did think there was something wrong with a country where no one questioned that" (*ibid.*).

164. See the many documents gathered in Oppler, ed., *Picasso's "Guernica,"* pp. 236–46.

165. Albert Einstein, message to the Peace Congress of Intellectuals, in Wrocław, released to the press August 29, 1948; in Einstein, *Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950, rev. 1956; rpt. New York: Wing Books, 1993), p. 152.

166. Oppenheimer was a leader to The Museum of Modern Art in 1939; see *Art in Our Time*, p. 8.

167. *Robert Oppenheimer: Letters and Recollections*, ed. Alice Kimball Smith and Charles Weiner (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 290. The first poem cited is Donne's "Hymn to God My God in My Sickness."

168. See "Reminiscences/Three Pictures" (1913), in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), pp. 376–77, 379.

169. This and the following quotation are from Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986, rpt. 1988), pp. 675, 676. On the moral issues considered in the scientific development of the weapon and in the military decision to use it, see also Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York: Knopf, 1981; rpt. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1987); and Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*.

170. In a farewell speech to his Manhattan Project colleagues at Los Alamos later that year, Oppenheimer saw their triumph in inventing the atomic bomb as an epoch-making change in the course of

history, comparable, in a negative way, to the Renaissance: "But the real impact of the creation of the atomic bomb, and atomic weapons—to understand that one has to look further back, look, I think, to the times when physical science was growing in the days of the renaissance, and when the threat that science offered was felt so deeply throughout the Christian world. . . . This quantitative change has all the character of a change in quality, of a change in the nature of the world" (speech to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists, November 2, 1945; in *Robert Oppenheimer: Letters and Recollections*, pp. 316, 318).

171. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 114.

172. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 44.

173. Similarly, in 1951, Barr refers to a contorted figure's "swastika" pose (*Matisse: His Art and His Public*, p. 51), at a time when the word could hardly have been free of recent associations.

174. Reprinted in Herschel B. Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1968), p. 560.

175. The statement is quoted in the discussion of de Kooning's *Woman I* in the postwar edition of *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 44. It also appears in Barr's "The New American Painting, as Shown in Eight European Countries, 1958–1959: Introduction" (1959), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 230.

176. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 176.

177. "Will This Art Endure?" *The New York Times Magazine*, December 1, 1957, sect. 6, p. 48. Earlier in the decade, William Faulkner had famously employed the word "endure" in his Nobel Prize address, delivered in December 1950. Speaking of a time "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening," Faulkner had avowed: "I decline to accept the end of man. . . . I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail."

178. *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 90.

179. See Northrop Frye's chapter "The Furnace" in his *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace, 1990, rpt. 1992), pp. 294–98.

180. Theodore Roszak, statement in the symposium "The New Sculpture," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1952; in Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, *Sculpture of the Twentieth Century* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1952); excerpts printed in Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art*, p. 568.

181. A. C. Bradley, "The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy," in his *Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1905); reprinted in Lawrence Sargent Hall, ed., *A Grammar of Literary Criticism* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 79.

182. "Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture," in *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967*, p. 641; the stock-market crash of 1929 and the outbreak of war in 1939 are recounted on pp. 620, 626.

An episode in world affairs, related to the allegory of flight, occurred in 1960. President Eisenhower had spent several years trying to bring about a thaw in the Cold War; but the hope for a nuclear arms agreement from the 1960 Paris summit meeting was lost when the Soviets unexpectedly shot down Francis Gary Powers's U-2 spy plane, as it photographed missile sites in Russian territory, and in the ensuing controversy Khrushchev was forced to respond with belligerence. Again, the Fall of Icarus was the figure of dashed ambitions.

183. In a 1965 interview, Frank O'Hara says of the influence of W. H. Auden's *The Orators*: "I don't believe for one minute . . . that the airmen business in it has failed to influence Terry Southern, who immediately dreamed up *Strangelove*. You know, the sheer flippancy and sarcasm and accurate satire is very important" (O'Hara, *Standing Still and Walking in New York* [San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1983], p. 25). Loosely based on the novel *Red Alert* (c. 1958) by Peter George, Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove*, with a script by Southern and Kubrick, was released in 1964, less than two years after the Cuban crisis.

Dr. Strangelove is part of a whole genre built around the idea of apocalyptic bombardment, from Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (published 1957, filmed 1959) and George's *Red Alert* to Eugene Burdick's *Fail-Safe* (published 1962, filmed 1964) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (published 1969, filmed 1972).

184. In Oppler, ed., *Picasso's "Guernica,"* p. 202.

185. *Ibid.*, p. 237. Reinhardt then goes on to discuss Jasper Johns's *Flags*; it would be interesting to know whether he was prompted by the association that "The Star-Spangled Banner" makes the flag, too, like *Guernica*, an emblem of bombardment, of "bombs bursting in air."

186. In Oppler, ed., *Picasso's "Guernica,"* p. 304.

187. Thomas B. Hess, *Barnett Newman* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1971), p. 68.

188. Quoted in Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall, *Art About Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978), p. 122. It is disconcerting to note that in 1975, Susan Sontag saw Nazi art, too, as coming to be treated like "a form of Pop Art" ("Fascinating Fascism," p. 94).

189. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, p. 193.

190. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 45. A different Lichtenstein painting is reproduced in the present text (fig. 25). Lichtenstein's large, mural-like pictures on military-industrial themes, *Preparedness* (1968; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York) and *Peace Through Chemistry* (1970; private collection), painted during the Vietnam war, pursue related questions of the proper application of modern technical inventions.

191. "Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture," in *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967*, p. 638.

192. Frank O'Hara, "Reuben Nakian," in his *Art Chronicles, 1954–1966* (New York: Braziller, 1975), pp. 87–88 (Nakian's *Hiroshima* [1965–66] is in the Museum's collection). O'Hara would, however,

speak of “universal destruction” and “a future which may be nonexistent” in talking about the apocalyptic aspect he saw in the “lyrical desperation” of some of Pollock’s paintings (p. 26).

193. In his *Starting from San Francisco* (1961); see Oppler, ed., *Picasso’s “Guernica,”* p. 306.

194. Larry Rivers with Arnold Weinstein, *What Did I Do? The Unauthorized Autobiography of Larry Rivers* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 323. Instead of being called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, as he feared would happen, Rivers was soon interrogated by the district attorney investigating “fixed” quiz shows.

195. On the bucolic versus the mechanical, see Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*.

196. “Tinguely ex machina,” statement delivered in the Sculpture Garden of The Museum of Modern Art, March 17, 1960; printed in *Homage to New York: A Self-Constructing and Self-Destroying Work of Art Conceived and Built by Jean Tinguely* (New York:

The Museum of Modern Art, [1960]).

It should be noted that Barr delivered his statement in the Sculpture Garden *before* Tinguely’s self-destroying work was activated. Helen Franc recalls that after the work was actually turned on, Barr was horrified when in the course of its destruction it broke into flames. Only two years before, in May 1958, there had been a serious fire in the Museum’s galleries that, in addition to damaging several major paintings, had caused a fatality.

197. See Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

198. This well-known phrase of Mark Rothko’s is quoted as one of the epigraphs to Barr’s “The New American Painting, as Shown in Eight European Countries, 1958–1959: Introduction” (1959), in *Defining Modern Art*, p. 230. Barr himself spoke of “timeless human tragedy” with respect to Orozco’s *Dive Bomber and Tank*; see *What Is Modern*

Painting?, p. 8.

199. *What Is Modern Painting?*, p. 42. He notes also: “In the art of post-war Paris and its outposts on the Riviera, *Sturm und Drang* had practically disappeared. Picasso, who had drawn his frightful *Charnel-house* in 1945, was within a couple of years engaged in painting lively pastoral frolics” (*Matisse: His Art and His Public*, pp. 263–64).

200. On renouncing the portentous sense of foreshadowing provided by types and exploring instead “the prosaics of daily life,” see Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994).

201. But to return, of course, in the crises that marked the later sixties, when *Guernica* was appearing on antiwar posters.

202. O’Hara, “Art Chronicle” (1962), in O’Hara, *Standing Still and Walking in New York*, pp. 128–29.

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