

## *By Way of Introduction: Inscriptions as Subversion*

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Nowadays there is almost an established tradition of research in art history which focuses on the relation between words and painting. Books like John Sparrow's *Words and Pictures* or Michel Butor's *Les mots dans la peinture* have become minor classics. A new British journal is called *Word and Image*. Museums such as the Louvre or the Bibliothèque Nationale have organized exhibitions on this theme.<sup>1</sup> It seems, therefore, proper that a special issue of *Visible Language* should also be devoted to the topic. Are not "inscriptions in paintings" more than anything else "language" made "visible"?

Accordingly, the last section of this issue presents a bibliography of books and articles devoted to the subject. It is perhaps, not as comprehensive as it should be. Nevertheless, the interested reader will find in it the major works as well as the more recent studies dealing with this very specific subject.

This special issue deals strictly with inscriptions "inside" or "within" a painting or a picture, not with "external" inscriptions such as titles.<sup>2</sup> Signatures are excluded although their role in structuring the viewing of pictures by an external observer is briefly mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

This introduction aims at giving some sort of unifying theoretical perspective or framework to the reader, although the excellent articles by a group of international scholars which constitute this special issue hardly make such a perspective necessary. Paradoxically, a number of these scholars find that unity is founded by "subversion"—subversion of the picture by the text it contains or of the inscription by the pictures that contain it.

But first, a few general words on the semiotic qualities of inscriptions.

### *A Semiotic Enclave*

Words inscribed in painting have sometimes been called "a

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semiotic medium (in this case, representational or figurative icons) of another system of signs, the written sign.

In terms of the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, written inscriptions in figurative paintings represent the intrusion of a primarily symbolic-indexic system into an iconic one. In the Western world, writing is not iconic (in the Oriental world, Chinese ideograms are); but it “points downward” or designates as a deitics or as an index which designates, or else it “stands for” (symbolizes) things located in the world.

Inscriptions imply a system of reading that is quite different from the system which directs the “scanning” of pictures: the act of sentence-reading is linear; moreover, it progresses from the apperception of signifiers to the evocation of images or concepts (the signified). What comes first in written language is the typographic aspect of a concept. This is not so with pictures.

In one of his first books on visual semiotics, Louis Marin wrote that figurative painting is the presentation of the signified rather than signifiers.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when we view a painting, the surface we apperceive is a surface made up of signified (represented) objects and concepts. With language it is just the opposite: one reaches the designated objects or concepts through the signifiers, that is, through the words which stand for them.

Indeed, painting begins not with the order of signifiers but in reverse (with reference to spoken or written language), with the overwhelming presence of the signified. Meaning itself seems to be present on the painted canvas for all to see. Thus, reading a painting means going backward, like a crab, away from the surface (that is, from surface meaning), away from what C.S. Peirce called “firstness.” In the terminology of Erwin Panofsky, reading a picture means going from the surface of the painting to a “pre-iconographic” level, then to the deeper level of iconography and from there to the yet deeper one of “iconology.” Or in terms of the linguistics of Noam Chomsky, this means going from “surface structure” to “deep structure.” Reading a picture is, indeed, like engaging in archaeology: starting with “superficial” meanings and then uncovering, by degrees, layers upon layers of signifiers.

With a conglomerate of written words, a “text,” the reader progresses from the string of signifiers, the words, to the

meaning. The operative concept here is something like “construct” or “construction.” In reading a text, one constructs meaning from the string. On the contrary, reading a painting means engaging from the outset in destruction and deconstruction.<sup>5</sup> We will see that many of the inscriptions presented here go even further and are tantamount to “subversion.”

Words in paintings pose the question of the primacy of language or, conversely, of the primacy of images. One wonders whether this built-in interrogation found in any word-in-picture complex is not part of a more globally philosophical or anthropological question concerning the primacy of pictures or language in mental apperception. Each conglomerate of words/pictures has a Wittgensteinian aspect: we are either “prisoners of words” or “prisoners of images”; opening the doors of verbal language confines us in the prison of images while opening the image-door, that is “naming the icon,” makes us prisoners of the verb.

#### *In the Beginning Was. . . ?*

The confrontation of words/pictures inherent in our subject poses a problem of origin: did the world begin with textual description or with visual representation?

The medieval cabalists saw the Bible as a blueprint for the word—nay, as a world-creating verbal formula. The written logos was for them the ground plan of the universe, and it was through “writing the universe,” through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, that God created it.<sup>6</sup> The world began with Scripture, not with visual representation.

And yet, archaeological evidence—the famous cave paintings of Altamira or Lascaux, to name only the best known of them—suggest that the world as a described object may have begun with picture, that is, with visual representation. However, even the frescoes at Lascaux may contain “written” signs, attempts at recording verbal language. There are curious marks on the stone. Small dashes and bars have been interpreted by Alexander Marshack and other Archaeologists as referring to the differentiation between sexes: female markers were opposed to the male markers. Thus, in the midst of very early “portraits” of beasts (rarely of men), in the very first representations of animal groups, one finds the first attempts at transcribing specific words, words which concern human sexuality. Language and representation, it seems, both began with the representation of sexuality and sexual difference.

However, many of the inscriptions analyzed herein “unsex” the pictures and claim to be typography as pure *logos*.

### *Techniques of Subversion*

It was said above that reading a picture is tantamount to deconstructing it. Indeed, words in painting are not merely “constructs,” they are often “deconstructs.” For instance, they may subvert the image by imposing on it a “direction” for reading which is the exact opposite of the apparent orientation of the picture as it is perceived in the first superficial glance. Thus, in order to read an inscription, the observer may have to draw near the picture and move his eyes in a specific manner in order to focus correctly on the text that is written on the canvas. This is what one might call “kinetic” subversion. It imposes movement on the observer even when this observer is supposed to be contemplating a picture dispassionately from a non-moving “point of vision.”

Subversion may be of an aesthetic order: some inscriptions assert that the image which contains them is not an image or, rather, that a representation is not a representation. The picture—by virtue of this semiotic enclave—is capable of saying “No!” A well known instance of this is the famous Magritte picture entitled *This is Not a Pipe*. Sometimes it seems as though inscriptions were placed in pictures in order to trigger a philosophical discussion on this question of the negation of representation by representation itself.

Subversion may also be theological in character. Through a “hieratical” or “pseudo-hieratical” inscription, an artist may insert a specific dogma—a theological dogma—into a religious picture or counter a religious dogma that he wishes to reject. We will see how Christian dogma subverts Jewish history (if indeed, the history of Jesus is part of Jewish history) through the agency of a pseudo-Hebrew inscription placed in a specific religious picture.

Even more bizarrely, there exists a type of inscription, the Jewish and the Islamic *pictogram* or *microgram*, which presents itself as a text—indeed, which proclaims itself to be a text, not a drawing, although its outward form is that of a representational drawing. This assertion, in itself, is the subversion of a sacred prohibition, a way of “turning” the Mosaic law against images.

As a final preliminary remark, it must be observed that this issue of *Visible Language* is devoted more to subversion—of images by inscriptions and, in specific cases, of text or inscriptions by images—than to conjunction, parallelism or harmony between words and pictures. Indeed, disjunction is the dominant perspective in the studies by Louis Marin concerning the French “classical” tableau in the seventeenth century and in the two studies on the work of Magritte, by Georges Roque and Leslie Ortquist. Esther Levinger’s study of words in Jasper Johns also shares this point of view.

These authors see the work of art (insofar as it contains inscription and is inseparable from inscriptions) primarily as a *discordia discors* or a *discordia concors*.<sup>7</sup> My own contribution, this introduction, is also an exercise in *discordia concors*.

### *Inscriptions as Subversion*

First, “kinetic” subversion. There are inscriptions which enforce a microscopic form of apperception instead of macroscopic apperception of the whole picture, which compel the observer to draw near the picture plane in order to decipher what is written and which intermittently impose a close-up view of a picture. Others oppose or even negate the general orientation of a picture—for instance, the orthogonal direction “in depth” imposed by perspective—and force the observer to change directions in his viewing of it. Still others force the reader to change the movement of his gaze in relation to the painting he is observing. Thus, the observer may be forced to re-orient his gaze according to turns of 90, 180 or 360 degrees in order to read a specific inscription. This is tantamount to submitting the picture to a veritable 90, 180 or 360 degree “panning,” to use a cinematographic term. In such cases, inscriptions transform the painting into a veritable “kinetic art” form although the “kinesis” is carried out by the spectator.

In a second stage, I shall deal with what might be called “theological” or “ideological” subversion. There are words in paintings that are essentially negations or denegations (in the words of Louis Marin) of the global pictorial effect, which negate that the representations in which they are inscribed are true representations or true icons of a transcendent reality. There are usually theological or ideological, sometimes aesthetic, reasons for such a negation. This imposes on the researcher some explorations of the intellectual background behind this type of inscription.

### *The Corpus*

The pictures examined here can be divided into two categories. First, those that deal in what I called kinetic subversion. In a first subsection, therefore, I shall examine close-up effects as well as upside-down “reversals” in pictures from the work of Fra Angelico, sixteenth-century graphic art, Cezanne, Max Beckmann, the cubist painters and the post-modern painter Georg Baselitz.

A second subsection deals with ideological or theological subversion. In it the following pictures will be presented: *The Supper in the House of Simon*, by Philippe de Champaigne; *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, by Hans Holbein the Elder; Jewish and Islamic pictograms; *The Temptation Triptych*, by Max Beckmann; *Genius*, by Max Beckmann, and Roy Lichtenstein’s *Masterpiece*.

#### *Kinetic subversion: on the perlocutionary force of inscriptions*

In terms of modern linguistic philosophy, kinetic subversion belongs to what might be termed the “perlocutionary effect” of inscriptions.

In his seminal *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin defined two categories of what he called “performative utterances” or “speech acts”: the “*illocutionary*” in which the speaker himself “performs” acts merely by speaking (this is the case when a minister pronounces you “man and wife,” or when the chairperson of a conference “declares the session open”); and the “perlocutionary,” in which an utterance causes the hearer to do something, to perform an action.<sup>8</sup>

Insofar as they proclaim something concerning representation (insofar as they are the visual equivalent of metalinguistic devices, in Roman Jakobson’s terminology), inscriptions are illocutionary in character. In the case of aesthetic “subversion” they declare, for instance, that a representation is not a representation or that a drawing is an inscription and not a representation, etc. Yet, insofar as they *cause us to do things*, namely to focus on a text, to read a text so that we move our heads in order to achieve focus and reading, inscriptions are perlocutionary. Kinetic demands are made on the reader, and these demands are the expression of the perlocutionary force of inscriptions.

### Focusing

Some inscriptions demand focusing, and this focusing necessarily negates the global viewing of the painting; that is, it compels the spectator to leave the spot in which he is standing and which usually corresponds to the “point-of-view” of perspective, this vantage point imposed on each viewer by perspective. Incidentally, this imposing a vantage point on the spectator, too, is a perlocutionary effect inherent in a “perspective” image. Perspective causes us to occupy a specific point in space in order to look at a picture. Thus, in the case of moving in order to read inscriptions, we perform a perlocutionary act that is, sometimes, a *counter-act* to the more globally perlocutionary demands made on us by Italian perspective.

This is the case in the great *Isenheimer Altar* by Matthias (Mathies) Grünewald in Colmar, especially in the Christ on the Cross panel. In this center panel, the inscription *illum oportet crescere, me autem minui* inscribed near the face of Saint John the Baptist (as though it were an utterance of his) forces us to quit the global vantage point in order to decipher it. In so doing, we lose the overall view of the three panels—and even of the center panel. Nevertheless, a deciphering of the inscription is essential for an understanding of what the picture is about.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, many of the medieval *tituli* in fourteenth and fifteenth-century paintings, usually Biblical quotations placed on phylacteries, impose a close-up view of the picture as we approach the surface of the painting in order to decipher the inscriptions. As there are often several *tituli* in one and the same picture, a veritable “dance” is enforced upon the reading spectator, who has to zig-zag between a global-vision vantage point and focused-vision stations.

An inscription in an El Greco painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, gives a good idea of the syn-copation in reading. In *The Adoration of the Shepherds*,<sup>10</sup> the infant Christ lies at the center while in the background the shepherds receive the news of his coming. Yet, overhead the angels flourish a thin ribbon that bears the Latin sentence from the Gloria: “Let us praise Thee and bless Thee/ Glory be to God on High.” (*Laudamuste benedicimus(te)/Gloria (in excelcicis) Deo.*) It is impossible to read this inscription from afar; a close-up viewing is forced on us so that we move forward and backward in relation to the picture plane.

In any case, whether *tituli* or modernized version of them by Matthias Grünewald or El Greco, the result of the inscriptions is that the total picture, the representation proper, demands to be left aside for a certain period of time in order for the spectator to focus on its textuality. Only subsequently, after the necessary reading, can one view the total picture again. But, of course, this “total” picture has changed in the interval. It is now infected with textual meaning. Thus, the sort of viewing produced by the intrusion of the “semiotic enclave” is what one might call the “syncopated” viewing of a picture; that is, it causes a syncopated vision and a constant interchange and exchange of vantage points.<sup>11</sup>

#### Panoramic scanning (panning)

The following reflections are exemplified by pictures which belong in the sphere of Western art. Yet, the perlocutionary force of inscriptions is, doubtlessly, of paramount importance in a sphere that is outside the competence of this writer: Oriental art. In Chinese and Japanese scrolls, ideographic writing normally imposes an up-down scanning of the picture (usually landscape or still life) on the literate viewer—since the reading generally proceeds up-down and from left to right. Similarly, in the Semitic world, one can generally assume that observers of paintings scan them from right to left just as they would read a written page.<sup>12</sup>

An artist like Max Beckmann may have been aware of the prevailing Western tendency of reading a picture from left to right, as one reads a book. In one of his paintings, *Prunier* 1944,<sup>13</sup> he amused himself by painting the French words *SORTIE* backwards, as *EITROS*, with an arrow indicating the right-to-left direction, that is, the direction of the words on a transparent pane of glass. His main objective might have been the imposing on his spectators of a right-to-left reading of the picture that was diametrically opposed to built-in Western practice.<sup>14</sup>

If textuality governs the deciphering of pictoriality even though it is absent from pictures, how much more so when it intrudes in them!

Panoramic rotation is to be observed as early as pre-Renaissance and quattrocento periods. Thus, an *Annunciation* by Fra Angelico in the Church del Gesu in Cortona shows an angel “announcing” verbally to the Virgin Mary: *SPS. SIT. VIRTU. ERABIT TIBI*, written normally from left to right.

The answer of the Virgin, however, is written upside down from right to left: *ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI*. Moreover, the announcing by the angel is made in the form of an open triangle into which the answer of the virgin is inserted, thus:

*SPS. SIT.*  
*ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI*  
*VIRTU. ERABIT TIBI*

Thus, the inscriptions are icons of voices. The triangular shape is the representation of a megaphone or of a Renaissance *portavoce*. The insertion of the Virgin's words into the triangle represents the immediacy of her answer.

Similarly, in *The Death of Saint Dominic* (figure 1), from the *Life of Saint Dominic* series on a famous predella now at the Louvre, the dying saint utters a sentence that is written upside down on the canvas and from left-to-right: *CHASTITATEM PARETE VMILITATEM SERVA(N)T. PAUPERTATEM VOLUNTARIA POSSIDETE*. (Through serving with humility and worshipping chastity, you will attain or possess the will to holy poverty.)<sup>15</sup>

FIGURE 1

*The Death of Saint Dominic*



By permission of the Louvre, Paris.

The inscription coming out of the mouth of the dying saint offers this aspect to a frontal observer:

CHASTITATEM PARTE VMILITATEM SERVA(N)T. PAUPERIATEM VOLUNTARIA POSSIDENTE.

Such an observer, therefore, has to rotate his gaze by an almost 360 degree turn in order to decipher the words.

Over and beyond the rotating, panning view they enforce on us, the fact that the inscriptions are written upside down has a signification of its own. In the first picture, the inversion of the script signifies that the two characters represented, the angel-messenger sent by God and the still-terrestrial Virgin, do not belong to the same universe: one is from heaven, the other from this world. Moreover, the reversal of the Virgin's "letters" means, simultaneously, that her words are being read by someone who does not belong to the normal universe, someone capable of capturing human language and human intentions in their terrestrial form and of "setting them right." The reversal of the script is a sign of human/divine communication.

In the case of the dying Saint Dominic, the reversal of the letters expresses the idea of death, the idea that the saint already belongs in the world beyond and that his dying words come from yonder world to the listening and weeping monks, his brethern.

What we have here is not exactly "subversion" but, perhaps, the idea of the divine sphere (the idea of the ineffably "beyond") as an "upside-down world" which takes the form of an upside-down inscription.<sup>16</sup> In this case, "subverting" the script meant imprinting a trace of the divine into the painting, into representation itself.

In the baroque period, many inscriptions imposed a vertical reading. This was the case, in particular, in a picture by Philippe de Champaigne which will be studied subsequently: *The Supper in the House of Simon*, in which a Hebrew inscription has to be read from down-up.

In the sixteenth century, during the first wars of religion, when the thematic of the "upside-down world" was of special importance,<sup>17</sup> an illustrator of a Grimmelshausen pamphlet entitled *Die Verkehrte Welt (The Upside-Down World)* created a front page title which was, indeed, upside down (figure 2).

Title page from *Die Verkehrte Welt*, Sixteenth century.



Jumping over centuries (the scope of this study does not allow for a complete chronological survey of inscriptions in painting), I reach the period of the mid-nineteenth century, dominated, in France by the doctrine of realism and the personality of Gustave Courbet. This doctrine and personality were certainly among the predominant influences which affected the work of young Cezanne. Thus, a portrait of his father reading a newspaper shows the title of the paper written upside down.<sup>18</sup> Reading the title implies that the observer “pans” or rotates his head according to a 360-degree revolution in order to read the title of the newspaper. But this rotation in itself is a sign. In the century of “realism,” the reversal is a sign of the realist doctrine. For the sake of achieving “realistic” effects, words written on objects *have to* appear upside down whenever the objects are inverted.

Inscriptions in cubist painting often impose a similar kind of contortion on the reader. This is especially true during the period of the so-called *papiers collés* in the work of Braque, Picasso or Juan Gris.<sup>19</sup> In this case, the objective is not realism but rather provocation: the pasted papers are tantamount to the introduction of noise into an orderly picture—and the

viewers of the period were offended by the idea of random or noisy objects being incorporated into “Art.” The scraps of printed papers were, of course, also used as a sign: a sign of the new aesthetics integrating randomness and order, *objets trouvés* and a strictly controlled “composition.”

Picasso made use of this technique of provocation, even in some of his later compositions. Thus, in 1941, he sketched a woman’s face, distorted according to his manner of the period, on an upside-down page of the newspaper *Paris-Soir* so that the headline on the page *Qu’en pensez-vous, Madame?* (*What do you think of it, Lady?*) serves as the upside-down title of the picture.<sup>20</sup>

A great modern artist who uses upside-down words in order to create special effects is Max Beckmann. The deciphering of many of his inscriptions imposes a 360 degree panning on the spectator. This is the case in such paintings as *Temptation*, analyzed below, and in many others.<sup>21</sup> At least ten of Beckmann’s pictures contain such inversed inscriptions. This predilection for inverting may actually be a sort of parody or pastiche of the procedure used by non-figurative abstraction.<sup>22</sup> It may have to do with the famous discovery of the abstract sign by Kandinsky. In his autobiography, this painter had told how, returning at sundown to his studio darkened by the invading twilight, he espied a magnificent picture that he could not recognize. On drawing nearer, he realized that it was a landscape that he had inadvertently placed upside down on its scaffold.<sup>23</sup> Beckmann, in his ironic way, may be forcing his public to “upside down” his pictures as a sort of disparaging commentary on Kandinsky’s “great discovery.”

But there is more to it than that. One of the great achievements of Beckmann, perhaps his greatest tragic painting, is the one entitled *Birth and Death*.<sup>24</sup> Reading this picture means a complete overturning of it during the process. Indeed, it was probably painted in the “right” direction, then set upside down on the easel and finished as an “inverse” picture. One wonders whether Beckmann—who was also a great connoisseur of Italian art—may not have been inspired by the example of Fra Angelico’s *Death of Saint Dominic*.

Thus it can be said that all the upside-down inscriptions in the work of Max Beckmann direct us toward this ultimate “death” in painting, which is also, to a large extent, a death

of painting; they are a preparation and prefiguration for a climax in which all normal or “straight” viewing of a picture is distorted or abolished.

The apex in this procedure of “painting reversal” is reached in our post-modernist period with the work of the contemporary German painter Georg Baselitz. Everything—trees, landscapes, people—is painted upside down. It is only due to one specific sort of inscription that it is possible to tell how the picture should be hung on the wall (namely, upside down): the signature of the painter himself. Again, we have here a type of picture in which the setting right of the trees and landscape can only be done against the “right direction” represented by the signature of the painter. Thus, the “right direction” means going against the painter himself—or, perhaps, the painter signifies by this that he is “against the right direction.” This, too, represents a very interesting technique of provocation quite different from the cubistic *papier collés*.

*Ideological subversion (the illocutionary effect of inscriptions)*

Hans Holbein the Elder: *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*

In a painting at the Hamburg Kunsthalle, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (figure 3), probably painted between 1510 and 1515, Hans Holbein the Elder inserted a Hebrew inscription, a part of which can be deciphered (see detail). It reads *BERESHIT BARA/VE HA-EL HOSHIA/* (illegible letters). The inscription hangs on the nave wall of a roman-esque-type church (the “Temple”) and is illuminated by rays emanating from the Virgin’s aureola.

The first two words are, of course, the first two vocables in the Hebrew Bible: “In the beginning (*BERESHIT*) God created (*BARA*) the heavens and the earth.” As to the second part of the sentence, it seems to express the idea that God *EL*, here: *L*, gave succor to humanity. It means something like, “And then God helped.” This fragment of the sentence is not to be found in any canonical Hebrew text and the “Hosanna” hymn in the Christian mass does not correspond exactly to this formulation. Nevertheless, the important thing is that the fifth word *HOSHIA* (succored) is based on the same root as the name Jesus, in Hebrew *IESHU*. Thus, it is an allusion to Jesus, who is said to have been created by God “from the first” to save humanity.

FIGURE 3

Hans Holbein the Elder, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, detail below.



Photos and permission by the Hamburger Kunsthall Museum.



To whom was such an inscription addressed? Who could read it? The Jewish converts who entered churches, perhaps—for it is a fact that the Jewish community of Northern Germany was living a precarious life, from persecution to persecution, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, certainly, also, the learned clerics and theologians of the period. Both categories could see in this beautiful painting an “archaeological” proof of the antiquity of Christ.

I see this montage of a real and pseudo inscription as an attempt to subvert the fundamental dogma of the Hebrew

Bible, perhaps the only Jewish dogma, namely that God is *One*. We have here the idea that the “concept of Jesus” was inscribed in the Bible “from the beginning”—and perhaps also the cognate idea that “Jesus was already created” when God created the world. This “inscribing” was done by a militant Christian bent on proving the divine nature and the divine character of the genealogy of Jesus, and by an artist who intended to show the church that he was a “scholar-painter” and knew how to use “archaeological” notations to demonstrate Christian truth.

Philippe de Champaigne: “Thou shalt not make images”

As was said above, there exist representations which negate their own essence as representations and do it through the agency of an inscription. As we observed earlier, the most famous of these is certainly Magritte’s picture entitled *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (*This is Not a Pipe*), which Michel Foucault deemed important enough to warrant writing a whole book about.<sup>25</sup> Yet, there are precedents to this picture. One of them is to be found in the first age of modernity, that is to say, in the so-called “classical” seventeenth century in France.

This is a picture by Philippe de Champaigne, *The Supper in the House of Simon*, illustrating a passage of the Evangelium (St. Luke Evangelium, VII, 36-48) in which Christ is invited to the house of the rich Pharisean, Simon, and engages in theological discussion (figure 4). The picture bears the inscription “Thou shalt not make images” (see detail of figure 4), the first biblical commandment.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in the very midst of a specific representation, an inscription proclaims the illegitimate character of this representation.

Moreover, the inscription itself is “represented.” It is visible as a phylactery, that is, as a Jewish liturgical object which is necessarily endowed with a persuasive force and is itself the expression of the law. Indeed, it is a reminder—for the observer of the painting—of the strictness of Mosaic law concerning representation and, more especially, the representation of human beings and of the human body. This inscription is in Hebrew. It is, therefore, accessible only to those spectators who know this sacred language. This was the case with the Jansenists, the religious movement to which Philippe de Champaigne himself belonged.<sup>27</sup> Again, the Hebrew inscription is a sort of archaeological sign.

FIGURE 4

Philippe de Champaigne, *The Supper in the House of Simon*, Louvre, Paris, detail below.



Photos and permission by Réunion des musées nationaux.



Yet what does this proclamation of an iconic interdiction really mean, set as it is in the very center of a historical representation it contradicts? Its meaning must be examined within the context of what one might call “the aesthetics of Jansenism.”<sup>28</sup>

If it is true that the Jansenists have not written very much or, rather, not very systematically on the question of “the beautiful” in the visual arts, nevertheless they have examined in their aphorisms and *pensées* the question of the legitimacy of painting and representation. Pascal, the greatest thinker of the movement, will provide the paradigms defining the aesthetic attitude of Jansenism.

Pascal’s most often quoted aphorism concerning painting is the following: “What a vanity this sort of painting (is); this painting which elicits admiration through its resemblance with things whose originals we do not admire!”<sup>29</sup> (*Quelle*

*vanité que la peinture qui attire l'admiration par la ressemblance de choses dont on n'admire point les originaux.)*

Pascal's formulation is not devoid of ambiguity. Did he have in mind the "vanity" of all painting, of the medium "painting" or only of the genre "which elicits admiration through resemblance with things"? A second ambiguity derives from his use of the word "things": did he mean "objects" and "the world of objects"? And did he include in it men and men's bodies? The meaning of the aphorism changes if one shifts the semantic emphasis from "painting" to "that sort of painting which . . .," and according to the various acceptations of the words "vanity" and "resemblance." The word "things" is also ambiguous. Yet its ambiguity may seem meaningless in the context of Jansenism: as a Jansenist, Pascal certainly saw both the world of things and of men as corrupt, so that any representation of them was necessarily infected with their corruption.

Yet in the case that "things" applies solely to the painting of objects, Pascal's *pensée* may be a sort of wordplay which needs to be made explicit: in the baroque age, the painting of objects belonged chiefly to the genre of *vanitas*. The *vanitas* (the word is culled from Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity!") were pictures that depicted objects as symbols of the ephemeral character of human life and human knowledge: dilapidated old books, wilted flowers, brittle crystal glasses, musical instruments lying in a heap beside human skulls, etc. If, indeed, this is the meaning of *vanité* in Pascal's sentence, the sense of the aphorism is the following: "What a vanity these *vanitas* are, because they elicit our admiration through resembling objects one does not admire."

It seems strange that a Jansenist philosopher should have intended to condemn precisely the pictorial genre that aims at showing the essential vanity of the flesh and the human world. And yet, this is not totally impossible. In the first place, a hedonistic conclusion might have been derived from the contemplation of too many *vanitas*: if life is as ephemeral as these pictures reveal it to be, the conclusion might be that it is better to choose a *carpe diem* philosophy than the austerity of prayer.

Another aspect of the *vanitas* may have been repugnant to the Jansenist philosopher: they might be construed as a glo-

rification of death. “Viva la Muerte!” after all, is an old Spanish scream. Was not one of the exercises advocated by Loyola (the arch enemy of Jansenist thinking) the holding in one’s hand of a human skull while praying?

However it may be, it is possible to shift the semantic emphasis of Pascal’s sentence on the “resemblance of things.” In this case, Pascal’s critique of painting is global and concerns the general concept of mimesis. What Pascal is rejecting, then, is mimesis as a legitimate means of pictorial creation.

Another theological factor that may have contributed to Pascal’s rejection of resemblance and mimesis was the Mosaic law. Pascal wrote the following letter to his beloved sister, Madame Pèrier:

*Whatever the resemblance between created Nature and its Creator—and notwithstanding the fact that the most minute and puny things in the universe represent the perfect unity that is only to be found in God through their own unity—it would be illegitimate to show the least respect for them. For there is no thing more abominable in the eyes of God and men than idolatry, for in idolatry one gives the creature the honor that belongs to the Creator. The Holy Scripture is full of the revenge wrecked by God on those who were guilty of it that is, of idolatry and the first commandment of the Law which contains all the other [commandments] forbids above all things to adore images.<sup>30</sup>*

In the *Pensées*, the prohibition against making idols is mentioned more than once, especially in aphorisms 597 and 498, where it is written that “the true Jew and the true Christian” should have been “without prophets. . . without a king, without princes, without sacrifices, without idols.”<sup>31</sup>

It is remarkable that it should have been this First Commandment, in Hebrew “lo ta’asses lekha pessel” (לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה), that was placed in the center of the picture by Champaigne, on a phylactery which enhances still more its holy character. There is little doubt that it is there as the result of an intentional act and not simply as a decorative element. The mere fact that it is readable proves this. The inscription was placed there as the result of an interior conflict in the soul of the painter: the Jansenist Champaigne knew that historical and religious pictures were not well regarded by his Port-Royal friends and that figurative, iconic pictures—pictures based on resemblance with

human shapes and human physiognomy—should, accordingly bear the mark of their own negativity.

Another picture by Philippe de Champaigne bears this “conflictual” mark. It is *Le Dernier de César*, in a private Parisian collection. It illustrates the passage of the Evangelium (Luke, XX, 21-26), in which Christ is confronted by “provocators,” Phariseans who want to trip him up and claim to need his advice as to whether a citizen of the Roman Empire should pay his dues to Caesar. Christ’s answer, “let us give Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God,” has become proverbial.

Like *The Supper in the House of Simon*, this picture presents a great number of Hebrew inscriptions. One of these represents an attempt at describing Jewish phylactery or *tefilin*. It is painted in the form of an inscription on a medieval Jewish headdress covering the head of the Pharisean standing at the right of Christ (figure 5). Champaigne knew that Jews in prayer were wont to attach a biblical inscription over their forehead, but he did not know exactly what a *tefilin* looked like. He also knew that the inscription had to be the main Jewish prayer, the Shema Israel. It is indeed the Shema Israel (Listen Israel!) that is represented on the cap of the Pharisean. He knew also that this prayer was essentially a reminder of the absolute unity of God (“God is One”)—of the absolute non-representability of this God—the only dogma to speak of in the Jewish faith. Thus, in Jansenistic times, representation had to be carried out against a background that constantly reminded one of the impossibility of “representing.”

FIGURE 5

Detail from Philippe de Champaigne, *Le Denier de César*.



Private collection, Paris.

*Inscription as subversion of a theological dogma: pictograms*

In both Judaism and Islam, there exists a type of inscription which can be seen essentially as a device which aims at subverting a fundamental interdiction: the interdiction of making images of living creatures and especially of human bodies. Both religions prohibit the idea of iconic representation (at least the making or drawing of objects in the shape of man and beast). Islamic and Jewish artists, then, are not permitted to draw iconically; the reproduction of the human body is forbidden to them. “Thou shalt not make images,” as Pascal said, is the first law of all laws.

What was the rationale behind this prohibition of images? Actually, the letter by Pascal, quoted above, defines this rationale quite exactly: one should not build a beautiful idol, the icon of a beautiful human body, because it would be a distortion of the imageless concept that is God and also because it would mean distracting men from the main object of the true cult, precisely this abstract and “shapeless” God. An icon, a body, is tantamount to a definition of God. Similarly, Koranic Allah is primarily a “conceptual” God, and his awesome beauty should not be discarded for the false beauty of idols.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the Semitic artists are condemned to work exclusively in the realms of architecture and decorative art. Indeed, one would look in vain for statues and figurines representing bodies in the art of the first centuries. And yet, the Semitic “artists of the book” devised one procedure for “turning” or subverting the essential prohibition which characterizes both Judaism and Islam: the pictogram, that is, the picture made with letters.

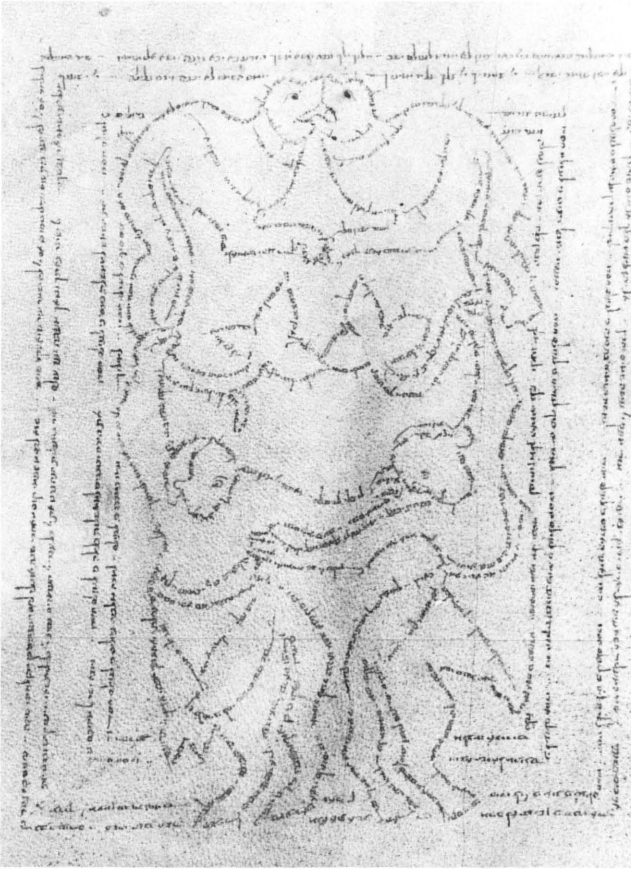
Thus, an Islamic pictogram shows a human face composed with the four letters of the name Allah (figure 6). Similarly, a medieval Jewish pictogram shows apes and men fighting. (figure 7).<sup>33</sup>

FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7

Pictogram, fourteenth-century Spanish



By permission of the National and University Library, Jerusalem.

Through the genre of the pictogram, the Semitic artists proclaim that they do not “draw” but “write” faces and bodies. They are theologically “safe,” and the law is also safe: it has merely been subverted through a sort of trick, but this trick is a legal one.

There would be much to write on what one might call “subversive legal procedure” in Judaism and Islam. In the Christian view, “tricking” God through such an emphasis on the letter (no pun intended!) of the law would certainly be considered a Pharisaic abomination. In Semitic theology, this is perfectly “kosher,” perfectly according to norm.<sup>34</sup>

This character of “legal” subversion by pictograms deserves to be discussed. In the fairly large body of specialized literature concerning the picto- or microgram (this includes a special issue of *Visible Language*),<sup>35</sup> very little has been written on the theological motivation behind these astonishing drawings. It seems fit, therefore, that a word about their essentially subversive character (and their theologically recognized and accepted “subversion”) should be said.

Subversion of an inscription by the pictures which contain it: “In the Beginning was the Word”:

The inscription bearing those words, the beginning sentence of the Saint John Evangelium, is found in Max Beckmann’s great *Temptation* triptych in the Bayrisches Museum in Munich. Once again it is written in reverse and can only be deciphered through contorting one’s head (figure 8). The picture seems to have been inspired by Flaubert’s *Temptation de Saint Antoine*,<sup>36</sup> and it is no wonder, therefore, that literacy connotations should be suggested by the actual presence of written words. Nevertheless, the inscription has not been put there merely as a sign of a “literariness.” It tells something of its own. In particular, it tells something through its position in the picture—it seems to have been trampled underfoot. The “saint” is sitting on the scroll, as though he had discarded it and had renounced reading it. Obviously possessed by voluptuous thoughts, he is staring at the opulent flesh of a semi-nude woman, the temptress, who is seated beside a mirror.

At first sight, this inscription seems to have a philosophico-theological function and to relate to the problematic first defined at the beginning of this introduction: Which comes first? Does the word come before the picture? The words of Saint John doubtlessly pose the question of origins. Simultaneously, the inscription is certainly set there for the sake of irony. Words are depicted as powerless against sex. Beckmann’s inscription also negates the power of the biblical word. The word cannot help the artist who confronts the power of the female body, the might of the “great female God” who presides over our destinies.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in *Temptation*, we have an inscription that is negated by a picture—and not an inscription which negates a representation as in the case of the Champaigne picture. Beckmann knew that he ran counter to the whole classical tradition in which pictures were seen as the exact translation of texts.<sup>38</sup> This was against the tradition represented, for instance,

FIGURE 8

Max Beckmann, *Temptation* (central panel) with detail below



Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst, München.



by the baroque French artist Nicholas Regnier and his idea that painting is “the invisible verb made visible.” (figure 9)

*Genius*, also painted by Max Beckmann, is a cityscape probably made after a sketch of the Sacré Coeur in Paris, as seen from a hotel window. A girl in her morning slip stretches against a window. Birds are perched on the roof-sills. A gigantic inscription—*GENIUS*—is located in the middle of the composition to achieve its full effect.<sup>39</sup> Without the

FIGURE 9

Nicholas Regnier, "Art is making the Verb visible."



Private collection, Paris.

inscription, the painting would merely be a typically Beckmannian cityscape. With it, what we have here, again, is a denegation by a genial painter of his own génie, of his genius.

This is the year 1945—March 1945, to be more exact—when the whole world seemed to be covered in blood in the final death throes of Nazism. Entries in Beckmann's journal mention the constant flight of bombers overhead. One of the entries reads "*Todesangst? Mais oui.*" (Fear of death? But yes.)<sup>40</sup> The genius of an artist did not carry much weight in the apocalyptic Europe of 1945.

*GENIUS* designates a pair of opaque spectacles, empty eyes which, perhaps, seem to the painter to be a reflection of his own eyes which have seen death and mass-death. One thinks

of a passage in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* in which a pair of empty spectacles, like empty eyes, watches over a valley of death.<sup>41</sup>

In our post-modern times, the pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, very like Max Beckmann, used a comic strip-like balloon inscription to debunk his own "genius." The work, painted in Lichtenstein's usual comic strip style, shows a girl looking in admiration at a canvas on its stretcher that we cannot see. It is entitled *Masterpiece*, another expression which, in the eyes of Lichtenstein (as before him, in those of Max Beckmann), perpetuates the romantic cult of the painter as "superhero," as deriving his talent from heaven—an expression which the picture intends to debunk and to subvert.<sup>42</sup> The title expresses the beautiful romantic lie about the supposedly superhuman "great artist," but the truth behind this lie is the naked reality of art-market values and prices. Lichtenstein, like Beckmann, is aware of the "economics of genius."

Thus, the subversive irony of the two artists is directed, first and foremost, against the merchants who have pitched their tents inside the Temple of Art. In our time, the subversion inherent in inscriptions set against representations also aims at the art market itself. It is directed toward the myth propagated by the art market itself. Demystification as well as subversion, or perhaps demystification through subversion of the visual, has become the ultimate objective.

- 1 Cf. *Les mots dans le dessin*, Catalogue of the 87th exhibition in the Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre 20 June-29 September, 1986.
  - 2 A number of studies have appeared on the question of "Titles"; see, for instance, in the series Urbino Pre-Publications in Semiotics and Language, *Pour une sémiotique du titre*, by Leo Hoek, No. 20/21, gen. febr. 1973/ Seri D.
  - 3 On this subject, see Claude Gandelman, "The Semiotics of Artistic Signatures: a Peircian Study." *American Journal of Semiotics*, Vol. 3, No. 3 1985, pp.73-109.
  - 4 Cf. "Eléments pour une sémiologie picturale," in *Etudes sémiologiques*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1972, pp.28-30.
  - 5 To some extent, it could be maintained that what Derrida has done is to apply iconographical—nay, iconological—methods to the written text, thereby turning it into a picture to be deconstructed.
  - 6 On the subject see especially Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, Schocken, New York, 1974.
  - 7 To borrow a concept evolved during the sixteenth-century mannerism in Europe.
  - 8 See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, 1960; J.R. Searle, *Speech Arts*, Cambridge University Press, 1969; O. Ducrot, *Dire et de pas dire*, Hermann, Paris, 1972., etc.
  - 9 *Illum oportet crescere, me autem minui*, from the *St John Evangelium*, III, 30: "It is fit that he should grow, I myself should diminish" or perhaps "For him to grow, I must diminish" is a sort of wordplay: the Baptist, as the observer knows, will be indeed, diminished—beheaded by the Herodian hangmen.
- The total picture shows the painter Grünewald standing in the right-hand wing of the triptych as Saint Sebastian pierced with arrows. Thus, through the inscription, the painter alludes to his essential character of a "martyr" (from Greek *martos*), that is, "witness" of Christ. We have here an utterance in which the painter "subverts himself": that is, negates his own quality of "artist," and proclaims himself essentially "chronicler" or "documentor" of Christ's greatness.
- 10 Reproduced, for instance, in Katherine Baetjer, *El Greco*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981, pp.32-34.
  - 11 It is a surprising paradox that modern non-figurative abstraction implies *continuity* in the viewing of a picture rather than *syncopé*! But this goes, perhaps, hand in hand, with the essential research for stability—that is, for the stability of the sign—that characterizes modern abstraction. On this question, see the conclusion of Claude Gandelman, "The Metastability of Signs/Metastability as a Sign." *Semiotica* (28), 1/2 pp.83-103.
  - 12 On this subject see Claude Gandelman, "The Scanning of Pictures." *Communication and Cognition*, June/July 1986, Vol. 19/1. pp.3-26.
  - 13 Reproduced in *Max Beckmann*, catalogue of the Haubrich Kunsthalle, Cologne, 19th April to 24th June 1984, p.112.
  - 14 On the subject of Beckmann and the cabala, see F.W. Fischer, *Max Beckmann: Symbol und Weltbild*, Munich, Fink, 1972, especially pp. 53, 65,67ff., 82, 87, 100 f., 108, 167ff., 175, 184.
  - 15 This fits well the personality of this saint, the founder of the first mendicant order in the thirteenth century.
  - 16 On this subject see Claude Gandelman, "Monde Renversé et Carré Sémiotique." *Neohelicon* XIV/1, 153-175. I am presently engaged in preparing a monographic study on the subject. Observe that medieval dialectics, with its "logic square" based on contraries and contradictions (the logic square delineated by Boethius, for instance) unites the idea of world and

anti-world, world and upside-down world.

17 Not only was the Luthern Reformation seen as the "setting right" of a world upside down, there took place in those days a true social revolution in which "the last became the first": the famous "peasant republic" of Thomas Muenzer.

18 Reproduced in *Cézanne* (London, Phaidon, 1947) figure 7. The title of the newspaper is *L'ÉVENEMENT*. Another very intersecting inscription by Cézanne is the name *ACHILLE EMPERAIRE PEINTRE* written in big stenciled letters as though on a crate in the portrait of Achille Empereire (*ibid.*, figure 6).

19 See, for instance, Picasso's *Still Life With Fruit and a Violin* (1913) with the title *..URNAL*. The lower half of the picture is actually a newspaper page pasted upside down on the canvas. Reproduced in Edward Fry, *Cubism*. I am citing from the French edition of the book (Bruxelle, "La Connaissance," Exclusivité Weber), Plate V.

20 Reproduced in *Pablo Picasso: Sammlung Marina Picasso*. Catalogue of the *Haus der Kunst*, Munich, 14 February 20 to April, 1981 (Prestel Publisher, Munich), p.217, Figure 366.

21 Among these, let me note—and, as I observed above, this is far from being an exhaustive list: *Stilleben mit Margariten*, "Still Life with Daisies," 1921; *Grosse Riviera Landschaft*, painted in 1940, which contains the words, *Le Temps*, name of a French daily paper of the time; his Carnival triptych, at the Iowa City Museum, which shows the name "Amsterdam" written upside down on what seems to be a piece of cardboard. All of these are reproduced in *Max Beckmann*, *ibid.*, respectively, pp.211,81,97.

22 Thus, the perlocutionary in Beckmann also has an illocutionary "met-apictorial" side.

23 Kandinsky's autobiography entitled "Reminiscences" in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, Vol. 1 (1901-1921) ed. K.C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (Boston, G.K. Hall, 1982) pp. 355-382. See especially 369-370.

24 Reproduced in *Max Beckmann: Retrospektive*, ed. by Carla Schulz-Hoffman and Judith C. Weiss (Munich, Prestel Verlag, 1984), p.269, figure 82.

25 Cf. M. Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982). The picture, in a Belgian private collection, is reproduced on the cover.

26 On this painting see Claude Gandelman, *Le Regard dans le Texte: peinture, écriture du Quattrocento au XXe siècle*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1986, pp.95-118.

27 Jansenism was also a sort of Christian revival of the Hebrew tongue. Thus, Sainte Beuve wrote of Antoine Le Maistre that he "devoured Hebrew books" and insisted that Nicole knew both Greek and Hebrew to perfection; cf. his *Port-Royal*, Paris, Hachette, 1922, Vol. I, p.392. Numerous Hebrew words are cited and discussed in the *Pensées* of Pascal.

28 Comparatively few studies have been written concerning this question of Jansenist aesthetics, and some of the writings devoted to the question even negate the idea of such a concept. Werner Weisbach, the author of one of the important books on baroque art, *The Baroque as Art of the Counter-Reformation (Der Barok als Kunst der Gegenreformation)*, wrote in another work of his "It would be an impossible task to trace a specific taste nurtured in Port-Royal and the attempts that were made to prove the existence of a Jansenist aesthetic are pure fabrications, based as they were on the inflating of the isolated opinions of individual Jansenist writers." *Franzoesische Malerei des XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, V.H. Keller, 1932, pp.226-288, my translation).

In "Le Jansénisme et l'Art Français," *Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Port-Royal*, Bernard Dorival, the author of a recent monograph on Philippe de Champaigne, is less categorical: "There are aesthetic ideas and a specific aesthetic attitude. . . . Yet one should not speak of Jansenist aesthetic proper. Nobody in Port-Royal ever exposed artistic conceptions in a systematic manner. One would search in vain for an equivalent of the famous letter written by Saint Bernard (Apologie a Guillaume de Saint Thierry) in all of their writings. In their abundant literature, there are only rare and summary judgments on art. Yet these are enough to delineate a common attitude when confronting the Beautiful—if not an aesthetics." (p.8, my translation)

29 Cf. the 1950 Pléiade edition of Pascal's works; aphorism No. 116.

30 "Car quelque ressemblance que la nature crée ait avec son Créateur, et encore que les moindres choses et les plus petites et les plus viles parties du monde représentent au moins par leur unité la parfaite unité qui ne se trouve qu'en Dieu, on ne peut pas légitimement leur porter le souverain respect, parce qu'il n'y a rien de si abominable aux yeux de Dieu et des hommes que l'idolâtrie, a cause qu'on y rend a la créature l'honneur qui n'est du qu'au Créateur. L'écriture est pleine des vengeances que Dieu a exercées sur ceux qui en ont été coupables, et le premier commandement du Dècalogue, qui enferme tous les autres, défend sur toutes choses d'adorer les images" (*Pléiade*, *Ibid.*, p.262.)

31 "sans prophètes. . . sans roi, sans princes, sans sacrifices, sans idols . . ." (*Pléiade*, *ibid.*, p.975).

32 A whole Talmudic treatise, *Avoda Zara*, expounds all sorts of techniques for "annulling" the idols or the beautiful fragments of idols found by religious Jews near Greek and Roman settlements.

33 From a fourteenth-century Jewish *Mahzor*. The National and University Library. Jerusalem.

34 In Jerusalem, there exists a special institute, Makhon Kol, where researchers, rabbis, and laymen, are entrusted with the task of *legally* "turning" Mosaic law. Instances of inventions which enable modern living to "adjust" to Mosaic law are sophistications like "the non-stop elevator" or the "Sabbath-automatic electrical switch"—devices which function during the Sabbath so that no human hand has to switch on the light or open the doors and press the buttons of elevators. In the age of robotics—the mind boggles at the possibilities it opens—everybody will be able to live a *comfortable* Jewish life.

35 On Jewish Pictograms see Stanly Farber, "Micrography: A Jewish Art Form." *Journal of Jewish Art*, Vol. 3/4. 1977, pp.12-24., and a response to it by Leila Avrin in the same journal, Vol. 6, 1979, pp.112-117. Leila Avrin and Colette Sirat produced a bilingual joint publication, *La Lettre Hébraïque et sa Signification/Micrography as Art*. Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1979.

On Islamic micrography, see Jerome Peignot, *Calligramme*, Paris, Dossiers Graphiques du Chêne, 1978, especially, pp.70-799, and above all, Abdelkebir Khatibi, *L'Art Calligraphique Arabe*, Paris, Le Chêne, 1976.

On Christian pictography, the latest book is an exhibition catalogue by Jeremy Adler and Ulrich Ernst, *Text als Figur: Visuelle Poesie von der Antike bis zur Moderne*, Exhibition of the Herzog August Bibliothek No. 56, 1st Sept. 1987 to 17 April 1988. See also the enormous bibliography at the end of the catalogue and my (forthcoming) review of it in *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, Paris. An author who does not appear in their bibliography is Paul Zumthor: "Carmina Figurata," in his *Langue, texte, énigme* (Paris, Seuil, 1975), pp.25-35, an essential work on the subject. For a more general overview, see the special issue, Pattern Poetry, *Visible Language*, volume XX, no. 1, (Winter 1986).

36 On this subject, see Clifford Amyx, "Max Beckmann: The Iconography of the Tryptichs." *Kenyon Review*, No.113, 1951, pp.613-623.

37 On this subject, see Friedhel W. Fischer, *Max Beckmann: Symbol und Weltbild* (Munich, W. Fink, 1972), pp. 110,136ff., 150ff.

38 See Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: Norton and Co., 1967).

39 That is, it can be described as "gigantic" in relation to the total scale of the picture.

40 Cf. Max Beckmann, *Tagebuecher: 1940-1950*, Munich, Vienna, Langen Mueller, 1979. Entries for 1944-1945. *Genius* is mentioned for the first time in March 1945.

41 "About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to break away from a certain area of land. This is a valley of ashes - a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke, and finally, with a transcendent effort, of ash-grey, men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. . . . But above the gray land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift suddenly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. Evidently, some wild wag of an oculist set them down there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens and then sank down himself into eternal blindness. . . . But his eyes, dimmed a little by the many paintless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground." (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, p.183.)

42 The picture is reproduced in many works on Lichtenstein or pop-art; see, for instance, *Art about Art*, Catalogue of the Whitney Museum Exhibition by that name, p.54.

43 Max Beckmann could still be considered an exponent of the Neue Sachlichkeit, or "New Objectivity" movement, at the time when he painted *Genius*.