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LOST IN SPACE

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**MODEST THEORY: SPATIAL
REFLEXIVITY IN ADRIAN STOKES'S
*PISANELLO***

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It all depends on one's philosophy of space.
Adrian Stokes, *Colour and Form* (1937)¹

In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate the importance of Adrian Stokes's reflexive interactions with space in the founding essay of his aesthetic oeuvre, *Pisanello: The First of Four Essays on the Tempio Malatestiano* (1928-30), which entails the establishment of polymorphous perversity derived from Freud as a model for the spectator's engagement with Italian Renaissance art works, most particularly the fifteenth-century Tempio Malatestiano commissioned by the tyrant of Rimini, Sigismondo da Malatesta, and the medals devised by Pisanello to celebrate the Tempio and its patron. Politically reactionary but sexually radical, Stokes's essay is a consciously *derrière-garde* intervention upon debates between the value of time-consciousness and spatiality in English art, art criticism, literature and philosophy, debates which were rife in the culture wars between the Bloomsbury circle of Clive Bell, Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf and the Vorticist circle of

¹ *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, edited by Lawrence Gowing, three volumes, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978, II, p. 65.

Gaudier-Brzeska, Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound in the London intelligentsia of the 1920s, but the essay also impinges on earlier debates in the Victorian aesthetic writing of Ruskin and Pater that Stokes would reformulate against the Bloomsbury circle through his attachment to the English, Neo-Hegelian, Idealist philosophy of F.H. Bradley which he had studied as an Oxford undergraduate in the early twenties.

Why, apart from antiquarian interest, go back to spatial debates of the 1920s when current interests preoccupy us with rhizomic and postcolonial conceptions of spatiality that appear to have superseded the Kantian-based conceptions of space on which the debates explored in this chapter depended? Why should even East European students of modernist culture concern themselves with what might seem such a parochially English matter?

A few years ago, Edward J. Soja painted a monolithic picture of what postmodernist discourses on space have superseded. Under the ancien regime:

Spatiality is reduced to a mental construct alone, a way of thinking, an ideational process in which the 'image' of reality takes epistemological precedence over the tangible substance and appearance of the real world. Social space folds into mental space, into diaphanous concepts of spatiality, which all too often takes us away from materialized social realities.

[. . .] The Kantian legacy of transcendental spatial idealism pervades every wing of the modern hermeneutic tradition, infiltrates Marxism's historical approach to spatiality, and has been central to the modern discipline of geography since its origins in the late nineteenth century. The vision of human geography that it induces is one in which the organization of space is projected from a mental ordering of phenomena, either intuitively given,

or relativized into many different 'ways of thinking'. These ideas about space are then typically allocated to categorical structures of cognition such as human nature or culture at its most general, or biographical experience at its most specific, or alternatively to 'science', to the Hegelian 'spirit', to the structuralist Marxist 'ideological-cultural domain', to an almost infinite variety of possible ideational compartments and sources of consciousness in-between.²

From this, we sense that Soja's own approach is going to be far more flexibly adjusted to the lived social realities of space and more reflexively 'situated' in relation to observers of cultural, geographical and political space. There is something starkly monumental of its own, however, about Soja's 'before and after' story of materialized social realities versus idealized mental constructs. It seems to entail a polemical reductionism which no doubt served a purpose at the time of writing.

While not returning to the spatial thinking that Soja critiques, the cultural geographer Nigel Thrift has recently entered a plea for 'Modest Theory' against certain excesses he perceives in poststructuralist theories of space (not necessarily Soja's). My own essay is organized in the light – and he will demonstrate what kind of light it is – of two of Thrift's reservations. He complains about

multiplying kinds of self-conscious commentaries on academic texts which now seem to be in vogue. . . these reflexive exercises too often end up simply patronising

² Edward J. Soja, *Postmodernist Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London and New York: Verso, 1989, p. 125.

4. *The Space of the Arts / Spațiul artelor*

readers, both through making the absurd assumption that readers naïvely believe that texts are in some way related to a referent out there and through making the assumption that a text about the way a text is produced is somehow more reflexive than a text with an actual object.³

Both towards Stokes's essay as the 'object' of my own writing and on behalf of Stokes's approach to the spatiality of Pisanello's medals, I follow Thrift in advocating what Latour calls

'infra-reflexivity', which includes in its credo: the deflation of methodology and its replacement by style; self-exemplification rather than self-reference; being on the side of the known rather than on the side of knowing; not being ashamed of weak explanations; working for equal relations between the represented and the representational; and automatically assuming 'transdisciplinarity'.⁴

Thus, I shall proceed not by endorsing Stokes's work through my own relation to it but by exposing the intertextual sources of his own swerving literary styles. (I shall also conclude with at least one 'weak explanation' of his reasons for writing as he does on space.)

Stokes's thesis about space in *Pisanello* is Grand in Soja's pejorative sense that its espousal of modernist reflexivity is intended to establish categories of spatial and temporal experience ('ways of thinking') that are true for all time. This brings me to the second of Thrift's reservations about current

³ Nigel Thrift, *Spatial Formations*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1999, p. xi.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xii.

critical practice. In a section entitled 'Modest Theory', Thrift says he

wants to avoid a theory-centred style, which continually avoids the taint of particularity. . . I want to point up the importance of practices as valid in themselves, existing without need of validation by some fully settled, monochromatic theory. . . I want to point to the perpetually inadequate (but not thereby unnecessary) powers of theory. In 1987, I wrote that my vision of theory was closer to a hand torch than a floodlight.⁵

I wish to do these things too. Stokes's theories of space and time are Grand, I have said, but appear less so when they are granted their taint of particularity by being grounded in the debates and enthusiasms from which they arose in their day. So situated, I believe they can be clearly understood for what they are, if not become generally useful again. Despite my painstaking exegesis of his texts, I am not aware of an evangelizing intent on my behalf for Stokes's theory of art and life beyond the desire to show that it is there and that it has multiple connections with other theories of art and life. The issue of space in Stokes's art criticism may seem a narrow tributary amongst the manifold adumbrations of an ultimately Platonic heritage, yet it was a varied and highly polemical affair with roots that go deep into nineteenth-century aesthetics.

What are the generic constituents of typical nineteenth-century essays on art, by Ruskin, say, or Pater, J.A. Symonds or, by token allowance, the Sitwell brothers, Osbert and Sacheverell? Much the same as in Stokes's *Four Essays on*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the Tempio Malatestiano: an interweave of biographical narrative, cultural mythology, art theory and ekphrasis of place and art. Ephrasis in its post-Romantic British sense is the creation of verbal equivalents to visual experience that brings art works to the imaginative eye, encouraging the dedicated reader to compare descriptions with original art works by travelling to them or by consulting books of illustrations that were often intended to facilitate travel across the tourist-orientated railways of Europe. 'Interweave' is too loose a term for what confronts the reader of *Pisanello*, however, for in rivalry with the modernist reflexivity of Ezra Pound's long experimental modernist poem, *The Cantos*, there are two reenactive principles at work throughout its text. One is synchronic, contrasting consciousness of time with spatiality, the other diachronic, encapsulating the mythic and aesthetic history of the West into the process of visual art-making from start to finish, concluding with descriptions of finished works of art, particularly medals. Ruskin and Pater were reflexive, certainly, in their creation of verbal equivalents for readers to respond to in carefully coordinated ways, but their word-paintings are not severed from their authors' deliberations with the foursquare independence intended for the *Four Essays on the Tempio Malatestiano*. Their format of four-squareness does not come from the *Cantos* only. It is part of their residualism that their respective treatments of Pisanello, Matteo de Pasti, Agostino di Duccio and Alberti seems to follow – though in a slightly different order – the chapter headings listed under 'Gli Artisti' in the second part of Corrado Ricci's richly illustrated *Il Tempio Malatestiano* (Paris and Milan, 1924),⁶

⁶ Corrado Ricci, *Il Tempio Malatestiano*, Rome and Milan: Casa Editrice d'Arte Bestetti & Tumminelli, 1924.

while the overall title seems influenced by *Four Essays on Baroque Art* that Sacheverell Sitwell had originally intended, with greater accuracy, for his more sporadically illustrated but intensely impressionistic *Southern Baroque Art* (1924).⁷ We shall see that the ekphraseis on which *Pisanello* ends only come alive when consulted against illustrations from G.F. Hill's *Pisanello* (London, 1925), but even if the second half of the essay had been published its readers would not have known how much they were missing since the passing footnote in which the book is recommended does not direct them to its illustrations. Nevertheless, the corrected version of *Pisanello* is more advanced in this respect than the companion 'second' essay on *Matteo* with its vague citations of historical authority from Pater and Burckhardt and more generic evocations of the Tempio's sculptural decorations. It was only when Stokes could incorporate large numbers of splendid collotype illustrations through Fabers in *The Quattro Cento* and *Stones of Rimini* a few years later (to Pound's great envy), that their mediating function between text and art works could be admitted and verbally corrected. *Pisanello* represents a fascinating transitional case between *Matteo* and these later books perhaps because any admission of dependency on Hill's illustrations would have compromised the implied directness between text and actual art works, a relationship so very much more direct than the fanciful illustrations supplied by the inexpert Henry Strater for *A Draft of XVI Cantos* and Gladys Hynes for *XXX Cantos*. Particularly in Hynes' case, Pound's taste in visual art, as Donald Davie remarked, was 'Pre-Raphaelite'.

⁷ Sarah Bradford, *Sacheverell Sitwell: Splendours and Miseries*, London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993, p. 121.

But Stokes's sharp focus on the medals also implies something broader about his intervention not only on the Cantos but also on the tradition of art books specifically addressing and illustrating the art and artists commissioned by Sigismondo. Hill's *Pisanello* is a relatively modest contribution in a sequence of books including the very lavish *Un Condottiere au XV^e Siècle: Études sur les Lettres et les Arts à la Cour des Malatesta d'après Les Papiers d'État des Archives d'Italie* (Paris, 1882) by Charles Yriarte and Ricci's *Il Tempio Malatestiano* already mentioned. In an indispensable study of the Tempio's political and social historiography from the seventeenth century to Pound's early Cantos, Lawrence S. Rainey shows that "several major studies. . . all deluxe volumes" resulted from a "feverish interest" surrounding "the Italian medals of the Renaissance, interest that fuelled a massive production of scholarship and staggering increases in prices on the art market".⁸ The phenomenon was fifty years old by the time Stokes began the *Four Essays*. Hugh Kenner exaggerates when he claims that "by the time (1923) the Malatesta Cantos were written their subject had been erased from literate consciousness".⁹ There may even have been in the mid-twenties an active revival of interest in the aristocratic culture of the early Renaissance to judge from the claims of Harold Acton, a still younger acolyte of the Sitwells who on leaving Oxford in 1925 contemplated a change from poetry to prose history:

⁸ Lawrence S. Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture: Text, History, and the Malatesta Cantos*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 101.

⁹ Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era: The Age of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis*, London: Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 77.

A reaction had set in, which Fascism did nothing to stem. But this did not daunt me, for Victorian puritanism had emasculated these writings. The truths hinted at by Burckhardt, Gobineau and Symonds remained to be told; and they deserved a fresh and vigorous interpretation. The families of Sforza, d'Este, Malatesta, Visconti, Baglioni – an endless list – every one of them was a gold-mine to the historian with vision and the courage to see his subject whole . . .¹⁰

Stokes *assumed* the existence of an interest in the Tempio, as we saw in a letter to Davie: “my ignorance was such at that time, and for a long time afterwards, that an interest in the Tempio seemed. . . anything but peculiar”. Rainey argues that Burckhardt’s *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* of 1860 had been foundational in this respect, for it made the art and architecture of the Tempio serve as an embodiment of Sigismondo’s life for the fictional projection of middle-class doubts and conflicts into an “ideal of European civilization” that grim contemporary history of world war and colonial exploitation could not appease as easily. Burckhardt was naturally oblivious to the “crass political considerations” that *actually* led the papacy to undermine a minor warlord with charges of murder, rape, adultery, incest, sodomy, sacrilege, perjury, and treason, “as major powers are wont to do” when the balance of their power is threatened.¹¹ Instead, Burckhardt specifically invoked Sigismondo

to exemplify the twin aspects united in the “whole man” of the Renaissance: “Unscrupulousness, impiety, military

¹⁰ Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, London: Methuen & Co, 1948, pp. 165-6.

¹¹ Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture*, p. 206.

skill, and high culture have been seldom so combined in one individual as in Sigismondo Malatesta." To be sure, he was also a "monster". . . . But His success was staggering. . . . Sigismondo had become a figure of European stature – and for European civilization.¹²

Pound's permutation of the many versions of this myth was that the "vicissitudes of Sigismondo are no longer ambiguities in the genealogy of bourgeois culture, but a rebellious and contestatory gesture directed against it".¹³ Stokes's precise attitude towards Pound's gesture will concern us later, but that he is becoming acquainted with the myth under Pound's guidance is clearly announced by the first footnote to *Matteo*: "Besides Burckhart's *The Renaissance in Italy* . . . I have struck no general book on the subject that either had helped me or that I can consider of any worth."¹⁴ The idea of Sigismondo as a model for the salvation of modern Europe bears closely on the development of textual strategies in *Pisanello*. Despite the sometimes maddening obscurities and inferential overloading of a twenty-six-year-old's first sally into aesthetic writing, denounced in 1945 as "This unspeakable MS",¹⁵ the woof and weave of the full version of *Pisanello* is

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁴ Adrian Stokes, "Matteo de Pasti: Second of Four Essays on the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini. Part of a Work in Progress on the Italian Renaissance" (1928), paginated typescript, Tate Archive, p. 2 n. In the ellipsis 'Pater's essays' are mentioned, but Pater never addressed the Tempio and it is to cultural mythology that this refers. In addition to Rainey, Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'Adrian Stokes et Ezra Pound', , *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, 25 (1988), pp. 21-4, supplies German and Italian historiography on the Tempio of relevance to Stokes and Pound.

¹⁵ Stokes's full note on the manuscript written in this year reads: "This unspeakable MS also the Pasti is not torn up because it may yet yield

accomplished through two mutually reinforcing strategies which endow it with a remarkable overall structure.

I

The first entails a synchronic device of *epideictic*, a rhetoric of praise and blame that alternates throughout the first third of the essay to establish metaphysical dualities whose accumulation creates an effect of enduring stasis rather than dialectical change. It gathers and divides the contrasting echoes of many authors' voices into good and bad, underwritten by ultimately Kantian categories of time and space, North and South. The transition between the first two paragraphs of the essay hinges, for example, on a change from deliberately confusing Paterian effects of musical fluidity and oceanic interiority –

A sense of unreality darkens the day and sours the night.
Each effect, each care, they are not real, and the wind
comes up, blows the rudderless beam of life dropping as
she is driven the ballast of preoccupation.¹⁶

– to a vision of a landscape whose stable mass effects – “The very sun puts a constriction upon him to manifest himself”¹⁷ – accord with Pound's regard for the “Effect of a decent climate where a man leaves his nerve-set open, or allows it to tune-in

certain images and phrases. In the advent of my death, both should be destroyed at once.” 1945, however, was the year that Pound, mentor of this essay, was on trial for his life in America on charges of treason arising from his war-time broadcasts on Mussolini's radio.

¹⁶ Adrian Stokes, “Pisanello: First of Four essays on the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini”, edited by Richard Read, *Comparative Criticism*, 17 (1995), p. 161.

¹⁷ Stokes, “Pisanello”, *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 162.

to its ambience" in the 1928 *Cavalcanti* essay. It would be natural to suppose, therefore, that Stokes has borrowed this strategy of alternation from the Hell Cantos (XIV-XV) where Pound moves between repulsive language characteristic of the damned and poetic glimpses of escape when souse hardens into the solid order of marble. But since the whole essay works against the religiosity of such Dantean eschatology, we look to other sources.

It is difficult to detect much sympathy in Stokes's works for the hard, anti-humanist exteriority Wyndham Lewis extolled in his visual art, novels and essays, but his *Times and Western Man* (1927), which was sometimes reviewed with Stokes's *Sunrise in the West* (1926),¹⁸ may have provided background support for the synchronic dimension of Stokes's dichotomies. As a critical and philosophical work it is more intent on Blasting the awfulness of the advocates of time-consciousness – Stein, Joyce, Proust, Valéry, Diaghileff, Bergson, Spengler and Whitehead – than Blessing the merits of spatiality evident enough in his own works, but in the 'transfer' articulated in the chapter on 'Spatialization and Concreteness' we find something close to a model for the alternations between temporal and spatial experience to which Stokes subjects the reader of *Pisanello*:

By this proposed transfer from the beautiful *objective, material* world of common-sense, over to the 'organic' world of chronological mentalism, you lose not only the clearness of outline, the static beauty, of the things you

¹⁸ See, for example, Geoffrey Sainsbury, "Anti-Spengler", Review of Stokes, *Sunrise in the West*; Henri Massis, *Defence of the West*; and Wynham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, *New Adelphi*, n.s., 1 (1927-8), 162-7.

commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them.¹⁹

Admittedly certain features in Lewis's scheme do not fit Stokes's: obsession with outline, chilly attacks on the body as a locus of exclusively interior sensations and unconsciousness as an undesirably shared state of common humanity all run contrary to Stokes's demonstrations.²⁰ But in a book in which Pater's musical analogy for art appears several times, Lewis's attack on music is closer to Stokes's outlook on reality than it is to Pound's:

In the case of music there is no concrete shape existing altogether, once and for all, or *spatially*. There is a shape, an organic completion, but it is a pure creature of *time*. It cannot spatialize itself. The representation goes on inside your mind, in making use of your memory. Its concreteness is not objective but subjective.²¹

Significantly for a later stage of my argument, Lewis places Pound, for whom the Tempio was in an ulterior sense 'a song caught in the stone',²² firmly on the side of sentimentalists of music and time past.²³

¹⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1927, p. 175. Another passage, *Ibid.*, p. 442, in the chapter on "Space and Time", also conveys the generic feel of spatial philosophy versus time-philosophy.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

²² Pound, quoted in an earlier draft of the Cantos by D'Epiro, *A Touch of Rhetoric*, p. 28.

²³ See Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, Book 1, Chapter 9, "Ezra Pound, etc.", and Chapter 15, "A Man in Love with the Past".

Stokes does not name names in *Pisanello* (apart from Pater's), but several literary voices seem to reverberate in his excoriations of time-consciousness. By 1928, it was a long time since he used to recite by heart a certain passage from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in ecstatic aspiration from the confines of Rugby School towards exotic Eastern climes that subsequent travel to India after leaving university would exhausted his enthusiasm for:

Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico. It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing, that feeling.²⁴

Rejecting the limitless Conradian journey as an anti-spatial phenomenon, Stokes declares in an early paragraph of *Pisanello* that 'You are wrong' to yearn after

unvarnished Nature . . . the real thing, the buffeting sea, ice, endless expanse, the unforgiving greys of England, the miasmatic glare of the Orient, . . . Greenland, Brazil, the Atlantic and the Siberian steppes.

Lewis, too had railed against the 'sultry oppressiveness of the chocolate-cream tropics . . . of Conrad' in *Time and Western Man*,²⁵ though here Stokes collocates hot and cold extremes

²⁴ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* ((1902), Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1979, p. 50 Evidence that Stokes recited this passage from school is from Joseph Macleod's interview with the present author on 31 September 1982.

²⁵ Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 80.

of climate to stand together in contrast to the clemency and human scale of the Mediterranean. Significantly, 'England' is sidelined as a 'foreign' place from that perspective.

After banishing music for 'this job' in his opening sentence, a more contemporary voice less certainly appears. It is of general relevance to the present chapter and the next that, in an undated letter from Rapallo of circa 1927, Stokes writes a little more than playfully to Edward Sackville-West a fascinating indication of his current range of cultural allegiances:

Incidentally, it is fatuous to regard me only as a joke. Anybody who ever does anything is always a joke incidentally and you will write better books if you go out and be a joke at Knole²⁶ and forget those bloody Bloomsburys who are, at the best, and it is nice of me to say so, feckless hyenas.

After giving his 'Love', he adds in an initially pensive postscript:

I admit Virginia Wolf is real genius, and at any rate, *To the Lighthouse* is, but I can't feel that is the fault of Dadie,²⁷ Dada, or that mountebank, Bell.

With a stroke of a pen that links to 'Dada', he adds:

That's alright, like all these things, if you get it first hand, that is to say if you are a fellow-provincial creating a hullabaloo in Paris. What chance of the chic hunt and

²⁶ Edward Sackville-West's family seat at Sevenoaks, Kent, to which Stokes was sometimes a visitor.

²⁷ Nickname of George Ryland, Shakespeare scholar at King's College, Cambridge, and fringe member of the Bloomsbury Group.

Raymond Mortimer if Paris were not americanized [sic]? Fancy being dictated to, too, by slippery Eliot, pursed mouth. I prefer to be slipshod. You are a pack of Americans, and it will serve you right if Lewis gets on your track. Set a thief to catch a thief I'm going to have a high old time one day.²⁸

The 'high old time' presumably refers to Stokes's identification with Lewis as a cultural outsider who got on Roger Fry's track with the 'Round Robin' that denounced his dealings at the Omega Workshop with its "mid-Victorian languish of the neck, and . . . 'greenery-yallery', despite the Post-What-Not fashionableness of its draperies", as Lewis had written.²⁹ The time for Stokes to play up would come very soon. He had met Woolf briefly in the company of Osbert Sitwell at Syracuse in April 1927.³⁰ However little he thought of the aesthetic doctrine of 'significant form' promulgated by Clive Bell and refined by Roger Fry, none had better conveyed the 'feel' of it from intimate acquaintance with its authors than Woolf in her account of Lily Briscoe's process of painting above the ocean at St Ives in *To the Lighthouse*, published in this very year. As Lily exchanges the fluidity of life for attempted concentration on her semi-abstract painting her "soul is reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without projection to all the blasts of doubt".³¹ Recovering her concentration and

²⁸ Stokes to Edward Sackville-West, 15 October 1927.

²⁹ Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wynham Lewis*, Boston, London, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 43 and Chapter 4, *passim*.

³⁰ Letter from Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell, 21 April 1927, in *A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol III: 1923-1928*, edited by Nigel Nicolson, London: The Hogarth Press, 1977, p. 365.

³¹ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Frogmore, St Albans: Granada, 1977, p. 148.

dabbing at her paints again, “this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current ‘as she loses’ consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance . . . while she modelled it with greens and blues”.³² It is within the range of these effects that Stokes evokes the anxieties of music in the metaphysical metaphors of his opening paragraph, for Lily’s painting is simultaneous with the progress of Mr Ramsay’s boat towards the lighthouse. “Each effect, each care, they are not real, and the wind comes up, blows the rudderless beam of life dropping as she is driven the ballast of preoccupations. . . Upon this flood the soul may trespass in the storm.”³³

There may be more positive indebtedness to Woolf in the next paragraph when the type of Sigismondo, exposed to Mediterranean scenery, is “bound by clamp to manifestation, and on this pile [i.e. the Tempio] hues and shadows take the softness of their ease”.³⁴ Loosening her hold on subject-matter – “Is it a boat? Is it a cork?” – Lily had taken up “the problem of space” again a little later in the novel:

The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that weight. Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly’s wing: but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron.

Still, as she lays on a red and a grey “to model her way into the hollow there”,³⁵ it is not at all Stokes’s notion of the means by which good art should be accomplished that comes across.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³³ Stokes, “Pisanello”, *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 161.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁵ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, p. 159.

The rift between good design and surface colour is too wide, should not, in fact, exist. It is too temporal, too disjunctive, but is at least a very firm alignment of the process of making with the final work of art that results at the end of the novel. It is at least reflexive.

In a later swing of the pendulum back to unsatisfying temporal experience, Stokes elides Pater's musicality with Eliot's mawkish longings for religious redemption.³⁶ The passage is perhaps unbearable except as an *intentionally* unreadable parody of snatches from *Portrait of a Lady*, *Prufrock* and *Ash Wednesday*, all associated with the emotional and physical *wetness* of England:

And now hear the barrel-organ in the next street *healing* the wet afternoon. "What'll I do" – After all, after *all!* Here is amen to the thin hope, and end to the process for a time, to that dreary tissue of event and planning, to that thin hope, the abstracted ambition, urgent yet fluid desire, to decisions and labour avoiding with no great measure of success the dampness of the wet afternoon, ill-nourished by a worn thread of exaltation remembered. *After* all! It's no fun straining after a gnat. Down tools and expand; bundle the moods, the reality together, carefully fold up the thin thread of hope – you will need it again – empty all into the generous sack of sound.³⁷

³⁶ Perhaps Stokes had caught wind that Eliot was going to respond to an editors' invitation of 25 October 1928 to publish "Second Thoughts about Humanism" in the March 1929 issue of *The Hound and Horn*. Eliot's essay engaged with the ongoing debate on the new humanism in those pages with "a plea for religious humanism" which Stokes would have disliked: "Man is man", Eliot wrote, "because he can recognize spiritual realities not because he can invent them". See Leonard Greenbaum, *The Hound and Horn*, p. 82 and 84, and the entire chapter on "Humanism", pp. 77-95.

³⁷ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 175.

The aim is to spoof Eliot's lapses into poetic gloom as premeditated opportunities for subsequent redemptive flights. We hear the prose mumble of the poet giving compositional instructions to himself: "carefully fold up the thin thread of hope – you will need it again". As Stokes wrote in a notebook of 1940: "Eliot is so old-fashioned with his cold despair, his Graeco-Christian Eumenides."³⁸ The technique used in all these instances seeks to open itself not just to a single author or literary tradition but also to a recurring state of mind, predominantly spatial or temporal. The danger, of course, is that if they pass unnoticed, the allusions will draw upon themselves the censure meant for their targets, but this was less likely at a time when this kind of modernist literature was fresh in readers' memories.

II

I have harped mostly on the negative side of Stokes's synchronic oppositions between time-consciousness and spatiality. Both sides of the dualism are amplified and turned into a historical dialectic in a history of successive phases of Greek, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque aesthetics that succeeds a discussion of modern art on which the published *Hound and Horn* version finishes. Greek art and culture is spatial and outward, Gothic is temporal and inward, Renaissance is spatial and outwards but synthesizes a Gothic and Christian conception of the inner soul that gives rise to proto-modernist conceptions of unconsciousness and individuality externalised for the first time in early Renaissance art. The very structure of the *Malatesta Cantos* emulates the compression of Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance forms at

³⁸ Stokes, Draft of *Inside Out* (1940), Tate Gallery Archive.

the Tempio,³⁹ but the significance of Stokes's cultural history is that it interpolates in positive terms a complex conception of individual psychology into the simpler, negatively formulated art historical development such as Pound had outlined in his 1928 *Cavalcanti* essay with the conclusion that "the sculpture of the Quattrocento discovered 'personality'". Before that, according to Pound, Greek sculpture was pure plastic, the "God is inside the stone", with latent but arrested force. Then, in the statue of the Etruscan Apolla at Villa Giulia, Rome, "the 'god is inside', but the psychology is merely that of an Hallowe'en pumpkin". It derives from

fear motive . . . here reduced to the simple briskness of small boy amused at startling his grandma. This is a long way from Greek statues, in which "the faces don't matter".⁴⁰

Pointing out that this meagre evidence of inner personality revives in the quattrocento portrait bust, Pound goes on to chart the decline of psychology into the social anecdote and 'carnal tissue' of 'post-peruginian painting' from Raphael to Rubens:

The people are corpus, corpuscular, but not in the strict sense 'animate,' it is no longer the body of air clothed in the body of fire; it no longer radiates, light no longer moves from the eye, there is a great deal of meat, shock absorbing, perhaps – at any rate absorbent.⁴¹

³⁹ See Carroll F. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980, p. 45.

⁴⁰ Ezra Pound, "Mediaevalism and Mediaevalism (*Guido Cavalcanti*)", *The Dial*, 84:3 (1928), p. 235.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

'Shock absorbing' perhaps infers a carnal obsession with sexual intercourse shorn of the religious purity that Pound applauded in the pagan vitalism of the Troubadour poets revived at the Tempio.

Stokes is at pains to provide an *explanation* of the development sketched aphoristically by Pound. Addressing the entire difference between the Greek and *quattrocento* conceptions of the soul, he finds the facelessness of Greek sculpture slightly sinister (crediting Pound's remark in a footnote). And whereas he is normally content to let innumerable echoes of Pater resonate in his text without comment, he has already exposed the debt to Pater in Pound's phrase "no longer the body of air clothed in the body of fire" by quoting at greater length than I do here the relevant passage from Pater's essay in *Greek Studies*, 'A Study of Dionysus: the Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew':

The body of man, indeed, was for the Greek, still the genuine work of Prometheus; its connection with earth and air asserted in many a legend not shaded down, as with us, through innumerable stages of descent, but direct and immediate. . .⁴²

His crucial manipulation of Pound's brief history, as Pater had inspired it, is the interpolation of a dialectical explanation for the emergence of personality in terms of the Freudian unconscious. The Greek ordering of nature into gardens had

⁴² Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 179 and 206 n. 17. The full reference is to Walter Pater, "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew", *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays*, Second edition, London: Macmillan and Col Ltd, 1901, p. 33.

exiled much desire into the untouchable recesses within man. Here depths gathered, soul is gathering soon to invade body, to reduce this splendour to be but the crust upon inner reality.

The eruption of soul in medieval Christianity brings with it the religious torments of inner fear, but, stripped of fear in the early Renaissance, it provides an inwardly animated external face for the sculptural figures of the Tempio: “accepting cohesion as wrought upon the Without by the Greeks, originate[s] a demand for similarly concentrated expression for the new Within”.⁴³ The significance of this is that in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ego and the Id* (respectively translated in 1922 and 1927), Freud had inserted the ‘preconscious’ or that which is “latent but capable of becoming conscious” between the unconscious and conscious layers of the mind.⁴⁴ He accords these layers a topological arrangement, the ego being “a position in space. It must lie on the borderline between outside and inside; it must be turned towards the external world and must envelop the other psychical systems”.⁴⁵ Stokes’s historicization of the “crust upon inner reality” in *Pisanello* is his first use of these ideas in a development that would lead to the overtly Freudian formulations of his 1945 essay *Concerning Art and Metapsychology* where our perceptual system is conceived in kindred terms as “a kind of hardened rind that withstands an overplus of stimulus”. Since there is no such protection from stimulus from within, Freud finds, according to Stokes,

⁴³ Stokes, “Pisanello”, *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 181.

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, 1953-1975, vol. 19, p. 15.

⁴⁵ *Works of Freud*, vol. 18, p. 24.

“the origin of the projection mechanism to be a defence against inner stimulus” exactly as in *Pisanello*.⁴⁶ The implication is that our perceptions of the outside world, especially when organized by art, reflect the structure of our minds. Whereas Pound had regarded the decline into carnality as a form of idolatry, Stokes regarded the absence of psychology from pre-Gothic art as a pernicious limitation. The conversion of a static dualism between effects of temporal and spatial consciousness into a historical dialectic concerning the unconscious origins of the artistic expression of individual personality creates a perfect mesh with the second reenactive strategy: the process of medallic art-making from start to finish that extends throughout the essay and to which I now turn.

III

This second strategy is diachronic. It enacts a parallel between changes in language over the entire essay and the coagulation of molten metals and mental images into vividly representational solid shapes. These shapes offer the same impact upon and resistance to the reader’s understanding as the medal did to the critic and its subject did to the medallist. Yet the first stage of the creative process enacted in *Pisanello* seems surprisingly unsculptural. This is because, in setting the scene for the patron’s first idea, it conveys a nascency whose vagueness is precise in evoking the origins of sculptural invention in human fantasy.

Take some virgin land, not barren, you must see, but under
the presidency of blue sky, virgin in beauty but devised
into terraces habitable with olives, take some wind, breeze

⁴⁶ Adrian Stokes, “Concerning Art and Metapsychology”, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 26 (1945), 178.

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that does not peer into chinks, take the evening star, a sea without a tide, a hurried dawn, take more blue sky, soft and blue, take them and thrust them into a man. It will be a tight fit. But a perfect fit, so perfect that music will not bubble up from subterranean cracks. In that man the passions will be constrained to run within an orbit as lucent and rounded as the blue sky, the intellect will fix upon the morning star above the sister terraces, green upon stone. His body anointed by the dawn, contested by the sea, will offer smooth and firm surface to the changing light of dusk.⁴⁷

Whatever else is happening in this passage, and I shall argue that a great deal is, it is a portrait of Pisanello, or his type, drawing artistic inspiration from passionately spontaneous meditation of Mediterranean space, countryside and sky. The seed for this is the Platonic 'form' of *Canto XXV* (1928):

"as the sculptor sees the form in the air
before he sets hand to mallet
and as he sees the in, and the through,
the four sides
not the one face to the painter"⁴⁸

In siding with the sculptor's three-dimensional imagining against the painter's single plan of operation Pound sexualizes, without abandoning, the transcendentalism of Ruskin's 'imagination penetrative' from *Modern Painters* II. But Stokes's man does not see through solid matter. In a manner more Aristotelian than Platonic his eye is stopped by the limits of the physical world. Gaining his inspiration from inhabitable

⁴⁷ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, pp. 161-2.

⁴⁸ *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 117.

landscape, the artistic material – such stone from a quarry – is not yet before him, and he is rather the subject of penetration than the penetrator. Yet, the insertion of a landscape into the man anticipates the union of the medal's two sides: "a profile on one side, a composition emblematic of this individual upon the reverse", as we read towards the end of the essay.⁴⁹ Pound's 'four sides' are reduced to two.

But what are we to make of the strange command to take the elements of a landscape and "thrust them into a man"? Let us not ignore the obvious possibilities, the humorous conceit of a cooking recipe ("take two eggs") with its mocking glance at *Genesis* ("And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground . . .").⁵⁰ A more remarkable likelihood, however, is that the imperative impulse behind so lyrical a passage derives from Stokes's fixation as an undergraduate and in his two first books on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley, in whose chapter on 'The Meanings of Self' in *Appearance and Reality* (1893) appears the source of Stokes's command:

Take a section through the man at any given moment. You will then find a mass of feelings, and thoughts, and sensations, which come to him as the world of things and other persons, and again as himself; and this contains, of course, his views, and his wishes about everything. Everything, self and not-self, and what is not distinguished as either, in short the total filling of the man's soul at this or that moment – we may understand this when we ask what is the individual at a given time.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 188.

⁵⁰ *Genesis*, 2:7.

⁵¹ F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*, Third impression of second edition, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., 1899, p. 77.

The quasi-mathematical aspect of this analysis is probably an attempt by Bradley to try out an 'economy of the self' symptomatic of moral *philosophy's* aspiration to become moral *science* at this time.⁵² For an adequate definition of self-identity, however, Bradley becomes dissatisfied with a momentary cross-section of this kind because there might be more to the self than can be summated in its state at any given moment. He therefore returns a second kind, as Stokes did, to his anatomical metaphor and changes it to examine "the constant average mass" of a man's soul:

Take, as before, a section completely through the man, and expose his total psychical contents; only now take this section at different times, and remove what seems exceptional. The residue will be the normal and ordinary matter, which fills his experience; and this is the self of the individual. This self will contain, as before, the perceived environment – in short, the not-self so far as that is for the self – but it will contain now only the usual or average not-self. . . . It is his habitual disposition and contents, and it is not his changes from day to day and from hour to hour. These contents are not merely the man's internal feelings, or merely that which he reflects on as his self. They consist quite as essentially in the outward environment, so far as relation to that makes the man what he is. For, if we try to take the man apart from certain places and persons, we have altered his life so much that he is not his usual self.⁵³

Stokes is clearly taken by the rhetorical boldness of Bradley's anatomical command, but the idea of a self

⁵² I am grateful to Dr Sue Ashford for this suggestion.

⁵³ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 78.

comprised of a not-self derived from the constancy of an outward environment becomes crucial to his image. Here, if ever there was one, is a spatialization of temporal phenomena that supports the two sides of Stokes's opposition within the man. As sublimated terms, self and not-self are differentiated and related to each other by two thematic images throughout the essay: the suit of armour enforcing separation, and the wheel (standing for the rim of the medal on which both sides may roll) that dramatizes action of the self upon the not-self. But equally crucial is that the tendency of the aesthetic process Stokes sets in motion here runs directly against the general direction of the philosopher's argument, for the intent of Bradley's chapter as a whole is a withering attack upon the possibility of defining self-hood at all. The taking of an anatomical section is a dry philosophical joke because what it examines is necessarily already dead (which is why Stokes changes it). For Bradley the case for an *averaged* identity, along economic lines, fails with all other attempts at defining a general self as a "problem insoluble because it is meaningless".⁵⁴ But for Stokes, the existence of distinctive (if not economically defined) selfhood is assumed. Although Stokes's gazer starts out as something of an everyman figure, implying that *anyone* will gain clearer self-definition in a Mediterranean environment, "Sigismondo, . . . more than all others of his age, manifested himself in the acts of the body",⁵⁵ and, more fulsomely still in *Matteo*, he argues that the art inspired by Sigismondo produces "the most complete emblem of personality ever achieved in Europe".⁵⁶ But I am begging

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

⁵⁵ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 183.

⁵⁶ Stokes, "Matteo", p. 21.

the complex question of agency in the identity of the figure that confronts us in this opening passage of sculptural invention.

Who is it, then, who does the thrusting of the landscape into the man? Alternative answers displace each other in rapid and confusing succession. In the first instance, sustaining the stamping metaphor which runs throughout the essay, it is Mediterranean Nature that does it to the human faculty of sense conceived of in Aristotelian terms as “that which is receptive of sensible forms apart from their matter, as wax receives the imprint of the signet-ring apart from the iron or gold of which it is made”.⁵⁷ But it is also the author (Stokes) who does it to the reader, and the reader who does it to the figure, who as Sigismondo tells Pisanello to do it, but as Pisanello does it to Sigismondo by fashioning his features and fusing them with the landscape emblematic of his qualities on the reverse side of the medal, though Pisanello does this in obedience to Sigismondo’s command. Pisanello’s double image, in turn, does it to the spectator, who to begin with is the author, but is then – as an imaginary spectator reading through the text to the ‘original’ – the reader again, only it is the reader enjoined by the author and all these other agencies to participate in interpretation by leaning over the page, the medal, the profile and the depicted landscape, all at once. A conceptual flickering results as these alternatives of object and agent fuse with and displace each other, but let us remember that this is only the beginning of the process. We are coming full circle, and we, he, they will continue to turn, as we shall see, on the imaginary rim of the medal.

⁵⁷ David Summers’ paraphrase in *The Judgement of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 55.

Many, though not all, of these possibilities are anticipated by a passage from Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Fuoco*, translated as *The Flame of Life*, which Stokes read in Venice in 1925.⁵⁸ There is a similar coercive mode of personal address:

Through the necessity of coining your own idea, you are brought to bend over a medal of Pisanello's; you come in conjunction with the sign of one who is among the greatest stylists that have appeared in the world; the most frankly Hellenic soul of the whole Renaissance. And your brow at once becomes marked by a ray of light.⁵⁹

Here is the implied parallel between leaning over a medal and leaning over the book which describes it, so that originality sparks further originality, the reader's from the writer's from the artist's, without apparent mediation, though it is also perhaps the brow of the figure represented in the medal that sheds the Italian Renaissance light of 'virtu' on these other brows. Such virtu is the kind that Pound explained in the 1928 *Cavalcanti* and later in the *Cantos* as "the light of the doer . . . cleaving to it".⁶⁰

If these are the agents of thrusting, who is it, then, who does the holding? "It is a tight fit, this holding of one man's emblem."⁶¹ All of the above candidates, again, obviously. But

⁵⁸ Richard Wollheim gives the date and place of first reading on Stokes's authority in "Introduction", *The Image in Form: Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972, p. v.

⁵⁹ Gabriele D'Annunzio, *The Flame of Life*, trans. Cassandra Vivaria, London: Heinemann, 1900, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁰ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, London: Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 251.

⁶¹ *Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, I, 139. The component words are found in "Pisanello", but the sentence comes from *The Quattro Cento*.

if the manufacture of medals is extended to the emblems allegedly commemorating Sigismondo's love for his mistress in the Tempio, it is also Isotta, "she who commanded his ultimate passion" and was the ultimate recipient of his impregnating power over others, who does the holding.⁶² The heterosexual dimension of this activity was likely to have been supplied by Will Brangwen's gift of a butter-stamper to his future wife Anna in D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915):

The first thing he made for her was a butter-stamper. . . . Strange, to lift the stamp and see that eagle-beaked bird raising its breast to her. She loved creating it over and over again. And every time she looked, it seemed a new thing come to life. Every piece of butter became this strange, vital emblem.⁶³

Will Brangwen, influenced by Ruskin's naturalism and the neo-Gothicism of William Morris's Arts and Crafts Movement,⁶⁴ has used his imaginative skill as a craftsman's to lighten the burden of Anna's domestic drudgery with this gift. First and second orders of creativity are involved here. The carving is actively original, her appreciation of it is passive and mechanical, her menial work enriched by mentally gestating the romantic potential of a phallic phoenix that will always 'rise again' to imprint the butter of her womb with the virility of its tactile image. Stokes's theory of carving and modelling (1933-34) is anticipated here, but the clue is not yet taken up,

⁶² Stokes, "Matteo", p. 19.

⁶³ D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, 1915; Middlesex: Penguin, 1969, p. 116.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113: "The influence of Ruskin had stimulated him to a pleasure in the medieval forms."

and something is wrong with the butter-stamp as a precedent for *Pisanello* here. It is not just the material – wood instead of stone – or the carver’s style – rough instead of smooth – or the social register – working-class rather than aristocratic – but the gendering of Lawrence’s image which is wrong, for in the passage of originary fantasy the landscape is held by a man, not a woman, by virtue of an action that is tantamount to sexual assault, even homosexual rape. The issue of patronage through which Sigismondo delegates the expression of his love onto the artists is irrelevant to Lawrence’s heterosexually more direct scenario.

If one looks at the chain of command in *Pisanello*, it is the male artists who must act as ‘midwife’ by gestating the patron’s erotic emblem en route to the medals, the building and the eyes of the eventual spectators.⁶⁵ If this appropriates female biology to extend masculine control over the entire spectrum of cultural reproduction, it cannot prevent, and indeed ensures, convulsive sado-masochistic reversals entailed in thrusting and holding. Only at the very beginning and end of the line does Isotta confer heterosexuality on these unstable patterns of domination and displacement by supplying the inspiration of her appearance and the understanding of her mind to the art that Sigismondo has commissioned for her, but even then she is sexually ambiguous, inflating and flattening herself in the imaginative registers of spectating. Writing of Diana, Isotta’s representative goddess in the Tempio relief, Stokes asks: “Is she a Gothic wench inflated by night airs into the round, or has the stateliness of the hollow, classic Diana suffered the compression of youth?”⁶⁶ The sexual ambiguity attributed to

⁶⁵ Stokes, “Pisanello”, *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 171.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

her here is still more pronounced in the companion-piece *Matteo*. In rather excruciating attempts to conjure up Sigismondo's tender romantic side, her secret is her youth: "Feminine occupations and habit of thought were weak in her."⁶⁷ Attracted to his vulnerability, it is *she* who made *him* "open like the petals of the eglantine".⁶⁸ Her calm and reassuring intellectuality "removed from her the feminine cares" until, "as youth wore off, feminine characteristic began to appear a little" in querulous requests for marriage. Lacking all credibility except "to pass for a boy, mirror . . . of his self-esteem",⁶⁹ she more closely resembles a younger partner in a schoolboy "romantic friendship" than the mistress of a Renaissance tyrant.⁷⁰ In responding to Sigismondo's fantasies the indeterminate sexuality of Isotta and the male artists' role as 'midwife' prepares us for the possibility that *Pisanello* consciously engages with the tradition reaching from Winckelman to E.M. Forster of

the homoerotic Mediterranean myth: allusions to Antiquity, descriptions of the virility of Southern men and the liberating influence of the Italian climate and mentality,

⁶⁷ Stokes, "Matteo", p. 27.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁰ Cf. Alec Waugh's public school novel *Pleasure*, London: Grant Richards Ltd, 1921, p. 58: "Tenderly Geoffrey gazed at the features that during the last months had stamped themselves so indelibly upon his heart. How well he knew each shadow of that loved face, the long, slow line of the throat, the weak almost girlish chin." Cf. his brother Evelyn's mention of "romantic friendship" at Oxford between Sebastian Flyte and the author-character in Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder: A Novel*, 1945; London: Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1946, p. 90.

the contrast between the North and the South in spirit and desire.⁷¹

In particular, since the word 'blue' was used with passionate obscurity throughout his earlier book of 1926, *Sunrise in the West*, the underdetermined vacancy of and overdetermined desire for 'more blue sky' in the originary sculptural fantasy perhaps calls directly on the codes of J.A. Symonds' *In the Key of Blue* (1903) where a young Italian man in shades of blue is arranged in the landscape of the Veneto so that the clear erotic significance of Whistlerian colour symphonies can be recomposed again and again in alternating poetry and prose.⁷² A very open and inclusive act of sexual intercourse is predicated for the relationship between art works and spectators in the scheme of *Pisanello*.

But otherwise, Stokes does not use Symonds' words. Before I proceed to the concretization of sculptural fantasy in the later stages of medal-making, there is one further, extremely important dimension of agency that must concern us in the opening fantasy. It is the origin of the words Stokes uses to convey the passions stimulated by "terraces habitable with olives", by the "wind", "blue sky", and "the morning star above the sister terraces, green upon the stone" in the landscape thrust into the man. Whatever its erotic charge and degree of cultivation, the landscape is a purely physical, natural entity. Its components seem to celebrate any number of landscape images from the early *Cantos*. Emerging from Hell into Purgatory, again, in *Canto XVI*, for example, Pound

⁷¹ Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 97.

⁷² J.A. Symonds, *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays*, London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1893, *passim*.

entered the quiet air
the new sky,
The light as after a sun-set

while the “founders”, with Sigismondo amongst them, stand “gazing at the mounts of their cities”.⁷³ But Stokes’s images equally accommodate the prose both of Ruskin’s “terraced gardens” abating “with their grey-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks . . . sloping under lucent sand” as seen by an imaginary bird migrating from South to North in “The Nature of Gothic” chapter of *Stones of Venice II*,⁷⁴ and the Venetian landscape of Pater’s essay on *The School of Giorgione* “instinct . . . with some wind-searched brightness and energy; of which fine air the blue peak, clearly defined in the distance, is, as it were, the visible pledge”.⁷⁵ Stokes is directly exposing the Victorian sources that operate covertly in the *Cantos* so as to reinvigorate the English tradition of response to Italian landscape. As a consequence, the dislocated poetry of Pound’s intertextual modernism appears neologistic. The sheer familiarity of these Victorian sources establishes an effect of timeless naturalism against abstract tendencies that Stokes wished to resist in Pound’s verse. If Pound buried his debts to Ruskin and Pater, however, Stokes’s exposure of them is in

⁷³ *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 69.

⁷⁴ *The Works of John Ruskin*, edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 volumes, George Allen: London, 1903-1912, vol. 10, p. 186. Another source for the whole passage is Ruskin’s description of Giorgione’s wholesome childhood environment in “The Two Boyhoods”, *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 374-75.

⁷⁵ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald L. Hill, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1980, Pater, p. 114.

turn indebted to a principle of *German* cultural politics that is buried both in his text and in Pound's.

Turning Pound's poetry back into prose produces energy, which reenacts Sigismondo's powers of externalisation, the cardinal principal of the fabricating process that Stokes called "the emblematic" throughout most of his early work. In *Pisanello*, it is activated by the medal turning on its rim:

When the soul of that man moves, . . . passionate, lit,
moulded, rounded, formed into coagulated mass; . . . it turns
broad upon itself like the solid wheel of Boadicea's
chariot, stone from the jagged mountain, hammered to
stable shape and concentrated strength.⁷⁶

Stephen Kite plausibly associates this with the great river Oceanus running round the animated depiction of ancient life on the shield of Achilles, "like a frame to the picture . . . forming the rim of the shield, in some metal of dark blue" which Pater described in *The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture*.⁷⁷ But quite apart from the very Poundian "hammering", it is the wheel that turns rather than any aqueous depiction on it. Far closer to Stokes are the "heavy cars, as a triumph, / . . . heavy on wheel" in *Canto XX*, a context which supplies connection both with Pisanello's Salustio medal and Sigismondo's use of carts to transport marbles stolen from Ravenna to embellish the Tempio.⁷⁸ One is likely to miss a larger point in tracking sources too minutely, however. The roll of Pisanello's medal dramatizes Sigismondo's capacity to turn inner flux into stable

⁷⁶ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 162.

⁷⁷ Pater, *Greek Studies*, p. 195, and Stephen Kite, "'The Glory of New-Found Space': Tectonics and Spatiality in Adrian Stokes's *Pisanello*", *Journal of Architecture*, 4, Autumn 1999, 308-9.

⁷⁸ *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 94.

achievements. Recalling Stokes's recourse to Bradley's idea of the self and not-self, it is a Kantian axle of reflexive consciousness that action illuminates, as remarked upon skeptically here by Terry Eagleton:

The aesthetic is simply the state in which common knowledge, in the very act of reaching out to its object, suddenly arrests and rounds upon itself, forgetting its referent for a magical moment and attending instead, in a wondering flash of self-estrangement, to the miraculously convenient way in which its inmost structure seems somehow geared to the comprehension of the real.⁷⁹

But the speed with which Stokes conceives Pisanello's medals rolling inner into outer reality is infinitely accelerated by the Nietzschean doctrine of externalisation:

The fierceness of a young body may be all the more apparent for an encasement of gleaming mail. So, Humanism brought within one circle of affirmation the smooth to enhance the rough. No such solidity if something was left over in the landscape or where the needs of the body are sacrificed to the "inner life". Externalisation is the mode of existence, the activity of soul in the body and the mind. Freedom is when all can be taken in, and all given out created, so living progresses neither within nor without . . .⁸⁰

Nietzschean, as I am about to explain, it is, but also Ruskinian, for Stokes's image of the young male body in a suit

⁷⁹ Terry Eagleton, "The Ideology of the Aesthetic", *The Politics of Pleasure: Aesthetics and Cultural Theory*, Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992, p. 23.

⁸⁰ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 162.

of gleaming mail stands for Alberti's gleaming Renaissance encasement around the Gothic church of San Francesco at the Tempio, an image that in turn derives from "this under muscular power of brickwork . . . to be clothed with the defence of the brightness of marble" that Ruskin ascribes to the Byzantine basilica of St Mark's in *Stones of Venice II*.⁸¹ Both Stokes's and Ruskin's sense of the encased church as a concealing and defended body reflects the implicit middle-class ideology of *homo clausus*. Working in tandem with the suppressed flatulence of "music that will not bubble up from subterranean cracks" in Stokes's opening image, this, as Dorinda explains (in the different context of Revolutionary France), is "a middle class body . . . which was preoccupied above all else with the maintenance of the unbroken physical outline, permitting no outsider a glimpse into the untidy conflicts within".⁸² For all the prosing of the Poundian landscape into (relatively) more familiar – and middle-class – Victorian language, the mode of externalization also reinforces more active principles of aristocracy derived from Nietzsche's type of the master in *The Genealogy of Morals*. "The master is said to react precisely because he acts his reactions."⁸³ The opposite type is the slave, the man of *ressentiment*: "As a result of his type the man of *ressentiment* does not 'react': his reaction is endless, it is felt instead of being acted." This determines the textual strategy by which Pater is 'Pound-ed' in Stokes's early

⁸¹ *Works of John Ruskin*, Vol. 10, 98-99.

⁸² Outram, Dorinda, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture*, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 67.

⁸³ For brevity and clarity I use the paraphrases of Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, London: Athlone Press, 1988, p. 111.

work. "The introversion and quietism of Pater, one might say, were replaced by the 'hardness,' extraversion, energy and stridency of Nietzsche."⁸⁴ Correspondingly, Nietzsche's insistence upon the active man's engagement with "the direct image of the object" motivates Stokes's revival of Ruskinian prose against abstract tendencies in Pound's poetry. Thus, Nietzsche's second system of reactive forces, "in which reaction is not a reaction to traces but becomes a reaction to the present excitation or to the direct image of the object", so that "then the corresponding reaction is itself acted",⁸⁵ will form the core of Stokes's emblematic theory of "art twice over" in which the "creative act itself, the turning of subject into concrete and particular and individual form, *is* the symbol".⁸⁶ Correspondingly, he would use against Pound (but also against Pater and the Bloomsbury critics) the Nietzschean claim that in the "process of accusation in *ressentiment* . . . reactive forces 'project' an abstract and neutralised image of force".⁸⁷ But if Sigismondo's enemies are easy to derogate by opposition of this kind, his relationship with those who serve him either as warriors or artists is far more problematical. Both Stokes and Pound appear to justify the artist's subordination to his master in terms of a Nietzschean proviso that surely underlies their understanding of Renaissance patronage: the "active type . . . includes reactive forces but ones that are defined by a capacity for obeying or being acted".⁸⁸ Rather than prevent, this actually

⁸⁴ T.H. Gibbons, unpublished Ph.D., quoted in David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation*, Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 112.

⁸⁶ *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, I, p. 41 and 61.

⁸⁷ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 123.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

ensures the convulsive sado-masochistic reversals of power I have indicated – everyone doing what everyone tells them to but everyone telling everyone else what to do. The problem embraces Stokes's relation to Pound. At one point in the essay, Stokes poses a rhetorical question: "When did men command, not retaliate upon as do the romantics, but command maturity?" In view of Pound's role as token "patron" of the essay, the subversion of his poetry through prose enactment is a deeply troubled act of allegiance on Stokes's part, though very real relations of power were, of course, involved in the making of Pisanello's medals.⁸⁹

The rolling image is picked up again with an analogous compression of historical periods – Renaissance upon Gothic upon Roman – when the ekphraseis of Pisanello's medals begin in the last third of the essay:

And just as the Roman coins that the Este fingered or turned on a cloth . . . molecules of iron compressed to make . . . a broad rim by which to roll the engraving without drag, resounding as it turns; so the larger medal, swollen . . . , holds the princely subject, his virtue in perfect distribution . . . , the root passions in their new circle, holds them by force in the round, just as the thick, unanimous wheels of Boadicea's chariot were first hammered smooth from the unbroken stone.⁹⁰

Intended, to produce the thrill of a "tight fit" between language and art work, the richest meanings of the representational writing that ensues derives from a problematic

⁸⁹ See Joanna Woods-Marsden, "'Ritratto al Naturale': Questions of Realism and Idealism in Early Renaissance Portraits", *Art Journal*, 46, Fall 1987, 209-216.

⁹⁰ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 188.

in which “mimesis appears as the founding condition of modernism itself”.⁹¹ Unlike the *Cantos*, Stokes’s language is not a semi-abstract modern supplement to the original work of art, as with the “silver beaks rising and crossing” in *Canto XVII*, for example (which conflates the gondolas of Venice with the sculpture of Brancusi).⁹² Instead, it exhibits a determination to refer to historical objects far more ‘directly’ than anything to be found in the pages of Pater or Pound:

‘Venator Intrepidus.’ The king, a youth, represented in ‘heroic nudity’, has leaped on to the back of a crusty boar. Where he slips astride he holds with his knees to the bristling flanks, impetus of the leap carrying his upper body forward, to the head of the beast whose right ear he seizes with left hand, his trunk thus twisted, swings back the free arm and shoulder, his knife ready. Strain upon his thighs. The monster is stopping short, held, too, by the other ear in the mouth of a dog. No less the virtu of the beast is fired in contact.⁹³

That this and other passages mean little without comparison with the originals recalls Donald Davie’s argument of 1982 that “once the prose could not be checked against particular art-works experienced”, Stokes’s criticism became reductively dependent upon Melanie Klein’s psychoanalytic theories of reparation to which analysis would expose him.⁹⁴ *Pisanello*

⁹¹ Peter Nicholls, “Apes and Familiars: Modernism, Mimesis and the Work of Wyndham Lewis”, *Textual Practice*, 6: 3, Winter 1992, 434. Cf. *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, vol. 1, p. 95: “Cultural values determine what is considered to be imitation.”

⁹² *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, London: Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 78.

⁹³ Stokes, “Pisanello”, *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 202.

⁹⁴ Donald Davie, “Adrian Stokes Revisited”, *Paideuma*, 12 (1983), 190.

is indeed pre-Kleinian in its resistance to reparative ideas on art. As he writes of Eliot: “art can do more than heal”. The solid definition of the medal depends here on a reflexive effect of nesting as the language cuts an image of the carving of a knifing of a boar. If the effect is of solidity, these multiple incisions also generate sadistic pleasure, which fits in better with Leo Bersani’s emphatically post-Kleinian view of art. For Bersani art enacts the destructive pleasures of a liberating narcissism:

It is as if the inherently solipsistic nature of sexuality . . . allowed for a development of autoeroticism in which the source of pleasure and, consequently, the object of desire became the very experience of *ébranlement* or self-shattering. The need to repeat that experience can be thought of as an ordinary sublimation [with] no connotation whatsoever of reparation or restitution It is as if a certain split occurred in consciousness, a split that paradoxically is also the first experience of self-integration. In this self-reflexive move, a pleasurable shattered consciousness becomes aware of itself as the object of its desire.⁹⁵

Aside from parallels with Bersani’s contemporary theory, the historical interest of *Pisanello* is that it offers insight into fantasies of violent domination that Stokes would bring to his analysis with Klein in subsequent years. Would it not be fair, then, to detect a reversal of such domination in Stokes’s description of medals when they appear to exhibit an almost abject religance upon Pound’s notion of the “flattened sphere” from his 1917 *Gaudier-Brzeska: a Memoir*?

⁹⁵ Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption*, Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 37.

In the reverse of the Visconti medal, it is even more obviously Gothic strength that almost breaks through the circle of the design. One more thrust with the thunderous lances of Duke and knight will snap the pressure that for a moment bends the composition into the round.⁹⁶

Does this not already vindicate the charges of plagiarism that Pound would eventually launch at *Stones of Rimini*? Does it not resemble still more clearly certain phrases in Gaudier-Brzeska's own palimpsest of world sculptural history reprinted in Pound's *Memoir*: stone-age man's "OPULENT MATURITY WAS CONVEX", for example; the Hamite Vortex of Egypt credited with having "RETAINED AS MUCH OF THE SPHERE AS COULD ROUND THE SHARPNESS OF THE PARALLELOGRAM"; "PLASTIC SOUL", in general, as "INTENSITY OF LIFE BURSTING THE PLANE"; or the Semitic Vortex which "elevated the sphere in a splendid squatness and created the HORIZONTAL"?⁹⁷ An unattributed quotation of the phrase "articulation of masses" in *Pisanello* shows Stokes's awkward acknowledgment of all these suspicions,⁹⁸ for it approximates to Gaudier's statement in the *Memoir*: "I shall present my emotions by the ARRANGEMENT OF MY SURFACES, THE PLANES AND LINES BY WHICH THEY ARE DEFINED".⁹⁹ Though Gaudier's flattened sphere idea is evident enough in *Pisanello*, by referring it to Pisanello's medals Stokes is pointing with originality and pertinence to a Renaissance source for Gaudier's and Pound's ideas. Parochially confining his attention to the West, as we might

⁹⁶ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 190.

⁹⁷ Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*, 1917; London: Laidlaw & Laidlaw Ltd., n. d., pp. 9-10.

⁹⁸ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 199.

⁹⁹ Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 28.

see it now, he is not just cutting language so that it fits Pisanello's medals and the Tempio, he is also *undercutting* other people's language by revealing its visual sources.

And yet, read closely, the dominating force of Sigismondo's personality as an inspiration to the Tempio artists and Pisanello himself throughout Stokes's essay is balanced by an abject, futile side which appears when the frustrations of injustice bursts forth from him in impotent or self-destructive rage:

Terrible the tragedy, the harassment, this bullying of a stronger type by expansive and reserved intelligence . . . Original fervour of the delicate soul dries up, and thought comes pale, heavy with jagged tooth. Bitterness is an abatement of the storm that leaves behind wracks of pinched thunder, toneless, hollow. But no anguish might flatten Sigismondo; on the contrary, each blow, tragic because no further retaliation is possible, must increase the unsnappable tension. His terrible energy will be redoubled, his rage furnished with larger bellows so that he dies a young man at fifty-one, exploded.¹⁰⁰

Which other, far younger character of this kind is literally 'exploded' in a modern novel if not Stevie in Joseph Conrad's great study of Nietzschean *ressentiment* in nineteenth-century London, *The Secret Agent* (1907)? Before the innocent, intellectually handicapped Stevie is blown to pieces by the home-made bomb which his wicked, comfort-seeking step-father Mr Verloc induces him to plant at Greenwich Observatory to appease his insurrectory masters at the Imperial Russian Embassy, Conrad explicitly compares the vascillating aspects of his personality to the sides of a medal. Here Stevie

¹⁰⁰ Stokes, "Pisanello", *Comparative Criticism* edition, p. 169.

has just witnessed an act of gratuitous cruelty to a horse in a London street:

In the face of anything which affected directly or indirectly his morbid dread of pain, Stevie ended by turning vicious. A magnanimous indignation swelled his frail chest to bursting, and caused his candid eyes to quint. Supremely wise in knowing his own powerlessness, Stevie was not wise enough to restrain his passions. The tenderness of his universal charity had two phases as indissolubly joined and connected as the reverse and obverse sides of a medal. The anguish of immoderate compassion was succeeded by the pain of an innocent but pitiless rage.¹⁰¹

The specific context of this passage makes the general contrast in the novel between innocent passion and corrupt prudence absolutely clear. It is a contrast that underwrites Stokes's portrait of Sigismondo. That portrait is hardly innocent in a sexual sense, yet the fact of his bisexuality as a condition of nature becomes for Stokes a symbol of resistance to the aggressive heterosexuality that Pound grants to the personality of Sigismondo in the *Cantos*. and to Pound's intolerance of sexual 'deviancy' in life. The symbol mirrors, perhaps, Stokes's unstable self-subordination to Pound.

In a late Socratic dialogue with Donald Meltzer M.D. a practising Kleinian psychoanalyst, Stokes specifically points again to sexual intercourse as a principle of engagement with

¹⁰¹ Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale*, 1907; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979, pp. 140-141. Stokes's schoolfriend Joseph Macleod informed in the interview recorded above that Stokes had written an essay on this novel extolling it as Conrad's best. The essay was thought of sufficient quality to send to its author who deigned to agree. The novel was deeply ingrained in Stokes's mind.

art works. Now, however, the sado-masochistic aspect of such intercourse is condemned as regressive and primitive, and Stokes makes his medically qualified interlocutor introduce the whole idea:

In acts of love, we know very well that processes both of projecting love and good objects, as well as of introjecting from the love-partner, are going on. In a similar way, in a destructive intercourse the projecting of bad parts of the self and of the destroyed objects, as well as the masochistic submission of one's self to this form of abuse are enacted. There is a parallel, then, in the intercourse between the artist and the viewer . . .¹⁰²

Stokes himself would add only "that the relationship exists, as does the parallel, only because of the essential otherness, the character of self-subsistent entity [of a work of art] . . . that has been created".¹⁰³ The detachment afforded by art makes even the most violent forms of intercourse worthy of contemplation, though he goes on to speak of "the nineteenth-century intertwining themes of 'sadism, masochism, homosexuality'" as if he had heard about them only from the pages of Mario Praz's *Romantic Agony* (1933).¹⁰⁴ In attributing the cause of what, from a psychoanalytic perspective, he now calls "bad projective identification" to the "mode of liberation from cruel Victorian smugness", it is as if he is recalling, but also disavowing, a former self who had been intent in the

¹⁰² Donald Meltzer, in dialogue with Stokes, "Concerning the Social Basis of Art", in *Painting and the Inner World* (1963), *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, III, 226.

¹⁰³ Stokes, *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

sexual radicalism of *Pisanello* on “a high old time” in agitating against prevailing intolerance of sexual diversity. As an older statesman of British aesthetics in these later years of his life, he seems to be assuming the respectability he had formerly eschewed when defending the implied eroticism of Sigismondo’s relations with his artists.

REZUMAT

În acest text voi încerca să demonstrez importanța interacțiunilor reflexive cu spațiul ale lui Adrian Stoke, din textul fondator al capodoperei sale estetice, *Pisanello: Primul din cele patru eseuri asupra Templului malatestian* (1928-1930), care propune „perversitatea polimorfă” drept model al angajării spectatorului cu opera de artă renascentistă. Reacționară din punct de vedere politic, dar radicală din perspectivă sexuală, lucrarea este o intervenție în chip deliberat de ariergardă privitoare la dezbaterile despre conștiința temporală și spațialitate în arta engleză, critica adiacentă ei, în literatură și filosofie care erau cu toate extrem de vii în războaiele culturale purtate între cercul Bloomsbury al lui Clive Bell, Roger Fry și Virginia Woolf, pe de o parte, și cercul Vorticist al lui Gaudier-Brzeska, Wyndham Lewis și Ezra Pound, pe de altă parte, cercuri ale intelighenției londoneze a anilor douăzeci. De asemenea, tema este semnificativă și pentru înțelegerea unor dezbateri anterioare, în estetica victoriană scrisă de Ruskin și Pater, pe care Stoke le va reformula împotriva grupului Bloomsbury datorită atașamentului său pentru filosofia engleză, idealistă, neo-hegeliană a lui F.H.Bradley, pe care autorul nostru a studiat-o la începutul anilor douăzeci la Oxford.

De ce, în afara unui interes anticar, să ne întoarcem la dezbaterele despre spațiu ale anilor douăzeci, când preocupările curente ne împing spre concepții ale spațialității rizomactice și post-coloniale, care par să fi depășit concepțiile kantiene despre spațiu pe care par să se întemeieze dezbaterele de care mă preocup? De ce un student est-european al culturii moderne să se preocupe de ceea ce pare în chip evident o chestiune strict engleză? Nu numai pentru că acest document fondator al operei sale poate fi acum interpretat în versiunea sa intactă, așa cum este ea descifrată de *Pisanello*, drept o etapă elocventă, de cotitură, a esteticii britanice și, în consecință, a istoriei esteticii europene și coloniale. Imaginea critică a spațialității înțeleasă estetic ca un întreg nu poate fi înțeleasă fără această parte a sa, câtă vreme a avut o influență puternică asupra artiștilor, criticilor și teoreticienilor de mai târziu. Neglijarea acestui subtil și recalcitrant critic se datorează în principal bogăției aluzive a scrisului său, aici explicată parțial cel puțin, care oferă o rezistență la interpretare comparabilă cu aceea a operelor de artă cărora li se adresează.