The purpose of this paper is to examine the way that we ordinarily approach abstract painting and expression. The notion of expression is at second glance a difficult one. Although we seem to work with an intuitive understanding that art is expressive, philosophy has historically failed to develop this intuition. The attempt shall be to do precisely that; to extract the concept of expression which is implied by what is routinely said and to enable it with the necessary philosophical rigour. This will be achieved with the help of some neurology; specifically studies related to the phenomenon of synaesthesia.

The concept of expression adopted will be made to bear on abstract painting, as compared with representational painting, in order to explain how the former could be deemed to be more directly expressive than the latter. The result is a sensible, yet sensual, way of understanding abstract painting.
Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my supervisor John Heintz for his constant encouragement and guidance. Thanks to Renilda Van Aerden and Merlette Schnell for their patience and guidance through the administrative jungle. If it were not for the generous help of my parents, Maurice and Marie, I would not have survived the last year. My thanks to them for their help.

My thesis is dedicated to Todd Jackson.
Table of Contents

Approval Page ................................................................. ii
Abstract ........................................................................ iii
Acknowledgments ........................................................... iv
Table of Contents ............................................................ v
Chapter 1 .......................................................................... 1
  §1 Introduction ................................................................... 1
  §2 The Negative Thesis ......................................................... 3
Chapter 2 .......................................................................... 11
  §1 The Concept of Intuition ...................................................... 11
  §2 The Musical Analogy ......................................................... 12
  §3 Primitivisation ............................................................... 19
Chapter 3 .......................................................................... 22
  §1 The Call for a Theory of Expression ................................. 22
  §2 The Nettle ................................................................... 22
  §3 The Canonical Position ................................................... 25
Chapter 4 .......................................................................... 36
  §1 New Expression ............................................................. 36
  §2 Expression in Abstract Art ............................................... 50
Chapter 5 .......................................................................... 53
  §1 Overview ................................................................... 53
  §2 The Flip Side ............................................................... 54
  §3 Neural Basis ................................................................. 57
  §4 Affective Synaesthesia ................................................... 61
Chapter 6...........................................................................................................66

§1 Putting the Artwork Back Together.................................................................66

§2 Artists meet Expression..................................................................................66

§3 Final Thoughts..............................................................................................72

§4 Implications..................................................................................................74

References..........................................................................................................77

Bibliography.......................................................................................................80
Chapter 1

§1 Introduction

The pictorial content of a representational painting is understood once the drama from which it is taken is understood. Caravaggio’s *The Taking of Christ*, 1602, presents a freeze-frame of biblical drama. To feel the expressivity of this painting one needs to identify and understand that biblical context. This is why museum guides and art critics attempt to draw out the expressivity of the painting by reminding us of this biblical context. For example, a recent review explained the painting in the following way:

“Caravaggio’s painting catches Jesus at the very moment when he learns that the answer to his prayer is “no”–the twinge of that recognition shoots across his face. Yet Jesus ended his prayer in Gethsemane with an act of resignation, “not as I will, but as Thou wilt”, and Caravaggio also conveys his obedience, by showing how Jesus sways with the crush of people moving in on him from the painting’s right, a rush that reaches its climax in the screaming, fleeing disciple on the far left –John, to judge by his age, his anguished attractiveness, and traditional colors of his clothes. Jesus sways, but he also stands his ground amid the knot of grasping hands, the cloying intimacy of Judas’ kiss, and his beloved disciple’s panicked desertion; the victim of this drama is also its strongest character” (Rowland, 11)

But perhaps the call for such an explanation is too much to ask. Could painting be expressive without the need for this kind of ‘unpacking’? Surely a painting that presents itself fully, there on the canvas, will be more directly expressive than one which is hinged to something external. These are the intuitions behind abstract painting. This paper aims to explore these intuitions and the concept of expression which is being employed. This exploration can be formulated into a positive and a negative thesis.

---

1I will ask that we employ a commonsensical distinction between non-representational decoration or ornamentation (e.g. arabesque or hispano moresque decor) and abstract painting.
The Positive Thesis

Already the notion that art is expressive is being assumed. Among artists, art critics and even pedestrian thinkers there is an intuitive acceptance of this notion. As Collingwood points out,

"The idea [that art is expressive] is familiar to every artist, and to every one else who has any acquaintance with the arts. To state it is not to state a philosophical theory or definition of art; it is to state a fact or supposed fact about which, when we have sufficiently identified it, we shall have to later theorize philosophically" (Collingwood, 113)

I aim to explore and explain the peculiar notion of ‘expression’ that is implied by what is being said. ‘Expression’ will be explained in terms of what is being expressed and to whom it is being expressed. Furthermore, we will move towards the claim that abstract art (or art in which representation is of diminished importance) is more directly expressive than representational art. This is an initially alarming thought as many people tend to find abstract art inaccessible or downright bemusing.

Some philosophers think that abstract art is self-sufficient not only because it does not refer to anything outside of itself, but because it does not express anything either. Karsten Harries sees the Russian avant-garde artist, Kasimir Malevich, in this light. Harries says,

"...Is what is present not meaningless and therefore unable to interest us? An answer to [this] question is provided by Kasimir Malevich’s interpretation of his suprematism and more especially his decision to turn to the square as the most abstract form and to white and black as the most abstract colours. “Abstract” here means not only non-representational, but free from all associations, particular feelings, emotions and interests that tie us to the world” (Harries, 21)
The view here will be neither that abstract art is coded, nor that it expresses nothing\(^2\). Thus, the main task will be to show that abstract art expresses but that expression here is not coded and this is where we will turn to neurology.

I aim to formulate an effective theory of expression, which will explore the question of how art is expressive and test the veracity of the claim that abstract art is more directly expressive. However, we need not only rely on intuitions (Chapter 2) and a philosophical theory of expression (Chapters 3-4) as the litmus test for these claims. As indicated above, there is also neurological research that speaks to this debate. Specifically, models concerning the phenomenon known as synaesthesia are relevant. This will be introduced in tandem with my conception of expression (Chapter 5). The final chapter will retrace our theory and the neurology back to the artistic intuitions we set out with, showing their mutual coherence.

§2 The Negative Thesis

The negative thesis of this paper is the argument that representational painting\(^3\) requires ‘unpacking’ before its expressiveness can be felt. This claim will be dealt with for the remainder of Chapter 1.

Clement Greenberg articulates the orthodox position:

"It is widely assumed that in the fine arts the representational as such is superior

\(^2\) Moreover, I think that Harries provides little argument that this is really the case for abstract art. The Malevich painting, which he here presents as being autonomous and unexpressive, he later calls "a sign of stillness" (Harries, 22). It seems to me that Harries is either arguing that it represents stillness, or that it expresses stillness. The neurology we will explore in Chapter 5 will help explain the nature of the relation between kinaesthetic experience and visual perception of painting.

\(^3\) The examples used will be the aforementioned Caravaggio: *The Taking of Christ*, 1602 and Van Eyck’s *The Arnolfini Marriage*, 1434."
to the non-representational as such: that, all other things being equal (which they
never are), a work of painting or sculpture that exhibits a recognisable image is
always to be preferred to one that does not” (Greenberg, Vol 3, 186).

The negative thesis will argue precisely the opposite of this position. Greenberg goes on,
in the paper *Abstract and Representational*, to claim that the debate is inconsequential,
that there is only good and bad art. However, if we were to compare like with like, would
one genre be deemed more directly expressive than the other? I think so. And I think so
precisely because representational paintings ask us, as observers, to do work, to ‘unpack’
the content. The fact that these paintings give us more to distinguish and identify does
not necessarily mean they express more. Indeed, this ‘unpacking’ may hinder the
expressiveness of these paintings.

“...that a painting gives us things to recognize and identify in addition to a
complex of colours and shapes to feel does not mean invariably that it gives us
more art. More and less in art does not depend on how many different categories
of significance we apprehend, but on how intensely and largely we feel the *art*”
(Greenberg, Vol 3, 187).

*Unpacking*

When one looks at the Caravaggio or the Van Eyck, the content must be illuminated
before one can understand what is going on in the painting. We cannot shed light on these

\[1\] Aristotle also advocates works of art which imitate. In Poetics he says, “It is also natural
for all to delight in works of imitation. The truth of this second point is shown by
experience: though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most
realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of
dead bodies” (Aristotle, Poetics 1448b, 10). Although I agree that we delight at first in the
cleverness of representation, there is a necessary distinction between the expressivity of the
art and admiration of the technique exhibited. We should also note that abstraction was not a
feature of art in Aristotle’s day and probably the only ‘art’ which did not represent was that
which we have termed ‘decoration’.

\[5\] This point is commonsensical, but it is worth noting. While my argument will be that
abstract art is more directly expressive than representational art, it should be noted that I am
not making an argument for poor abstract art and I am not saying that *any* abstract art, no
matter what its origin or insight is, is more expressive than the best representational art.
details from the canvas alone: either one must carry prior knowledge or one must learn something new before the expressivity of these paintings can be felt. Examples of this kind of knowledge are the historical, sociological and cultural details manifest in the artwork.

In looking at *The Taking of Christ*, one must realise that this is a piece of a biblical drama. One must be able to plug in some of the details of that drama (the main characters, the perfidious kiss, the denial of divine intervention etc.). If one was unmindful of all of this the painting would simply express motion and perhaps anguish—the origin of which would be obscured. One would ask questions about why the man on the far left is fleeing, one would not understand the strength of the main character. His gestures and facial expression may even lead us to believe that he is sheepishly unmoved by what is happening.

This may be because the notion that certain bodily gestures or stances are universally expressive is false. So a claim that the people represented in paintings are easily ‘read’ seems ill-founded. This highlights how reliant we are on the narrative implied to find the expressiveness of these characters—we cannot, as seen in my last comment about Jesus in *The Taking of Christ*, rely on the representation alone. Nelson Goodman notes this too, and quotes Ray Birdwhistell for support,

“Insofar as I have been able to determine, just as there are no universal words, sound complexes, which carry the same meaning the world over, there are no body motions, facial expressions or gestures which provoke identical responses the world over. A body can be bowed in grief, in humility, in laughter, or in readiness

*And for this reason these are the things that are brought to our attention when this painting is examined. One of the first things that must be ensured is that we know about the larger story behind what is being presented. Cf. Rowland’s description at the beginning of this chapter.*
for aggression. A “smile” in one society portrays friendliness, in another embarrassment and, in still another, may contain a warning that, unless tension is reduced, hostility and attack will follow” (Ray L. Birdwhistell, in Goodman, 49)

Similarly, The Arnolfini Wedding, 1434, needs to be unpacked before it can be understood. It seems that the occasion represented is a formal one, but would we know immediately that this is a betrothal if not told? And how does knowing that this is a wedding scene change our impression of the painting? Yet still, there may be details more symbolic than many of us could even guess at. For example, the signature on the back wall—'Jan Van Eyck was here, 1434'—and his reflection in the mirror has led many to believe that he was an actual witness at the marriage. The carving of Saint Margaret, the patron saint of childbirth, on the bed, and the presence of the dog—a traditional symbol of faithfulness—accentuate the connubial theme. The solitary flame burning in bright daylight can be interpreted as the bridal candle, or God's all-seeing eye, or simply as a devotional candle. The fruits on the window-sill probably stand for fertility and our fall from Paradise. Even the discarded shoes are not thought to be incidental, but to signify the sanctity of marriage. Without knowing the significance of these symbols even an intense degree of concentration would not render the painting expressive of the solemnity and devotion evidently to be felt. And as Greenberg has pointed in the passage quoted above, the fact that The Arnolfini Wedding gives us so much to tease out does not necessarily render it more expressive, does not make the emotion more felt.

**Problem of Ubiquity**

Some would argue that this kind of ‘reading’ comes as second nature. Perhaps the story of Christ has such ubiquity that unpacking it from Caravaggio’s work does not impede the
expressivity of the painting\textsuperscript{7}. They would claim that his painting can be expressive at first sight, that one does not need to be Christian to recognise a Christ-like figure in a painting, or to know something of the biblical story. The short and quick answer here is that we cannot assume that everybody would carry this kind of knowledge. Still, we do have to grant that there is a certain ubiquity to this kind of reference in the western world.

Arthur Danto\textsuperscript{8} similarly notes that the “inferential component” (Danto, 88) of reading most paintings can be easily bypassed. He draws attention to the fact that simple drawings, e.g. cartoons, can be easily read. He says,

“My favourite example shows the fact that a man is turning his head by drawing his head in several positions, united by some broken circles. We read this as a man turning his head, rather than a polycephalic figure of the sort familiar in Hindu sculpture, but it is because ours is a picture-rich culture and we have learned to do so. Show it to members of a culture where there are other signs or who have no pictorial need for depicting movement, and they will not know what is going on” (Danto, 89)

Yet Danto also notes that there are elements in reading a painting which are a matter of inference e.g. relation in space and movement. Improvements in perspective helped us read the way objects in a painting were related to each other spatially. However, “we still have to read movement, and once it is decided that this is something we want instead to show, the inherent limitations of the medium become obstacles” (Danto, 92).

Moreover, when we ‘unpack’ a painting like the Caravaggio we are taken to

\textsuperscript{7} This problem seems more easily raised with the Caravaggio than with the Van Eyck. But perhaps this is because I see the Caravaggio as presenting a less coded narrative than the Van Eyck. Some might find Van Eyck’s symbolism easier to decode than Caravaggio’s external narrative.

\textsuperscript{8} Danto goes on, in the same paper, to draw a notorious conclusion that the developmental history of art is over. I will not comment on this conclusion here. I merely want to draw attention Danto’s account of the limitations of representational art.
something outside of the canvas itself (though the canvas remains an important and paradigm representation of the drama)—namely to the story of Christ as it originally appeared in Scripture. Granted, in a certain sense, we may have to ‘read’ an abstract painting too: it can help to have somebody taking you through it and pointing out details. But the attractant will remain the canvas and its formal content rather than an external referent. We do not need to put the abstract painting through an external alembic in order to extract its expressivity.

**Degrees of Coding**

Before we can fully clear up the problem of ubiquity we need to recognise that there are certain degrees of coding. Most paintings are coded—we need to realise that the people are supposed to be people, that the trees stand for trees etc. On this level, Caravaggio and Van Eyck are calling upon us to recognise the people in their paintings as people, their countenances as human expressions and their movements as typical human gestures.

“All the images in this song are just the images that they are, you know. All the flowers are just flowers, all the cigars are just cigars—no Freudian stuff in this song” (Fred Eaglesmith, *From the Paradise Motel*)

To my mind, *this* is the level of coding which can be deemed ubiquitous. Let us call this ‘tables and chairs knowledge’ and let us agree that such coding does not impede immediate expression, because it is pervasive. Dewey too acknowledges the pervasiveness of this level of coding. He writes,

> “Every work of art “abstracts” in some degree from the particular traits of objects expressed. Otherwise, it would only, by means of exact imitation, create an

---

9 For as René Magritte pointed out in the painting *The Treachery of Images*, 1928-29: ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’.

10 Later we will see that this level of coding remains even when the process of abstraction has begun cf. Cézanne, Gauguin, even Kandinsky, though not Rothko.
illusion of the presence of things themselves...the very attempt to present three-dimensional objects on a two dimensional plane demands abstraction from the usual conditions in which they exist” (Dewey, 95)

Examples in painting of such coding might be seen, for example, in the art of Alex Colville\(^\text{11}\). Colville’s paintings present representational scenes. But these scenes do not refer to a larger narrative played out elsewhere. Colville’s people are just people—they do not necessarily map on to people in the world. But although Colville’s paintings may be more directly expressive than Caravaggio’s they are not yet uncoded. We still need to think of the people and scenes represented in terms of an external world.

However, as already noted, Caravaggio and Van Eyck ask us to do more than decode the ‘tables and chairs’ in their paintings. It is not enough to realise that these are men, that this is a dog, that here is a mirror etc. We are asked to decode the ‘tables and chairs’ into something more elusive: that this dog is a symbol of faithfulness or that the man is Jesus, who was betrayed by a kiss. This is a second, more difficult level of decoding.

Thirdly, there may be no coding at all. The painter may ask us simply to react to the concrete presence of the canvas and its formal content. Here we approach the condition of abstract art, a condition which I shall argue aids direct expressiveness.

\textit{Expressiveness versus Direct Expressiveness}

Before we leave the negative thesis to begin exploration of the artistic intuitions in favour of the positive thesis, it is necessary to distinguish between expressivity and direct expressiveness.

\(^{11}\) Favourite examples from Colville’s art include \textit{Traveller}, 1992 or \textit{Woman with Revolver}, 1987. Others may think perhaps of Edward Hopper’s \textit{Nighthawks}, 1942.
expressivity. I am not arguing that *The Taking of Christ* or *The Arnolfini Wedding* are unexpressive paintings. I am arguing that before their expressivity can be felt certain elements must be decoded or unpacked—namely those things which fall into the second, and higher, level of decoding. Some might now think that the distinction drawn in this paper amounts to nothing much. For I am not saying that representational art is unexpressive, merely that, because of this process of ‘unpacking’, we can feel its expressiveness indirectly\textsuperscript{12}. However, my argument for abstract art is not an argument for some quick aesthetic fix. It is an argument for a different kind of looking. Indeed, it can take as long to ‘get’ Rothko’s squares as Caravaggio’s biblical scene. But in one we are engaged in attentive looking, we are responding to the sensuality of the canvas. In the other we are appreciating the depiction (and maybe even its sensuality) as a reference to something outside the canvas.

And I am not arguing that this is not worth doing. These paintings were picked precisely because it is worth taking the time to decode them—there is much expressivity to be felt once these paintings are properly read. However, this reading can take time. And it can also remove us from the actual painting and ask us to go from the scene presented on the canvas to the larger drama played out elsewhere. The intuition of the artists I shall now turn to is that this removal acts as an unnecessary drain upon on the directness of expression in an artwork.

\textsuperscript{12} We can, of course, react to the Caravaggio without decoding the painting with the specificity suggested in previous quotation (cf. page 1). But it seems to me that if we are to fully ‘feel’ the painting we must also decode the representational content.
Chapter 2

§1 The Concept of Intuition

I have thus far noted that intuitions will play an important role in this paper. And before I present the intuitions in question it may be helpful to explain what we shall take an intuition to be, and why they are thus important.

“An intuition is an idea, image or thought that is clear in the sense that it is pellucid, has nothing in it that is obscure or confused, or unformed, and distinct in the sense that it is different and sharply separate from every other” (Sparshott, 313)

This definition coheres nicely with what I mean by intuition. When I say that various artists and art critics have intuitions about what art does, I mean that they have clearly formed ideas. When I say that we seem to have an intuitive understanding that art is expressive, I mean that we have a distinct impression that this is the case. However, intuitions left in this form can seem rather unjustified and have vague, sixth sense connotations. What philosophy needs to do then, is to raise intuitions from this subjective clarity and bring them into a more objective setting. I believe this can be done without rejecting intuitions—they will act merely as a kind of Rosetta stone leading us to clearer understanding. Therefore, the examination of artistic intuitions will act as a springboard into a philosophical discussion of the notions implied. The aim is to present a philosophy which is friendly to these intuitions, but which does not remain in their exclusive company.

1 In present day ethics and epistemology, ‘intuition’ usually means something vague and sixth sense in this way. Also ‘intuition’ may be used interchangeably with ‘first impression’. I think that the intuitions of the artists I present are more concrete than this. They did not have vague feelings about creating abstract art. They employed a particular method based on clear ideas—the ideas of the musical analogy and primitivisation.
There was a clear idea among artists that methods which emphasised obscurity could enhance the expressiveness of their art. In the twentieth century two such methods became especially prominent: (i) the drawing of an analogy between music and painting and (ii) the employment of techniques of primitivisation.

§2 The Musical Analogy

*Music as a More Autonomous Art*

We seem to accept that music\(^1\) is more readily accessible than the plastic arts. This is perhaps because with music we are presented with a complete experience. When one listens to a musical piece one can react directly to its expressiveness. In contrast, representational art requires unpacking (as previously explained with regards to the Van Eyck and Caravaggio). And this unpacking must take place before we can experience the expressiveness of such art. In other words, we are called upon to develop an understanding of something that lies beyond the canvas before we can fully appreciate the canvas itself.

Certain artists began to think that this ‘unpacking’ process sacrificed the directness of our experience of the art, in this way reducing the art’s accessibility and expressiveness. They instead turned their attention to music. Felix Mendelssohn had already argued (of his musical works) that there is little to be said beyond what is said by the music. It is not so much that he dismissed suggestions about what the music ‘means’ or ‘represents’. Rather, he pointed out that such suggestions fail to reach their mark. In

---

\(^1\) That is purely instrumental music, music without a text or programme. While dance, vocal, and programmatic music can be enjoyed as purely instrumental, this is not their intended purpose. The music that is more “directly expressive” for the painters in question is music which stands independent of these things, “music alone” as Kivy puts it.
thus attempting to decode music into ordinary language, we omit something; namely the expressible content of the music. Music, for Mendelssohn, expresses that which ordinary language leaves ineffable. But music does not express the ineffable as ineffable. Rather it gives newfound clarity to thoughts which ordinary language can but fudge.

“What the music I love expresses to me are thoughts not too indefinite for words, but rather too definite” (Mendelssohn in Strunk, 1201)

Thus we are presented with the notion of music less as representational of something we can talk about or depict and more as an autonomous form of expression.

This Thesis Applied to Painting

Perhaps it was a similar notion that led painters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to begin cropping the representational content from their art. Instead, they concentrated on the formal content: form and colour, line and texture and the canvas itself. These artists\(^3\) saw a logical connection between musical content and formal content.

Furthermore, in playing up this analogy they hoped to increase the direct expressiveness of art.

“Painting approaches the condition of music, which according to Aristotle is the most direct and hence most subjective means of expression, having least to do with the representation of exterior reality” (Greenberg, Vol 1, 204)

We can trace this path from Cézanne, who brought an emphasis upon the conceptual and from Gauguin who brought an emphasis upon the spiritual into art. While their art was by no means non-representational, they seemed to reduce the emphasis placed upon what was represented. Rather, painters placed the emphasis on the canvas and formal content, which they saw as akin to musical content. Van Gogh in 1888

\(3\) Among them Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh.
commented upon the connection he felt between his own use of colour and Wagner’s music (Van Gogh, in Chipp, 38). Already we see the associative precedent being set. In Tahiti, Gauguin was voicing similar ideas:

“One does not use colour to draw but always to give the musical sensations which flow from itself, from its own nature, from its mysterious and enigmatic force.” (Gauguin in Chipp, 66)

These points merely form a prolegomenon. The point I am trying to make is that when artists began to question representation they did not merely subtract it. Rather, they played up the connection between the formal content of art and the content of that other, already non-representational (and seemingly more directly expressive) art of music. The morphology of painting began to reflect the morphology of music and revealed a logical connection that seemed to be borne out in our experience of such art.

Even though Cézanne’s landscapes were still representational landscapes they were different in a way recognised by, among others, the playwright and poet Samuel Beckett. Beckett wrote (of Mont Sainte Victoire, 1904-06) what a relief it was to find a landscape not anthropomorphised, but abstracted from man. This no-man’s-land was of paradigm importance to Beckett’s own work and he saw the same notion embodied in the work of Cézanne.

“...in defining what he saw as Cézanne’s recognition that landscape had nothing to do with man, that man was quite separate from and alien to it, he was defining a view that was excitingly close to his own no-man’s-land” (Knowlson, 188)

It is worth mentioning this because we can view Beckett as a leader in the movement towards abstraction in literature. He similarly moved from the traditional attempt to know more and more to recognition that subtraction may partially aid a more
sublime form of expression.

“I realised that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, [being] in control of one’s own material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that. I realised that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than adding” (Beckett in Knowlson, 352)

Greenberg also expressed a similar view of Cézanne’s paintings in describing the canvas itself as the “actual locus of the painting instead of its window pane” looking unto a worldly narrative (Greenberg, Vol 1, 201-2).

**Expressionism and Orphism: The Problem of Simultaneity**

The post-impressionists (Cézanne and Gauguin) can be seen to have had two strands of influence: Cubism and Expressionism. The French expressionistic strand worked with a wild abandonment of colour and, in the case of Matisse, an extraordinary use of curved line. Matisse spoke of harmony and dissonance in his art (in Chipp, 132), of the central role of empty space and arrangement in painting (versus an emphasis placed merely on the represented object). And again we have the musical analogy.

“The painter chooses his colour with the profound concentration suitable to him, just as the musician chooses the tone and intensity of his instruments. The colour does not govern the design but harmonises with it” (Matisse in Chipp, 143)

The Orphist painters achieved a blending of Cubist intellect with Fauvist colour though they began to abstract in a manner previously unknown to either movement (see Kupka’s painting *The Cathedral*, 1913-4). Greenberg describes the appearance of an

---

*French expressionism was known as Fauvism. German expressionism (the movement which Kandinsky represented), formed around two groups Der Blaue Reiter and Die Brücke.*

*Look, for example, at Matisse’s painting *Joy of Life*, 1905-06.*

*Robert Delaunay and Frantisek Kupka.*
Orphist painting as “...a prismatic, curvilinear, abstract kind of painting” (Greenberg, Vol 2, 281). However, it would seem that the Orphists hesitated to bring the musical analogy home in the way that we shall see Kandinsky does. The movement of colour in Orphist paintings can be aptly compared to free music. Their paintings have an improvisational feel to them. Look again at the examples of Orphism; the artists often seem to toy with the object. In order to maximise the musicality of their paintings these artists attempted to free their art from the objective form.

“[Kupka] was inspired by beliefs similar to those influencing Kandinsky—in particular, the belief in the dissolution of matter into purely spiritual energy in which vibrations of sound or colour can create corresponding vibrations in the soul” (Spate, 35)

For the Orphists, though, the musical analogy was to prove somewhat limited. Delaunay argued that music has a temporal existence in a way that painting does not, saying that music conveys its meaning in a succession or stream. That is, music begins at time X, lasts for a certain duration, and ends at time Y. Painting, on the other hand, presents itself simultaneously (a paradigm example from Delaunay’s art would be Simultaneous Contrasts: Sun and Moon, 1912-3). It certainly has temporal existence too, but experience of it does not have to involve perception throughout a prescribed temporal duration.

“Although Delaunay speculated on the relationship between painting and music in the first months of 1912, by spring or early summer he...began to discriminate

---

7 As noted by Buckberrough (106) inviting us to look at Delaunay’s series of paintings The Windows, 1912.
8 These paintings were not only abstracted paintings, they were abstract. They were not depicting an abstracted object, rather no object at all (e.g. Kupka Amorpha, Fugue an deux couleurs, 1912). We shall see that Kandinsky rarely, if ever, went this far. Rather, he showed that our attention need not concentrate on the abstracted object but on the abstract play of colour.
between the visual and auditory arts, claiming that only the former could embody ‘simultaneity’, the essence of life” (Spate, 76)

It is my opinion that Delaunay is here mistaken. I do not deny that a painting is wholly present at a simple moment whereas a musical work is not. However, I disagree that our reaction to painting is thus immediate. Rather we let our eyes wander over the canvas, taking in certain elements, moving in a kind of succession, finding certain elements expressive of certain qualities. Attend to the way in which one looks at, for example, Kandinsky’s Composition VII, 1913. Our eyes cascade through the canvas; one glance is insufficient. As Goodman puts it “scanning is necessary for normal vision. The fixed eye is almost as blind as the innocent one” (Goodman, 12). Yes, the ontology of the painting is such that we can see it in one instant. But our experience of both music and painting takes time, requires certain duration. I therefore think that Delaunay’s claim that painting can embody simultaneity in a way that music cannot is somewhat false.

**Kandinsky**

“Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammer, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another to cause vibrations in the soul” (Kandinsky, 25)

From this alone, we can see that Kandinsky quite naturally adopted and extended the musical analogy we have been talking about. The analogy lends itself to the practice of abstraction because (as already pointed out) “music was the one form that, with the exception of marches and dances, fulfilled no practical purpose and had no descriptive or

---

*I am not trying to suggest that there are no important differences between music and painting. The ontology of these artworks is different, and we must therefore be careful when drawing any close comparison between them. For example, music orders the way in which we perceive it through time. While painting can approach this it does not have the quite same characteristic of unfolding through time.*
narrative function” (Whitford, 18). This notion had a dramatic effect on Kandinsky.

"Kandinsky envied music its independence and the freedom of its means of expression, and he attempted to establish what he called a ‘theory of harmony for painting’ comparable to that of music—an internal discipline which colours and forms were to obey” (Becks-Malorny, 7)

For Kandinsky, the analogy was more than a tool to explain his aesthetic philosophy. He wanted our experience of his art to be subject to the same kinds of conditions. In other words, when we experience the art of Kandinsky it should be seen as a musical composition in respect of appearance and expressivity. The titles of his paintings suggest this too, for example, Fugue, 1914.

"Kandinsky believed that painting should take its bearings from music in its search for rhythm and mathematical construction. He gave the title Fugue to this composition after its completion, in recognition of its “polyphonal order”. (Becks-Malorny, 111).

The viewer can recognise this quality on the canvas. The lower half of the painting presents a soft calm, muted haze, which strengthens and develops towards the centre, becoming finally dense and noisy with colliding lines and colours. As our eyes move around this palette we can see the interplay of these different ‘sonic zones’. Kandinsky, it would seem, did not have to torture visual data to make it confess a sonic result. These synaesthetic associations occurred quite naturally for him.

“A specific sound would make him see a specific colour; listening to an orchestral concert could conjure up an entire visual spectacle. In the same way colours made him hear sounds” (Whitford, 22-23)

An example of this is the painting To the Unknown Voice, 1916. Becks-Malorny explains “this watercolour arose following Kandinsky’s first-phone-conversation with Nina, subsequently to become his wife, and is dedicated to her voice” (Becks-Malorny, 117). We will look more closely at the the phenomenon of synaesthesia both as it affected Kandinsky and as it translates to non-synaesthetes in Chapters 5 and 6.
§3 Primitivisation.

The second method of abstraction, that of primitivising representational content, also gained momentum with Cézanne. This can be seen as a more overt manifestation of the diminished importance of the object. The so-called primitive art of Africa and Asia was the direct catalyst which set this method of abstraction in motion. However, we must note that while forms were simplified and ‘roughened’ they nonetheless remained. One result of this method is an increased emphasis upon the expressivity of the actual canvas. Prominence is given to the flat surface of the canvas rather than the objects depicted. It is interesting to compare the description of Cézanne’s Mont-Sainte Victoire with the description of The Taking of Christ (page 1) to see this shift reflected:

“...the artist seems to have broken free into an ecstatic, sensuous mood, without any loss of control, for, as Cézanne declared, “form is at its fullest when colour is at its richest”. Here the entire canvas surges and pulsates with large, sonorous chords of deep, strong colors that, for all their floating, translucent quality, structure the picture along its rectilinear and diagonal axes” (Hunter & Jacobus, 32)

Kandinsky

Kandinsky did more than wield colour as one would musical sound. He also primitivised the objects represented, deeming them to be by-the-way of the expressiveness of the painting. Two incidents contributed to this awakening:

(a) Kandinsky saw Monet’s Haystacks, 1891 and failed to recognise the object

11 In particular, Gauguin and Picasso acknowledged the influence of art indigenous to Africa and Asia. Picasso’s painting Les Demoiselles d’Avignon, 1907 (particularly the right hand portion of the painting) is an important work in part for this reason. Similarly, Kandinsky took an interest in the folk art of Russia and in iconography. It became clear to Gauguin and Picasso that the rough-hewn nature of primitive art was not an impediment to expression. Polished finishes thus became somewhat superfluous, edges become blurred, forms distorted. Our attention is drawn to the canvas rather than to the object and we pay attention to what the artist is doing rather than what he is painting.
represented, yet found the painting tremendously expressive.

(b) Kandinsky experienced a painting of his own as “an indescribably beautiful painting, pervaded by inner glow” (Becks-Malorny, 31) and later realised that the painting was lying on its side.

These two experiences led Kandinsky to the conclusion that “objects harm my pictures” (Becks-Malorny, 31). Kandinsky never did away with real forms\(^\text{12}\) entirely although he did contend that those real forms were superfluous to the experience of his art. One can, therefore, experience the expressivity of Kandinsky’s art without recognising it as being representative of anything.

“Kandinsky believed...that it was neither necessary nor desirable to understand a work of art on an intellectual level. Indeed, the rational could hinder responses to a work’s emotional content” (Whitford, 25)

\textit{Rothko}

‘Primitive’ may, but does not necessarily, mean ‘simple’. Goldwater notes how Rothko’s paintings are simple (without complication) yet are not “simplist” (without subtlety) (Goldwater, 32). Thus we should avoid viewing abstract art simplistically. For example, Rothko claimed that he was “no colourist”\(^\text{13}\). Colourism is the skill of achieving large effects through the use of colour (the Fauves, for example, employed colourism). This claim of Rothko’s is somewhat confounding since what assaults us in his paintings is precisely a fusion of pigment, an arrest of colour. What Rothko means is that his paintings should not be viewed simplistically in this way.

“These paintings begin and end with an intense and utterly direct expression of

\(^\text{12}\) Although his forms were often reduced to zoomorphic fantasies in e.g. \textit{Blue Sky}, 1940.

\(^\text{13}\) Quoted in many articles including Robert Goldwater’s.
feeling *through* the interaction of coloured areas of certain size” (Sylvester (1997), 36) [my italics]

In contrast to Rothko’s paintings, representational painting reveals a moment of drama–marriage or perfidy in our examples—and we must do some unpacking in order to fill in the rest of the narrative before we can fully understand the expressivity of the content (representational *and* formal). Abstract paintings instead call us to look at the mere canvas, they “compel careful scrutiny of their physical existence, of their variations in handling and arrangement” (Goldwater, 33)\(^{14}\).

If the Caravaggio and Van Eyck paintings can be seen as an analogue to programme music, and Kandinsky to a symphony or melody, Rothko’s paintings can be compared to a single held note or chord, full of depth, individual character and vibrating intensity.

\(^{14}\) Again, it is interesting to note that when a representational painting is explained it is done by revealing the narrative a scene of which it is depicting. See the description given of the Caravaggio (page 1, Rowland’s quote). In contrast when one is ‘walked through’ an abstract painting like the Rothko, one’s attention is drawn to the details of the painting itself. And in fact it would be an injustice to the paintings to try to pass them off into an external narrative—“Such literary fancies are program notes that relax the visual hold of these canvases, filter their immediacy, and push away their enigmatic, gripping presence” (Goldwater, 33).
Chapter 3

§1 The Call for a Theory of Expression

It should be obvious from the first two chapters that there is a concept of expression in use that needs clarification. What is asked of the aesthetician then, is an explanation of the concept intuitively employed by the artistic community. This chapter will introduce a more philosophical way of thinking about expression. We will attempt to find the notion of expression that best explains what is assumed in the previous chapters. This will involve a look at the history of the debate about expression, and finally an articulation of the concept of expression that:

1. Lends philosophical rigour to the pedestrian fact that art is expressive.
2. Allows us to test the hypothesis, readily accepted by the artists presented in Chapter 2, that abstract art is more directly expressive than representational art.

Prior to moving on to an examination of the philosophical understanding(s) of 'expression', we will address the reader who already rejects the hypothesis that abstract art is more directly expressive than representational art. First then we will grasp the nettle of dissent.

§2 The Nettle

There will always be those who simply deny that they could find abstract art more expressive. They will say they do not 'get' it in the same way. My mother will look at a Rothko and baffle at the fact that I like it so much. If I try to explain why she will nod agreeably, taking note of the things I like; she even admits that it is strangely mesmerizing. Yet after all this, she will come back and say 'But I still prefer the Caravaggio'. There are
some options on how we deal with this response:

(1) Pigheadedness: There are those who are comfortable dismissing such views as coming from aesthetic heathens. The argument is that people like my mother are closed to the more subtle nuances of abstract art, we may even doubt that they are really appreciative of the art they claim to like. However, as I have indicated, this seems rather pigheaded. Moreover, often these are people who are knowledgeable about art. Waldemar Januszcak expresses his bewilderment about Rothko’s paintings in more detail:

“Why should staring into a large rectangle of colour be a moving experience? They appear to have no ambition other than to lure you into themselves, into their gorgeously coloured rectangular mists...I was surprised to see how clever they are, how precisely he [Rothko] orchestrated them, how little he repeated himself. But there is no real defence against an enemy who dismisses them as grandiose fogs of poster colour” (Januszcak, 9)

(2) Invoke Richard W. Miller’s concept of blind-spots: Miller introduces the concept of an aesthetic “blind-spot” to explain a lack of universality in aesthetic appraisals. The concept plays along the following lines: I have paid appropriate attention to abstract art, I recognise its virtues and its expressiveness and I understand that it is not ‘coded’ in the way that has been here described. But I still prefer the Caravaggio. Miller explains,

“Wise appreciators sometimes admit to blind spots, confessing that their general competence does not give them access to virtues that others detect. Pauline Kael says Fassbinder is one of her blind spots...I think that Kael may well be admitting that Fassbinder has merit that she cannot see for herself—in spite of appropriate attention and Humean virtues” (Miller, 37)

It seems that what we are trying to explain here is a deeper aesthetic issue. Namely that
of loving\. Joyce was almost unanimously polled to be the most important writer of the 20th Century\(^2\). I can see why. And I would probably pick him if asked too. But ask me what writer I love the most and I’ll answer Beckett. Miller has given us a label to put on the discrimination that is brought about by love of certain art, but is this label really helpful? Do I turn to my mother and tell her she is suffering from a blind spot? Miller himself recognises that this use of the concept is still “pointlessly insulting” (Miller, 43). Thus Miller’s concept of blind-spots may be nothing more than an articulate brand of pigheadedness.

(3) The third approach offers a more moderate response. We can accept that there are some people who will simply love representational art more without trying to label the disparity\(^3\). Not because they do not understand what abstract art aims to do, or because they are closed to it as an artistic method, but because they still love representational paintings more—in much the same way as I can’t help loving Beckett more than Joyce. However, my thesis is yet not lost on such people, no more than an account of why Joyce is so important is lost on me. That I am happily in love does not mean that I am dead to the charms of others.

We can explore what is different in the way the person who loves Caravaggio

---

\(^1\) The question of why some people value certain art works over others is notoriously flocculent. This debate alone has had much examination, and I cannot do the topic justice in this small space. Nevertheless, the topic should be raised as it is the basis of the chief objection to the second part of my positive thesis. While I cannot convince my readers to love abstract art, I do ask them to notice that abstract art calls for a different kind of looking than representational art. And that this difference can be seen to bear significantly on expressivity, even though they still prefer representational art.


\(^3\) I do not ask the reader to fall out of love with one genre, but merely to fully recognise the virtues of abstract art.
approaches art as a way of trying to account for the disparity. If we posit a good explanation of what we appreciate in abstract art, which leads us to believe that it is more directly expressive, the Caravaggio lover should be able to agree with what we say. Departure should only occur when we ask him to love the Rothko more than the Caravaggio. But we are not going to do that. Thus, our inquiry can still act as an explanation of how abstract art can be seen as being more directly expressive, of why we think it offers more to be directly ‘felt’.

§3 The Canonical Position

Having observed how talk of ‘expression’ is bandied about by the artistic community, and grasping the nettle of dissent in one hand, we must now pick up the philosophical stick of skepticism in the other. Philosophical stances on expression can be divided into two distinct groups:

(i) The Canonical Position represented by Hospers, Bouswma, Collingwood, Dewey and critiqued by Tormey and others. This position will be examined in the present chapter.

(ii) New Expression Theory represented by Sparshott and Sircello (to be examined in Chapter 4).

The Canonical Position has now been, for the most part, rejected. However, I feel that it is important for us to take note of the errors made. Moreover, even though their foothold in expression theory has been loosened, the canonical expression theorists raise questions that still stand. I shall therefore present the Canonical Position, not as a strong model, but

---

*I have pilfered this term from Sircello and will use it precisely as he does in the paper The Expressive Properties of Art. Canonical Expression theory gives expression “chief explanatory role, artworks do not merely describe or represent emotions, they more directly communicate an artist’s highly specific moods and feelings, and enable the appreciator to experience them also.” (R.W. Hepburn in the Oxford Companion to Philosophy).*
as a series of thoughts and objections, the answers to which will reverberate into our new theory of expression.

**Cathartic Expression**

The canonical theorists ask us to abandon some familiar notions of expression; one being the notion that in discharging an emotion I am expressing it. When I funnel my anger by slamming a door I am expressing my anger; the door-slamming is an expressive act. I know that I am angry, I want to show it, I slam the door. My anger remains as I stomp away. But Collingwood et al. instead propose that expression is a cathartic articulation of an oppressed and ambiguous passion. That is, that in expressing or articulating an ambiguous emotion we somehow recognise it. And this recognition lessens the perturbation of ambiguity.

“When a man is said to express an emotion, what is being said about him is this. At first he is conscious of having an emotion, but not conscious of what this emotion is. All that he is conscious of is a perturbation or excitement, which he feels going on within him, but of whose nature he is ignorant...From this helpless and oppressed condition he extricates himself by doing something which we call expressing himself” (Collingwood, 113-14)

Thus ‘expression’ does not really describe the above door-slamming scenario, but one in which I do not know what is wrong, where there is something eating away at me and then I perform some expressive act. The expressive act accomplishes two things: firstly, it enlightens me as to what the perturbation was (I do not know until I complete the act of expression) and secondly, it purges, or acts cathartically on, that perturbation.

This proposal is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, as already noted, we are comfortable using the term ‘expression’ to describe the first scenario. Slamming the door
seems to be an example of an expressive act. We are given no real reasons for abandoning this usage. Secondly, and more problematically, we can conceive of artistic acts falling into either of the scenarios above. For example, Rothko may have known he was terminally depressed and deliberately picked the melancholy gray and black shades of his final paintings, the darkest shade usually placed on top. He may have wanted to express his desolation, and to do so wielding a brush was as natural for him as slamming a door is for a pouting teenager. Alternatively, Rothko may have found himself picking these morose pigments, placing the dark colour on top, hovering over and stifling the lighter shade, stepped back and for the first time realised the kind of desolation he was feeling. But Collingwood would want to say that he must now feel better because of this realisation, that the mystery of unease must be diminished.

“As unexpressed, he feels it in what we have called a helpless and oppressed way; as expressed he feels it in a way from which the sense of oppression has vanished” (Collingwood, 114)

In reality, however, it seems that expression can act either way: as a deliberate articulation, or as self revelation of ambiguous feelings. To limit its use to one aspect, as the canonical theorists do, seems unjustified.

**Expressive Pigment**

Let us remain with the Rothko example. Towards the end of his career Rothko suffered an illness that left him seriously depressed. Around this time his palette changed from the vibrant intensity to shades of sombre melancholy. Monochromatic blurs express desolation. But Bouswma points out that this claim does not make sense. A tube of

---

5 Though of course wielding a brush is a more complex kind of act, involving greater discrimination and articulation.
Vandyke Brown or Lamp Black does not have a soul; it does not feel. So how can it express? Bouswma answers for us—“Well it can’t!” (Bouswma, 77).

This problem affects representational art too. The Caravaggio expresses more than the expressions on the faces represented. So does the Van Eyck. Where is this expressivity hailing from? Is it in the paint, in the brushstroke, in the form and line? The problem is accentuated when we want to argue that art which represents nothing—does not even contain expressive faces, merely has formal content—is expressive. Hanslick articulates the problem for music. He shows us how the content of music is not to be confused with emotion. Notes do not represent or contain sadness. He says,

“The primordial stuff of music is regular and pleasing sound...The material out of which the composer creates, of which the abundance can never be exaggerated, is the entire system of tones, with their latent possibilities for melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic variety...The content of music is tonally moving forms.” (Hanslick 28-9)

So how can notes express sadness?

Let us step back from art for a moment in order to to address this problem. This seems to be a problem with expression language in general (not only the way it is applied to art). For we can surely agree that there is nothing intrinsic in a slammed door that expresses anger. How can the bang of wood against the door frame express anything? The door does not have a soul—there is nothing ontologically subjective in a cut of wood. But the claim that ‘Rothko’s painting expresses desolation’ is not comparable to the claim that ‘Jane expresses anger’, because Jane does not have the same ontological status as a

* The origin of this problem may be the assumption that expressive predicates are applied in the same way other predicates are (like for instance ‘blue’). Sircello’s notion of ‘artistic acts’ will help clarify what feature of the artwork we are attributing expressive predicates to.
canvas with paint on it’. However, the claim that ‘Rothko’s painting expresses desolation’ may be more aptly compared to the claim that ‘Jane’s door-slamming expresses anger’. And we are comfortable with the latter, even though the door shares the same status as the painting. This objection therefore, is not just an objection against artistic use of expression-language but of its use more generally.

This noted, let us shelve this problem until our exposition of ‘new expression’, at which time these comments will be developed into a more substantial response to the problem of expressive pigment.

**Expression as a Commodity**

The last complaint has led some canonical theorists to conceive of expression as some kind of commodity which can be traded from one shareholder (the artist) to another (the art). They see the artist transferring feelings from himself to the artwork. Again this seems counter-intuitive. What kind of stuff are feelings made from, and how is that stuff taken out of our most private selves and transferred into something public and inanimate?

It seems that this ‘transferral of feelings’ is surely a metaphor. Its more concrete implication is the claim that the artist feels a specific emotion as he ‘puts’ that feeling into his work. Tormey also lodges this complaint:

“[the Expression theorist asserts that] since the aesthetically relevant qualities of the object are *expressive* qualities, the productive activity must have been an act of expression and, moreover, an act of expressing just those feeling states whose

---

7 Assuming of course that we agree that Jane *has* feelings whereas a collection of inanimate canvas and paint does not.
8 And we may be mistaken that Jane is angry at all—a question that will be returned to later.
analogues are predicated of the object” (Tormey, 103)\(^9\)

The error in this is easily realised. For example, we can be told that an artist worked on two paintings which express antithetical feelings at the same time. Or that Rothko’s final paintings were actually not the dark, leaden ones, but that he had moved back to colour—which could perhaps be interpreted as optimism at a time when we know he was most severely depressed\(^10\). Yet, Hespers claims, “we may use ‘express’ to mean something approximately equivalent to ‘reveal’” (Hespers, 63). That is, he claims that by expressing a given feeling in an artwork, the artist is revealing that mood in himself\(^11\).

Moreover, if we read a feeling of joy into certain artworks “and if it should turn out that he [the artist] is not actually feeling joy, then our inference is a mistaken one” (ibid.). As it stands, Hespers would argue, that if we said a smile expressed joy, and it turned out that the person was not joyful, we have to say we were wrong. Yet the exact same facial contortion can be correctly deemed to be expressive of joy if the person was joyful. This is getting confusing. Surely the artwork is independently expressive (without a need to audit the artist’s emotional state).

Perhaps Hespers’ argument can be saved if we substitute ‘implied artist’ for ‘artist’. Now the claim becomes that I am expressing joy by smiling insofar as that seems\(^\star\)

\(^\star\) Of course this objection equally applies to the door-slamming example. However, we already noted that Jane could be acting or trying to fool us. Moreover, the example was posed as one where Jane was angry and so she slammed the door. This is a possibility with art too. Of course, the artist could be feeling the emotion expressed in the artwork as he is executing the artwork, but for the following reasons we want to avoid stating that this is necessary.

\(^9\) Compare the later, Untitled 1969[21] with Untitled, 1969[20]. The latter is usually taken to be representative of Rothko’s terrible depression. Yet the former, in all its bold vibrancy was painted closer to his suicide in February 1970.

\(^11\) This is surely tied in with Collingwood’s notion that the expression of emotion is the discovery of that emotion in oneself. Thus as the emotion becomes clear, it is articulated in the artwork.
to be the emotion that I am, to all appearances, expressing. The implied artist of Rothko’s final paintings is not wearing desolation on his sleeve, so we can be right saying that these paintings are more optimistic than his penultimate paintings. From a literary viewpoint, Jenefer Robinson explains the notion of the implied artist in more detail:

"Because the way in which people act typically expresses features of their minds, attitudes and personalities, we are justified in making inferences from the way in which people perform actions to the presence of them in certain character or personality traits...Although it may sometimes be legitimate to infer from the way these acts are performed to personality traits in the actual author, it is normally the case that the personality expressed by the style of a literary work is not that of the actual author but that of the implied author" (Robinson, 234)

However, as formulated, the implied artist is a device for understanding literary works, for differentiating between the author herself and the author as she presents her characters. Does this function cross over into painting, and more pertinently (for us) abstract painting? I’m not sure. There seems no third party to whom we can attribute the notion of ‘implied’: no narrator, no characters etc.

Moreover, it seems somewhat naïve to expect that the emotion expressed was felt at the time of execution, as Hospers would have us believe is the case. Even when I say that I expect Rothko did feel the desolation of *Untitled, 1969* [20], I do not expect that he felt it precisely as he painted. Often such extreme emotions are not conducive to such

---

12 Thus, explains Robinson, “however querulous and intolerant the actual Tolstoy may have been in real life, the implied author of *Anna Karenin* is full of compassionate understanding.” (Robinson, 234).
13 We could make a distinction between the painter as painter and the painter as an ordinary person, but I think this is problematic because it assumes that we can separate the ‘painter’ aspect of the painter from the ‘person’ aspect. Obviously this creates questions of identity etc. that I do not here have time to address (my thanks to Mark Migotti for this point).
14 Dewey seems to grant that the coincidence of emotion felt and emotion expressed is not necessary. He says, “The other factor that is required in order that a work may be expressive to a percipient is meanings and values extracted from prior experiences and funded in such a way that they fuse with the qualities directly presented in the work of art” (Dewey, 98).
good work. We do not expect that the best philosophy of art is formulated while the philosopher is in the rapturous sway of an artwork, so why would we expect that an artwork expressive of desolation was painted precisely when the artist was in the depths of depression? However, it seems unnecessary to employ the concept of an implied artist to make this simple point.

So again, let us step back from art and investigate whether this is a problem for expression in general. The problem Hospers has left us with is that he wants our claim that a painting is expressive to be hinged to what the artist was feeling at the time of production. Again, as it stands, Hospers would argue that if we said that a smile expressed joy and it turned out that the person was not joyful we have to say we were wrong. Enter Kivy.

Peter Kivy uses the example of a St. Bernard to differentiate between ‘expressing’ and ‘being expressive of’. ‘Expressing’, he argues, requires the sort of thing Hospers wants. Namely, it requires that the person actually feel what is being expressed. He says,

“It is extremely important to note that one necessary condition for shouting and fist clenching to be expressions of my anger is that I actually be angry; and unless I am indeed angry, it is incorrect to say that I have expressed anger or that my shout and fist-clenching are expressions of it.” (Kivy, 12)

However, Kivy also highlights the notion of something ‘being expressive of’ a certain emotion e.g. a St. Bernard’s face is expressive of sadness\(^\text{15}\), which does not carry the same implication that the feeling state exists in the subject.

“We do not mean to say by this that the St. Bernard’s face expresses sadness. For certainly the Saint Bernard is not always sad...When, therefore, we describe the St. Bernard’s face as a sad face we are not saying that it expresses sadness, but,\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\) This is the example given by Kivy, 12.
rather, that it is *expressive of sadness*” (Kivy, ibid.)

This helps us with Hospers’ problem because we can now say that a smile is expressive of joy without necessarily saying that the person is feeling joyful.

**The Intentional Fallacy**

A further problem which stems from Hospers’ claim above is the fear that we are being asked to commit what is called *The Intentional Fallacy*. Put briefly, we could worry that we would need to find out what the artist’s intentions were when creating the artwork in order to verify any expressive predicate applied to the artwork. Such scholarship may not be possible and even if it were would certainly act as an impediment to the directness of expression. Indeed, this may be a further level of coding, that not only asks us to leave the artwork, but to leave its district and instead go to that of the artist. Tormey again notes this problem,

“...the Expression theorist is committed to the further assumption of a *necessary* link between the qualities of the art work and certain states of the artist. Critics of this theory have been quick to observe that this would commit us to treating all art works as autobiographical revelations. Moreover, it would entail that descriptions of the expressive qualities of an artwork were falsifiable in a peculiar way.”

(Tormey, 104)

However, it seems that Robinson’s differentiation between artist and implied artist can direct us back to the canvas and the intentions implied therein. And Kivy’s distinction between expressing and being expressive of enables us to talk about the artwork as being expressive without necessarily implying the presence of a corresponding feeling in the

---

16 This differentiation may be also seen as an aid to the expressive pigment problem. But this will come later. We should also be aware that helpful as Kivy is here, our language does not usually follow his differentiation. We still make claims about what the art is ‘expressing’ rather than about what the art is ‘expressive of’. An easy response is to claim that when we say the former we mean the latter. But we will return later to examine whether this is actually the case.
Expression as Arousal and Subjective Expression

The last notion presented by the Canonical Position that I will examine is that of expression as arousal. The idea here is that what is expressed is not only transferred from artist to artwork, but back out from artwork to percipient. Collingwood articulates the notion,

“If there is any effect which we wish to produce in the hearer [or percipient], it is only the effect which we call making him feel how we feel.” (Collingwood, 114)

The problem with this line of expression theory, is that we can look at a painting without feeling the emotion which is expressed, even when we recognise it. As Dewey notes “the peculiar power of tragedy to leave us at the end with a sense of reconciliation rather than horror forms the theme of one of the oldest discussions in literary art” (Dewey, 96).

Hospers pushes this error yet further towards subjective expression (Hospers, 64). In this case, I would not only be saddened by the music, but would think that this was only because the music was sad for me. Thus there would be nothing objective about my judgment that the music expressed sadness. But we do not thus qualify our accounts of art18. Moreover, examples such as Kivy’s St. Bernard work precisely because we have a notion of expressivity as something ostensive we can point to; this is why it is a good example. We know that the St. Bernard has a sad face, not that all of us think the St.

---

17 And therefore allows us to close the door on the “But turns out he was really feeling a different emotion at the time” objection.
18 Unless as a way to imply that we understand the artwork’s expressivity better than the next person—“I found the music so sad”, and here the implication is that everybody should but that maybe I am more sensitive or more in tune with the musical piece, not that the music was more sad for me.
Bernard has a sad face to us; we think that this is an objective claim to be made about the dog, not a subjective response.

Having explored some of the snares fallen into by the canonical theorists of expression, we shall now move on to an examination of new expression theories and an articulation of our own theory of expression. The aim here, we must remind ourselves, is to nurture the intuition that art is expressive so that we can sound out the claim (and the intuition of the artists presented in Chapter 2) that abstract art is more directly expressive than representational art.
Chapter 4

§1 New Expression

The Canonical Position by no means represents the end of philosophical explanations of the concept of expression. As previously noted, the Canonical Position is now rarely held (even by those mentioned as advocates). However, the problems we had with the Canonical Position stand as problems with the concept of ‘expression’ as wielded by aestheticians. Francis Sparshott and Guy Sircello react to these problems, and to the insufficiency of the canonical theorist’s conception of expression. This chapter will explore the accounts offered by these philosophers. As these are the theorists we will borrow from the most, we will examine them individually to become better acquainted with them. In Chapter 5, we will then move on to our own formulation of ‘expression’, aided by the insight of the new expression theorists and wary of the problems of the Canonical Position.

Before we turn to this, however, it is first worth exploring the kind of scaffolding on which we want to build our theory. Again, it may be helpful to think of ‘expression’ aside from its use in art. This example may aid clarification: We have all met people with expressive faces. Often such a person cannot keep her moods to herself even if she tries. However, in terms of verbal expression she can be lacking. Thus there is often an incongruity between what you see in her face and what she confesses. Because there is often no confession it can be hard to pin down exactly what is wrong (or right) with such a person. We are inclined to say things like ‘You seem in a bad mood’ or ‘What’s wrong?’ The interesting point is that, regardless of the answer we get, when such a
person’s face wears the marks of a bad mood, we recognise it directly. Thus the fact that many expressive predicates could be falsely applied to such a person, does not alter the fact that her face is directly expressive.

We’ve also encountered people who are altogether different. Not that such a person is unfeeling, just that we wouldn’t know by looking at him what kind of mood he’s in. Although his features aren’t bland, his face isn’t deadened, he doesn’t wear the marks of his feelings for all to see. We usually find out about his moods because he tells us. And he may not tell us by saying something like ‘I feel lonely today’. It is often some big shebang that will have catapulted him into the mood. Thus, he may not tell us what he’s feeling. Rather, he tells us the story of what happened to him which implies that feeling. And we have to know why the elements of the story are significant in his life to understand how he is feeling about it.

Our Rothko’s and Kandinsky’s are like the expressive-faced person. We know that they are expressive of something by looking at them. It may be hard to pin down the precise predicate to be applied, but that does not mean that they are coded in the way the Caravaggio is. We see the expressivity there, whether we can peg the precise expressive predicate or not. With the second person, as with the Caravaggio, the feeling is obscured, hidden behind the narrative of the ex-girlfriend, the bad day at work, or the perfidious kiss. Even this narrative does not directly give us that feeling, it merely implies it. We are therefore more steps from seeing what is being felt by the second person than by the first. And the expressive faced person is the one we more easily react to, laugh at etc., without prompting. But, recall the problem carried over from the Canonical Position: How can an
artwork be like an expressive faced person? A painting by Rothko is not sentient, the person is. How is pigment and canvas thus expressive?

**Sparshott: Rejecting the Expressive Line**

Francis Sparshott conceives of the Canonical Position as the “idea that art is that in which one makes one’s truest feelings clear to oneself and others” (Sparshott, 303). He does a lot to dismantle and analyse this position, but doesn’t really leave much scaffolding upon which we can begin rebuilding; he does not put it all back together. So we will rely on Sparshott as a critic of the Canonical Position and on Guy Sircello as the engineer who helps us rebuild.

Sparshott presents some senses of expression that seem to be fudged by the canonical theorists (Sparshott, 304). Firstly, there is the notion of expression as, for example, *sadness showing*. This led us, in Chapter 3, to problems such as the implied artist, the intentional fallacy and expression conceived as a commodity. Secondly, there is the notion of expression as *sadness producing*. This was similarly rejected in Chapter 3, as patently false: sad art does not necessarily make us feel sad, even when we recognize that it is sad. And thirdly, Sparshott presents the canonical notion that ‘art is sad’ means *sad-in-the-sense-art-is-sad*. The idea that there is a peculiar sense in which expressive predicates are applied to artworks (as opposed to everything else) was criticised in the last chapter under the view of cathartic expression. We argued that the canonical theorist’s view of cathartic expression limits our ordinary use of expressive language and forces us to exclude instances which we would ordinarily accept as examples of expression. The canonical theorists did nothing to convince us that such carving up of the
language of expression to encompass only voluntary acts is necessary. As Tormey points out,

“Dewey' clearly wants to confine ‘expression’ to activities which are intentionally or voluntarily undertaken...But there is an existing distinction, and one which we would normally employ here, between voluntary and involuntary expression. Dewey offers us no reason for abandoning this in favor of his stipulative restriction, other than an implicit appeal to the very theory which requires the sacrifice, and we are entitled to a more compelling argument before adopting this way of speaking” (Tormey, 101)

In a similar way, Sparshott finds the expressive line (his term for the Canonical Position) in conflict with our linguistic inheritance. He says,

“Whatever the priorities and proprieties, the English word “expression” has associations that are inimical to the expressive line. As Tormey points out (1971), what we speak of as “expressed” is usually something that has an intentional object, which can be stated in propositional form; I express the fear, the belief that something is or may be the case. In other words, the expressible is (as it were) parasitic on discursive language; and that is the very opposite of the situation envisaged by the expressive line, in which what is expressed is supposedly an emotionally charged intuition the clarification of which is the discovery of a meaningfulness incapable of any reduction” (Sparshott, 305)

For Sparshott, these problems are deep-rooted. So much so that he wonders why we would attempt to reformulate a concept of expression. We may wonder the same. But as Sparshott knows, there is such fierce acceptance of the language of expression in the artistic community that any theory which did not make reference to or explain it would be necessarily remote from what other people say about art. This should bother us because we ought to feel an imperative to seek coherence between different understandings or explanations of art. Artists know a lot about art, so do art critics, and so do aestheticians.

---

1 Dewey, like Collingwood, held the Canonical Position, especially with regards to what I termed ‘Cathartic Expression’. Cf. Chapter 3.
Interdisciplinary agreement would surely add weight to any theory of expression. Conversely, abandonment of the dominant language of these disciplines may result in a hashed and contrived way of talking about art, which would never really bear fruit when we visit the museum or art gallery and are confronted with the artwork. Moreover, as Sparshott notes,

“...the thesis that art is expression, understood in a rather confused way, has remained “obviously true” in that it has been the accepted line for persons of a general culture to take...” (Sparshott, 307)

It seems implied that philosophers just haven’t done good work with the concept yet.

Sparshott points out that the expressive line presumes a number of underlying insights (Sparshott, 308-9). First of these is the notion that articulate culture is a characteristic of humanity (hence the link between expression and sentience). Second is the notion that the existence of language implies the minting of language, and this implies the recognition of significant occasions. He says,

“...the archetypal language generating act is the devising or discovery of a sound or movement or mark (a “gesture” in any event) that stands for something worth noting, what is worth noting about it, and why it is worth noting...” (Sparshott, 309)

Thirdly, learning this language is an important part of becoming an individualised human. We seize language and individually use it to add significance to the world as we encounter it. Fourthly, we may experience things which require new symbolisations. These things can be seemingly banal or may be completely novel. These new symbolisations can be linguistic or artistic. We may invent new words to describe what we encounter or we may invent new ways of speaking, of writing or of painting to try to capture the experience. Mendelssohn thought that his music expressed something language could only abuse.
Thus conceived, his music is a new artistic symbolisation. In poetry, Raymond Carver gives significance to the banal: he thus presents a new symbolisation of something that may seem unremarkable:

“I wade through wheat up to my belly,  
cradling a shotgun in my arms.  
Tess is asleep back at the ranch house.  
The moon pales. Then loses face completely  
as the sun spears up over the mountains.”  

According to the expressive line, art symbolises these original experiences; expression in art is original symbolisation. The above excerpt from Carver expresses because it carves up our encounter with the world in an original way (perhaps ‘original’ here because it places weight on something we may not ordinarily comment upon, we may not pay much attention to). The expressive line says that,

“...art is nothing other than the provision of these original expressions. Every such expression, however unselfconscious, humble, transient, and unnoticed, is art...” (Sparshott, 309)

Sparshott is here proposing that expression relies on novel symbolisation of some kind. This may be damaging to our thesis, as symbolisations are surely coded and need unpacking. Rothko may have found a new symbolisation to express desolation. But if it is nevertheless a symbolisation, it will surely need to be ‘read’ in a way similar to the way we have shown symbolisation is ‘read’ in representational art. Sparshott does say that these new symbolisations are intuitive’, but what does this mean? It is left unclear. Is failure to read the symbolisation in abstract painting any different from not ‘getting’ it? I

---

3 And this may be grounds to distinguish between the symbolisation of intuitions and the symbolisation that occurs in, for example, The Arnolfini Wedding.
suggest it is not. But for a subtle reason—because there is nothing to ‘read’ (in the sense we have been using the word) in an abstract painting. If we think of abstract painting in terms of successful and unsuccessful ‘readings’ we will surely miss something. This will connect up with my suggestion at the beginning of the paper that abstract painting calls for a different type of looking.

Sparshott does briefly argue against complex painting—he claims that complex painting does not always represent an intuitive symbolization or expression.

“All work on a large scale is likely to have slack parts, unassimilated aspects and bridge passages, and so is less likely to be a true work of art than its humbler counterpart” (Sparshott, 314)

I am unsure what Sparshott means by ‘complex’ here. As previously noted, Rothko’s paintings are not uncomplicated. They are simple, but not simplistic. Finally, Sparshott unequivocally says that an artwork cannot be on the same level as its originating intuition.

“In fact, the advantage is on the side of the humble gesture, which is more likely to be free from construction and contrivance....The work of art, then, cannot really be on the same epistemic level as the basic intuition that our most naive expressions still embody. It must belong to some higher cycle of integration” (Sparshott, 314)

For Sparshott, then, even the most uncomplicated artwork will still be coded in a way that the basic intuition it expresses is not. There will still be decoding to be done. While we have rid abstract art of the layers of coding which wrap around representational art, Sparshott suggests that there is one final layer that is still intact. If we want to preserve our argument that abstract art does not require unpacking and is therefore more directly expressive we will have to rid ourselves of the suggestion of a final layer. We will endeavour to do this in the next chapter. Here we will employ neurology concerning
synaesthesia to suggest that there no mask covering our experience of abstract painting, that one of the reasons we may not ‘get’ abstract painting is because we are used to unmasking so much in representational painting.

**Sircello: Assembling the Scaffolding**

Guy Sircello also finds the Canonical Position deficient and asserts (i) that it supposes that artworks are like natural objects or natural quasi-/non-objects. And (ii), that it supposes that the anthropomorphic predicates we apply to art are no different than simple colour terms, for example, red (Sircello, 238). The first objection extends our attempt to overcome the problem of expressive pigment. Instead of relying on Kivy’s ‘expressing / being expressive of’ distinction, Sircello proposes that we are wrong to acknowledge a problem of expressive pigment at all. He says rather that an artwork is not like a tube of paint, and so that there will be predicates that apply to the artwork which do not apply to the tube of paint. This brings us to his second objection, the objection that we look to compare the expressive predicates applied to art with the predicates that can be literally applied (like ‘red’, or ‘dense’). Sircello holds that ‘desolate’ is not like ‘red’ (ibid.).

Instead of the Canonical Position, Sircello argues firstly that there are many ways to apply anthropomorphic predicates to artworks. Secondly, he argues that the ‘simple thing–property’ relation is not an adequate taxonomy for understanding these applications. And thirdly he argues that art is expressive in ways much more interesting than those allowed by the Canonical Position.

These arguments are not in conflict with what we have said thus far. Recall in
Chapter 3 when we proposed that it was more apt to compare the expressiveness of Jane’s door-slamming, than the door itself, to an artwork. This proposal notes the insufficiency of a comparison between an artwork and ordinary objects. The second objection, that the anthropomorphic or expressive properties we apply to art are different from the simple properties of art (e.g. ‘red’), seems to be implied by the Rothko claim that he is “no colourist”. While we may be assaulted by colour in Rothko’s paintings, it is not merely shades of colour that should seize us. Rothko is trying to distract our attention from what he does (paint blocks of colour) and instead draw it to what is felt. He is employing the same distinction as Sircello. While Rothko’s means is colour, it is not his end. He wants that colour to do something else⁴ and he is admonishing those of us who are seduced by his means and fail to see his end.

Through a number of examples, Sircello shows some of the ways that we apply anthropomorphic properties to artworks⁵. I have broken these down into four ways:

Firstly, the entire content of the painting may express, that is, what is represented, the formal content and the attitude of the (implied) artist. In The Taking of Christ, what is

---

⁴ This something else may be analogous to Kandinsky’s desire that his art not only trigger cross-modal correspondences, but that these correspondences have “reverberations in the soul” (cf. p.17).

⁵ Sircello gives 13 examples of artworks and how they express. For the sake of the reader, I will not introduce these examples in the main body. I feel it would be more helpful for us to think Sircello’s categories in terms of the examples we have already explored. However, for the sake of those familiar with the Sircello text, I will refer to some of his examples in the following footnotes.

⁶ The example Sircello gives of such an artwork is Raphael’s La Belle Jardinière, which he describes as being calm and serene. Similar to the way I have presented the Caravaggio above, he says, “It is fairly clear what it is about this painting which makes it calm and serene: the regular composition based on an equilateral triangle, the gentle and loving expressions on the faces of the Mother, the Child, and the infant John the Baptist, the placid landscape, the delicate trees, the soft blue of the sky, the gentle ripples in the Mother’s garments blown by a slight breeze, and, finally, the equanimity and quiet with which the artist views his subject and records the details of the scene” (Sircello, 239).
represented and the way that Caravaggio paints what is represented are similarly expressive. Jesus’ face is given a certain softness, the steel of the armoured arm is prominent and cold. The chiaroscuro, or used of light and dark, in the painting coheres importantly with the scene represented: The colours are stark and clear. The light on Jesus’ face is softer, more ethereal. All these things contribute to the expressivity of the painting. But only, we have seen, once we have unpacked the representational content, pegged the narrative. That is, we have claimed that from the formal content alone, from Caravaggio’s use of chiaroscuro alone etc., we could not fully understand The Taking of Christ. These formal flags are ready to be planted on to the narrative of Gethsemane, but without Gethsemane, we are just carrying them–unsure of how, or where, they fit.

Secondly, the formal content of the painting may be expressive. Rothko’s colours, his brushstroke, the presence of the canvas etc. are the expressive forces of his paintings. But since there is no representational content at work here we do not have to read the painting before we understand the relevance of the formal content. On the other hand, some may want to argue that this (removal of representational content) is a lack that leaves the formal content vague and ungrounded. We will suggest otherwise.

---

7 Sircello’s example here is Hans Hofmann’s The Golden Wall, which he describes as “an expressive abstract painting...What is expressive is the color scheme, which is predominantly red and yellow. Blue and green are also used as contrasting colors, but even these colors, especially the blue, are made to look aggressive because of their intensity....” (Sircello, 239)
Thirdly, the manner of execution by the implied artist may be expressive. In the Carver poem, it was not so much what the poet was telling us, but the implied way he was thinking which expressed the slow silent contemplation of the speaker, the patience of hunting. Carver may or may not have shared such moments. He may not be a hunter; he may merely be an astute observer of people’s lives.

Fourthly, the artist’s actual attitude as presented (rather than implied) may be expressive. In The Arnolfini Wedding, Van Eyck ‘paints in’ something of his own attitude with the reflection in the mirror and the witness testimony on the wall. We know Van Eyck is not hypothesising about the scene. He was an actual witness at a real wedding. And, at least in part, the painting reflects his attitude to the event and his own role. His attitude thus adds to the solemnity and intimacy of the occasion.

Both the third and the fourth ways deal with an attitude as manifest in an artwork. The examples I used, as I interpreted them, may be disagreed with. But I think it stands that the attitude in an artwork can either be the attitude of the artist toward the scene, or it can be an implied attitude. For example, I suggest that Carver may not be a hunter (as

---

8 One example Sircello gives of this is that of Poussin’s The Rape of the Sabine Women. He describes the painting as being calm and aloof despite the fact that it presents a scene of great violence. Sircello says “…it is quite clear that the depicted scene is not clear and that no one in it, with the possible exception of Romulus, who is directing the attack, is aloof. It is rather, as we say, that Poussin calmly observes the scene and paints it in an aloof, detached way” (Sircello, 239). This is not to say that rape was something that Poussin was aloof about, no more than we want to say that Carver is in reality a calm hunter, merely that this is the attitude that is presented, and which influences the expressive predicate applied to the artwork.

9 Sircello’s examples of this category are T.S. Eliot’s “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” or Breughel’s Wedding Dance in the Open Air. However, we must note that the application of the third and fourth categories may be debated with regards to any individual work. This is not a criticism of the distinction itself, just a matter of scholarship with regards to individual artworks. Perhaps, after all, Poussin was indifferent to rape and Carver was himself a calm hunter. I address this concern in more detail below.
the subject of the poem is), that this may be a character, and that the slow silent contemplation is an attitude he is imparting rather than partaking of. I may be wrong about Carver in this case (he may himself have actually gone shooting one morning and left Tess behind in bed) but the distinction stands¹⁰.

Which of these notions applies to abstract art? It seems that the first and second are most pertinent. The entire content of an abstract painting is expressive (the first notion). But the entire content of the abstract painting seems to be collapsible into its formal content (the second notion) either because there is no object represented at all, as is the case with Rothko, or because there is no object of importance represented, as is the case with Kandinsky. That this mode of expression affords the viewer a more direct experience of the artwork’s expressivity is not yet clear. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that we are at least avoiding sending the viewer to an external object or narrative or to an artist’s description (with the emphasis on ‘artist’; implied or actual).

Nevertheless, there is an extent to which the artist still plays a role in the abstract painting, since we know that the painting was deliberately painted. Even Jackson Pollock’s paintings were done deliberately. When Hans Arp, for Arrangement According to the Laws of Chance, 1916-17, tore up a sheet of paper and dropped it, then pasted the fragments as they had fallen, he did so deliberately. He deliberately allowed chance to play a role in the creation of the artwork. Knowledge of this deliberation is something we carry with us when we view artworks. We know they were crafted by somebody. They

¹⁰ My own evidence for this interpretation of Carver is that his poetry is regularly presented in the first person when he is telling stories of other people. He seems to have wanted to reveal the world as his characters saw it, rather than necessarily as he himself experienced it from the outside. He is a storyteller.
are not the results of acts of God or of natural elements. Similarly, our view of Jane slamming the door (even if we do not see Jane) and our view of the door slamming closed in the wind are different\textsuperscript{11}. Thus Sircello points out that we carry a notion of ‘artistic acts’ with us when viewing an artwork. And it is in virtue of acts of these sorts that we apply the expressive predicates to an artwork. He says,

“...the respective anthropomorphic predicate is applied to the work in virtue of what the artist does in that work” (Sircello, 243)

Sircello helps explain the muddiness that inhabits our expressive language. For example, we will say that Dave scowls angrily (the anthropomorphic predicate is applied to Dave’s act of scowling). But we will also say that Dave has an angry scowl on his face (the anthropomorphic predicate is applied to the scowl itself with the implication of Dave acting a certain way). Sircello notes,

“What is interesting about these clauses is that they show how an anthropomorphic term can be applied either adverbally to “acts” or adjectivally to “things” without a difference in the sense of the term or the sentences in which it is used” (Sircello, 245)

Sircello’s differentiation between the artist and his or her artistic acts steers us away from the problematic claim that understanding the artwork necessarily involves understanding something about the artist. For as we previously noted, I could slam a door angrily without being angry. Rothko may have painted his most desolate paintings during a temporary respite from his feelings of depression\textsuperscript{12}.

The second false claim of the Canonical Position was the claim that the

\textsuperscript{11} We could say that the wind slammed the door angrily, but then we would be personifying the wind.

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. Chapter 3, (30).
anthropomorphic predicates we apply to art are on the same footing as, say, simple colour terms e.g. red. Sircello rejects this notion. Again as previously noted Rothko’s paintings are not desolate in the same sense that they are black. Here Sircello objects to the notion that they are metaphorically desolate. Sircello thinks that there is nothing metaphorical in our application of anthropomorphic predicates. He is right. There is no metaphor in use, the painting is desolate, it is not a metaphor for desolation. But we do not want to move from the claim that the painting is a desolate painting to a claim that it must therefore express desolation (in the sense Kivy used) precisely because this is the puts us back with the problem of expressive pigment. As Sircello says,

“...such uses [of anthropomorphic words] appear not to be metaphorical at all. After all it is not as if calling a smile sad were representing the smile as, as it were, feeling sad, acting sad, weeping and dragging its feet. To see a smile’s sadness is not to discern the tenuous and subtle “likeness” between the smile and a sad person. It is much more straightforward to think that a smile is sad because it is a smile characteristic of a sad person who smiles; that laughter is gay because such laughter is characteristic laughter of persons who are gay. In this respect “sad smile” is rather like “six-year-old behavior” or “Slavic cheekbones”. These phrases do not indirectly point to unexpected similarities between a sort of behavior and six-year old children or between cheekbones and persons. They designate, respectively, behavior which is characteristic of six-year old children and cheekbones characteristic of Slavs. And there is no inclination at all to call these phrases “metaphorical” (Sircello, 249-50)

The point we should take from Sircello then is that when a painting is expressive of, say, desolation, we do not mean that it is metaphorically desolate. We mean that the painting is actually desolate by virtue of the artistic acts manifest therein, though not that the

---

13 Directly this is an attack on the position of Nelson Goodman, who relies heavily on the notion of metaphor in his account of expression, cf. Goodman’s Languages of Art.
pigment, canvas, brushstrokes etc. are desolate themselves\(^\text{14}\). Similarly, when we mark a
certain face as being sad we usually do so by virtue of its, say, droopiness, weakness or
waness (think of Kivy’s St. Bernard). However, we must also realise that there is a
difference between marking these properties and saying that the face is sad. Sircello
concludes,

“The difference is that the term “sad” explicitly relates the character of the smile to
sadness of persons” (Sircello, 250)

§2 Expression in Abstract Art.

How do these accounts bear upon abstract art? Sircello has argued that when we say
Rothko’s painting is desolate we do so with reference to the artistic acts evident in the
artwork and because such actions are often characteristic of feelings such as desolation\(^\text{15}\).
This certainly leaves it all there on the canvas\(^\text{16}\) to be directly felt. However, Sparshott
wants to insist that there is still a layer of coding to be unraveled. Recall that Sparshott
unequivocally says that an artwork cannot be on the same level as its originating intuition.

“In fact, the advantage is on the side of the humble gesture, which is more likely
to be free from construction and contrivance....The work of art, then, cannot really

\(^\text{14}\) We are relating the canvas to a person, an artist, in much the same way as we relate the sad
smile to sadness of people or a person. However, we are not thus making a claim about the
host’s feeling: we are not saying either that Rothko was necessarily desolate or that he was
necessarily painting desolately. In the same way, we are not saying that the sad smiled is
necessarily sad or even that he is intentionally smiling in a sad way, merely that the smile he
is wearing is characteristic of what we think of as the smile of a sad person. Of course, all the
above might be true of somebody who is smiling sadly—the person may be sad, they may be
intentionally smiling sadly and the smile may be the right kind of sad smile - the kind that we
usually think of as characteristic of sad people. But only the last of these possibilities is
necessary in order for us to legitimately say “That smile is sad”, or “You are smiling sadly”.
To deem the others to be necessary would be to place us back in the Canonical Camp with its
associated problems

\(^\text{15}\) We will explore a possible explanation for this connection between certain artistic acts and
certain emotions in Chapters 5 and 6.

\(^\text{16}\) Sircello is not even using the notion of the implied artist, and he is certainly not asking us
to commit the aforementioned Intentional Fallacy.
be on the same epistemic level as the basic intuition that our most naive expressions still embody. It must belong to some higher cycle of integration” (Sparshott, 314)

While Sparshott’s objection is undeveloped, some may agree with his reasoning. How could a complex act, like a painting, be as directly expressive as a smile or a frown? Moreover, some will find that the lack of a represented object leaves the viewer nowhere to directly plant these anthropomorphic properties. For Sparshott and some readers then, even the most uncomplicated artwork will still be coded in a way that the basic intuition it expresses is not. There will still be decoding to be done.

Dewey makes a suggestion along similar lines but he focuses on abstract painting more particularly. In detail, he claims that our understanding of the expressivity of abstract painting is packed into our understanding of the formal content of the painting outside of its instance in that painting. He claims that,

“...lines, even when we try to ignore everything else and gaze upon them in isolation, carry over the meaning of objects of which they are constituent parts” (Dewey, 100)

The lines in an abstract painting are expressive then because they remind us of the lines we notice in our environments, in the objects we have experienced. Such a view may not be problematic: We need not be asked to consciously recall the lines from our environments every time we perceive lines in an abstract painting. All Dewey may be saying is that lines we perceive in art may have been conditioned by our built environment17. However, if he is saying that every time we perceive a line in an abstract painting we can only find it moving if we refer it to some line in our environments I

17 In a similar way, for example, people who live in round huts reportedly do not experience the Müller-Lyer illusion. My thanks to John Heintz for this point and the example.
disagree. For example, some people see Rothko’s horizontal dividing lines as actual representational horizons. While I do not suggest that this is false, I do think this viewer will miss something by thus limiting the way he is looking.\textsuperscript{18}

In the next chapter we will respond to the claim that abstract art is yet coded by introducing neurological research that speaks to the subject. Dewey and Sparshott are making claims about the way we perceive the content of an abstract painting. They are saying that it is coded, but in the opposite direction to representational painting. Sparshott did claim that the simple painting employs a more intuitive symbolisation than the complex painting. But we were unsure what this meant and (recalling the distinction between simple painting and simplist painting when viewing Rothko) whether the abstract painting we have been talking about qualified as being uncomplicated. Nevertheless, Sparshott and Sircello have empowered us with some useful language, and have aided our dismantling of the canonical stick that was being brandished at us at the end of the last chapter.

\textsuperscript{18} I will return to Dewey’s problem thus interpreted in Chapter 6.
Chapter 5

§1 Overview

With the help of Sircello we have explained how an artwork expresses. The conclusion is that art expresses by virtue of artistic acts, and that the artwork expresses to an attentive viewer. Moreover, we have exposed representational art as being coded in a way that mitigates the directness of its experience\(^1\). Nelson Goodman also agrees that abstract art can express, but he refuses to make a qualitative appraisal in its favour. He says,

“Nothing in the present analysis of symbolic functions offers any support for manifestos to the effect that representation is an indispensable requirement for art; or is an insuperable barrier to it, or that expression without representation is the highest achievement of the human spirit...” (Goodman, 94)

Sparshott also leaned towards an argument similar to our own but retreated. He went so far as to say that a painting that is not “complex” will rely on a more intuitive form of symbolisation. This might diminish the unpacking to be done in such a painting. But Sparshott does not clarify what he means by “complex”. Rothko’s paintings are not without subtlety, so can we be sure that they are uncomplicated? And Kandinsky’s Composition VII is certainly busy, but is its formal content simple or complex? Thus far, the theory of expression accepted has answered the thesis that abstract art is more directly expressive in the negative (albeit for unclear reasons).

In this chapter we will attempt to answer these lingering questions. We will elaborate this simple / complex distinction in the light of neurological research. This

\(^1\) Whether abstract art is too coded in this way remains unresolved.
research suggests that the ‘symbolisation’ used in abstract painting is basic in a way which implies that calling it ‘symbolisation’ is to embroider it with unnecessary connotations. In turning our attention to this we will begin to look at the way we perceive art. So we will not be talking about ‘artistic acts’. Nevertheless, our acceptance of this notion stands; in exploring this other side of expression, we do not mean to replace what has been argued and accepted, rather to supplement it from the other direction.

§2 The Flip Side

The artwork is expressive because of more than what happens on the canvas. It is expressive because we react to it in some way. To be clear, we do not necessarily feel what the artwork is expressing; the sad painting does not make us cry. But we are moved by the experience of an expressive artwork. When I look at the dark Rothko I observe dread and desolation, I experience a sensation of exclusion. His more bold, vibrant canvases pull me in and let me wallow. The sensation is one of floating. These are not emotional feelings, but inner sensations. In a similar way, the smell of cut grass can make us physically feel a certain way—perhaps light and energetic (aside from the emotions associated with the summer). I am here distinguishing between the sensual and the emotional. Cytowic gives a better example,

“...few people claim to like explosions, yet everyone likes fireworks. Millions of pounds of entertaining explosives go up all over the world, with millions turning out to watch them. What are they, these colored lights, flashes and bangs? They are not real things in nature, representations of anything else, and they don’t remind us of anything at an intellectual level. They are as abstract as Piet

---

2 The “sinking feeling” that accompanies my viewing of the Rothko is a sensation. Its emotional correlate is something like desolation. But while I experience the sinking feeling, I do not experience Rothko’s desolation. As previously noted, sad music does not necessarily make us sad. This is not to suggest that there is no connection between sensations and emotions, just that the connection is not always necessary.
Mondrian or Jackson Pollock—and yet they [induce] millions to watch and then walk away, highly satisfied, saying, “That was wonderful,” without anyone being able to say exactly what “That” was. No other form of abstract visual expression is as popular” (Cytowic (1995), 7.4)

The ‘ahh-experience’ of fireworks is strongly tied to our visual and aural perception with an immediacy that seems uncoded. This is perhaps because our experience of fireworks is, as Sparshott might put it, ‘uncomplicated’.

Fireworks present a multi-modal experience i.e. we experience them with more than one sense (we both see and hear the fireworks). Cytowic, however, is drawing an analogy between such multi-modal experiences and cross-modal experiences. In doing so, he is showing the breadth of our perception, specifically with relation to a phenomenon known as synaesthesia. Synaesthesia or joint perception is defined as “cross-modal correspondences such as analogies between the perceptions of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch” (Watkins, 1). A synaesthetic experience involves the stimulation of one sensory module and a resulting perception in one or more other senses. For example, hearing a musical composition could conjure up a visual palette of colour, or being kissed could taste like orange sherbet.

We may recall that Kandinsky was highly prone to draw the connections between sound and colour (cf. Chapter 2). Indeed, he was disposed to see musical sounds as

---

3 The existence of synaesthesia is assumed here. Skeptics may be directed to Baron-Cohen et al.’s paper ‘Coloured speech perception: Is synaesthesia what happens when modularity breaks down?’ (1993). There is by no means consensus among neurologists regarding synaesthesia. I do not pretend to present (or understand) all the neurological subtleties of this research. However, I have attempted to present the more uncontroversial and up to date research in an accessible manner. Richard E. Cytowic, Simon Baron-Cohen and Geoffrey Collier are accepted authorities on the subject.

4 To quote the title of a documentary on the subject: BBC (1994), Orange Sherbet Kisses, TV documentary, Teresa Hunt, producer.
colours. Kandinsky’s accounts of his musical experiences are consistent with synaesthesia. This condition certainly adds veracity to Kandinsky’s accounts in a way that mere analogy cannot. Neurologists, including Cytowic, note this too:

“Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) had perhaps the deepest sympathy for sensory fusion, both synaesthetic and as an artistic idea. He explored harmonious relationships between sounds and color and used musical terms to describe his paintings, calling them “compositions” and “improvisations”” (Cytowic (1995), 3.9)

Kandinsky’s perception of sound as colour, like the connection between the visual spectacle of the fireworks and the ‘ahh-experience’ resulting, was not coded, and it is these perceptions that he was trying to present in his paintings.

But surely this is yet coded for us? We are not all synaesthetic. When I, for one, devour chocolate the taste is not accompanied by a tactile sensation. The sound of my name does not smell like vanilla (to a non-synaesthete). Given that Kandinsky actually perceived sounds as colours, we are led to question the degree to which we, when perceiving his art, can experience the same thing. Surely, because I am not synaesthetic, I cannot understand the expressivity in Kandinsky’s painting in the same way that he did? So surely I cannot ‘get’ Kandinsky’s work the way he intends, without realising and unpacking his synaesthetic experiences. Perhaps. But current research disagrees and instead proposes that we all possess synaesthetic abilities. As Cytowic notes,

“It is aphorismic that nature reveals herself by her exceptions” (Cytowic (1995), 1.3)

Synaesthesia to the extent that Kandinsky possessed it is not common. But such cases

---

5 Cf. Chapter 2, 18.
6 Cytowic estimates that “1/25,000 individuals is born to a world where one sensation involuntarily conjures up others, sometimes all five clashing together” (Cytowic, 1.2)
may be exceptions to a more general perceptual trend.

§3 Neural Basis

The general features of synaesthesia are the following:

(i) Stability in inter-sensory associations. This means that if a synaesthete declares that the sound of the letter ‘o’ is white, she will always perceive the letter thusly.\(^7\)

(ii) Synaesthetic perceptions are generic (Cytowic (1995), 4.5). For example, while non-synaesthetes may imagine a sleigh ride while listening to Prokoviev, a synaesthete’s experience will be unelaborate,

“...they see blobs, lines, spirals, and lattice shapes; feel smooth or rough textures; taste agreeable or disagreeable tastes such as salty, sweet, or metallic” (Cytowic (1995), 4.5)\(^8\)

(iii) Synaesthesia is projected, perceived as something external to the body but usually in “peri-personal space” (Cytowic (1995), 4.3). Synaesthesia thus highlights the fact that perception is not a passive process. The synaesthete responds to the objects that she is seeking out in her environment, rather than all the objects in her perceptual field (this would surely constitute an overwhelming experience).

“Our brains are not passive receivers of energy flux, but dynamic explorers that actively seek out the stimuli that interest them and determine their own contexts for perception” (Cytowic (1995), 8.2)

Similarly, when we perceive an angle as being sharp we are selecting that angle in particular as an object of perception. We then project the quality of ‘sharpness’ back onto the angle rather than holding this as a subjective reaction. The angle, we hold, is

---

\(^7\) Cf. Baron-Cohen et. al. (1993) for precise results regarding this claim.

\(^8\) Cytowic believes that this distinction between ‘elementary and elaborated experience is crucial if we are to craft a coherent neurological explanation of synaesthesia’ (Cytowic, 4.9).
sharp. The tactile sensation becomes a characteristic of the angle rather than a characteristic of us.

Simon Baron-Cohen supports arguments that synaesthesia is experienced by infants and represents a normal phase in development. Specifically, he supports the Cross-Modal Transfer (CMT) hypothesis which argues that,

“objects can be recognized in more than one modality, as a result of infants being able to represent objects in an abstract form. This implies, for example that babies can recognise one object versus another from their appearance, even if they have previously only touched them without seeing them” (Baron-Cohen (1996), 2)

The claims are that we all experience cross-modal perception as infants and that our modular development has now severed the connections there were between the five sensory modules\(^9\). Lewkowicz and Turkewitz show that infants respond to shifts in intensity rather than modality. For example, if we were to flash a bright light and follow it with a noise of similar intensity, the infant’s heart rate remains constant. The infant matches the intensity of the stimulation, regardless of the modality they experience it in (visual or auditory in this experiment). A reaction is only achieved when the intensity of stimulation is irregular. This shows that what lends salience to the infant’s experience is the quantitative rather than modular shift. They say,

“[The results] suggest that for the young infant the salient characteristics of stimulation are variations along quantitative dimensions whereas variations along qualitative dimensions (e.g. modality) are essentially ignored. Thus, the infant responds not to the differences in the modality of stimulation but to the amount

\(^1\) Baron-Cohen cites experiments by Rose, Gottfried and Bridger (1978) and Lewkowicz and Turkewitz (1980) which add weight to this hypothesis.

\(^9\) This view is seen to directly contradict the views of Locke, Berkeley and Piaget who held that we had independent sense modalities as infants and that we learn to correlate them through encountering objects in each of the different sense modalities. We may note that there may be implications here for the problem famously posed by Mr. Molyneux, but I will not deal further with this here for want of space.
of stimulation” (Lewkowicz and Turkewitz, 606)

It follows then that development of sensory modules is a process of severance or progressive differentiation. The proposal is that synaesthetes represent a breakdown in this modular development.

However, it might be questioned how much further our (as in non-synaesthetic) modular development goes. Are our sensory modules wholly severed? Or are they just more severed than those of the synaesthete? If so, how much more? Lewkowicz and Turkewitz also performed the experiment reported above on adults. They found that adults reacted more to the change in modality than the change in intensity (again measured by heart rate). However, when they instructed the adults to attempt to make cross-modal matches using intensity, they found that adults were able to do so reliably. They conclude that,

“We would therefore emphasize the possibility that differences between infant and adult processing of sensory information may reflect differences in the aspects of stimulation attended to rather than differences in ability” (Lewkowicz and Turkewitz, 606)

Moreover, synaesthetic experience can be induced with the help of certain drugs (e.g. LSD, amyl nitrate, ethanol)\(^\text{1}\). If the experience can be induced, it would seem that the sensory modules are not wholly disconnected from each other.

“...the fact that synaesthesia can sometimes be induced in non-synaesthetic people suggests that an ability to experience the phenomenon is possessed by most if not all people, and will arise when ‘properly catalysed’” (Watkins, 5)

If this were true, it would help explain our ability to understand the analogy between

music and sound as applied in Kandinsky’s, and other’s, paintings. And this would be more immediate than decoding the analogy (which would put us back with representational art).

**Common Synaesthesia: Synaesthetic Metaphor**

Presumably, we are not all doing LSD when we look at Kandinsky’s paintings. In terms of day to day living then, how does synaesthesia manifest itself in experience? One way is in our use of synaesthetic metaphor. Synaesthesia must be distinguished from literary tropes, but nevertheless our ready adoption of such ‘metaphors’ may be more commonplace evidence that our sensory modules are still interconnected.

Synaesthetic metaphor links something belonging to one sensory module to another. Common examples are ‘bitter cold’, ‘loud colours’, ‘sweet smells’. Synaesthetic metaphors are just metaphors, but the origin and intuitive aptness of them seems explainable by cross-modular correspondences. Marks proposes the following,

“The Doctrine of the Unity of the Senses provides a good starting point for interpreting synaesthetic metaphor. In a nutshell, the doctrine says first, that there are meaningful similarities across different sense modalities, and second, that some of these similarities are appreciated by virtually everyone” (Marks, 212)

Marks explores the example of ‘bitter cold’. We could entertain the hypothesis that this is merely an expression that conveys the discomfort associated with cold. But our

---

One might here think that another example is ‘warm colours’ or ‘cool colours’. However, Marks suggests otherwise. He notes, “the fact that yellow and red colors are called warm, green and blue ones cool, does not seem to have its main basis in sensory synaesthesia. Children are not as reliable as adults in the way they assign warmth and coolness to colors, and for this reason it has been suggested that relations between color and temperature are learned” (Marks, 219). It is important for us to note such exceptions. Not all synaesthetic metaphor is related to modular connections. However, many such metaphors are neither reducible to literary tropes nor to learned connections (the connection, for example, between fire, orange-red and warmth is one which is learned).
reaction to bitterness (wincing, watering eyes etc.) does not seem similar to our reaction
to cold (shivering, chattering teeth). Moreover, Marks points out,

“If bitter is used metaphorically solely because of its unpleasant connotation, we
may inquire why is sour not used similarly? People never, or hardly ever, say
‘sour cold’, yet sour does not seem very different, hedonically, from bitter”
(Marks, 217)

These observations lead Marks to believe that ‘bitter cold’ and certain other examples are
explainable only by reference to synaesthetic perception. Of course, it is conceivable that
these synaesthetic metaphors are now employed as a matter of convention. But we could
still ask from whence that convention arose.

Synaesthetic metaphor can allow us to make rational sense of the way that we
naturally talk about art. For example, we refer to acute angles being ‘sharp’, curved lines
being ‘soft’; these are tactile terms projected onto visual phenomena. In other words, we
can sensibly bring the sensuality back into art. Yet, these cross modal correspondences do
not seem to be coded. They seem intuitive in the way that Sparshott desires. Perhaps a
painting which merely relies on this kind of correspondence is what he deems to be
uncomplicated, the symbolisation of which does not need to be unpacked.

§4 Affective Synaesthesia.

In §2 we made reference to the sensations that we felt in reaction to art. Cytowic talked
about our response, the ‘ahh-experience’, to the multi-modal perception of fireworks. It
seems that our perceptions are tied to these sensations. Indeed, these feelings may be a
form of internal perception. And just as there are cross-modal correspondences between
sensory modules, there may be correspondences between what we perceive and how we
'feel' (in terms of sensation, rather than emotion) when we perceive these things. Geoffrey Collier calls this ‘affective synaesthesia’ (Collier, 2). When music is ‘right’ we actually feel a shiver up our back. When our eyes wander over a canvas they will come to rest in a certain spot, where we feel at home, and I mean actually feel comfortable. Look at the Kandinsky, allow your eyes wander over it and then find yourself stop moving around, but yet looking, lingering in some perceptual comfort zone.

This sensation seems tied to the expressivity of the artwork too. The sensation of being excluded which accompanies the Rothko, connects with the expressive content of the painting. Desolation is alienating. Also, the way our eyes move over a painting may be influenced by synaesthetic associations. Kandinsky uses curve and point to block certain visual passages and emphasise others. The movement of our eye across paintings is hinged to the expressivity of the painting too. We are encouraged to wallow in the wash of colour we see in many of Rothko’s paintings. Conversely, the stark ‘horizon’ in the other painting, *Untitled*, 1969[20], seems to bar the way. And these reactions, these cross-modal correspondences, are not coded, they do not appear as symbolisations.

Moreover, cross modal perceptions are projected outward (see (iii) above). They are not perceptions in the mind’s eye but are perceptions that we relate to the objects in our environments. Cytowic notes that it is a mistake to consider perception to be a one-way street. He says,

---

13 Collier makes the move towards emotion, rather than resting with sensations, that I am reluctant to make. However, he classes emotions by valence (good-bad), activity (fast-slow) and, to a lesser extent, potency (strong-weak). These measurements, he says, “function as an intermediary between stimuli and emotions” i.e. they reside more with sensations than emotions and this “makes convention a less plausible explanation for all the reliability in the mappings” between stimuli and emotion. I will present his findings below.
"We think of perception as a one-way street, travelling from the outside world inwards, dispatching a linear stream of neural impulses from one relay to ever more complex ones, so that the process is metaphorically like a conveyer belt running through stations in a factory, until a perception rolls off the end as the finished product" (Cytowic (1995), 5.3)

Contrary to this view, it is proposed that we project back onto the world. Thus expression in art may be not only a matter of artist–artistic acts–artwork, but also, to a significant degree, viewer–artwork. The reason there can be synchrony between percipients is that we project back simple or ‘intuitive’ cross-modal correspondences.

Collier’s experiments reveal the frequency of affective synaesthesia. He shows that we readily make correspondences between shapes and emotions and between colours and emotions. He measures the connection between a certain colour and a certain emotion in terms of valence and activity. Valence is a measure of positive and negative, activity is measured in terms of high and low. So, for example when we say a gray canvas is expressive of boredom or depression or gloominess or guiltiness or despondency, we are attributing negative, low activity sensations to this colour. He says,

"...it would not be fair to say either that people consistently map specific colors onto specific emotions or that their mappings are arbitrary. Specifically, there is a tendency for the emotions of a given colour to cluster in one, two, or at most three quadrants of emotion space [measured in terms of valence, activity and perhaps potency]" (Collier, 20)

These perceptions, he claims, are cross-modal in nature\textsuperscript{14}. For example, a

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{14} Some results he cites:
"The main effect of shape can be simply summarized: for hard, agitation, powerful, furious and serious, angles were preferred over curves, while curves were preferred over angles for quiet, gentle, lazy, weak, playful, merry, sad and dead. This preference for angles seems to be determined by a combination of negative valence, high activity, and perhaps some potency" (Collier, 25)
Also see Collier, 21 and 23 for tabled results.
\end{quote}
connection between colour and activity is a connection between visual and kinesthetic perception. So these correspondences are based on synaesthetic perception which is common to all of us. Collier does note that convention may play a role here (as we also noted is the case with some synaesthetic metaphor). However, his experiments reveal cross-cultural consistencies\(^{15}\) and while it is “impossible to eliminate subtle conventions as their basis in any particular case...it should be noted that conventions themselves stand in need of explanation, and may themselves contain synaesthetic components” (Collier, 7).

These Experiences are Uncoded

The cross-modal correspondences that come into play when we view art are basic in an important way. Let us recap the degrees of coding we outlined in Chapter 1: Firstly, there was the ‘tables and chairs’ level at which most paintings are coded. Caravaggio assumes this level of coding and proceeds beyond it, while Colville stops at this level of coding. Here the artist asks us to translate objects from the two dimensional canvas into a three dimensional world. This translation, we held, is easy; we readily think of Colville’s painted people as people. However, while there is no hard translation here, the process still removes us somewhat from the canvas. We begin to think of the painted people as real people in a real world. Our experience of the painting takes us farther than the canvas.

Secondly, we noted that Caravaggio and Van Eyck asked us to do more than

\(^{15}\) Experiments cited approach the problem anthropologically. For example, one experiment showed consistencies across American, Najavo, Mexican-Spanish and Japanese subjects (cf. Collier, 2).
decode the ‘tables and chairs’ in their paintings. It was not enough to realise that these are men, that this is a dog, that here is a mirror etc. We were asked to decode the ‘tables and chairs’ into something more elusive: that this dog is a symbol of faithfulness or that the man is Jesus, who was betrayed by a kiss. This, we thought, was a more complex level of coding that may pose difficulties for certain viewers.

Thirdly, we noted that there may be no coding at all. The painter may ask us simply to react to the concrete presence of the canvas and its formal content. This reaction is based on the way we perceive. The suggestion of the neurology that we have just examined is that when we perceive we perceive in more than the modality the object is presented in. So our reaction to a painting is based not only on visual stimulation but on cross-modal correspondences including affective synaesthesia (measured by valence and activity). When we perceive expressive, uncoded art, our limbic brain projects cross-modal perceptions (including sensations) back onto the artwork, which give salience or ‘meaningfulness’ to our experience of the artwork. This process is simple; we are not making complex inferences or being distracted by outside associations, but engaging in normal perception. And this process is the part of expressiveness that comes from us, the viewers. Part of our application of expressive predicates to an artwork is linked to the nature of our perception of that artwork.
Chapter 6

§1 Putting the Artwork Back Together

In this, our final chapter, I will attempt to pull the ideas accepted back together in a way that gives prominence to the artwork and its sensuality. Armed with concepts from Sircello, we have become confident that painting expresses in virtue of artistic acts. The neurology hinted at more; that there is no symbolisation besides intuitive cross-modal correspondences in abstract art. This will now be married to what artists and the art critics have said. If we look at the intuitions voiced in Chapter 2 and they ring true due to insights from Sircello, Collier and Cytowic, we will be closer to making a conclusion in favour of the positive thesis. Seeing the artist’s intuitions mirrored back onto our theory of expression (including the neurological aspect) will add weight to our theory, as it will reveal inter-disciplinary agreement. Moreover, it will lend force to the way artist’s understand their practice, to the way they explain it and to what they think it is doing; it will allow sensual talk to become sensible.

§2 Artists meet Expression

Kandinsky

Recall that Kandinsky not only wanted us to perceive his artwork similarly to the way that we would listen to a musical composition. He also asked that our actual experience of the artwork be similar and “cause vibrations in the soul” (Kandinsky, 25). Now, however, we can propose what Kandinsky means. Kandinsky, being a synaesthete, knew that there are cross-modal correspondences. He was actually acquainted, on a daily basis,

---

1 See Chapter 2, 17, for full quotation.
with the analogy between colour and music borne out in his environment. This is what he sought to portray in his work. He spent a great deal of time exploring the various other cross-modal correspondences that could play a role in his art. He notes,

“Many colours have been described as rough or sticky, others as smooth and uniform, so that one feels inclined to stroke them (e.g. dark ultramarine, chromic oxide green, and rose madder). Equally the distinction between warm and cold colours belong to this connection. Some colours appear soft (rose madder), others hard (cobalt green, blue-green oxide) so that even fresh from the tube they seem to be dry” (Kandinsky, 25)

These perceptions seem apt, even to the non-synaesthete. The technique of wielding colours, of knowing their effects, how they jar or massage other senses, is important to artists. Moreover, in painting, colour is married to form. Form can be a separating line, the edge of the canvas, or actual shapes on the canvas. Soft colours paired with soft (curved) shapes or with hard (acute) shapes will produce different effects, will likewise jar or coddle the percipient. These ideas are based on recognition of cross-modal correspondences.

However, the artist wants to do more than tease our senses and exercise our intersensory abilities. He wants to express something. And he performs these artistic acts so that the artwork will ultimately be felt (in terms of sensation), not just perceived (however cross-modally). Recall from Chapter 2, Kandinsky says he wants his acts to “cause vibrations in the soul”. He is presenting a sensual experience to be felt. The expressiveness of his paintings can affect the percipient in the same way as the fireworks can affect the eager crowd. The cross-modal correspondences do not merely feed the five senses, but lend salience to the resulting sensations. Thus can we not only understand the expressiveness of the painting by looking at it, by perceiving the canvas, but we can
experience it in a meaningful way. As Cytowic points out, this noetic perception stimulates the limbic brain, making the experience notable, provoking the ‘ahh-experience’ of the fireworks.

Abstract artists are aware that increased perceptual fodder can render an artwork more expressive. This comes out more perhaps when we look at the way sculptors talk of their works. Richard Serra provides a perfect example in a recent interview:

“Richard Serra: ...The feeling that you get as you walk through it [Torqued Ellipse IV] is that it’s moving laterally away from you. Your perception is propelled by the movement of your hips, not by your trunk. Number IV has more athleticism than the other pieces.
David Sylvester: It stretches you, it stretches your body. There are other Ellipses where an illusory movement of the walls is analogous to the movement of the muscles in your body, but this one is unique in the way it creates a definite pull in both directions, a stretching of your length.
RS: Your gesture is larger with this piece. You take larger strides as you walk its length.
DS: Well, it has the quality of a stadium. It’s as if it is open to the skies, and it gives you a feeling of great release. It’s like being out of doors.
RS: That’s right” (Sylvester (1999), 32)

In the last comment above from David Sylvester, we observe the move from observing the way the work tugs in different directions, to how that makes us feel. Sylvester moves from noting the way we perceive and move through the work (visual and kinaesthetic perception) to the way it makes him feel, saying, “it gives you a feeling of great release” (ibid.). And ‘feel’ here is not meant in an emotional sense but in terms of sensation. In terms of measuring affective synaesthesia, valence here is positive and activity is high.

It is this last connection that is analogous to Kandinsky’s “vibrations in the soul”

---

1 See Chapter 5, 54-55.
and that renders our perception of the artwork a truly sensual experience, exciting cross-modal correspondences between inner sensation and outer perception (affective synaesthesia). This is where expression changes direction and runs from the perceiver to the artwork, instead of from the artistic acts to the artwork to the perceiver. And this is why Cytowic notes that it is a mistake to conceive of perception as a one-way-street.

**Rothko**

We claimed that Rothko’s penultimate paintings express desolation. This appraisal was aided by the monochromatic palette, the sharp forbidding horizon. Compared to his other paintings there is a starkness, there is nowhere to allow the eyes to come to rest. Some like to compare these paintings to actual landscapes with real horizons. This is allowable but unnecessary, and as Sylvester noted such an attempt to put a programme to the canvas may sap away some of its presence.

“To fantasise about them...to discover storm-clouds or deserts in them, or sarcophagi or aftermaths of nuclear explosions, is as corny as looking at Gothic architecture and thinking of the noonday twilight of the forest. These paintings begin and end with intense and utterly direct expression of feeling through the interaction of coloured areas of a certain size” (Sylvester (1997), 36)

This painting expresses desolation merely through the “interaction of coloured areas of a certain size”. There is nothing to be decoded, no narrative to expose. These colour chords stimulate more than our visual sense, we may be pulled in and sway towards the canvas, we may want to reach out and touch, ground, the shimmering mass of colour or we may

---

3 The comparison between a Gothic church and a grove of giant cedars may be apt. But it is naïve to think that the one captures all of the feelings prompted by the other. In a similar way, we may say that Rothko’s paintings can be explained in the terms above. But this likewise omits something. Namely, that Rothko’s paintings can just be seen as coloured squares...and they can be appreciated as such too.
feel outcast. Rothko is clever about this. As Januszczak put it, even when we’re not sure why it works, we still feel it luring us.

Moreover, our explanation of expression has helped us to unravel Rothko’s claim that he is “no colourist”. At first it was hard to credit such a contention. Hopefully now we understand it better. While Rothko employs colourism, the skill of achieving effects through the use of colour, the important aspect of his work is not what it contains but what it actually achieves. Rothko’s achievement is not colourism, it is the use of colourism to express feelings in a clear and uncoded way i.e. without symbolisation.

In a deliberate, and perhaps mischievous, play on the sensual qualities of Rothko’s paintings, Iain Baxter created a work called Bagged Rothko, 1965. Certain perceptual (tactile) features which are not purely visual are actualised in this work. For example, the shiny surface of the plastic ‘bag’ is reminiscent of the luminous, shiny quality of Rothko’s own work. Baxter thus draws our attention to the fact that Rothko does more than paint a surface to be seen.

“Bagged Rothko (No. 17) becomes a literalization of certain qualities in Rothko’s paintings: his luminous colour is translated into real light reflected from the plastic’s shiny surface, his unevenly brushed edges are converted into fuzzy edges of absorbent cotton; the atmospheric continuum in which Rothko’s interior rectangles appear to float becomes in Bagged Rothko an air-filled band around the sides, or a floating frame.” (Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982)

This work is not only witty homage to Rothko, but reveals how we perceive his work with more than one sense (here the tactile is highlighted). Moreover, the wallowing or floating sensation associated previously with some of Rothko’s paintings is here

---

4 Cf. Chapter 3, 23.
actualised with an artwork made out of inflated vinyl, air and cotton.

**Greenberg**

Finally, let us turn our attention to the art critic. It is obvious from the critics and commentators on Kandinsky and Rothko that their use of the notion of expression coheres with our account. Greenberg contended that the most important lesson we could learn from abstract art was the prominence of the canvas. The prominent canvas puts the emphasis back on sheer perception rather than coded representation. This shift in emphasis (which began with Manet) “turned representational painting inside out” (Greenberg, Vol 1, 201). He says of Kandinsky,

“Kandinsky was very quick to perceive [that] pictorial art was at last able to free itself completely from the object—the eidetic image—and take for its sole positive matter the sensuous fact of its own medium” (Greenberg, Vol 2, 4)

The notion of painting being liberated from the object is a powerful one. It was liberated in two connected senses (i) the artist could concentrate instead upon sensual formal content, and (ii) in doing so, the painting could become more directly expressive. This ‘expressive test’ is a much harder one for the artists to pass. It is more than technique, more than hoarding symbolisations onto a canvas. Greenberg notes,

“the Quattrocento [15th Century Italian art] was preoccupied with techniques and the accumulation of data: its painters preferred, for instance, to portray old people because their faces offered more details to the brush. They had not yet reached that point of repletion at which there is a readiness to sacrifice and simplify for the sake of large effects” (Greenberg, Vol 1, 200)

The sacrifice of the object and of this “accumulation of data” (such as we see in the Van Eyck) is rewarded, as Greenberg puts it, with “large effects”. The percipient is more moved, and moved because the subtraction of data is a subtraction of coding. Less to be
 §3 Final Thoughts

In Chapter 3 we attempted to grasp at the nettle of dissent. I think we can now toss it away unscathed. My mother may still honestly prefer the Caravaggio, and still this is not necessarily a rebuttal of our arguments. As I said, I still prefer Beckett even though I could point out the ways in which Joyce is a better novelist.

However, against the person who wants to make the claim that representational art is better than abstract art, we may have some thoughts:

(1) They mean this in the sense that one might say “But my son could paint that”. People who dismiss abstract art with such haste are probably put off by the fact that it is all there on the canvas and that they can see it more or less in a glance. However, we will recall that we argued the precise opposite of this. You cannot see it all in one glance. The ‘directness argument’ was not an argument for a quick aesthetic fix, it was an argument for a different kind of looking, paying attention to the canvas and its sensuality rather than to a coded referent. Greenberg levies a similar charge against such viewers of art. He says,

“That those who condemn abstract art generally do so in advance of experience is shown by the completeness with which they condemn” (Greenberg, Vol 3, 188)

(2) They are trying to look at the abstract painting in the same way as they look at representational painting. That is, they are still seeking the programme. Such people might look at the Rothko and ask “what is it?”. Some will say, “ah-ha it’s a landscape!”.

They are is not going to be happy when we turn and retort, in Sylvester’s words, that the paintings are just “coloured areas of a certain size” interacting in an expressive way. The
urge to decode must be abandoned before the sensuality of these paintings can be directly perceived.

These replies also act as solutions to the Sparshott problem: the suggestion that abstract painting is yet coded. It seems only coded if we ask questions such as the above, if we try to formulate a programme. The cross-modal correspondences are not ‘coded’ in the same sense, because as the neurology has shown us, this is the way we perceive. If abstract art is coded for this reason, we might think that fireworks are too.

There was also a possible lingering objection from Dewey. He proposed that, for example, the line we see in an abstract painting is only expressive because we associate these lines with the lines we see in our environments. He says that,

“...lines, even when we try to ignore everything else and gaze upon them in isolation, carry over the meaning of the objects of which they have been constituent parts...The habitual properties of lines cannot be got rid of even in an experiment that endeavors to isolate the experience of lines from everything else. The properties of objects that lines define and the movements they relate are too deeply embedded” (Dewey 100-1)

Dewey may also be suffering somewhat from the strangle-hold of the urge to decode. But to prove that this is the case, look around one’s surroundings. Note the various horizontal lines, say between the edge of one’s desk and the wall it is against, or between the sash of the window and the wall, or between the ceiling and the wall. Now look at Rothko’s painting Untitled, 1969 [20]. You may find that any of the horizontal lines you have just observed can be projected onto the canvas. But it is interesting to note that this is not the

Cf. Chapter 4, 51. Dewey may have been suggesting that this process is done unconsciously. And we deemed this to be unproblematic. But we also noted that he may have been suggesting that lines alone can only be expressive because we somehow relate them to lines in our environments. The response here is to this latter interpretation.
way we were looking at the painting previously. This is more laboured. When we abandon all these coded notions, the painting suddenly comes to life. Instead of concentrating on projecting an object onto the canvas our eye can move around, we can pay attention to how the canvas acts on our senses, and we can feel its sensuality.

At the beginning of this paper I argued that the directness thesis would depend on a different kind of looking. This involves abandonment of the urge to decode. We need to stop being intrigued by associations to objects that can be experienced more richly elsewhere. Even though Kandinsky kept objects in his paintings (we may note figure-like objects etc. as we move around the canvas), he also fully realised that these objects harmed his paintings (cf. Chapter 2, 20). Thus we should not be looking for them, we should not be trying to project figures onto every vague biped in the painting. Instead we should be concentrating on the sensuality of the canvas, on the perceptual details of the painting.

§4 Implications

The representational / abstract debate is a live one. There are a number of implications for this debate in what we have said:

(i) We have not found that one method is more expressive than the other, but that the expressivity of abstract painting can be felt more directly than representational painting.

(ii) This is because when we look at an abstract painting we are engaged in a different kind of looking. With representational painting the expressivity hails first from what is represented and we must ‘get’ what is represented before we can feel this expressivity. That is, we must understand the story of Christ’s betrayal in Gethsemane before we can
feel *The Taking of Christ*.

With abstract painting the act is more one of looking, and of looking with a certain amount of attention to what happens to one when one looks. The Richard Serra example above illustrated that paying attention to how we perceive the artwork can aid expressiveness. David Sylvester found himself pulled both ways, Serra notes that people tend to take large, striding steps as they enter the ellipse. It was these observations that led Sylvester to note how the artwork made him feel, that it “gives you a feeling of great release” (Sylvester (1999), 36). It may be hard to pay due attention. Because the artwork has concrete presence it is easy just to glance at it and walk away. It may also be easy to become distracted by attempts to decode the artwork into something else, something it isn’t. But if we instead concentrate our energy on perceiving, the artwork will become more sensual, and we will actually feel something from it.

(iii) This different kind of looking is uncoded because it rests on basic cross-modal correspondences. And as examined in the Chapter 5, such correspondences are like synaesthetic metaphor. We quite naturally adopt terms like “bitter cold” or “clashing colours”. That the way we look at a sculpture can make us physically sway seems equally natural. And it was with such a correspondence that many of the artists we examined were trying to impregnate their art with. Moreover, these correspondences link not only the way we perceive the artwork, but the way it makes us feel (in terms of sensation). The Serra ellipse feels like a stadium precisely because looking at it makes us stride, as in a large open space. Thus the claim that it is like being out of doors begins to make sense, rather than seeming to be a flowery description.
(iv) Finally, we have shown that the aestheteician and the artist need not be at odds. Philosophy need not impose an artificial taxonomy on the artist’s domain. A theory of expression can be formulated which will bear fruit when we are confronted by the artwork. However, it is important to note that expression, like perception, is not a one-way-street. A painting does not express merely in virtue of the artistic acts of the artist (Artist–artistic acts–artwork). It also expresses in virtue of us perceiving it in a sensual way (Percipient–artwork).

Instead of interpreting art, of translating it into various coded meanings, we need to focus on the sensory experience. We need to perceive more. As Susan Sontag says,

“Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there. This cannot be taken for granted...What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more.” (Sontag 13-14)

If we do this, adopt what Sontag calls an “erotics of art” (Sontag, 14), I believe our experience of abstract painting can be directly moving.
References

1 Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi
*The Taking of Christ*, 1602
Oil on canvas, h133.5 x w169.5 cm.
Society of Jesus of Ireland, on loan to the National Gallery of Ireland

2 Van Eyck, Jan
*The Arnolfini Marriage*, 1434
Oil on panel, h81.8 x w59.7 cm.
National Gallery London

3 Magritte, René
*The Treachery of Images*, 1928-9
Oil on canvas, h60 x w81 cm.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

4 Colville, Alex
*Traveller*, 1992
Acrylic polymer emulsion on Masonite, h43.2 x w86.4 cm.
Redpath Gallery, Vancouver

5 Colville, Alex
*Woman with Revolver*, 1987
Acrylic polymer emulsion on Masonite, h56.5 x w28.2 cm.
Mira Goddard Collection

6 Hopper, Edward
*Nighthawks*, 1942
Oil on canvas, h76.2 x w152.4 cm.
Art Institute of Chicago (Friends of American Art Collection)

7 Cézanne, Paul
*Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1904-06
Oil on canvas, h70.8 x w91.75 cm.
Philadelphia Museum of Art (George W. Elkins Collection)

---

1 I have not included the works referred to from Guy Sircello’s paper *The Expressive Properties of Art*, as these examples did not form an integral part of the thesis presented and were merely mentioned as an aid to those familiar with the Sircello paper.
8  Matisse, Henri
    Joy of Life, 1905-06
    Oil on canvas, h174 x w238 cm.
    Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pa.

9  Kupka, Frantisek
    Cathedral, 1913
    Oil on canvas, h180 x w150 cm.
    Private Collection.

10 Delaunay, Robert
    Windows (series of paintings), 1912
    Various

11 Kupka, Frantisek
    Amorpha, Fugue en deux couleurs, 1912
    Oil on canvas, h211 x w220 cm
    Národní Galerie, Prague

12 Delaunay, Robert
    Simultaneous Contrasts: Sun and Moon, 1912-3
    Oil on canvas, 133.35 cm in diameter.
    The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

13 Kandinsky, Vassily
    Composition VII, 1913
    Oil on canvas, h200 x w300cm.
    State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

14 Kandinsky, Vassily
    Fugue, 1914
    Oil on canvas, h129.5 x w129.5 cm.
    Collection of Ernst Beyeler, Basle

15 Kandinsky, Vassily
    To the Unknown Voice, 1916
    Watercolour and ink on paper, h23.7 x w15.8 cm.
    Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
16  Picasso, Pablo  
**Les Demoiselles d’Avignon**, 1907  
Oil on canvas, h243.84 x w233.68 cm.  

17  Monet, Claude  
**Haystacks**, 1890-91  
Oil on canvas, h60 x w100 cm.  
Art Institute of Chicago

18  Kandinsky, Vassily  
**Blue Sky**, 1940  
Oil on canvas, h100 x w73 cm.  
Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

20  Rothko, Mark  
**Untitled**, 1969. (1986.43.166)  
Acrylic on paper, h206.5 x w193.7  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Mark Rothko Foundation Inc.

21  Rothko, Mark  
**Untitled**, 1969. (1986.43.275)  
Acrylic and ink on paper, h128 x w107.2  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Mark Rothko Foundation Inc.

22  Arp, Jean (Hans)  
**Arrangement According to the Laws of Chance (Collage with Squares)**, 1916-7  
Torn-and-pasted papers on paper, h48.6 x w34.6 cm.  
Museum of Modern Art, New York

23  Serra, Richard  
**Torqued Ellipse IV**, 1998  
Weatherproof steel, overall 364 x 1100 x 670 cm., plate thickness 5 cm

24  Baxter, Iain  
**Bagged Rothko**, 1965  
Inflated vinyl, air, cotton, h167.6cm x w156.2 cm  
Germaine and Yves Gaucher
Bibliography

Aristotle
Poetics (Volume 2)
The Complete Works of Aristotle
ed. Jonathan Barnes
Princeton University Press, 1985

Art Gallery of Ontario
Iain Baxter: Any Choice Works 1965-79
AGO, 1982

Baron-Cohen, Simon
Harrison, John
Wyke, Maria
Goldstein, Laura H.
Coloured speech perception: is synaesthesia what happens when modularity breaks down?
Perception, 1993, Volume 22

Baron Cohen, Simon
Is there a Normal Phase of Synaesthesia in Development?
Psyche, 2(27), June 1996

Becks-Malorny, Ulrike
Kandinsky: The journey to abstraction
Taschen, 1994

Bouswma, O.K.
The Expression Theory of Art
Aesthetics and Language
Basil Blackwell, 1954

Buckberrough, Sherry A.
Robert Delaunay: The Discovery of Simultaneity
UMI Research Press, 1982

Carver, Raymond
Shooting
Ultramarine
Vintage Books, 1987

Chipp, Herschel
Theories of Modern Art
University of California Press, 1968
Collingwood, R.G.  
*Art as Imaginative Expression*  
*Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*  
ed. George Dickie & R.J. Sclafani  
St. Martin's Press, 1977

Cytowic, Richard E.  
*Synaesthesia: A Union of the Senses*  
Springer-Verlag, 1989

Danto, Arthur  
*The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*  
Columbia University Press, 1986

Day, Sean  
Synaesthesia and Synaesthetic Metaphor  
*Psyche*, 2(32), July 1996  

Eaglesmith, Fred J. & the Flying Squirrels  
*From the Paradise Motel* (Track 8 - Summerlea)  
Barbed Wire Records, 1994

Goodman, Nelson  
*Languages of Art*  
Hackett Publishing Co., 1976

Goldwater, Robert  
Reflections on the Rothko Exhibition  
*Mark Rothko 1903-1970*  
Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1997

Greenberg, Clement  
*The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Volumes I-III  
ed. John O'Brien  
University of Chicago Press, 1993

Hanslick, Eduard  
*On the Musically Beautiful*  
translated and edited by Geoffrey Payzant  
Hackett Publishing Company, 1986

Harries, Karsten  
The Painter and the Word  
*Bennington Review*, June 1982
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title/Other Information</th>
<th>Publisher/Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospers, John</td>
<td><em>Meaning and Truth in the Arts</em></td>
<td>The University of North Carolina Press, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes, Robert</td>
<td><em>Blue Chip Sublime</em></td>
<td><em>The New York Review</em>, 21 December 1978; 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter, Sam</td>
<td><em>Modern Art</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobus, John</td>
<td><em>Rainbow Warrior Sails Again</em></td>
<td><em>The Sunday Times</em>, February 14, 1999 (Culture 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Januszczak, Valdemar</td>
<td><em>Concerning the Spiritual in Art</em> (intro. MTH Sadler)</td>
<td>Dover Publications, New York, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Music Alone</em></td>
<td>Cornell University Press, 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kivy, Peter</td>
<td><em>Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett</em></td>
<td>Bloomsbury, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowlson, James</td>
<td><em>The Unity of the Senses</em></td>
<td>Academic Press, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks, Lawrence E.</td>
<td><em>Three versions of objectivity: aesthetic, moral and scientific</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Aesthetics and Ethics</em></td>
<td>ed. Jerrold Levinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge University Press, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, Richard W.</td>
<td><em>Style and Personality in the Literary Work</em></td>
<td><em>The Philosophical Review</em>, XCIV, No. 2 (April 1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, Jenefer</td>
<td><em>The Real Caravaggio</em></td>
<td><em>The New York Review of Books</em>, Volume XLVI, Number 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland, Ingrid</td>
<td><em>Expressive Properties of Art</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in <em>Art and Philosophy</em></td>
<td>ed. W.E. Kennick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Martin's Press, 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sontag, Susan</td>
<td><em>Against Interpretation</em></td>
<td>Farrar, Straus &amp; Giroux, NY, 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparshott, Francis</td>
<td><em>The Theory of the Arts</em></td>
<td>Princeton University Press, 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvester, David</td>
<td><em>Rothko</em></td>
<td>Stewart, Tabori &amp; Chang, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Serra in Bilbao’</td>
<td><em>Modern Painters</em>, Autumn 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tate Gallery &amp; Authors</td>
<td><em>Mark Rothko 1903-1970</em></td>
<td>Stewart, Tabori &amp; Chang, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tormey, Alan</td>
<td><em>The Concept of Expression</em></td>
<td>Princeton University Press, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watkins, Christopher</td>
<td><em>Synaesthesia: Is it the Key to Consciousness?</em></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ex.ac.uk/~cwatkins/synaesth.htm">http://www.ex.ac.uk/~cwatkins/synaesth.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitford, Frank</td>
<td><em>Kandinsky: Watercolours &amp; other works on paper</em></td>
<td>Thames &amp; Hudson, 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>