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The mythical conception is the name: Titles and names in modern and post-modern painting

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1

'What's in a name?' Juliet's rhetorical question expects the answer that both roses and Romeos can be renamed without any detriment to their essential qualities. And, for the most part, the history of art tends to confirm the view that paintings and other works of art fall within the same category. Titles of paintings are liable to be tendentious, going beyond what the artist perhaps intended to tell us. What everyone knows as The Arnolfini Marriage is very possibly not a marriage at all, and all that Van Eyck felt moved to tell us about the ceremony depicted is that he was there at that particular date: 'Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434'. Titian's Three Ages of Man may appear to forestall dispute about the precise correspondence between an iconographical scheme and the title which identifies it. But a glance at Vasari shows that one contemporary commentator, at any rate, refused to baptize the picture in this way, and spoke of its components on a quite different level of analysis. This list of titles which predicate, and prejudge, a specific type of interpretation could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Moreover, there are also paintings which contrive to keep more than one title, as a sign of the different constructions that have been, and still are, placed upon them. When Norman Bryson reproduces a fine Van der Meer on the cover of a recent book, he identifies it as The Artist in his Studio. When Svetlana Alpers reproduces and discusses the same work in another recent study, she calls it The Art of Painting. It could be argued that each author has chosen the title which suits their general argument best. And that would certainly be true in my own case, where I use the same picture on the front of a book of historiographical essays: the title required in this case, which foreshadows the invocation of Cio, Muse of History at the outset of the work, is Allegory of Fame.

More extreme examples could also be adduced with ease to show how the identity of a painting, as measured by the name or title attributed to it, changes in the course of time. An informative publication of extracts from episcopal registers and local newspapers shows us how Piero della Francesca's Madonna del Parto quite lost its badge of authorship and illustrous origin, receiving in return the status of a cult object famed for its powers of stimulating fertility, until the providential visit of an art historian in the late nineteenth century restored its Renaissance identity (without, of course, cancelling out the acquired social meaning). Across this lengthy period, Piero's image survives both the ravages of time and the trauma of transportation from one building to another. But no name persists to identify that image at every stage in its career. At each point where it is designated, it is adapted to the specific, utilitarian purposes of the enquiry which is under way. By contrast with this informal nomination, we may suppose that a new regime of standardization was imposed with the rise of the Academies in France, and later in Britain, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Paintings produced within the system of the Academies bore their titles as a mark of identification which had originally been required at the annual exhibitions of the Salon or the Academy: these titles were simply the final individuating element in a hierarchy of names which were fixed by official decree, establishing each work within the appropriate genre and fixing its number and position. But, if we can accept in general that the regime of the Academies fixed and standardized what had previously been a matter of chance, then we must also take into account that the challenges to the salon system in the mid-nineteenth century, and the rapid growth of Modernism, made this normative principle problematic once again. It is not as if the modernist artists reverted to the previous anomic, however: partisans of the new avant-garde retained and exploited the unitary title, but did so in such a way that it could serve as a sign of their own transgressive practice.

Beginning this essay in this way leads very rapidly to the issue of method. If we accept simply as an initial proposition the highly schematic conflation of problems presented in these opening paragraphs, we are also bound to observe the radically different perspectives which open out from one or other aspect of the convention of titling the work of art. At the two extremes, we might say, are the two completely disparate approaches which might be termed historical and semiotic. A historical approach to the question of titling would patiently review the documents in which titles have been recorded – wills, inventories, auction catalogues, salon lists – as well as the evidence for persistence or non-persistence of a title in critical reviews.
journalistic notices and personal papers of artists, whether published or unpublished. It would have to cope with technical problems such as orthography, not forgetting the empirical investigation of devices for framing and protecting the work of art, since this protection very often, if not invariably, involves the fixing of a more or less permanent title as identification. A semiotic approach, by contrast, would examine each selected instance outside the diachronic flux. It would be concerned with the specific character of the title as sign, more particularly in relation to the painting or work of art as sign. In terms of Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotics, for example, we might arguably classify the title of a painting as a *decent indexical legisign*. It would be a legisign (unlike the painting itself, which because of its singularity would be qualified as a sinsign) because its representational function was discharged through the public medium of language; indexical because its role was to point to, or indicate, certain features of the work to which it was attached; decent because it served to announce the ‘actual existence’ of its object (unlike the painting itself, again, because the painting might well be an *icon* of its object, but in its condition of resemblance would not necessarily presuppose the existence of that object). Peirce’s chosen example of such a sign is, charmingly enough, the ‘street cry’, about which we might reasonably observe that its relation to the wares on sale is probably less complicated than the relation of title to painting! Nevertheless, even such an apparently incongruous pairing need not blind us to the fact that a semiotic differentiation of this kind enables some irreducible properties of the title to come to light. To put the matter in a negative way, it is important to bear in mind that the title is not a sinsign, that in so far as it is physically inscribed on frame or label, it is simply a *replica*, or individual instance of a legisign. Equally it is crucial to recall that the title is *decent and indexical*: whereas the iconic work does not presume the existence of its object, the title has no meaning or function unless the object which it indicates does in fact really exist.

Having sketched out this dichotomy between the historical and the semiotic approach, I should however make it clear that my intention is not to maintain it over-foolishly in a limited investigation of this kind. I do not deny the very real utility of sifting through the very diverse types of documentary material mentioned above in order to establish the historical genesis of conventions of titling. But the question remains, and will need to be asked at the end of any such empirical investigation: how does the title located in a particular historical conjuncture function as a sign (and Peirce’s semiotics need not be taken as a closed system in preparing an answer to this question, since the semiology anticipated by Saussure, and applied by such critics as Mukarovsky and Barthes, opens up the enquiry in new, and possibly more fruitful areas)? Equally, I am far from contesting the importance of semiotics (or semiology) in facilitating a precise description of the mechanisms of signification. But such a description cannot by its very nature accommodate the phenomenon of change: having described the instance, it leaves it in a methodologically pure realm, abstracted from the incessant circulation of meanings which we must surely take to be the inevitable property of any system of representation.

My purpose is therefore to raise, in a preliminary way, some of the issues which occur when we postulate a convergence of history and semiotics, or at least a condition of the sign which is evolving and dynamic, rather than static. Such a project might take as its model, on a much broader canvas, Hubert Damisch’s brilliant treatise, *Théorie du nuage*, in which the evolution of pictorial systems in the West, from the Renaissance onwards, is traced through the continuous metamorphosis of the cloud as *signifier*. It could also take as a useful precedent the recent studies on the framing of pictures which, from a number of widely different points of view, have enhanced and, in a real sense, brought into focus this neglected aspect of the material being of pictorial works of art. Thus Derrida’s meditation on what lies outside the work, in *La vérité en peinture*, can be seen to engender the more specific and historical investigation of Didier Semin, who deals with the original practice of Scurat in constructing and decorating his own frames. And Peter Cannon-Brookes’ informative presentation of the frame as the intersection between two conservatorial systems – that of furniture and that of painting – can be related to Svetlana Alpers’ study of seventeenth century Dutch conventions of framing, and her suggestion that a form of frame common to both paintings and mirrors may indicate a habit of perception distinctly different from the ‘window-frame’ convention assumed by the masters of the Italian Renaissance. Unlike the frame, the title of a work has no necessary physical relationship to it, and we could hardly expect titles to give us reliable hints about the conditions of viewing at a particular period. Nevertheless, it would be quite wrong to view the condition of the title as necessarily immaterial, and therefore set aside from the ‘work-thing’ to use Mukarovsky’s convenient term. In the perspective while I shall be constructing the ultimate historical point is to be a kind of irruption of the name into the very painting itself, so that the title is no longer simply a replica, but a sinsign; no longer the label of the work, but its being as a sign. I hope to show that this is not merely a capricious gesture by the contemporary artist, but the fulfilment of a certain logic of development which is inscribed in the history of Western painting.

A final word is necessary, before we pass to the paintings themselves, about the titling of literary works;
since this will prove to be surprisingly relevant to some of the developments which will be traced. If we take only one, relatively restricted field for a very summary analysis, we can glimpse an odd, yet perhaps exemplary process of transformation taking place over the period which concerns us. Already in the case of Stendhal, there is evidence that the relationship of title to novel had become a subject of intense concern: Lucien Leuwen, begun in 1834, conceals beneath a bland enough title the doubts about its naming which Stendhal experienced throughout its gestation, settling at successive stages for Leuwen, L’Orange du Malte, Le Télégraphe, Les Bois de Prémol, Le Chasseur Vert and Le Rouge et le Blanc.\textsuperscript{10} Fifty years later, when Zola announced his new novel under the title of Germinal, the preceding review of possibilities had been even more extensive, stretching from L’assiette au beurre and Le cahier des pauvres, through at least sixteen other variants, to the point where the final, economical title was chosen—a signifier in which connotations of Spring, revolutionary uprisings and hunger were satisfactorily combined with the etymological root of fruitfulness.\textsuperscript{11} Zola’s own comments on his trouvaille are particularly interesting to read:

I was looking for a title which expressed the impulse of new men, the effort which the workers make, even unconsciously, to disengage themselves from the laborious darkness in which they still move. And it was one day that, quite by chance, the word Germinal came to my lips. I wanted nothing of it, at first, finding it too mystical, too symbolic; but it represented what I was searching for, a revolutionary April . . . And, little by little, I became habituated to it, to such an extent that I was never able to find anything else. It remains obscure for certain readers, it has become for me like a sunbeam which lights up the whole work.\textsuperscript{12}

The passage shows Zola’s initial resistance to the title which seems to sum up, to totalize, the entire work. And doubtless his eventual willingness to see his whole novel ‘lit up’, as it were, by this single, overdetermined word, is a measure of the extent to which the novel could, by this stage in its development, be seen as claiming a degree of poetic unity which it had not possessed in the early years of the century. Yet, if we carry the investigation a few decades further, there has been yet a further metamorphosis in the relationship of the name to the work, which has been memorably recorded in the digressive meditations of A La Recherche du Temps perdu. For Proust, it is not a question of summing up, in a single illuminating phrase or term, the multiple thematics of an entire novel. A name like ‘Guermantes’ is itself an active constituent in the self-reflexive process which is the work’s diegesis. It is not placed at the mast-head, to advertise and explain the work, except in so far as it experiences, in the course of the novel, the irresistible accumulation of meanings which justify its placing there. As the Proustian narrator remarks, at the outset of Le Côté de Guermantes, a name may be ‘no more than the simple photographic identity card which we make use of in order to know whether we are acquainted with, whether or not we ought to greet a person who is passing by’,\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, a name sanctioned by memory can become, like the Guermantes name, ‘one of those little balloons in which oxygen or another gas has been enclosed’,\textsuperscript{14} releasing at will its charge of precipitate meanings and sensations. In making this point, the Proustian narrator is (as usual) not vindicating an eccentric theory of ‘involuntary memory’, but celebrating the power of the text itself to create the conditions of such an explosion. The name Guermantes acquires its resonance from the patient, materialized enchainment of signifiers; one might say by pictorial analogy, from the facture of the novel itself.

II

The Proustian name (which is also, in both senses of the word, a title) thus represents in this essay a point of arrival; its equivalent in the realm of modern painting can be found no earlier than in our own period. Nevertheless a number of carefully selected works from the nineteenth century can be used to prepare the ground. Despite the academic regime which governs and standardizes the picture title, confining it within the economy of the genealogy system, a painter like Turner exploits the convention to the full in certain works, making us aware of a tradition of interpretation which is fundamental to the Western tradition but has been largely effaced by the Academy. John Gage has pointed out how a painting like The Sun at Venice going to sea, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1845, recalls the particular type of interpretation proposed by the emblem books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such emblem books brought into conjunction an image—say, of a boat at sea—a motto or title, and a verse drawing moral conclusions from the scene depicted.\textsuperscript{15} In Turner’s case, the titled work has its own moral commentary in the verses published by the painter in the academy catalogue:

Far shines the morn, and soft the zephyrs blow,
Venizia’s fisher spreads her sail so gay . . .
Nor heeds the demon that in grim repose
Expect his evening prey.

There has been a certain amount of controversy over the interpretation of this work. Andrew Wilton has reconciled some contrary opinions by suggesting that this is not simply ‘another vessel acting as an image of the artist’, portending Turner’s own ‘impending death’, but at the same time a kindred symbol to those used in other pictures of Carthage and Venice, implying that ‘The city, however glorious, must like ancient Carthage—of
modern Britain—eventually sink in decline.”¹⁶ Such a willingness to multiply the strands of meaning, rather than debate which univocal interpretation should be accepted, is of course perfectly consistent with the tradition of the emblem, or impressa. As Gombrich has remarked about the tradition of commentary to which Turner’s verses relate: “The comment does not rest content with one application. The author uses his wit to draw out as many applications as the patience of the reader will bear.”¹⁷

Of course this comparison should not be allowed to override the obvious differences between the emblem tradition and Turner’s painting. For one thing, the hallmark of the emblem is its generality: both ‘motto’ and image are drawn from a conventional stock of phrases (often in Latin or another foreign tongue) and a visual repertoire heavily coded by history and myth. No one person is the author of an emblem; indeed it is the ‘given-ness’ of the motto and image combined (what Gombrich calls its status as ‘free floating metaphor’) which invites us to meditation, as if we were being offered not a personal vision but an aspect of the symbolic structure of the world. This being so, it is all the more marked that Turner should attempt to re-establish a similar interpretative structure, against the grain so to speak. The title ‘The Sun of Venice going to sea’ aspires to be much more than an indexical legisign directing us to what is represented in the painting. It combines with the image to present an icon of the moral world, so that we shall find it worth our while to ponder the many hidden aspects which are truthfully revealed there.¹⁸

Undoubtedly reminiscent of Turner’s usage, though more radical in one respect, is the use of titles and verses by the Pre-Raphaelite Brethren. In their case, however, the urge towards generality and polysemy is deliberately confined: title and verse offer access not to an interpretation of the moral (and historical) world, but to a privileged world assembled from the group’s own repertoire of Christian and chivalric myth. In an early painting by Rossetti like The Girlhood of Mary Virgin, the attached verses are both indexical and predictive. The gesture of naming (“This is . . .”) singles out and identifies the different elements in the picture, but in so doing endows them with symbolic force; each object is made a symbol of Mary’s future greatness, and thus the ‘Girlhood’ itself becomes the neutral sign of a majesty which is perpetually deferred. Yet the force of title and verse in drawing attention to what the picture itself prefigures (without actually showing) is particularly accentuated here by the inscription of both upon the picture frame. In cases like this, the physical inscription of title (and related texts) upon the broad surfaces of the frame must clearly portend a shift in the terms of interpretation. For the title is no longer, in Peirce’s terms, merely a legisign, made manifest through a replica or token. The frame is no longer, in fact, the exact limit inside of which the regime of ‘furniture’ is effaced and that of ‘painting’ begins. It is a bounding field, but one which does not simply serve to focus the rays of sight in the way that Poussin had stipulated to his patron Chantelou.¹⁹ It offers a plane surface outside the painting, but parallel to it (so that the space of the image resists construction in terms of a single vanishing point, and appears to press forward, invading the spectator’s own space with its jostling foreground figures). Upon this surface, the title or name is inscribed as a s insign, unique and unrepeatable in its inscription. Thus the capacious wooden frame of Paolo and Francesca da Rimini (1867) has the capitalized words FRANCESCA DA RIMINI carved in wood as a superscription, woven into the garland of leaves which parts, beneath the image, to reveal the related verses from Dante’s Inferno (figure 1).

Such a change in the way in which a title functions as a sign has quite clear implications for our interpretation of the work. It is as if we were being shown in the form of a paradigm what measure of our attention to devote to reading (literally reading) the work, and what measure to devote to looking at it. And perhaps the implication of such a demonstration is to show that the two processes are in fact continuous, rather than distinct. A message of this kind can, however, easily be confused with the traditional objection to Victorian painting; that it is much more concerned with ‘literary’ than with ‘plastic’ values. The injustice of this complaint will, I think, become much clearer towards the end of this essay. For the moment, however, it must be conceded that the French pioneers of modern painting had a more integral approach to the reassessment of traditional pictorial systems, in which the title as sign holds hardly less prominent a place. Both Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites, to a certain extent, propose a paradoxical deflection of attention from what is, in effect, a traditionally conceived image. One might say that it is not in fact necessary for The Sun of Venice going to sea to exist as a painting; in principle, at any rate, Turner’s emblematic scene requires only the recognizable visual elements which a crude wood-cut would provide.²⁰ In the same way, it is undeniable that image and text in Pre-Raphaelite paintings have a habit of pulling in different directions, without resolving the conflict (as William Morris no doubt recognized when he celebrated his ownership of Rossetti’s The Blue Closet by writing a poem under the same title, in which the semantic possibilities of the title, and the potentialities of poetic language in general, are used to set a perceptible distance between the poem and its supposed point of departure).²¹ For the French contemporaries of the Pre-Raphaelites, the title retains its traditional status as indexical legisign. But it may also serve to indicate more specifically the particular reading of space which the artist proposes. In
Figure 1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Paolo and Francesca da Rimini, (1861). Watercolour (Paper joined on all four sides). 48 × 300 cm. (From Bequest, 1929) reproduced by permission of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Dr. Alan T. Grieve has suggested that the frame in which the watercolour appears was not ordered by Rossetti himself, and is probably an Arts and Crafts frame (a view shared by Francesca Lane, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts at the National Gallery of Victoria, who however judges to believe that it dates from the last quarter of the century). In the particular context of this dissertation, issues of authenticity are, however, relatively unimportant.
the eye, it could be seen at the end of a church which had be used to arrive at the mechanism of the work. Even an inauspicious title like Goya’s “El Capricho” or “El Bartolomé en el Infante” (1799) both indicate and, in a sense, transmals the pictorial construction. Michael Ford has drawn attention with great forcefulness to the way in which Goyas draw the spectator through clever articulation of pictorial elements like a sinister voyage coursing us way into the distance. He has even visualized the scenario line of movement thru the figures in El Infante or El Capricho as serving a similar purpose of simultaneously offering a visual space for occupation and drawing the viewer into the pictorial construction. In the “El Bartolomé en el Infante” (usually considered from the full form of the title in this way) is a plane which draws our attention to one, comparatively minor section of the painting, the figure in the undercoat on the ceiling between two walls which is central to the composition, but another detail, showing somewhat to the left, a group of gilt chibes can be glimpsed. Does more than this, however, for the ideas proposed in the title is one of circular movement, we are invited to see this and little grouping as involved in a game of “hiding and seeking” to its French equivalent. Having become beholder of this we are to see the vertical, spatial movements throughout the virtual space of the “El Bartolomé en el Infante”, setting the simple protocol of looking receiving, the implied ivinition form, and exhibiting Goyas self-justified equation between the painted and the actual space and the green-of-green light of the world. If Goyas proposes a special type of reading through the inductive force of the title, Monet deliberately interweaves indexicals, and makes this aspect of the title in many other difficult themes problematic. A painting like Le Déjeuner, exhibited at the Salon in 1869, fails to correspond in the expected way to the textually simple implicature of the title. Even a critic as intelligent as Michel Conan is moved to exclaim: “But why the woman on the table? Is it a boudoir which follows or precedes a cabaret? We don’t know.” How have nothing so simple as the preliminary empathy of Mary’s ‘Girlhood’, since (as Goyas well knows) the narrative to be reconstructed from the various objects is radically different? Many explanations could be given for the presence of the innermost room, among them being the simple one that Monet did not disdain to include a certain amount of miscellaneous studio property. But an ingenious plausible line of argument would be to note the significant role played by a scene of the painting in the romantic revival of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. When a sum of arrangement occurs in this revivalist context—whether in the paintings of Landseer or the museum display of Alexandre du Sommerard—its inappropriacy serves as a synchrony for the revived life of the past.” If we compare Renoirs portrait of Jeanne du Sommerard in “L’Ambassade” in 1861, with the picture by Monet in the Museum of Chateau written in the 1880s, there is one of the most striking changes in this transition from picturesque to harmonious which lies in the fact that the artist is no longer being asked to represent the scene in its most literal form but to bring the visual scheme in the window back in. That Monet should have used argent in Le Déjeuner therefore seems to indicate his wish to evaluate this poetic romantic synecdoche. Argent is no longer a theoretical substitute for the ideal space of emptiness and illusion, but an even greater extent than Goyas, Monet is engaged in a kind of antithetical play with the expectations of his public. The very refusal of the title to indicate what is there to make sense of becomes an accessory to the supplantation of the spectator’s body inside and outside the virtual space made because the strategic placing of the young man in front of the projecting table has the effect of interposing us in the frontal plane of the picture outside, because we are reminded forcibly that the pictorial space is an illusion construction, how the privileged role of the artist which is at this same time hollow, and yet remains something, supplements the impression of narrative incoherence noted by Goyas. This sublation of the public does, however, enter a new phase with the Impressionist generation. If Monets title indicates to us what we really cannot read (that is to say, make some of) in the painting, then Monets celebrated Impression soleil levant (1872) indicates as concrete (as a representation by resemblance) what could only really be established by reference to the code of Monets own successive work. As Michel Conan has noted, this title is not only the technical assertion of an act of impressions, “‘it is also an attempt per se to forecast the expected perception of morning or evening.’ Yet the differentiation does not entail (as it did once deliberately be Turner) a crucial differentiation between the symbolic of morning and evening, the room and the claustrophobic. All that hinges upon the assertion that this is a sombre rather than a sunny in the monastic truth of Monets representation. Yet, in these circumstances, it is leading too much upon the title as design, to expect it to carry this particular influence. What emerges from this scrutiny of the influential work, perhaps, is the recognition that it is a sombre because Munceur Monet says it is. Indeed there is a paradox afterthought to the Impressionist achievement, which helps us to see how a certain logic of the title could lead very rapidly, as my absurd conclusion. Jules Lévys “Salon des Arts Indépendants” which was founded in 1882 and lasted well into the 1890s, attempted to parody the whole apparatus of salon
presentation, from the titled picture to the illustrated catalogue. And it was to the 1884 Salon des Arts Incohérents that the journalist and wit Alphonse Allais submitted a work which radically inverted the customary relation between title and image. Entitled "First Communion of Anaemic Young Girls in the Snow", this work consisted of nothing more elaborate than a sheet of white Bristol paper pinned to the wall with drawing pins. Quite incidentally, Allais had succeeded in pioneering a simple method of presenting work in a public gallery which has only in the past few years (with the partial atrophy of frame and support) become acceptable. But his "jeu d'esprit" needs to be set in a more precise historical context than that. Allais had in fact carefully chosen a title whose different elements were not in themselves improbable. The Impressionists had indeed pioneered a vogue for landscapes 'sous la neige', and the singular popularity of Brittany among artists of all types had already stimulated a fashion for the recording of ecleciastical folklore. Working within this accepted tradition, Allais could reasonably erect the title as legibly into an incontrovertible index: the work represents what it does, because the title (that is, Monsieur Allais) says so. Unfortunately Allais breaks his own system in his subsequent contributions to the Lévy Salon, and becomes a formalist (we may assume) with the exhibition of: "Apoplectic Cardinals Harvesting Tomatoes on the Shore of the Red Sea (Study of the Aurora Borealis). The work itself is regrettably lost, and the format of yet a third catalogued work by Allais, "Great Sorrows are Silent (Funeral March)" continues to elude scholars.

III

With the advent of Modernism, it becomes possible to analyse in a more systematic way the relationship of title to work. Instead of directing attention to occasional instances which betray a special usage of titling, one can note how the increased theoretical self-consciousness of the modernist painters expressed itself in (among other things) an awareness of the utility of names. This is particularly the case when the status of the image as sign is itself in question. Cubism in effect calls into question the iconic properties of the work. Peirce distinguishes among icons a number of sub-groups according to the type of relation between \textit{representamen} and \textit{object} which is achieved: the \textit{image}, properly speaking, involves a resemblance through 'simple qualities', while 'those which represent the relations... of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts, are \textit{diagrams}.' Without labouring the point, or arguing for an exact application, it could be claimed that Cubism's neglect of the 'simple qualities' of objects seen in perspective entails a movement to a diagrammatic mode of representation. It is also perhaps relevant to note Peirce's third category of icon, the \textit{metaphor}, which represents the object - representing a parallelism in something else. For while the Cubist system if not the achievement of a \textit{paradigm} (Cézanne's own word) on the painted surface for its chaotic forms of the external world? However this may be it is clear that the Cubists palliate this ambiguity of icon through the use of titles which observe a stricter generic consistency: the work is a 'landscape' or a 'still life', despite its neglect of conventional visual clues. Even in Cubism's most hermetic phase, the indication that we are looking at a 'Guitar' or a 'Portrait of Ambroise Vollard' supplies the indispensable prior orientation. With Cubism's eventual transition into \textit{papiers collés} as an assemblage, however, Braque and Picasso give an increasing prominence to the stencilled or printed mass-head - which detaches itself from the painted surface as legible sign. In a work like Picasso's \textit{La Bouteille de Pernod} (1912), the legibility of the title simply echoes the singularity of Picasso's playfully inscribed bottle label.

Working at the same time as the Cubists, but with a wholly distinct modernist project, Kandinsky develops an idiiosyncratic and innovatory use of titles. \textit{Cossacks - Show for Composition 4} is one of the relatively few paintings from this period in which Kandinsky chooses to initiate us into the specific components of his imagery of apocalyptic warfare. As a more general rule, his titles carry through the policy of 'veiling and stripping' his subject matter in order to achieve the spiritual intensity of abstraction. Yet this determination to conceal, at least on the explicit level, his reliance on traditional religious motifs like that of \textit{Transfiguration} or \textit{Ascension}, results in a perhaps unpredicted dividend. Composition 4 is part of a series, in which certain consistencies of format, imagery and facture are observed. The series of \textit{Improvisations} becomes an ambitious attempt to test the limits of Kandinsky's plastic vocabulary, and in so doing, exceeds all existing norms for the 'abstract' painting. Even the simple fact of listing the products of these different series numerically, becomes a potent device for implying the systematic, almost scientific character of the work which is being pursued. In the decade of the 1920s, an artist like Moholy-Nagy will attempt, at least for a while, to carry this principle of identifying works sequentially, by letter and number, to its logical conclusion, eliminating the artist's signature as an unwelcome intrusion into the hard, determinate world of symbols. But by this stage Kandinsky himself had lost his initial evangelistic fervour, and the titling apparatus which faithfully reflected it. If there is still a kind of 'veiling' in the later work, it is to increase the spectator's playful participation in the experience of the work. As Butor has perceptively remarked of Kandinsky's \textit{Deux points verts} (1935), the effect of the title is to draw our attention to the two spots but also to make us notice that their lower sections have
been transformed to violet by an overlapping rectangle. If the title had not indicated the spots in this way, we would probably not have noticed that the picture could be perceived as a consistent presentation of overlapping, semi-transparent planes of colour.

In the second wave of Modernism, where painting is intrinsically involved in predominantly literary movements like Dada and Surrealism, the ingenious use of titles runs riot. Echoes of M. Allais' *jeu d'esprit* in the Salon des Arts incohérents come to mind when we look at Picabia's series of works which apply solemn and specific titles to simple linear and geometrical forms. But Andre Breton recognized in *Pas perdus* that Picabia's experiment was an inconclusive one as far as the public were concerned. It was, as he admitted, Picabia who formerly had the idea of entitling circular figures: Ecclesastic, and a straight line: Star Dancer. But, Breton pointed out, such a practice was in the end too permissive to tax the spectator, who would rightly feel that seeing one or two such works was to see them all. By 1922, as he noted, Picabia had reverted to a more conventional economy of title and work. By this stage, he was disposed to include 'no title that makes an image', or, on the other hand, to double interpretation. It is impossible to see in it anything but the necessary complement of the picture. Yet where Picabia experimented and thought better of it, his Dada colleague Marcel Duchamp managed to achieve a more consistently challenging disruption of the regime of title and image. With Duchamp, the title becomes the vehicle of an integral irony, which does not render the work itself titile and disposable, but offers access to a hermetic circle of meanings and deeper meanings, and then provides us with a handy lifebuoy with which to haul ourselves out again. If we are to believe the retrospective musings of Duchamp, even his comparatively youthful work illustrates some of the potential ironies of titling. Discussing one of his later Fauve works, which bears the title, *Le Buisson* (1910-11), Duchamp confessed in retrospect to have used a 'non-descriptive title' for the first time in relation to this work. 'In fact, from then on,' he confesses, 'I always gave an important role to the title which I added and treated like an invisible colour.' Duchamp's later Cubist manner produces works like *Jeune homme triste dans un train* (1912), a title which must be given in its original French form, since (as Duchamp explains) the young man is 'sad' - 'triste' - simply because he is in a train - 'train'. In going beyond the Cubist specification of genres, and purporting to give a location and an emotional disposition, Duchamp of course ridicules the indexical capacity of the title: its reference to the painting is at once asserted and nullified by the recognition that a mere repetition of signifiers ('tr', 'tr') has engendered an emotional tone. (No doubt Duchamp takes for granted the fact that, in Symbolist painting and in contemporary non-French work like Sickert's *Emma*, the use of the title to energize and create an atmosphere is firmly maintained.

Duchamp in effect runs the gamut of challenging and transgressive uses of the title, working always in the interests of what he ironically called the 'rehabilitation of perspective'. In his *Chocolate Grinder* series, the title is lovingly incorporated in the dead-pan composition, in one case transmitted as a signum with gold-tooled lettering which, like the real threads used to define the illusionary image, draws attention to the flatness of the surface on which a perspectival scheme is being constructed. Duchamp's revolt against the tradition, maintained even by the Cubists, of the painting as 'belle matière', finds its expression particularly in the glass works which parody the Albertian tradition of the painting as window-frame: not only the *Large Glass* but also the small glass of 1923 which bears the seductive title: *To be looked at from the other side of the glass with one eye, close up, for almost an hour*. Here the indexical direction turns the spectator into the monocural idol being of Albertian theory, and gives him an optically dazzling pyramid to console him for the loss of his expected vanishing point. In this case, as in the majority of Duchamp's works, it becomes clear that the critique embodied in the demonstration is not simply internal to the discourse of art, but extends to the condition of art as a social institution. The spectator is, to an extent, imprisoned within conventional modes of seeing, but the artist, even the avant-garde artist, is imprisoned within conventional modes of patronage. Duchamp's own lengthy and unusually successful attempt to circumvent the system of patronage cannot be dealt with here. But it is worth concluding this brief glimpse at his use of titles with a reference to a comparatively late work which nicely triumphs the card of patronage. When asked to design a book jacket for the New York publisher, Alfred Knopf, Duchamp interpreted the commission in the sense of designing just that - a book jacket. Perhaps it is a measure of Duchamp's cunning that the design was never used for its intended purpose.

Duchamp's titles are indeed integral to his revisionism Modernism, and they stretch to an extreme the property of indexicality (which, to be sure, his images also exploit and foreground to the full). Perhaps his only competitor in subtexte, at this stage of the Modern Movement, is the resourceful and intelligent Paul Klee, whose less radical revision of the Cubist and Expressionist legacy leads him to offer an equally privileged place to the consideration of titles. 'How does a picture gain access to its name?', asks Klee at one point. The singularity of the question, with its implication that the painting must grow into its title and not simply act as support for a label, is quite in keeping with Klee's organic and dynamic theory of the genesis of plastic art. In the most decisive way
possible (though with an obvious debt to his avant-garde predecessors), Klee repudiates the taboo which, since the Renaissance, had set on one side the image – guaranteed by the scrupulous observance of perspectival construction – and on the other side writing. Indeed ‘taking a line for a walk’, which is Klee’s own well-known definition of the dynamics of composition, could serve as a description also for his particular convention of inscribing a title. A single line is ruled beneath the lower edge of the painted area, and both signature and title ‘go for a walk’ along it. It is evident that, not only might the words above the line have been traced by the same pen as the compositional elements, but the syntax of the composition is itself a graphic one – what might almost be called pictographic writing.

Such a description applies exactly to a watercolour like Comedy (1921). But for obvious reasons, it is not directly applicable to Klee’s work on canvas, which utilises a wide variety of plastic media. At the same time, the subtle, dynamising role of the title is carried over, and becomes even more crucial in these more ambitious works. Klee’s Red Balloon (1922) seems to epitomise the process of the work ‘acceding to’ its title which was mentioned above. Out of a pulsing interplay of more or less ambiguous cubic forms, the red circle emerges with a higher degree of definition and, as it were, meets the title in its ascent. Coincidentally, this work puts us in mind of one of Peirce’s central examples of the complexity of semiotics, which demonstrates how a symbol may at the same time contain an index and an icon. ‘A man walking with a child points his arm up into the air and says, “There is a balloon.” The pointing arm is an essential part of the symbol without which the latter would convey no information.’ Clearly Klee’s title, as an indexical legisign, functions in this way: it not only tells us what is there, but points us in the right direction (that is to say, the convention whereby a certain label is determined to apply to a certain work supplies the place of the pointing finger). But Peirce takes the example further, and imagines the child asking: ‘What is a balloon?’, and the man replying: ‘It is something like a great big soap bubble.’ Representation of the type that Klee engages in – where there is a deliberate indeterminacy between ‘abstract’ and ‘figurative’ elements – plays upon the containment of the iconic within the symbolic as a central component of its desired interpretation. In a sense, Klee is reenacting the child’s question: ‘What is a balloon?’, and answering within the determinate field of the work: ‘It is something like a circular line drawn around a patch of red pigment.’

Even as early as 1922, with Red Balloon, Klee shows that he is no less concerned than Duchamp with specifying the conditions of viewing his work: together with the title, date and series number of the painting, the reverse side contains scrupulous instructions for how it must be framed, and how the glass must not be too close to the image. In the next decade, this exact concern with determining the whole visual appearance of the art object is harmonized with a shrewd sense of the epistemological implications of his practice. Hubert Damisch’s remarkable essay on the painting Equals Infinity (‘Gleich unendlich’) from 1932 demonstrates the levels of complexity on which Klee is working, and shows how the title is placed within a succession of three different analysable units. The quotation which I use here is bound to be a substantial one, because of the need for the minutest distinctions:

(a) The unit formed by the painting in its frame, such as it can be seen in the museum together with the accompanying label, whose wording is duplicated, supplied with translation and supplementary information of a descriptive nature (artist, date, medium, dimensions), by the caption inscribed on the painting itself.

(b) The unit formed within the frame by the canvas-rectangle and the support on which the latter is attached and in the margin of which is inscribed, following Paul Klee’s normal practice for this type of composition, the ‘title’ of the work, its date and serial number.

(c) The unit formed by the field of dots . . . and by the ground on which it is depicted. The boundaries of this field are not very well defined due to the fact that the paint spills over on to the canvas rectangle from the margins of the support which it covers, thereby preventing any real division between the elements, canvas and support which constitute unit (b); that is, between the canvas which is supposed to function as ‘figure’ and the ‘ground’ on which it would stand. This is a division that Klee systematically set about destroying but which reproductions nevertheless try to recreate through various artifices of framing that one eludes the problem. Those of Klee’s productions which present the structures of paintings within paintings that we have tried to define are regularly reproduced minus their ‘margins’ and the captions which are written upon them.

It is noteworthy that Klee’s title (‘Gleich unendlich’) occupies the critical zone which Damisch alludes to: it is on the very margin of the margin, in precisely that area which is a medium term between figure and ground – on the canvas, but also on the hand of paint which spills across from the support for the canvas. However Klee’s title is also reproduced, in symbolic rather than cursive script, in the centre-right section of the canvas: there we find the ‘equals’ sign (gleich), and the mathematical sign for infinity (though, as Damisch goes on to explain, there is a deliberate ambiguity maintained between this reading, indicated by the title, and the reading of the symbol as designating the sound-holes of a violin, which knowledge of Klee’s previous work might lead us to privilege). It would be hard to sum up in a few words th...
arguments which Damisch uses to explain the significance of this exactly crafted work. Let me at least say that he traces a connection between the dotted and barred internal canvas and the mathematician Cantor’s notion of a ‘collection of points’: Klee’s work, which includes both as a title and as a graphic symbol the reference to Infinity, is about the revision of concepts of space brought about by modern mathematics (and to this extent, it is also a repudiation of the practical consequences of Euclidian geometry for the painter, as epitomised in the conventions of Albertian perspective). Damisch quotes a passage from Klee’s own Creative Confessions of 1922: ‘Above our heads the stars shine (a seed-bed of points).’

We are asked to read the infinite in this painting, suggests Damisch, just as Ruskin claimed to be able to read infinity in a patch of Turnerian blue. The nicely intermediate position of the inscribed title, in a zone which is neither inside nor outside the ‘figure’, stimulates us to such an imaginative reading of a picture which relinquishes the customary spatial support for interpretation. In selecting for comment this particular sequence of nineteenth and twentieth century paintings, I have in a certain sense been retracing the history of modern art as a whole. The title can be read as a faithful indicator not only of the meaning of the individual work, but of the relationship which the artist has established (or tried to establish) with the ideal spectator. Such a spectator might indeed be tempted to emblematic meditation by Turner, drawn into a hermetic world by the Pre-Raphaelites, incited to take a roundabout path of reading by Courbet, or frustrated in his narrative competence by the provocations of Manet. In the present century, however, he would be made aware that the artist’s stake in the title had been summarily increased. For Duchamp and Klee, at any rate, the title takes the risk of entering an unstable zone of meaning, where its value as an indexical sign can be either completely null or absolutely essential. Duchamp’s revelation of the title as ‘non-descriptive’ (Le Buisson) or as mere verbal play (Jeune homme triste dans un train) is complementary to Klee’s inordinate trust in the symbolic efficacy of the name, which must serve as the knot from which the various threads of meaning can be teased out. Another way of putting the matter would be to say that the particular evolution of modern painting, with its aboriginal split between ‘abstract’ and ‘figurative’ modes, has indeed raised the stakes for the artist’s investment in titles, but for that very reason it has frequently compelled him to make an announcement of his bankruptcy. Against the spectacular plenitude of some of Klee’s titles – genuinely ‘sunbeam(s) which light up the whole work’ – we have the practice pioneered by Kandinsky of giving no more than a series title and number. In the more recent period, we have the illuminating negativity of a whole family of paintings which their authors have chosen to designate as ‘Untitled’.

This whole phenomenon is worthy of a much more detailed study than it can be given here. My intention is not so much to follow through the implications of the modernist pattern which has been sketched out, as to point to a recent metamorphosis in the regime of naming which requires quite a different interpretation. To call the work which I shall consider ‘Post-Modernist’ is to observe a convention of nomenclature which at least has the merit of suggesting a stylistic break with the foregoing concerns and practices. But, as my earlier reference to the novels of Stendhal, Zola and Proust suggests, I would seriously doubt whether the break can be understood as a development confined to the visual arts. The sequence of attitudes to titling which we followed in these three novelists can be taken as an exemplary one. With Stendhal, there is a search for the appropriate, emblematic title which ends with the bland and unassuming Lucien Lamence, with Zola, the discovery in Germinal of a title which condenses the multiple symbolic meanings of the work. With Proust, finally, there is a migration of the resonant name into the very texture and experience of the novel. ‘Guermantes’ is not simply an illuminating ‘sunbeam’: it is a name in a narrative, which gathers to itself a host of inseparable associations – ascribed to the narrator’s own memory on one level, but becoming part of our own memories as readers, while we retrace the labyrinthine pathways of A La Recherche du Temps Perdu. And of course, for Proust, this special enrichment of the name Guermantes is no more than a demonstration of the way in which names generally acquire meaning within a cultural and historical context. It is a means of conveying the mythic property of names, as they become amplified from the private into the public dimension. Perhaps even Proust never conveyed this transition more succinctly than did his admired predecessor Walter Pater, when discussing the name Dionysus in Greek Studies:

To illustrate this function of the imagination, as especially developed in Greek art, we may reflect on what happens with us in the use of certain names, as expressing summarily, this name for you and that me – Helen, Gretchen, Mary – a hundred associations, trains of sound, forms, impressions, remembered in all sorts of degrees, which, through a very wide and full experience, they have the power of bringing with them; in which respect, such names are but revealing instances of the whole significance, power and use of language in general. Well, – the mythical conception, projected at last, in drama or sculpture, is the name, the instrument of the identification, of the given

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matter, – of its unity in variety, its outline or definition in mystery; its spiritual form, to use again the expression I have borrowed from William Blake.12

Pater is here making an assertion which seems uncannily relevant to a certain direction of Post-Modern painting. The name is the mythical conception, he maintains, and the figurative form taken by the name in drama or sculpture (there is no reason not to add painting) is to be regarded as a 'projection' or representation of the name. This does not of course mean that the richness of myth can be reduced to a purely abstract register. Myth is to be conceived, according to the Sausseuan distinction, not as langue but as parole. Or, to take Alberti’s celebrated statement about the pictorial use of mythic materials, the painter has need of a ‘più grassa Minerva’ – a Minerva with flesh upon her.13 The artist’s role is therefore quite precisely to flesh out the potential body of myth. But, if we look again at Pater’s statement from our contemporary point of view, we may well come to ask ourselves if the ‘projection’ of the name must inevitably pass by way of the literal representation of the body. Jean-Louis Schefer’s profound meditation on Poussin’s Et in Arcadia Ego, with its references to the ‘alphabetical distinction’ of Western painting and the effacement of the body in the deictic gesture, might well encourage us to speculate further in the same direction.14

These speculations seem to be in order if we look at the recent work of the American painter, Cy Twombly. It is noteworthy that Twombly’s original development as a painter took place in very much the same artistic and literary milieu as his rough contemporaries Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. However Twombly made an early decision to set up his studio in Rome, rather than New York, and much of his most memorable work has been concerned with capturing what Roland Barthes has inventively termed a kind of ‘Mediterranean effect’.15 In the 1970s, this effect was customarily achieved by a combination of pencil scralls, flashes of bright pigment and more or less decipherable graffito distributed over the predominantly white surface of the canvas. By the beginning of the present decade, however, the ratio between decipherable and indecipherable marks has been – at least temporarily – altered. In a striking, four-panel painting from 1980, the name ‘Pan’ makes its appearance as a richly overscored, gesturally vibrant graffito, containing within its reiterated letters a dense range of juxtaposed colours which are echoed, as it were, in the three panels which form the remainder of the series; the last of them showing, as its principal plastic incident, a shiny patch of pure purple as lustrous as a grape. As Barthes once put it (paraphrasing Hegel), ‘Pan’ was the name which the ancient Greeks gave to the ‘immense frisson of meaning’ which they discerned in the order of the natural world.16 In Twombly’s serial painting, the name also serves to set up a ‘frisson’ of meaning, which fills the sequential panels with its alarming resonance, and puts us in mind of the etymologically related term of ‘panic’.

In Twombly’s Pan, the pictorial space is torn apart to accommodate a kind of interruption of the name. ‘Pan’ is not only the title of the work, and to that extent a decent indexical legitimation; it is also the ‘figure’ of the work (according to the traditional binary distinction between figure and ground), and in that sense inseparable from the painting as sig PIL, the painting in its singular, material identity. We know that the artist has traced (and retraced) this word, but its significance does not stop at this indexical revelation of gesture. Something is staged there for us, in very much the same way as a pictorial allegory stages the events and incidents of mythology. It is useful in this connection to mark the crucial difference between Twombly’s work and the recent constructions of the English artist Joe Tilson, which draw upon the same kind of mythic materials. Tilson’s Stele for Dionysus comprises within a set of distinct, pictographic episodes the inscribed Greek capitals which form the name of the god, and the term which designates his sacred accoutrement, the Thyrsus (Figure 2). Yet the image of the Thyrsus itself is also offered to us, within the overall form of an object which simulates a votive column, or stele. This fastidious distribution of signs into a kind of verbi-visual syntax which recalls the traditional model of the rebus is also in one sense close to the practice of the Pre-Raphaelites. Like Rossetti, Tilson directs us on a quest between word and image, object and symbol, deferring the question of hierarchisation between them, just as the Girlhood of Mary Virgin defers the expected moment of Mary’s destiny. This is an equivocation quite foreign to the splendid economy of Twombly’s Pan.

In fact, it seems necessary at this point to introduce a new level of analysis which cuts across the predominantly semiotic emphasis of the criteria employed up to now – though it can be justified by a concern to return to the historical and philosophical roots of figuration. At one of Twombly’s most recent exhibitions, the paintings shown were a group of related works on paper dating largely from the latter part of 1983. To fix them in time in this way would be, however, to make an initial error which closer inspection of the paintings would lead us to modify. A number of them, it turns out, are inscribed with not one but two dates – for example, Aug. 81 and Nov. 783 – so that we would be justified in thinking that they are intended to evoke an autobiographical dimension, a period of lived time between the commencement and completion of the individual works (Figure 3). Clues to the possible hermetic significance of the paintings in this series are liberally scattered across the broad, white surfaces of the paper: the word ‘Roma’ occurs not far from

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the inscription of a 'Virgilian view' and the Latin word 'sylvac' (perhaps the 'woods' of Virgil's First Eclogue), indicating that we have to do not simply with biographical time but with the mythic time of classical antiquity. But the word which has greatest prominence in the series, and gives it an overall title, is the Greek 'Anabasis', coupled in at least one case with the name of the author of the celebrated text known by that title, Xenophon. Is there any way of explaining the occurrence of these suggestive and yet enigmatic terms as anything more than a kind of anecdotal diary of a contemporary artist fascinated by antiquity? Must we take them as throwaway references – thrown away gracefully through the relaxed gestures of Twombly's characteristic hand?

To prove the contrary of this easy supposition, we have to search for the suppressed connections which lie behind these epi-phenomenal names. We can note first of all that Xenophon's 'Anabasis' is in fact, if we give it its full name, the Kurou Anabasis, or story of the going-up of Cyrus; it tells the history of the Greek mercenaries who supported Cyrus, Satrap of Lydia, in his unsuccessful expedition to vindicate his claim to the throne of Persia. Is Twombly's Anabasis (the group of paintings) then to be thought of as the Anabasis of Xenophon (a minor participant in the action, and then its chronicler) or that of Cyrus (the chief protagonist in the action, who nonetheless dies in battle with the Great King at an early stage in the narrative)? Twombly cleverly elicits a kind of figurative counterpart to these names when he elaborates upon the 'X' of Xenophon, enabling the individual letter as trace to develop as 'cathectic of gesture' in the way that Derrida notes from his discussion of Melanie Klein. At the same time, Twombly also allows us to see those multiplied 'Xs' in the guise of a chariot-wheel (figure 4). Indeed some of the paintings in the Anabasis series clearly portray the chariot itself: the chariot of the Commander Cyrus and not of the foot-soldier Xenophon, or perhaps even an example of those fearsome chariots, with sharp scythes projecting from their axle-trees, which the Great King of Persia thrust against Cyrus out of his conquering army?

Are not the scythes themselves visibly featured in the chariot drawings, however schematic they may be? There is a growing impression, as we ponder this interlacing of names and images, that the exclusion of Cyrus from the centre of the stage is only apparent – that his glory and his death are forcing through the mythic texture of Twombly's work.

Yet is it exact to say that Cyrus is excluded? In effect, the signature which makes its appearance throughout the series is 'C.T.', or Cy Twombly, or (we may infer) Cyrus Twombly. The Anabasis series would appear to be overdetermined for Twombly by the fact that it incorporates not simply the autobiographical signs of the painter (as in the Roman references), but the mythic projection of
Figure 3. Cy Twombly: Untitled, Aug. 1981 - Nov. 7 1983. Pencil. Pastel on paper, 100 × 70cm. Mayor Gallery.

Figure 4. Cy Twombly: Anabasis, 20 Nov. 1983. Pencil, Pastel and Oil on paper, 100 × 70 cm. Mayor Gallery.

Figure 5. Noel Forster: Resurrecit, 1983. Acrylics and Oil on Linen, cut and patched. 250 × 500 cm approximately.
serves as the title of the painting, is Resurrection. By a happy accident, my first acquaintance with this picture was directly after a lecture in which I had been trying to explain the semiotic significance in Post-Renaissance painting of such Christian themes as the Ascension, the Assumption and the Visions of the Saints. According to Hubert Damisch’s compelling argument, the rigid perspectival system of the early Renaissance had been progressively invaded and transformed by the introduction of the ‘cloud’ as a ‘counter-subject’. In serving as a kind of shifter from subliminary to heavenly space (from the pierced cupolas of Correggio to the vaporous Assumptions of Zurbaran and Murillo), the intermediate cloud had facilitated the creation of a space beyond space, and thus helped to rescue Western painters from the regime of diminishment to a single vanishing point. Noel Forster’s Resurrection is a remarkable transformation of this semiotic system: shifting from one space to another (no longer hierarchized in terms of a space ‘below’ and a space ‘above’) is achieved by means of a ‘cloud’ which is a freely movable circle of canvas within the central area of the painting. But it is the ‘message’ to the painting which convinces us that this is not the mere reemployment of a pictorial device, but an engagement with the historically constituted problem of self-hood. Under a new, and at the same time very old, regime of the name, we can place both the ‘going-up of Cyrus’ and ‘He is risen’.

Such a rapid and selective survey as this can hardly claim to offer representative conclusions about the direction and character of contemporary painting. At the same time, in shifting attention from the semiotic function of the title to the mythic and psychological functions of the name, it has perhaps focused upon a persistent figure in the elaborate carpet of Post-Modernity. In asking who is named in the painting – Pan or Cyrus, Dionysus or Christ – we may be on the path of discovering not the least essential thing about it. Through tracing the vicissitudes of titling, we come to recognise that the name may be the major stake of the subject.

NOTES

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in and about the work of art' Studio International, 183, No. 942 (March 1972), pp. 105-111.
2 - Bruno Giorgi, La Moderna del Parto di Piero della Francesca (Sansepolcro, 1977).
4 - This objection could be made to the semiotic method developed by Max Bense, which is highly restrictive in its scope. Bense writes of his semiotic description of the works of the Swiss concrete artist Max Bill that he finds it 'impossible to speak about his work in other than rational terms'. (Max Bense, 'Max Bill 1965' 20th Century Studies, 15/16 (1976), pp. 12-17.
6 - J. Derrida, La vérité en peinture, (Paris: Flammarion, 1978) see especially the first section, 'Parcours' (pp. 19-68).
9 - Cf. J. Mukaurovsky, 'Art as semiological fact' 20th Century Studies, pp. 6-11.
12 - Ibid., p. 1881.
14 - Ibid., p. 12.
18 - Cf. J. Buchler (ed.), Philosophical Writings of Peirce, p. 105: 'For a great distinguishing property of the icon is that by the direct observation of it other truths concerning its object can be discovered than those which suffice to determine its construction'. Peirce illustrates this principle with the argument that algebraical formulae can reveal 'unexpected truth' (p. 106). The parallel with the emblem or impress is indicated by Gombrich's comment on the motto 'Hinc clarior' which, with its image, constitutes 'a free floating metaphor ... Somehow such an image reveals an aspect of the structure of the world which would seem to elude the ordered progress of dialectic argument.' Symbolic Images, (p. 165).
20 - Cf. Ruskin's surprising judgement on Turner's 'Building of Carthage', when he remarks of the 'group of children sailing toy boats': 'a scratch of the pen would have conveyed the idea and spoken to the intellect as much as the elaborate realizations of colour' (Modern Painters, I, London 1903, p. 33).
27 - J. Buchler (ed.), Philosophical Writings of Peirce, p. 105.
28 - In this work, as in many others from the Cubist period, there is a deliberate equivocation between the legible sign ('Pernod fils') and the more or less indecipherable, but recognisable letter forms in the background (a tension particularly expolited by Picasso and Braque in their papiers collés).
30 - Ibid., p. 108-93.
31 - M. Butor, Les mots, pp. 27-24.
33 - Ibid.
37 - J. Buchler (ed), Philosophical Writings of Peirce, p. 112.
40 - Ibid., p. 58.
41 - Even the most bleakly descriptive title can, however, have a strong indexical force, in that it may give us directions about how the work was constructed (e.g. R. P. Lohse's Thirty systematic colours and (1949-70)).
43 - Quote in H. Damisch, 20th Century Studies, p. 65.
44 - Cf. p. 191.
51 - Michelangelo writes that it is 'not enough to be a painter, a great and skilful master; one must further be of blameless life, even if possible a saint, that the Holy Spirit may inspire one's understanding'.
52 - H. Damisch, Théorie du nuage, p. 147.