CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Modern and Postmodern Art and Architecture

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1 Nietzsche and Freud

Well before the inventions of the postmodernists in the 1960s and 1970s, the classical component in Western culture had already been subjected by others to radical revisions that might have stimulated interest among artists. The old academic vision of the classics had been undermined and new meanings and values anticipated by powerful appropriations. Artists developed a whole range of responses to the classics, from the most immediate and idiosyncratic to those more typical of ideas, which became widely diffused, that were suggested (mediated if not dictated) by the cultural authority of others, proposed elsewhere and solidified into currency as compelling cultural myths – above all by Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, along with disciples of Freud such as Otto Rank and Carl Jung. Another key source of classical influence on artists is *The Golden Bough* (1922) by Sir James G. Frazer.

Nietzsche himself was a classicist, but too speculative and bold for most scholars. He burst the limits of academic discipline in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872), which confidently posited a dynamic of Greek culture in terms of opposing tendencies of the human psyche, the Apollonian and Dionysian. The dichotomy proved unforgettable. It was to acquire mythic status in modern culture, all the while remaining controversial and problematic, especially among the classicists of his own time (Silk and Stern 1981: 88–9). Nietzsche's analysis effectively undermined the cultural myth of serenity and rationalism in Greece, proposing instead a vision of conflict between rationalistic optimism and dark forces. Nietzsche dramatized the heroic role of the artist and more generally of creative will as a central and overarching value. His ideas had received a degree of fame in America by 1915, when Willard Huntington Wright wrote in his book *What Nietzsche Taught* that Nietzsche's "adherents have already reached the dimensions of a small army"

(Wright 1915: 10). Wright dedicated his work to H. L. Mencken, his friend and fellow journalist, whom he credited as, "The critic who has given the greatest impetus to the study of Nietzsche in America."

Nietzsche had a strong impact on European modern artists, especially the Italian Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), who grew up in Greece and whose early education was more philosophical than visual. In his early writings, de Chirico indicated that he perceived the importance of *revelation* from the philosopher:

> When Nietzsche tells how he came to conceive Zarathustra and says, "I was surprised by Zarathustra," all the enigma of a sudden revelation is contained in this participle "surprised." When (in another case) a revelation is generated by the sight of a composition of object, then the work that is manifested in our thoughts is closely connected with the circumstances that provoked its birth. (De Chirico, quoted in Fagiolo dell'Arco 1982: 11)

De Chirico's *Hector and Andromache* (1917), *The Hall of Apollo* (1920), *The Departure of the Argonauts*, and his *Self-Portrait with the Head of Mercury* attest to his engagement not only with classical themes, but also with classical forms.

Classical influence in the modern age arrived not only through Nietzsche, but also through Freud, who posited a dramatic conflict within the human spirit, although in terms that were destined to have even broader and deeper impact, albeit in simplified and popularized forms. Freud's immense American reception was facilitated by a new climate of public opinion, which had begun to perceive medicine as a field where scientific progress was possible. The influence of Freud began to spread from Europe to America with his lectures at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1909.

Beyond scientific authority, Freud's themes could reach everyone directly, notably his claim that dreams could be interpreted to reveal an unconscious, and that the underlying drive was sexual. In 1911, *Forum Magazine* featured Edward M. Weyer's "New Art of Interpreting Dreams" with emphasis on what it meant for the individual, who now could acquire the "habit of picking the skeletons of his own dreams immediately upon waking in the morning," adding that "The wealth of his own dream life will probably astonish him at first: then he will come to know himself as the proprietor of a busy theatre – owner, spectator, and critic in one" (Hoffman 1959: 50). The metaphors ring ironically in retrospect. The images of inner wealth and flourishing business seem idiotically insouciant, optimistic, in view of the mythic paradigms that Freud had transferred from classical tragedy to the psychic stage, most notoriously the stories of corrupt families symbolized by Electra and Oedipus.

Examples of classical reverberation could be multiplied for visual artists in the theater, fiction, poetry, dance, and music. Freudian readings of classical myth abound in literature. The intellectual fashion in the decades of the 20s and 30s saw the ideas of Freud play a leading part in transforming values. Opposition arose to everything that had been accepted before and during World War I. Among the young, it became fashionable to reject the standardization of society, assert the free life of the pagan, and confess to the psychoanalyst (Hoffman 1959: 60–1). In this cultural climate, the term "Puritan," which had referred to a specific part of earlier American experience,

underwent a powerful metaphoric expansion and assimilation to the Freudian perspective. Puritan became "separated from its historical context and extended to include almost all of the guardians of the nation's morality and business," as one observer remarked, adding paradoxically that it seemed as if the "virtues [not the sins] of the founding fathers had been visited upon their sons.... The nation had fallen victim to a serious moral illness – repression" (Hoffman 1959: 62). With this metaphoric expansion, critics began to reinterpret the very character and history of America in Freudian terms. Whether bold insight or audacious simplification, one paradoxical effect was to facilitate further and powerful reverberations of classical paradigms by American minds.

One reverberation suggested and justified by the expanded idea of puritanism transformed tragedy, a genre that could feed on the concept of a determining and perverse strain in the American character. "The busy theater" of the American psyche, as perceived by Freud's early journalistic herald cited above, became a stage for forbidding psychological drama in which puritanical inhibitions destroyed innate spiritual freedom. As early as 1926, Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953) began work on what would grow into the trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), using no lesser model than the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus (525/4–456 BC). In O'Neill's conception, puritanical meanness, raised to mythic dimensions in three generations of a rich and powerful New England family, becomes a curse even more destructive than the violent pride and hostile fate that destroyed the descendants of Atreus in the Aeschylean trilogy. Beyond the horror and vengefulness, Aeschylus had offered a vision of the hero's redemption in the civic order of Athens, through the establishment of legal institutions. No similar affirmation lightens O'Neill's American scene. After deaths by murder and suicide, O'Neill's version of Electra turns away at the end from the hostile, puritanical society around her to immure herself in isolation with her memories of frustration, violence, and misplaced passions in the family's ancestral mansion, which had been built in Greek revival style.

2 Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Realism

In Europe, the Surrealists, such as André Masson and Matta as well as Picasso, had absorbed Freud and turned to classical mythology. They also admired De Chirico's work with his classical references. Between 1932 and 1934 alone, Masson (1896–1987) painted works reflecting his increasing engagement with Greek myth, including *The Silenuses* (1932), *Bacchanal* (1933), *Daphne and Apollo* (1933), *Orpheus* (1934), and *The Horses of Diomedes* (1934). Masson did not just take his subject matter from classical mythology, he also paraphrased forms, such as that of a running figure of Apollo from a Greek vase (Lanchner 1976: 137).

The Surrealists singled out the Minotaur, a monster that was half man and half bull, as a being from classical mythology that "corresponded in its duality to the conflicts within the conscious and subconscious minds" (Penrose 1973: 111). Ovid (*Ars amatoria* 2.24) tells how the Cretan Queen Pasiphaë's affair with a white bull resulted in the monster's birth. In 1933, the Surrealists named their new journal *Minotaur*, and

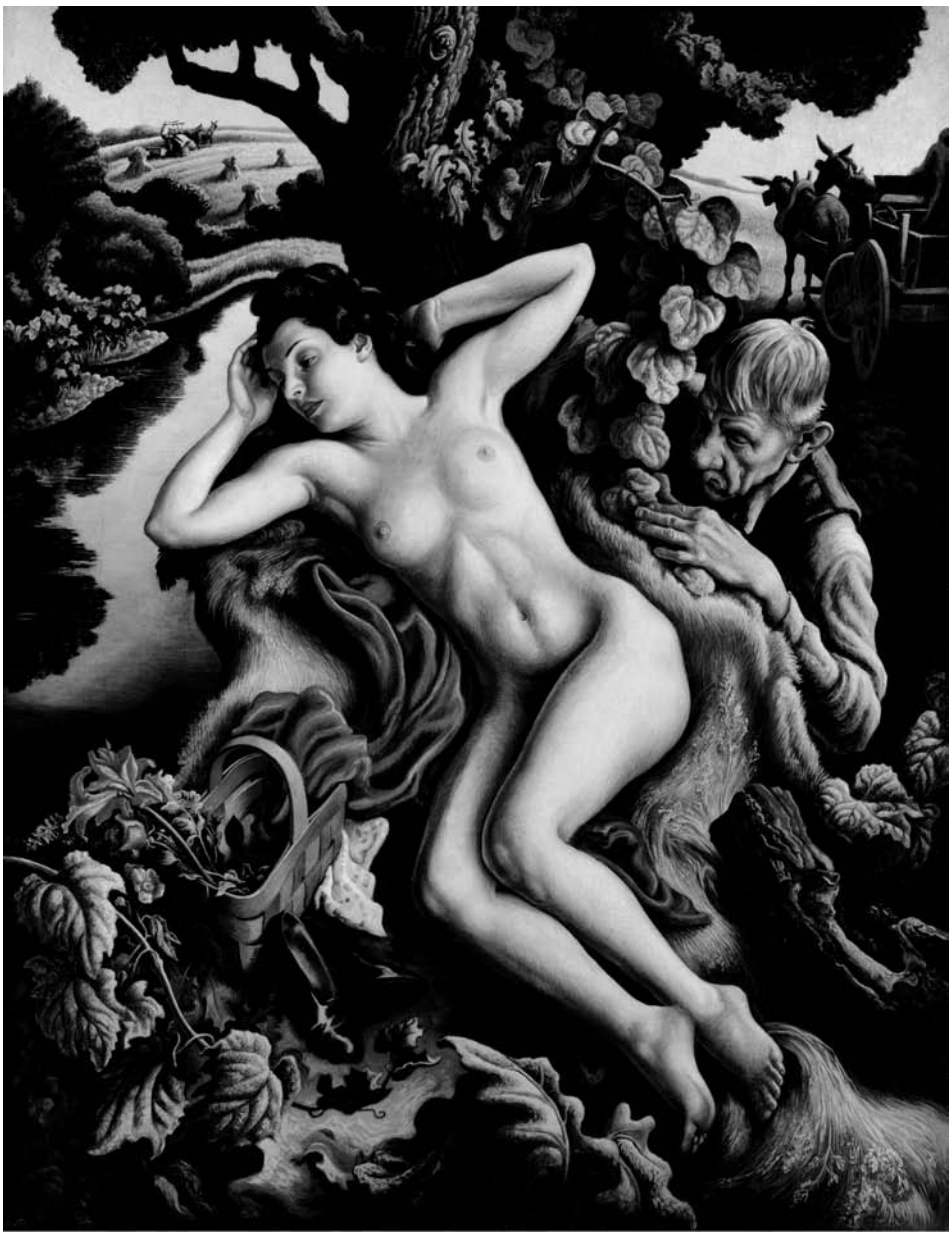

Figure 25.1 *Persephone* by Thomas Hart Benton, ca. 1938. Tempera with oil glazes on canvas, mounted on panel, 72–1/8 × 56–1/16 inches (183.20 × 142.40 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: acquired through the Yellow Freight Foundation Art Acquisition Fund and the generosity of Mrs. Herbert O. Peet, Richard J. Stern, the Doris Jones Stein Foundation, the Jacob L. and Ella C. Loose Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Richard M. Levin, and Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Rich, F86-57. Photo by Jamison Miller. © T. H. Benton and R. P. Benton Testamentary Trusts/DACS, London/VAGA, New York 2006

the poets André Breton and Paul Eluard asked Picasso to design their first cover. Picasso chose to explore the Minotaur at length, creating a series of etchings, the Vollard Suite (1933–7), including *The Sculptor's Studio*, in which he shows the sculptor as a bearded Athenian. In his vision, the lustful Minotaur invades the studio and interacts with the nude model, sometimes depicted as a sleeping nymph.

The Surrealists registered despair resulting from World War I and the Great Depression. There was despair enough to go around on both sides of the Atlantic. The once-accepted notion that influence came from European to American art has been modified by studies that document how the American modernists sought to define themselves by their own return to the classical past, as they understood it through the filtering medium of Freud and Nietzsche, above all Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, which gave such a central role to myth and to the artist (Polcari 1991: 54–5). This picture of a return to Greco-Roman myth via Freud and Nietzsche can be enlarged yet further by recalling how widespread the impact of Freud and Nietzsche had already been in the other arts, penetrating and transforming American consciousness since the century's first decades. The Abstract Expressionists were thus enmeshed in a process of cultural realignments that had been under way in America since before World War I.

In 1914, Walter Lippmann, who had studied with William James at Harvard, inaugurated a long career on the New York intellectual scene by publishing *A Preface to Politics*, which brought the theories of Nietzsche and Freud to bear on American public life (Hoffman 1959: 54). Sexuality, mythic reverberation, and the shock of contemporary intrusion also characterize the painting that became arguably one of the most notorious visual icons of the tumultuous period between the wars: *Persephone* (1939) by Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975).

Benton's art and life pass through the modernist crisis in their own fashion: Benton begins in the country, then passes through a period of urban and cosmopolitan abstraction in Paris and New York, only to return to his rural regional roots and vivid narrative. He switched from abstraction to representation with the claim that he just "couldn't paint George Washington as a rainbow," yet his realism remains stylized. He conceived of a nude *Persephone*, which he followed eight years later with *Hercules and Achelous* (1947). His *Persephone* mingles classical and popular forms, resembling at once the old master Correggio's version of the myth of Antiope visited by Jupiter and pinup art of the period. Yet some details reinforce the classical reverberation for the informed viewer: thus the grain harvest in the background recalls the goddess of grain and fertility, Demeter, the mother of Persephone; the mule-drawn wagon ironically reinterprets the chariot in which Persephone's uncle, Pluto, carried her off; and the vines of Dionysus creep into the foreground. The curves of the female form merge with the land, leading interpreters to see a new version of the old metaphor that identifies the fecundity of earth and woman. The corollary, which was not uncommon in American art of the time, was that the agricultural exploitation which produced the Great Depression's dust bowl had been a rape (Adams 1989: 289).

Among the students Benton taught in New York during the 1930s was Jackson Pollock (1912–56), who in the 1940s became one of the pioneers of Abstract Expressionism. During the heyday of this "last hurrah" of modernism, artists took

a vigorous interest in classical myth. Pollock changed the title of a major abstract painting from *Moby Dick* to *Pasiphae* (ca. 1943) after the curator, James Johnson Sweeney, told him the story of the Cretan queen who fell in love with the white bull sent by Poseidon to her husband, King Minos of Crete. Pollock left two sheets of notes on *Pasiphae*, complete with quotations from Ovid and Dante (O'Connor and Thaw 1978: 1:78).

Pollock, who was in Jungian psychotherapy during 1939–42, stated, "We're all of us influenced by Freud, I guess. I've been a Jungian for a long time" (Polcari 1991: 43). In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung's 1933 collection of essays addressed to a general public, he wrote about primitive cultures preserving their systems of secret teaching

> about hidden things . . . handed on to younger men in the rites of initiation. The mysteries of the Greco-Roman world performed the same office, and the rich mythology of antiquity is a relic of such experiences in the earliest stages of human development. (Jung 1936: 189)

Among Pollock's contemporaries, the choreographer Martha Graham is also known to have undergone Jungian analysis. Interest in both Jung and Freud is well documented by the painter Adolph Gottlieb's comment "Oh, we were all interested. First we discovered Freud, and then Jung" (Polcari 1991: 43). Not surprisingly, the painters Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, William Baziotes, Barnett Newman, and Byron Browne, as well as the sculptor Isamu Noguchi and his occasional collaborator, Martha Graham, all drew upon classical themes, giving mythic titles to works produced in the 1940s.

Noguchi was the son of a Japanese writer and an Irish-American mother, Leonie Gilmour, who taught him as a child about classical myth, which he later related to Japanese mythology. Noguchi met Graham through his mother, who helped with costumes for Graham's dance company. When he designed sets and costumes in 1946 for Graham's *Cave of the Heart*, based on the story of Medea, he called it a "dance of transformation as in the Noh drama." He wrote about his collaboration in 1948 with Igor Stravinsky and George Ballanchine on the ballet *Orpheus*, for which he designed sets and costumes:

> I interpreted "Orpheus" as the story of the artist blinded by his vision (the mask). Even inanimate objects move to his touch – as do the rocks, at the pluck of his lyre. To find his bride or seek his dream or to fulfill his mission, he is drawn by the spirit of darkness to the netherworld. . . . Here, too, entranced by his art, all obey him; and even Pluto's rock turns to Eurydice in his embrace. . . . (Ashton 1992: 6)

The following year, Noguchi traveled to Europe, where he visited Pompeii, describing the nearby Villa of the Mysteries as a "beautiful integration of painting and architecture," and Paestum, where he saw the Temple of Poseidon and commented on the "sacred relation of man to nature," and Greece, among other places (Ashton 1992: 82). He sketched an ancient sculpture of Apollo as the shepherd. Noguchi even titled one of his abstract marble sculptures *Kouros* (1944–5) after the archaic Greek

male figures stiffly carved in marble. He also continued to choose titles that make reference to the classics, in one case calling a bronze sculpture *Cronos* (1947) after the Titan son of Uranus and Gaia who was the father of Zeus, and in another case, naming a two-part marble sculpture *Euripides* (1966). In order to acquire Greek marble for his sculptures, Noguchi often stopped off in Greece en route to America from Japan.

One of the closest students of classical myth was Rothko (1903–70). His famous radio broadcast of 1943 with his long-time friend Gottlieb shows how Nietzschean and Freudian thinking led to a new interest in myth:

> If our titles recall the known myths of antiquity, we have used them again because they are the eternal symbols upon which we must fall back to express basic psychological ideas. They are the symbols of man's primitive fears and motivations, no matter which land or what time, changing only in detail but never in substance, be they Greek, Aztec, Icelandic, or Egyptian. And modern psychology finds them persisting still in our dreams, our vernacular, and our art for all the changes in the outward conditions of life. (Rothko quoted in Polcari 1991: 118)

In Rothko's case, he may even have taken time out from painting to study myth, in order "to break with what they considered stagnant in the European tradition and with the provincial American past" (Gottlieb's wife, Esther, quoted in Chave 1989: 78). But, as a Jewish immigrant from Latvia, he must also have been responding to the tragic situation of the Jews in Europe during World War II.

Rothko invoked the ancient religious practice of predicting the future course of events in his canvas *The Omen of the Eagle* (1942), where he drew upon Greek literature, specifically Agamemnon, the first play of the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus, in which two eagles sweep down on a pregnant hare and devour its unborn young, an omen of the coming war with Troy and the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Here the image of feet gets adapted from chiton-clad figures in Greek vase painting (Polcari 1991: 123). Rothko also chose themes from Sophocles' Oedipus trilogy, including *Tiresias* (1944), the seer of Thebes, who, though blinded but long-lived and prophetic, suggested metaphorically Rothko's own vision about the future of art as he renounced the tradition of representation.

Rothko's colleague, Gottlieb (1903–74), produced, in addition to other classical subjects, a series of paintings from 1941 to 1945 on the Oedipus myth. In the *Hands of Oedipus* (1943) and the *Eyes of Oedipus* (1945), we can see Gottlieb's concern with vision, recalling that in Sophocles' play, once Oedipus saw the tragic truth behind and beyond appearance and circumstance, he turned against literal sight and destroyed its organs, gouging out his own eyes. This myth may have appealed to Gottlieb for its bearing on his own spiritual and artistic development, as he, a Jew, sought to express his pain at the Holocaust, the human tragedy he had no power to stop, by turning away from representational art toward painting where one no longer sees a literal object. The state of the world may have seemed beyond representation.

Other examples among the Abstract Expressionists who drew upon classical myth include Barnett Newman's *Song of Orpheus* (1944–5), William Baziotes's *Cyclops* (1947), and *Onyx of Electra* (1944) by Matta, a Chilean-born Surrealist who had

Figure 25.2 *Eyes of Oedipus*, 1941, by Adolph Gottlieb, oil on canvas, 32-1/4'' × 25'' (81.9 cm × 63.5 cm), #4104. © Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation/VAGA, New York/DACS, London

moved from Paris to New York for a time. From the same period, we should also mention an African-American artist, Romare Bearden (1911–88), who showed with many of the Abstract Expressionists, particularly at the Samuel Kootz Gallery in New York, where he knew Gottlieb, Baziotes, and Hans Hofmann (who immigrated to the US from Germany), all of whom used classical references in their work during the 1940s.

In 1947, Bearden, an avid reader, began a series related to Homer's *Iliad*. Working in oil, he produced such paintings as *The Walls of Ilium*, where, fascinated by the tragedy of the city destroyed, he showed flames shooting out from Troy's stone walls. In 1948, he also produced a series of watercolors inspired by the *Iliad*, where the walls resemble those in the oil painting. Many of these watercolors focused on two individuals, as in *The Parting Cup*, where a woman offers a goblet to her departing warrior. Continuing his engagement with classical myth, Bearden produced in 1977 20 large collage depictions of Homer's *Odyssey.* For this project, he mixed classical antiquity with the iconography of the African-American experience. He imagines the treacherous goddess *Circe* as a seductive, black-skinned figure surrounded by bold colors that suggest a jazz performer.

Figure 25.3 *The Cyclops*, 1977, by Romare H. Bearden collage, 14 ½"×11". © Romare Bearden Foundation/DACS, London/VAGA, New York 2006

A less obvious reference to the classics appears in the work of the American realist Edward Hopper (1882–1967), who called one canvas *Excursion into Philosophy* (1959). In this painting, a sulking nude female lies stiffly on what looks like a hard, cold bed, her buttocks upwards. The man sits abject, an open book by his side. To explain the sense of disassociation and modernist dissonance, Hopper made an enigmatic remark to his dealer, purporting to explain why the male figure in the painting appeared so glum. According to Hopper, who usually spoke with a taciturnity and point worthy of New England, "He's been reading Plato rather late in life." This from a man whose pert and independent-minded wife, the painter Josephine Nivison Hopper, called a group of her female friends "the Euripides gang" and inspired her husband to inscribe a holiday card to her in French, "ma petite Xantippe," comparing her to the wife of Socrates, known for her ill humor and peevish disposition (Levin 1995: 525). Hopper read classical literature, but he was also steeped in Freud and Jung. Both their names appear on books under the arm of a skinny figure with outsized fetal head and huge eyeglasses that Hopper sketched, in what looks like a self-caricature as both an impressionable infant, vulnerable to neuroses, and an adult voracious reader fascinated with the latest fashion for dissecting the human species (Levin 1995: 93).

By contrast to Hopper's stubborn rejection of modernist abstractions are the classical references made by Cy Twombly (born 1928), who moved from the US and settled in Rome in 1957. There Twombly developed a fascination with graffiti, which led him to consider the ancient graffiti in his Roman surroundings. Clearly he both

embraced the classical past and struggled to make aspects of its narrative his own. Eventually he incorporated a number of classical literary references into his abstract compositions. Written on his works in Twombly's own graffiti-influenced style, we find these familiar names and many others from classical antiquity: "Ovid" visible on *Untitled* (1960), *Ode to Psyche* (1960), *Venus and Mars* (1962), *Vergil* (1973), *Orpheus* (1975), *Apollo and the Artist* (1975), *Mars and the Artist* (1975), and *Phaedrus* (1977). But then there is also *Aristaeus Mourning the Loss of His Bees* (1973) with its green paint in streaks and the word "Bucolic" scrawled across the top of the composition, although Aristaeus loses his bees in Vergil's *Georgics*, not his pastoral *Bucolics*.

Twombly showed his *Nine Discourses on Commodus* (1963) with the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1964. The title of this series of abstract canvases referred to the degenerate son of Marcus Aurelius, who became emperor in the second century (AD), went mad, and was strangled. Although the paintings are completely unrepresentational, the chaotic and violent application of paint evokes the madness and the violence of the story alluded to by the title.

3 Postmodernism

By the next decade, references to classical traditions show that further dissociation from the tradition of modernism was well underway. There emerged in art and architecture a new historicism that looked back at the classical artistic and architectural tradition, often in an ironic way, in order to subvert convention. Thus, even when parodied, forgotten classical themes became visible once again in the new art. What was being subverted was the long-dominant austerity and inherent elitism of high modernism, where sacrosanct images were usually abstract and "quality" in the visual arts was defined exclusively by the white male creator. Among the innovators, women artists and artists of color appropriated classical themes and forms, carving out their new territories in what came to be called "postmodernism." For them, Greek and Latin classics proved easily recognizable and therefore adaptable in different ways, according to the individual needs of the artist.

Postmodern art was often playful, ironic, eclectic, and parodic. Already in 1962, the French Nouveau Réaliste Yves Klein (1928–62) covered a reproduction of the *Victory of Samothrace* with a coat of his signature deep blue paint, making a contemporary work of art out of the classic enshrined in the Louvre, presented in the guise of a reproduction. The American Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923–97) produced playful appropriations of images from comic books and other aspects of popular culture. Looking to subvert the dominant modernist style of abstract expressionism, Lichtenstein recounted that he had pondered what would be most unacceptable as a subject to paint, choosing comics and advertisements. But he also mined classical tradition, turning to the cliché of Greek architecture in his painting *Temple of Apollo* (1964) and other related images. The image pleased him enough that he reproduced it again as a color lithograph, *Temple*.

Perhaps Lichtenstein never would have turned to the Greek temple if he had known of its appreciation by the leading modernist architect and city planner, the

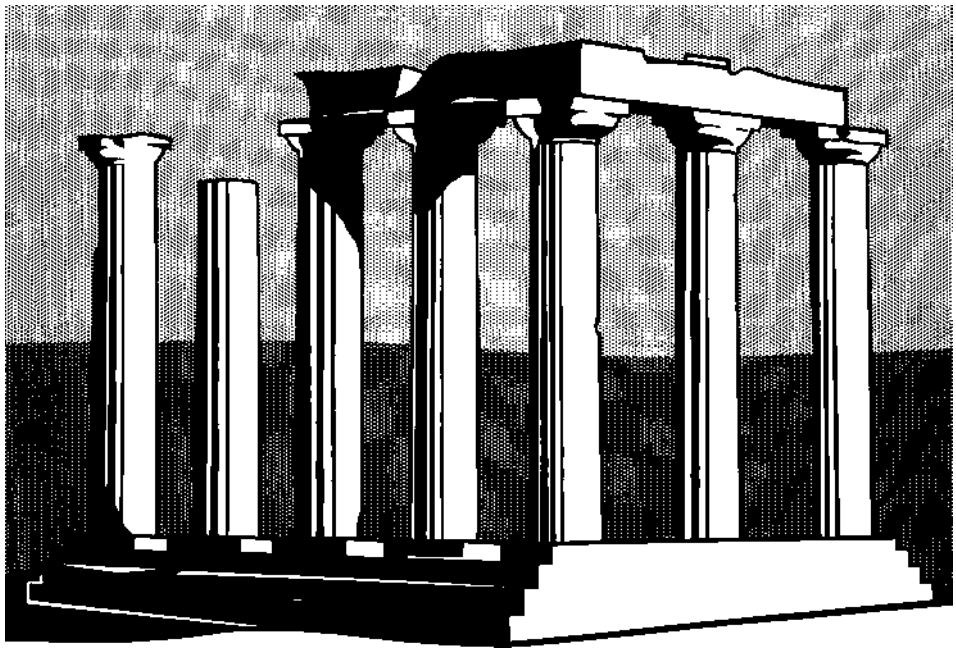

Figure 25.4 *Temple of Apollo*, 1964, by Roy Lichtenstein, magna and oil on canvas, 94'' × 128''. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Brown. © The Estate of Roy Lichtenstein/DACS

Swiss-born Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret 1887–1965). In his 1923 book, *Towards a New Architecture*, Le Corbusier had warned, ''To send architectural students to Rome is to cripple them for life'' (Le Corbusier 1986: 173). His book reproduced photographs and sketches of the Pantheon, the forum in Pompeii, the Parthenon, and a Greek temple at Paestum, noting, ''The Parthenon is a product of selection applied to an established standard. Already for a century the Greek Temple had been standardized in all its parts'' (Le Corbusier 1986: 133). And he exclaimed, ''The plastic system of Doric work is so pure that it gives almost the feeling of a natural growth'' (Le Corbusier 1986: 209). Appreciating other classical architecture, he recommended Hadrian's Villa, for ''One can meditate there on the greatness of Rome. There, they really planned'' (Le Corbusier 1986: 157).

A more widespread revival of interest in classical styles and themes in the visual arts and in architecture emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as postmodern art and architecture became the vogue. Postmodernism also successfully challenged traditional cultural values and began to blur distinctions between high and low art. The term ''postmodernism'' gained currency in a book on architecture by Charles Jencks, who attacked the International style – the style of the European Bauhaus and the dominant tradition of modernism – by arguing for a more eclectic approach. Eclecticism arrived with postmodernism.

By the early 1960s, the architect Philip Johnson had declared that he was bored with the work of the Bauhaus veteran Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, although he still considered the modernist architect ''a genius.'' For his own direction, Johnson rejected

"academic revivalism. There are no classic orders or Gothic finials. I try to pick what I like throughout history" (Johnson, quoted in Jencks 1984: 82). Johnson's building for the AT&T Corporate Headquarters (1978–83) in New York earned him unprecedented international attention. It features a Roman-style arch at the entrance, but a broken pediment that tops the building draws more upon the eighteenth-century English furniture-maker Chippendale than on classical Greek or Roman styles.

Perhaps "classic orders" had heretofore seemed too tainted for Johnson because of their association with both Mussolini's Fascist Rome and Nazi architecture, as in the work of Albert Speer, or with Hitler's admiration for classical forms (Jaskot 1996: 622). The Nazi admiration for forms of Greek classicism was a part of a deep German admiration for Greek antiquity and a preference for the classical over the contemporary (Silk and Stern 1981: 4). It has been pointed out that Hitler's views on Greek art and architecture were similar and perhaps indebted to those of the great German scholar and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), whose dictum he was known to repeat: "the only way for us to become great . . . lies in the imitation of the Greeks" (Spotts 2002: 20). During the 1930s, Johnson himself had sympathized publicly with, and promoted, fascist ideology and the Third Reich, but by the mid-1950s, he had publicly atoned and had designed a synagogue in suburban New York. Also encouraged by the antimodernist polemics of Robert Venturi, whose *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* appeared in 1966, classical grammar crept back into contemporary architecture.

Figure 25.5 Piazza d'Italia, Charles Moore. © Brendan Nee www.picturethecity.com

Classical revivalism in the US included John Paul Getty's museum for antiquities in Malibu, California, designed in the early 1970s by the firm of Langdon & Wilson, with Norman Neuerberg as historical consultant and recreating the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum. Architects have both condemned the Getty's *trompe l'oeil* columns, false marble, and "contradictory painted shadows" and praised it as a good replica that functions appropriately for its purpose (Jencks 1984: 82, 94–5). The project served to make prominent the issue of historicism in the early 1970s.

By the late 1970s, there emerged a postmodernist classicism. Architects such as Charles Moore, James Stirling, Hans Hollein, Aldo Rossi, and others incorporated convention, metaphor, ornament, and polychromy to create a "free-style classicism" (Jencks 1984: 147). Moore's *Piazza d'Italia* (1976–9), an open plaza dedicated to the Italian-American Community in New Orleans, Louisiana, exemplifies this new classicism. This project draws upon elements inspired by the Greek Agora and the Roman forum, including classical arches and columns, although there are also echoes of Renaissance and Baroque architecture. But Moore had his Ionic capitals made of spirals of bright stainless steel, the impact of which he enhanced by adding the glow and color of the neon light. Such bold revisions led architect Robert Stern to dub this variant of postmodernism, "ironic classicism."

4 Feminism

During that same decade, at the time of the Women's Movement, feminist art emerged, critiquing modernism and emphasizing content. A number of the leading feminist artists looked to classical culture for material with which to express their political point of view. Their interest coincided with the development of feminist scholarship among classicists and historians, as documented in the bibliography about ancient women published in *Arethusa* in 1973. Classicist Barbara McManus (1997) has surveyed the theoretical and methodological principles developed by pioneering feminist classical scholars, such as Sarah B. Pomeroy, who in *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, Women and Slaves* (1975) sought to recover information about women from skimpy and dispersed evidence filtered through centuries of patriarchal assessment.

Feminist artists such as Judy Chicago (born 1939) imbibed such scholarship, eager to know more about women in ancient times. In researching her major art work *The Dinner Party* (1979), Chicago sought to create a work about the history of women in western culture that would be so monumental and important that it could not, like so much earlier art by women, be erased from memory. She designed a triangular table with 39 ceramic place settings, each on a cloth runner, illustrated by needlework, representing women from myth and history. Working with hundreds of volunteers to research and complete this work, Chicago chose not only these 39 women, but 999 others whose names are represented on the porcelain floor.

Among the 39 place settings are five women from antiquity who reflect the new scholarship in classical studies: Sappho, the Greek poet from Lesbos; the Athenian Aspasia, who was the influential consort of Pericles; Boadaceia, whom, as Tacitus recounts, the Romans fought in the British Isles during the first century AD;

Figure 25.6a Sappho placesetting from *The Dinner Party.* Plate: 14" in diameter, China paint on Porcelain. Runner: 5' × 3'. Mixed media. Collection: The Brooklyn Museum of Art. © Judy Chicago 1979, 2006 / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Hypatia, the Greek upper-class mathematician who lived in the Roman era; and Marcella, a Roman widow who devoted herself to Christianity. In addition, on the "heritage floor" at the center of the triangular table, we find such names as Anyte, Anasandra, Carmenta, Cleobuline, Corinna of Tanagra, Cresilla, Erinna, Helena, Artemisia I, Cleopatra, and Zenobia.

The Dinner Party has had a tremendous impact on its audience, raising consciousness about the significant roles played by women in western civilization. Judy Chicago has written, "Greco-Roman goddesses paled beside their historical antecedents, and the position of Greek women was summed up in this famous remark . . . : 'That

Figure 25.6b Installation view of *The Dinner Party*. Featuring Judith and Sappho place-settings. Photo © Donald Woodman. Collection: The Brooklyn Museum of Art. © Judy Chicago 1979, 2006 / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Figure 25.6c Installation view of *The Dinner Party*. Wing One & Heritage Floor. Photo © Donald Woodman. Collection: The Brooklyn Museum of Art. © Judy Chicago 1979, 2006 / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

woman is best who is least spoken of among men, whether for good or evil.' '' The comment to which she referred was made by the political leader and statesman Pericles, as reported by Thucydides. Chicago went on to write, ''The destruction of the Goddess reflected the gradual erosion of women's political, social, and religious authority. . . . While Roman women were in a similar legal position to that of their Greek predecessors, in actuality they were far less oppressed'' (Chicago 1996: 17).

The lives and contributions of particular women represented in *The Dinner Party* have since inspired entire books. Likewise, Sappho's plate made its way into a recent scholarly book on women, sexuality, and gender in classical art and archaeology. There, Jane McIntosh Synder wrote,

> Who knows, it may be that Judy Chicago comes much closer to the heart of Sappho's poetry, with its sensuous images of trembling bodies, soft beds, purple headbands, roses and honey-lotus, garlands and perfume, and the rosy-fingered moon, than did the Athenian vase-painters, striving to create images that would please the Athenian men who wanted to please their wives with a suitable – and suitably safe – gift. (Snyder 1997: 117–18)

For the debut of *The Dinner Party* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1979, a day-long conference called ''A Celebration of Women's Heritage'' took place and featured a panel discussion about ''Women in the Ancient World,'' with Harrianne Mills, Marilyn Skinner, and Bella Zweig, all classicists by profession. In addition, Amazons and witches were the subject of a talk by Susan Rennie, an author and editor of the feminist journal *Crysalis*.

During the same period, the feminist artist Nancy Spero (born 1926) was also drawing upon images from classical antiquity to explore the imbalance of power between the sexes and between oppressors and victims. By utilizing classical images long associated with the masculine – even the giant phallus – Spero forged new symbols of feminine power by creating a new context for these images. She first became interested in ancient images, especially Roman and Etruscan, while living in Europe and specifically when making a long visit to Italy with her husband, artist Leon Golub, in 1956. Her subsequent use of classical imagery is distinguished by her use of either a frieze or mural arrangement of smaller figures, as in her *Athena-Sky Goddess-Masha Bruskina* (1974–92).

Spero's interest in ancient imagery has been ongoing. She even called her 1994 show at the New York gallery, P. O. W., ''Black and Red III,'' making an allusion to the colors of classical Greek vases, from which she borrowed ''dildo dancers.'' Her references are different from Chicago's use of metaphoric representation of ancient women or from the heroic dimensions of the figures adopted by the feminist sculptor Audrey Flack (born 1931).

Flack was already well established as a photo-realist painter when she gave up painting in the mid-1980s and took up sculpture, the content of which often derives from classical tradition. Already in her paintings, Flack was drawn to images of spirituality, such as a Gothic cathedral, the Madonna, or Buddha. She had also depicted iconic images – from *Isis* (1983) to Marilyn Monroe (1978) to Michelangelo's *David* (1971).

Figure 25.7 *Colossal Head of Medusa*, 1990, by Audrey Flack. Courtesy Meisel Gallery

Thus it was but a small leap to move on to sculpt figures that evoke images from classical antiquity.

Flack's sculptures in the classical tradition include *Diana* (1988), *American Athena* (1989), *Colossal Head of Medusa* (1990), and *Galatea* (1998). For Medusa, Flack sought to reimagine the ancient myth and to question the traditionally negative identity given to this, the most beautiful of three Gorgon sisters. Learning that Medusa had suffered a rape in the temple of Athena, Flack saw in Medusa a metaphor for the rape of the earth.

Modeled and cast in bronze, Flack's forms often have distant classical sources, but these have evolved under the influence of European academic traditions from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Flack endows her figures with an intentional grandeur and often imagines her sculptures positioned in prominent public spaces.

Joyce Kozloff (born 1942), another important feminist, drew upon Greek classical vases in some of her watercolors called "Patterns of Desire," a cross-cultural and witty exploration of eroticism, in which she alternately mixed figures from a Greek red-figure amphora with Chinese imagery on a Chinese-shaped vessel that she called *Smut Dynasty Vase* (1987). Around the same time, she also used imagery from both classical Greek black-figured and red-figured vases on her own "revolutionary textiles," which parody early Soviet designs. By combining the classical with Asian motifs, Kozloff showed the universality of Eros.

Like so many other feminist artists, Eleanor Antin (born 1935) has successfully appropriated classical imagery for her own ends. In her 2001 series *The Last Days of*

Figure 25.8 *Pornament is Crime #4: Smut Dynasty Vase*, 1987, by Joyce Kozloff, 22'' × 22''. Collection of Terry Stept. Photo: Eeva Inkevi

Figure 25.9 "The Artist's Studio" from *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 2001 by Eleanor Antin. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

Pompeii, she conveys the decadence of Roman life through carefully staged photographs with costumed actors that she directed. Her imagined scenes include an artist's studio complete with nude model, a Roman banquet, and the death of Petronius.

On the wall of Antin's most recent show, "Roman Allegories," held in the spring of 2005 at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York, she quoted Pliny the Younger: "That summer, in the first year of the reign of Titus, there appeared a small band of players who met with some success until they disappeared without trace, leaving behind one of their number." The show featured 12 large tableaux, beautifully staged and photographed. Her characters included Columbine, the Lover, the Trickster, an ex-gladiator Strong Man, the Poet, and a little girl, all of whom act out episodes in Roman times, along with a fully costumed Bacchanal and sylvan scenes that are clearly allegorical. The parodic and ironic aspects of Antin's work make it postmodern. Malcolm Bradbury's literary term, "parodic realism," appears appropriate for her work (Rose 1993: 270).

5 Other Works of The Eighties and Nineties

Beyond the appearance of classical referents in the work of these feminist artists, perhaps the most prominent use of the classical by a postmodernist has been in the

word pictures of Jean Michel Basquiat (1961–88). Like Twombly, Basquiat was interested in the incorporation of names and words for their graphic power, which he sometimes utilized instead of, or combined with, pictorial images. In 1982, he painted *Speaks for Itself*, a triptych that features the words "NERO, CARTHAGE, PUNIC WARS" and "ROME SACKED BY GOTHS" in block letters on its first panel, alluding to Nero, who fought Hannibal in the second Punic War during the third century BC. Basquiat continued to convey this military theme with gestural brush strokes, violent drips of paint, and bold, red graffiti. He moves forward in time to more violence, when the northern Visigoths sacked Rome in 410 AD. The middle panel treats the fourth century BC, when in "THE BATTLE OF PERSIA" Alexander the Great killed Darius III in the Battle of Gaugamela in Mesopotamia in 331 BC, a date that appears on the right-hand panel. Since Basquiat's own life was cut so short, we cannot know if he would have continued such imagery as Twombly does, but his interest seems to have been more than trivial.

The name "Alexander the Great" also appears across the top of Basquiat's *All Colored Cast (Part II)* of 1982 above the *faux* Roman numerals "MCLMVX XIIVI." Both the image and the name "Alexander the Great" recur in *False*, which is one of the 32 untitled drawings (1982–3) of the Daros Suite in a Swiss Collection. *False*, boldly executed in black and red on a white ground, also features labeled linear drawings of Aphrodite, Pericles, a Greek Soldier, Romulus and Remus, and a "BARBARIAN INVADER" who "SEES ROME FOR THE FIRST TIME." Other names, words, and phrases include Plato, Homer, Socrates, "PAX ROMANA," "BRUTUS AS 1ST CONSUL," and "ROME IS SACKED BY GOTHS."

Around the same time as Basquiat's classical references, Francesco Clemente (born 1952), one of a group of Italian painters who in the late 1970s and early 1980s became known as the "Transavanguardia," produced a self-portrait as a nude male striding figure carrying a model of the Pantheon in his arms, which he titled *Perseverance* (1981). Painting in a neo-expressionist, gestural style, Clemente had just come to live in New York from Italy, where he had known Twombly in Rome, after having moved there to study architecture. Clemente described this canvas:

> The first night I slept in the studio in New York, I had a dream where shit was raining from the sky. This painting came after that dream, with the Pantheon sort of protecting me from this rain of shit. What that means, I don't know. One should remember that downtown New York was a city of ruins back then. . . . It was an archaeological site with the Roman gods still walking around. (Adams 2003)

Since Clemente would collaborate with Basquiat in 1984, it is interesting that he, too, occasionally mined the ancient world for some of his imagery.

Unlike so many of these artists who engage briefly with classical themes, Andrea Eis (born 1952) trained as a classical scholar. When she abandoned scholarship for the visual arts, she kept her passion for classical civilization, finding her themes there. She works in photography and creates installations. For example, she made an installation about the conflict between Antigone and Kreon called *Antigone's Cave, No. 2* (1990), questioning "the conflict of personal and ethical boundaries and governmental

authority.'' She expressed authority and social order in architecturally controlled pathways, which she created through a ''ritual corridor'' made of pairs of fluted wooden columns, each pair progressively taller, through which the viewer walked. At the end of the corridor, a sharply lit photograph of a woman's hands twisting in tension and frustration, scaled much larger than life, confronted the viewer. Eis created another large-scale installation, *Labyrinth for Theseus and Ariadne* (2000),

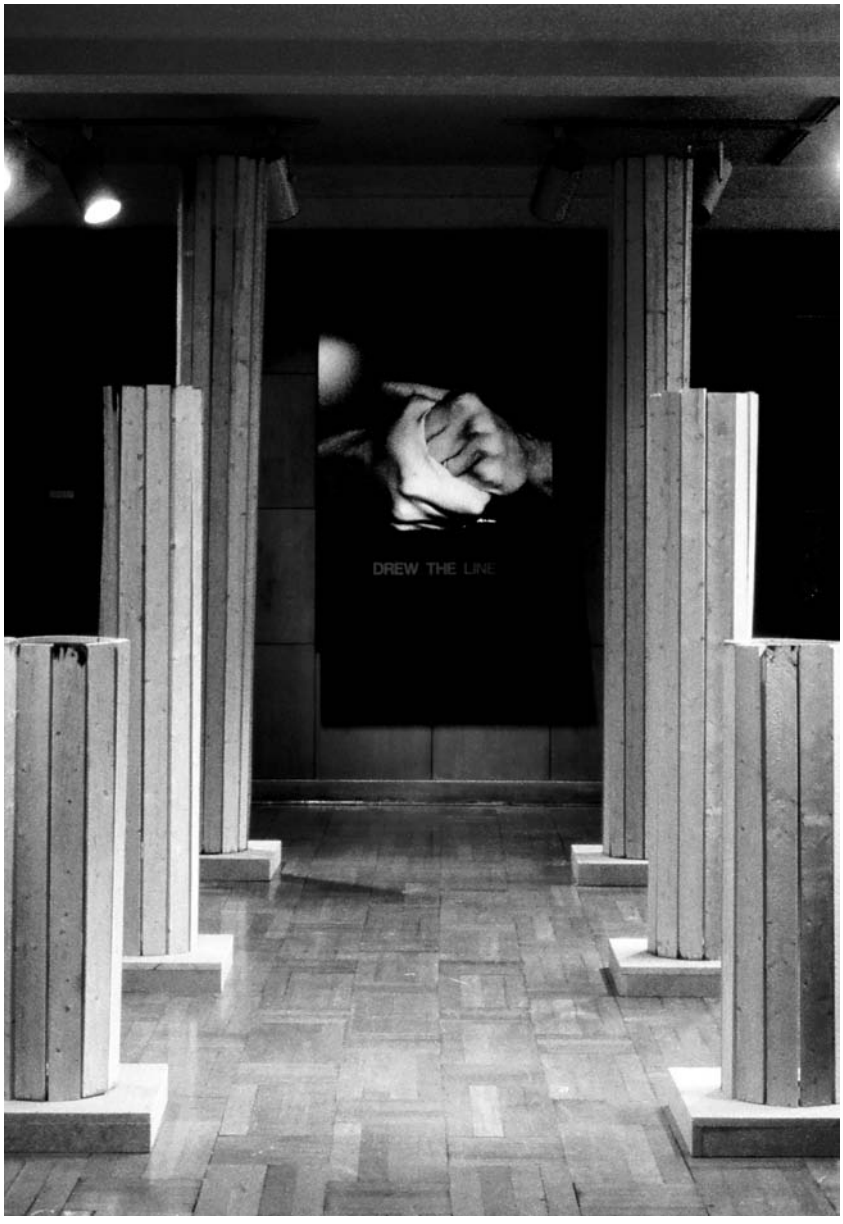

Figure 25.10a *Antigone's cave, No. 2* by Andrea Eis. Photo © Andrea Eis

Figure 25.10b *Antigone's Cave, No. 2* by Andrea Eis Photo © Andrea Eis

in which she "returns the path to Theseus," but "gives Ariadne the final word." This piece involves translucent fabric with a photograph dyed into it; it is both fragile like the past and suggestive of a labyrinth. Her goal is to use articulations of space combined with manipulations of images and texts to create metaphorical connections to the insights of ancient myths. Eis has written, "With our own society's myths becoming increasingly hollow, perhaps exploring the Greek myths can provoke a re-evaluation of what we believe, and why" (Eis 1993: 3).

While interest in the classical never completely disappears, certain periods and particular artists find innovative uses for the familiar forms, names, and characters. As we have seen, even an arch-modernist like Le Corbusier appreciated classical architecture. While we should not expect Alexander the Great to figure in the work of an artist inspired by graffiti such as Basquiat's, we should not be surprised. Nor should the fascination with the classics among feminist artists seem unlikely. For they were not rebelling against Praxiteles or Lysippos, but against the domination of modernist formalism with its suppression of content. For all of the artists who want to draw upon rich cultural traditions, classical forms and literature offer a rich and readily available body of sources.