If strong artists deal with the anxiety of influence (to borrow Harold Bloom’s indispensable term) not by avoiding it but by incorporating and transforming the work of their precursors, Pollock’s artistic evolution can be understood as the story of his changing response to, and eventual transcendence of, his European sources. Above all, it is the story of his long wrestling match with Picasso—a wrestling match conducted at long distance. Some of Picasso’s most important works Pollock could have known only in reproduction. Others he would have absorbed secondhand, through paintings and drawings by other artists who had been influenced by Picasso at an earlier date. When Freud died, in 1939, W. H. Auden wrote that he had become “a climate of opinion.” So too, in the 1930s and ’40s, Picasso’s ideas and innovations were so widely diffused that no artist could completely escape them. Lee Krasner recounted that when she and Pollock were still living in New York, she once heard something fall in his studio and then Pollock yelling, “God damn it, that guy missed nothing!” She went in to see what had happened. “Jackson was sitting, staring, and on the floor was a book of Picasso’s work.”

Pollock’s relationship to Picasso is hardly news: scholars have often noted his reworkings of motifs from paintings such as Girl before a Mirror (1932) or Guernica (1937). Even more important than these individual borrowings, however, are the different structural models offered by Picasso’s pictures. Of these, the most often discussed is the example of “allover” composition that Pollock supposedly found in Analytic Cubism. Several critics have echoed Clement Greenberg’s statement that “by means of his interlaced trickles and spatters, Pollock created an oscillation between an emphatic surface . . . and an illusion of indeterminate but somehow definitely shallow depth that reminds me of what Picasso and Braque arrived at thirty-odd years before, with the facet-planes of their Analytical Cubism. . . . Pollock’s 1946–1950 manner really took up Analytical Cubism from the point at which Picasso and Braque had left it.” The problem is that the “interlaced trickles and spatters” that create the oscillation between surface and depth in Pollock look nothing like the straight lines and
shaded facets that produce a similar effect in Analytic Cubist paintings. Greenberg’s argument requires us to believe that Pollock jumped in a single bound from the rectilinear grid of 1910–12 Cubism to the looping web of his own mature work, without any of the intermediary studies that allow us to follow his absorption of Guernica, for instance. In fact, Pollock absorbed not one but several of Picasso’s styles, and in most of these cases we can trace the process of diffusion and absorption virtually step-by-step.

Much of Picasso’s evolution was visible to artists in New York, thanks to a series of exhibitions held by the Valentine and Seligmann galleries in the late 1930s, and followed by the great Picasso retrospective of 1939 at The Museum of Modern Art. Aspects of his work not represented in these exhibitions could be studied in the pages of Cahiers d’Art, which published numerous studies and drawings as well as finished paintings.

From the late 1930s through the end of his career, Pollock responded to many aspects of Picasso’s oeuvre. But the most important antecedent for his work is a group of pictures that have received curiously little attention from either Pollock or Picasso scholars: Picasso’s interlace paintings of 1926, such as Painter and Model (fig. 1). These works rephrased the all-over field of Analytic Cubism in a language of curves instead of straight lines, pointing a way beyond the orthodoxy of contemporary abstraction. As the critic Carl Einstein com-
mented, "The curve returned after the war, and with it the possibility of a painting of feeling."5 The interlacing curves of Picasso’s new style of 1926 seemed to liberate his pictures from the constraints of the rectilinear grid without relapsing into naturalism, and what Alfred H. Barr, Jr., called the “curvilinear Cubism” of these pictures gave rise in his work to a style known as “free form.”6

In Painter and Model, lines flow without a break from figure to figure and from figure to ground, imbuing the composition with a sense of perpetual motion.7 The contours of the figures are recognizable as such but wildly distorted. Denser groupings of line reveal themselves as heads, fingers, or feet; examined individually, they separate from the curvilinear field, but merge back into it as soon as the viewer looks elsewhere. Overall, the character of the field is graphic and conceptual. The alternation of light and dark tones in the background, however, suggests actual optical experience, and the picture seems to open onto a stagelike space behind the scrim of interlacing lines.

By 1927, Picasso’s web had begun to loosen, so that individual figures were easier to distinguish. In works like Seated Woman of that year, the interlace pattern tends to function only within the contours of the figures, while the backgrounds are indicated with a kind of rectilinear shorthand.8 The culmination of this style arrived in Girl before a Mirror, where, however, the unity of the interlaced composition is deliberately disrupted by abrupt changes of color and pattern that set off one figure from the other and both from the background.9 Acquired by The Museum of Modern Art in 1938, this picture had a major impact on artists in New York.

Although Picasso’s allover interlace paintings remained in his studio, unexhibited and unreproduced, the idea of drawing with interlacing loops and curves was disseminated in works by other artists as diverse as Max Ernst, Paul Klee, André Masson, and Georges Braque. The figure in Ernst’s 1927 canvas The Kiss, for instance, is remarkably similar to that in Picasso’s Seated Woman. And in 1942, when Peggy Guggenheim opened her New York gallery, Art of This Century, Ernst’s picture was displayed as the centerpiece of the collection.10 Other versions of the

Fig. 2. André Masson. Antilles. 1943. Oil, sand, and tempera on canvas, 51⅛ x 3⅝ in. (129 x 87 cm). Musée Cantini, Marseilles.
interlace style appeared in the work of Masson, who, like Ernst, spent the war years in New York. His work of these years is often close to Pollock’s work of the time, while his drawings and paintings of the mid-1920s closely anticipate the allover interlace of Pollock’s drip paintings.11 Ironically, though, Masson’s own skill as an academic draftsman subverted his transgressive ambitions: behind the web of meandering lines, the viewer almost always senses the presence of a conventionally modeled figure (fig. 2).

The interlace style proved attractive to printmakers like Stanley William Hayter, who played an important role in its diffusion. After working with Picasso and the Surrealists in Paris from 1927 to 1940, Hayter moved to New York, where his Atelier 17 print shop acted as an informal classroom for young American artists interested in Surrealism.12 For Hayter and his circle, the loops and swirls of the interlace style seemed the natural language of Surrealist automatism. But the style could serve equally well as a vehicle for classical imagery, and Picasso, as usual, led the way, with a series of 1927 drawings devoted to the distinctly unmodern motif of the Crucifixion (fig. 3).13 Braque adopted a version of this style in his illustrations for Hesiod’s Theogony, commissioned in 1930.

The interlace style was an important thread in Picasso’s development during the years 1926–32, but his other inventions of these years were equally influential. In one series of pictures, including The Swimmer (1929; fig. 4), Picasso extracted his curvilinear figures from the web, reducing them to freely distorted outlines, and positioned them like heraldic emblems on blank backgrounds of an infinite depth or flatness. Several of these emblematic figures were included in Picasso’s 1939 retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art. Picasso identified
them as swimmers and acrobats—athletes who had freed themselves momentarily from the constraints of gravity, and who therefore had no fixed “up” or “down.” Accordingly, Barr noted in the catalogue that The Swimmer was composed so that it could be hung “with any edge up.” Earlier artists and critics, from Joshua Reynolds through Vasily Kandinsky, had suggested the evaluation of a painting by turning it upside-down, rendering the subject matter unrecognizable and thereby forcing the viewer to concentrate on the work’s formal structure. Picasso literalized this idea by making pictures that could be rotated from one orientation to another as the owner wished.

The linked ideas of weightlessness and rotation also made appearances in New York exhibitions by other Paris painters. In the spring of 1939, the Passedoit Gallery showed several of Amédée Ozenfant’s pictures of flattened, weightless bathers from 1929–30—evidently painted in response to Picasso (fig. 5). Fernand Léger, exiled in New York by the war, executed a series of similar compositions representing divers, and showed one of them, Circular Divers (1942), in Sidney Janis’s exhibition Abstract and Surrealist Art in America, of 1944. In his statement for the catalogue, Léger expressed his interest in rotating forms “like birds and clouds,” and explained that his picture might be “hung on any one of
its four sides." The theme of divers, he said, enabled him "to realize a new deep space without the aid of traditional perspective," which would have required the inclusion of a vanishing point and a horizon line.  

The indefinite space of these pictures, and their simple but evocative figuration, suggests a connection to cave painting (fig. 6), a subject of great critical interest in these years. Reviewing Ozenfant's 1939 exhibition for Art News, Doris Brian described his clay-red figures as "consciously reminiscent of African cave drawings." Similarly, in his 1937 article "Primitive Art and
Picasso,” artist-critic John Graham insisted on a link between primitive art in general and Picasso’s “arbitrary contortions of features in two-dimensional arrangements.”

For Graham, Girl before a Mirror represented the essential Picasso. Its influence on Pollock in the years 1938–41 is evident in paintings like Masked Image (c. 1938–41) and Birth (c. 1941), the latter the canvas Graham selected for the 1942 exhibition that first put Pollock on the map (American and French Paintings, at McMillen Inc., New York). But Pollock was equally fascinated by the mural-sized Guernica, which seemed to confirm Picasso’s status as the preeminent mythological painter of the century, simultaneously modern and primitive. Exhibited at the Valentine Gallery in the spring of 1939 and then again that fall at The Museum of Modern Art, Guernica deployed Picasso’s pictorial discoveries of the previous decade in the service of an insistent narrative. If the results had something in common with the metamorphic anatomies of Hollywood cartoons, that only meant the picture would reach a broader audience.

The veteran critic Henry McBride, writing in the New York Sun, marveled at the “revolutionary forms” of Picasso’s canvas, and predicted that “all the lesser artists” would soon be using this “new language.” Indeed numerous American artists would respond to Guernica, not least among them Pollock, whose “psychoanalytic” drawings of 1939–40 contain numerous quotations from the painting. But Pollock’s slavish initial response was replaced, within a few years, by a profound rethinking of Picasso’s style. This depended, in large part, on the American artist’s attention to more abstract—and hence less “primitive”—aspects of Picasso’s work from the 1920s.

Two groups of works were particularly important. One was a series of drawings executed in a vocabulary of lines punctuated with dots (fig. 7). Suggested, Picasso said, by “astronomical charts” showing the constellations as outlines connecting stars, this dot-and-line style was explored in notebook sketches he did in the summer of 1924. He showed these sketches to a few of his Surrealist friends, but they remained relatively unknown until 1931, when they were published as wood-engraved illustrations in Ambroise Vollard’s edition of Balzac’s story Le Chef d’oeuvre inconnu. Numerous artists then began to adopt elements of the style, whose apparent abstraction made it seem particularly advanced. Chief among them was Joan Miró, who responded with a 1931 series of paintings adapting Picasso’s linear vocabulary to the more open style of his own compositions. Miró returned to the dot-and-line style in his Constellations series of 1941, which were exhibited in New York four years later, to considerable acclaim. One of them, The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers (fig. 8), was acquired by The Museum of Modern Art, and was also reproduced in Art News, where the anonymous reviewer commented that Miró’s “all-over patterns” looked like chemists’ diagrams of “atomic structure... all woven together in taut relationship and tied by thin electric lines.” The evenly distributed
lines and forms of Miró's Constellations have often been cited as a precedent for Pollock's allover compositions of 1947–50. Miró's heavy black circles and triangular marks—his version of Picasso's dots—were also important for Pollock, and their role will be examined subsequently.

As Pollock overcame his infatuation with Guernica and began looking for a more abstract style, he turned to earlier examples—not Painter and Model itself (which he may never have seen, even in reproduction) but the 1927–28 Picassos in which the studio motif of that painting was translated into rectilinear terms. Here the curving organic figures of 1926 often became geometric outlines, positioned like stage flats in front of a backdrop of squares and rectangles. These rectilinear studio pictures of 1928 were well-known in New York: there was one in Peggy Guggenheim's collection, the Modern owned another, and a third, Two Women in front of a Window (fig. 9), was in the collection of the influential critic and curator James Thrall Soby. The last, with its densely layered rectangles and triangles, offered a textbook illustration of Hans Hofmann's theory that a picture should be constructed around a series of overlapping planes, and close paraphrases of it were painted by artists such as Judith Rothschild (a Hofmann student) and William Baziotes.

Pollock himself was clearly interested in the Soby picture, but not in its example of construction by overlapping. In Male and Female in Search of a Symbol—a painting included in his first solo exhibition, at Art of This Century in
November 1943—he disassembled Picasso's composition into a series of separate shapes, lying side by side in the picture plane instead of overlapping (fig. 10). Vertical figures appear at either side of the composition, and the space between them is framed by straight lines forming a roughly trapezoidal shape that suggests the end of a table seen in perspective. Partly canceling out the implied sense of recession, the trapezoidal form is open at the top, so that it merges here into the pink background. Nonetheless, the space remains strikingly
theatrical, with an opening in the middle flanked by stage-flat-like figures at either side. This was a favorite format for Pollock from 1942 through 1946, used in pictures such as Guardians of the Secret (1943), Pasiphaé (c. 1943), The Tea Cup (1946), and The Key (1946). It is equally evident in Stenographic Figure (c. 1942; fig. 11), in which a figure with a triangular head appears at the left of the composition, stretching out an arm toward its counterpart on the right. Here the table between the two figures is more tangible, divided into areas of gray, red, and white that set it off from the blue, yellow, and black of the background. The two figures appear to be playing some kind of game.

Calligraphic scribbles had appeared in one area of Male and Female in Search of a Symbol; in Stenographic Figure they cover the surface of the picture, forming a kind of scrim that veils the space behind them. Formally these scribbles function much like the interlacing lines, floating in front of broader areas of light and dark, in Picasso’s Painter and Model, or the linear scaffolding, set against a field of colors, that is often found in Klee. In Picasso and Klee, line carries the chief burden of representation. In Stenographic Figure, however, the forms are defined primarily by color, while the lines seem more like the cryptic inscriptions found in Miró. Other lines revise or elaborate the original painted forms, adding a pair of circular breasts to the left-hand figure, for instance.
Pollock carried this process of revision much farther in *Untitled (Composition with Pouring I)*, of 1943, one of his earliest experiments with dripped paint. Here, even before applying the drips, Pollock heavily overpainted the original composition with broad brushstrokes of red and yellow paint mixed with sand, but in the interstices of these strokes there can still be seen several triangular forms suggesting heads, as well as an outstretched gray arm resembling the red arm on the left of *Stenographic Figure*. The strokes of red and yellow seem mostly to have been applied along the contours of the original composition, so that the rhythms of these contours remained even as their representational meaning was obscured. Then, in a third and fourth campaign, Pollock dripped skeins of white and black across the composition, setting up a kind of responsive counterpoint to the rhythms of the earlier forms. Although the reworked canvas seems to approach pure abstraction, the relationship between the dark lines in the foreground and the field of lighter colors in the background recalls the stagelike space of *Stenographic Figure*, and of Picasso’s studio pictures. This vestige of representational space is even more evident in *Untitled [Black Pouring over Color]*, of 1946 (fig. 12), where the relationship between poured line and colored background is similar but the overall composition is simpler and more legible. We seem to see a pair of loosely drawn figures running or dancing in an open setting of ocean and sky.

The dripped technique of the 1946 picture is distinctively Pollockian, but the contrast between the linear figures in the foreground and the flat colors of the background is a splendid example of period style—the sort of thing that might have been come up with by any competent artist attuned to European modernism. Indeed an almost exact counterpart to Pollock’s picture appears in the 1946 canvas *Chessplayers* (fig. 13) by Hans Moller, a German émigré artist active in New York in the 1940s. Though Moller’s figures are far more conventional than Pollock’s, the two artists use remarkably similar loose interlacing lines, and Moller breaks up the unity of his figures by filling in adjacent loops with different colors, just as Pollock does. In both cases the figures float against an open field of color, though the field in Moller’s picture is more monochromatic.

For Emily Genauer, critic at the New York *World Telegram, Chessplayers* was one of the best pictures of the 1946–47 season. But the decorative color and stagelike space of both this picture and Pollock’s *Untitled [Black Pouring over Color]* make it evident; by contrast, how much Pollock achieved in more substantive paintings like *The Key*. The loose, looping outlines of this picture seem as spontaneous as those in *Untitled [Black Pouring over Color]*, though painted with a brush instead of dripped. What is completely different is the use of color, which is inserted between the drawn lines, instead of forming a continuous field behind them. Working in the upstairs bedroom of his and Krasner’s house in The Springs, Pollock laid the canvas on the floor and spread the paint with a knife,
Fig. 12. Jackson Pollock. Untitled [Black Pouring over Color]. 1946. Oil on specially prepared canvas on panel, 20 x 24 in. (50.8 x 61 cm). Private collection, courtesy Jason McCoy Gallery, New York

Fig. 13. Hans Molier. Chessplayers. 1946. Medium and dimensions unknown. Location unknown
pushing down against the floorboards so that it was simultaneously pressed on and scraped off, like butter on a piece of toast. The result is that the colors seem to occupy the same plane as the lines, or perhaps even to move in front of them. In many areas the weave of the white canvas gleams through the paint, while horizontal lines of thicker pigment mark places where the canvas sank into the crevices between floorboards, eluding the scraping action of the knife. The drawing of the composition—with one figure at the right and another, holding what seems to be a palette, at the left—repeats the "studio" format of Picasso's that Pollock had already explored in *Male and Female in Search of a Symbol* and *Stenographic Figure*. But the rapid alternation of color from one area to the next breaks up the coherence of the drawn figures, so that the picture reads as an "abstraction" despite its figurative origins.

The linear pattern of *The Key*, extending to the edges of the composition, recalls the allower patterning of some of the engravings that Pollock executed in Hayter's workshop in 1944–45 (fig. 14). Here too we find dark and light shapes interwoven, flanked by figures at right and left. Pollock's use of a curvilinear interlace may reflect the influence of Hayter, and of the printmaking process more generally. Working with a burin, Pollock would have had to rotate the copper plate repeatedly in order to draw the curves of his composition. The swimmers and acrobats of Picasso, Ozefant, and Léger had demonstrated that a successful "abstract" composition could be seen from any of its four sides; the experience of printmaking now demonstrated the value of working on a picture from all four sides—as Pollock probably did in scraping on the colors of *The Key*.

Even before Pollock participated in Atelier 17, a contemporary observer noted the resemblance between his work and Hayter's. But comparison with one of Hayter's prints immediately reveals radical differences in their approach to composition (fig. 15). Although Hayter uses an interlace pattern to bind together his figures, they occupy a more boxlike stage than Pollock would use; as another reviewer noted, Hayter's "two-dimensional linear abstractions exist within deep space." Pollock's more allower use of the interlace brings him closer to the example of Picasso's *Painter and Model*, a kind of composition very much in the air in the New York of the mid-1940s. His engraving finds a close counterpart, for instance, in Walter Quirt's 1943 painting *The Crucified* (fig. 16), which seems in turn to be a more densely woven version of Picasso's earlier Crucifixion studies (fig. 3). Quirt may be virtually forgotten today, but in 1944 he and Pollock seemed like promising young artists of comparable importance, and *The Crucified* faces Pollock's *She-Wolf* (1943) across a page spread of Janis's 1944 volume *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*. As in Pollock's print, Quirt's figures merge into an interlacing web. But when an individual figure is recognized, it separates from the field and seems to take up a stance in a more conventional stagelike space.
Interlace patterns were also common in the work of younger artists associated with the Art Students League and Kenneth Beaudoin’s Galerie Neuf. In addition to Picasso and Miró, another source for this imagery was the Native American art of the Pacific Northwest—hence the application of the term “Indian Space” to some of this work. Beaudoin’s short-lived magazine Iconograph published reproductions of paintings by not only Pollock and Rothko but also Peter Busa, Gertrude Barrer, Seong Moy, and other artists associated with his gallery. Busa, a close friend of Pollock’s since their student days under Thomas Hart Benton, shared his interests in Surrealism and in Native American art, and exhibited, as he did, at Art of This Century. There is an obvious affinity between Busa’s pictures from this era and works by Pollock, even when, as in Busa’s Thing in the Present (1945; fig. 17) and Pollock’s Totem Lesson 1 (1944) and Totem Lesson 2 (1945), both artists set interlacing aside in order to create flat figures with heavy outlines and an accumulation of decorative marks. The flat outlines of the figures in all three of these paintings recall Picasso’s emblematic swimmers and acrobats of the late 1920s (fig. 4), while the intense colors and patterns seem to come both from Native American sources, especially the art of the Northwest Indians, and from other Picassos, such as Girl before a Mirror. Picasso is a particularly strong presence in Totem Lesson 2, where the original accumulation of marks was followed by a second stage in which Pollock pared down the complexity of the picture by painting over large areas of it with gray paint. Pollock’s paint handling in general seems cruder and more direct than Busa’s.

It is impossible to understand Pollock without understanding the impact that the two Totem Lesson works had on their original audience. In April 1945, when Greenberg first proclaimed that Pollock was “the strongest painter of his
generation and perhaps the greatest one to appear since Miro,” he singled out these works as pictures “for which I cannot find strong enough words of praise.”

Similarly, an Art News reviewer wrote in May 1946 that Pollock had to some extent left behind his “swirling webs of pigment” in favor of a newer, “simplified” manner: “Larger, more representational shapes are placed against flat, monotone backgrounds; clarity increases at the expense of motion.” Evidently, Pollock seemed at this moment to be moving away from, not toward, a style
based on rhythmic interlace. He would have to sacrifice this style—a successful one—when he returned to the interlace in 1947.

It was paintings of 1944–46—the two *Totem Lessons* and the Accabonac Creek Series (*Eyes in the Heat, The Key, The Tea Cup,* and *Yellow Triangle*)—that were published in *Possibilities* in the winter of 1947–48, even though Pollock had by then been working in the drip style for the better part of a year, and would exhibit a group of drip paintings at Betty Parsons that January.47 Pollock’s statement accompanying these pictures is in fact more a description of his earlier methods than of his new drip technique: “My painting does not come from the easel. I hardly ever stretch my canvas before painting. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting.”48 These lines inevitably recall Hans Namuth’s later photographs of Pollock dripping paint onto horizontal canvases. But the reference to “the resistance of a hard surface,” for instance, clearly applies to canvases like *The Key,* where the scraped-on colors bear the traces of the floor on which it was made. In the drip paintings, on the other hand, “resistance” was a moot point, since there was no physical contact between the tool releasing the paint and the canvas receiving it.

The earlier pictures also bear witness to another impulse documented in *Possibilities,* Pollock’s desire “to get further away from the usual painter’s tools such as easel, palette, brushes, etc. I prefer sticks, trowels, knives and dripping fluid paint or a heavy impasto with sand, broken glass and other foreign matter added.”49 “Dripping paint,” here, seems to allude to Pollock’s new work, but he had in fact employed this technique since 1943, sometimes for figuration but usually for decorative texture. The use of trowels, knives, and heavy impasto is
evident in 1946 pictures like The Key and Eyes in the Heat, and also in pictures from 1947 like Full Fathom Five, which was not illustrated in Possibilities.

The most often-quoted part of Pollock’s statement, however, is his remark, “When I am in my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It is only after a sort of ‘get acquainted’ period that I see what I have been about.” In August 1949, when Dorothy Seiberling profiled Pollock for Life magazine, she cited this statement to explain his drip technique. Robert Goodnough’s 1951 article “Pollock Paints a Picture,” illustrated with Namuth’s dramatic photographs, reinforced the impression that Pollock worked in a kind of shamanistic trance, weaving lines of paint across the surface without conscious intention. Taking this conclusion as a given, later critics linked Pollock’s working method to Surrealist automatism and the existential acte gratuit.

What is obscured by this easy identification between automatism and the drip technique is that Pollock’s approach to painting was already seen as “automatic” before he began the drip paintings. In May 1946, for instance, a reviewer for Art News, describing him as “one of the most influential young abstractionists,” noted that he used “an automatic technique, pushing totemic and metaphorical shapes into swirling webs of pigment.” Automatism had been in the air for years, even before the Surrealists arrived in New York to provide a personal demonstration. By the mid-1930s, accounts of Picasso’s working process often stressed his claim to be an unconscious observer of his own creativity. Herbert Read’s 1934 book Art Now quoted Picasso saying, “I don’t know in advance what I am going to put on the canvas . . . whilst I work, I take no stock of what I am painting on the canvas . . . . It is only later that I begin to evaluate more exactly the result of my work.” And Barr’s catalogue for the Picasso retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art in 1939 gave prominent place to the artist’s 1935 statement that “a picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case, a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture—then I destroy it. . . . A picture is not thought out and settled beforehand. While it is being done it changes as one’s thoughts change.” Articles and essays about Miró also stressed the role of unconscious discovery and revision in his working process.

By 1946, this approach to composition was common among New York’s avant-garde painters. Moller, for instance, gave a similar account of his working method to Emily Genauer, who wrote,

When Hans Moller starts a picture he has not the slightest idea of what its subject, not to mention its shape, will turn out to be. He begins with a mood. . . . The mood soon determines the character of the line. The character of the line determines the subject. . . . “Chessplayers” . . . started with a drawing—little more than a doodle, really—of what Moller calls “soft” (for curved) and “hard” (for angular) lines. Presently they suggested to him two persons seated at a table, and as he drew and his
imagination became unloosed with the unfolding coils of his line, it occurred to him that his seated people might easily be playing chess.56

Moller's initial technique was quite as "automatic" as Pollock's, but they differed in their use of its results. Moller looked to his abstract doodles for the suggestion of a figurative motif; Pollock did the opposite. As Seiberling wrote in Life, "Once in a while a lifelike image appears in the painting by mistake. But Pollock cheerfully rubs it out because the picture must retain 'a life of its own.'"57 Similarly, the text accompanying Namuth's photographs of Pollock on their first publication, in 1951, stated, "The conscious part of his mind, he says, plays no part in the creation of his work. It is relegated to the duties of a watchdog; when the unconscious sinfully produces a representational image, the conscience cries alarm and Pollock wrenches himself back to reality and obliterates the offending form."58 Automatism, here, is seen as a means of arriving at "abstract" form; recognizable imagery is merely an incidental by-product, to be discarded or suppressed.

Discussing this process of obliteration in a 1967 interview, Robert Motherwell commented that when Pollock found his own paintings too similar to the Picassos that had inspired them, "he would violently cross out his Picasso images. . . . Then, at a certain moment . . . he realized he didn't have to make the Picasso thing at all, but could directly do the crossing out or dipping, or what have you."59 Ironically, in doing so, Pollock embraced an idea of painting as a "sum of destructions" that was itself derived from Picasso.

Pollock now returned to the interlace as one means (among others) of reworking and obscuring an image. This process can be followed in a number of drawings from 1945–46, and from these drawings to what we now think of as the "classic" drip style it is only a short step.60 According to Greenberg, Pollock's first picture in the drip style was a small canvas from 1946 (probably late in the year). Ironically, the work's title—Free Form, a name suggested by the dealer and collector who acquired it, Sidney Janis—stressed the picture's resemblance to Picasso's work of the 1920s and '30s.61 The most notable new feature here is the fact that the painting is executed exclusively with dripped paint. The drip technique is not the source of the interlace per se; similar compositions are visible in Pollock's drawings, paintings, and prints of 1945. Nor is the technique responsible for his adoption of an "automatic" approach to composition—he had already proven himself capable of painting "automatically" with a brush. The new practice may have encouraged a form of automatism, however, by eliminating the resistance of the canvas (the resistance Pollock would nevertheless claim to need in the Possibilities statement a year later) and allowing him to paint more rapidly. The chief advantage of the drip technique, in fact, was a gain in pictorial energy. Gradually or abruptly swelling, shrinking, or changing course, Pollock's line seems infused with a new sense of motion. Compared with a drawn or brushed
line, which tends to maintain an even width throughout its course, the dripped line imparts a sense of constantly changing velocity, as though the variations in width corresponded to variations in the speed of the hand that formed it.  

The dripped line could be employed in many different ways—even to draw a relatively conventional figurative image, as in the head on the right of the 1953 canvas Portrait and a Dream. It is for the most part associated with the abstract phase of Pollock’s career, from 1947 through 1950, but it is not clear that abstraction and figuration are mutually exclusive in these paintings. Computer-assisted reconstructions of the early states of several canvases from 1950—Number 27, 1950, Autumn Rhythm: Number 30, 1950, and One: Number 31, 1950—suggest that each of these compositions began with some kind of figurative imagery, and that this imagery may even have been reiterated at later stages of the work. Yet the effect of the finished paintings is unquestionably abstract, as Pollock himself insisted.

Evidently there are several factors at work here. One is the extreme simplicity of the figuration Pollock employed during these years. This may reflect his interest in ancient cave art, which, as we have seen, was a frequent topic of discussion in both the Paris and the New York avant-gardes. As writers on the subject often noted, the cave artists made highly realistic drawings of animals, but almost invariably treated human bodies as mere stick figures. These figures might in turn be reduced to seemingly abstract symbols, of the sort found engraved on Paleolithic pebbles (fig. 18). Twenty years earlier, Miró had turned for inspiration to the same prehistoric drawings. But even without this shared source, it would have seemed obvious that there was a parallel between the “abstraction” of the figure in cave art and in modern art.

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Fig. 18. "Painted Pebbles from Haus D’Azil" and "Degradation of natural forms to the marks on Azilian Pebbles,"figs. 20 and 21 from G. Baldwin Brown, The Art of the Cave Dweller (New York: R. V. Coleman, 1930)

Fig. 19. Jackson Pollock. Untitled, c. 1939–42. Indio ink on paper, 19 x 13 ¼ in. (48.2 x 33.2 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchase, with funds from the Julia B. Engel Purchase Fund and the Acquisitions Committee
Pollock experimented with stick figures in the early 1940s, sometimes
drawing them on the same sheet with sketches inspired by Picasso's flattened,
emblematic figures of the late 1920s (fig. 19). He was hardly alone in this
interest; indeed more literal quotations from cave painting appear in work by other
New York painters of the period.67 The stick figures of cave art demonstrated that
the body could be evoked with a crude, incantatory sign instead of a naturalistic
representation, opening a possibility that a number of artists began to
explore. But cave art also demonstrated a distinctive pictorial space, different
from the deep space of academic painting or even the shallow space of Cubist-
influenced art.68 The spatial relationships in a typical hunting scene are purely
local (fig. 6). One area may show the relationship between a lion and the hunters
he chases, another might have a second lion pouncing on a falling man, but
there is no attempt to coordinate these two scenes within a unified, three-
dimensional space. The composition is an arrangement of independent signs on
a plane surface, a disjunctive, graphic space instead of a unified, scenic one.

Ozenfant and other painters had taken cave art as a model for a kind of
weightless space in which depth was indicated by height: figures were arranged
one above the other, instead of one in front of the other (fig. 5). Pollock does not
seem to have been attracted to this arrangement: his stick figures are usually
disposed in a single horizontal row, as in the friezelike composition of his 1943
Mural (plate 1), or in several drawings of 1946 (e.g., Untitled, c. 1946; fig. 20).69
We find in these drawings the exact prototype for figures in the later drip paint-
ings: the human body is evoked by a long, sticklike axis surmounted by open
curves representing head and arms. The axis forks at the bottom to indicate
legs,70 or an upward-pointing angle may suggest a raised knee.

It should be noted that the space in these drawings is not flat. The streaks
or patches of color that crisscross the image seem to recede into a shallow depth,
as does a fine spray of black dots. The black lines defining the figures lie clearly
in front of these elements; and in front of the black lines, and therefore seeming
to advance in front of the figures, a number of broad black splotches are scat-
tered here and there across the composition. The white paper is treated as an
indefinite graphic space capable of contraction or expansion. Within this space
there seem to be definable relationships between adjacent figures; but the figures
do not occupy an enclosed stage-space that would allow us to gauge the relative
depths of figures that are not adjacent.

A computer analysis of One, isolating the lines in a single layer of the paint-
ing, reveals figures similar to those in the drawing of c. 1946 (fig. 21). The canvas
seems to be covered with a series of vertical lines that are traversed by horizon-
tal curves at the level of head or shoulders, and that divide into legs at their
bases. There is also a kind of family resemblance between the drawing of c. 1946
and Number 32, 1950 (plate 3), in which the dancing black lines seem to form
three or four distinct configurations that may have figural undertones. The vertical line at the center, for instance, is topped by an oval, emphasized with horizontal strokes; and the base of this vertical is joined to an upward-pointing angle, recalling the raised knee of the central figure in the 1946 drawing. 71

The reappearance of these stick figures—or simply of a consistent vocabulary of linear marks—casts new light on Pollock’s assertion that he did not plan his compositions ahead of time, and specifically that he did not work from sketches. 72 This may be true, but it does not necessarily mean that he had no idea what he intended to do, or that his compositions emerged at random. Instead he seems to have developed a consistent repertory of figures and marks, which
he employed first at the small scale of his 1946 drawings, then at the traditional scale of his 1947–48 paintings, and finally, in 1950, at the mural scale of *Number 32, 1950, Autumn Rhythm* (plate 5), and *One* (plate 4). Pollock did not need to preplan the compositions of these enormous works because he knew their elements by heart. Like a practiced tennis player moving automatically into the posture for a serve, a forehand, or a backhand shot, he had only to decide on his general intentions and his hand and arm would do the rest. Or it might be more accurate to compare him to a jazz musician, constructing a “new” solo from a repertory of familiar riffs. As these activities demonstrate, there is no sharp line here between conscious and unconscious action, between the planned and the automatic. Most of our lives, indeed, are lived half-consciously and half-automatically; and part of the power of Pollock’s painting is that it exemplifies this familiar but elusive quality of everyday experience.

What is important is not the presence or absence of figuration in the paintings of these years. If any stick figures played a preliminary role in the composition of *Number 32*, they have dissolved completely into the weave of the endlessly interlacing lines that surround them, and this process of “veiling” has completely restructured the pictorial space. The interlacing web of *Number 32* may recall Picasso’s *Painter and Model* of 1926, but it does not evoke the three-dimensional, stagelike space of Picasso’s picture. Instead, space is suggested by variations in density, as it is in Pollock’s drawing of c. 1946.

These variations can best be understood in light of the more precise understanding of Pollock’s working process that has emerged from the study of Namuth’s photographs and films. If the making of *Number 32* followed the pattern visible in Namuth’s documentation of *Number 27, 1950* and *Autumn Rhythm*, Pollock began work on it by defining several independent configurations drawn with a line of uniform medium width. He then unified the different elements of the picture by the addition of interlacing lines extending from one configuration to the next. Some of these lines would have been thinner than the original lines; others would have been the same width. Meanwhile, Pollock also selectively overscored and thickened various elements of the composition, defining a new pictorial rhythm of heavier accents unrelated to the original figuration.

One model for this deliberate interruption of a linear outline would have been Miró’s Constellation drawings (exhibited in New York in 1945), in which narrow contours outlining surreal heads and mythical beasts are interrupted by black circles and triangular marks recalling ax heads (fig. 8). As we have seen, Miró had first experimented with this type of composition after seeing reproductions of the Picasso drawings of 1924 based on “astronomical charts” (fig. 7). The dot-and-line style was thus consistently linked with the idea of stars in the night sky, an example Pollock may have had in mind when he chose (or at least acceded to) the titles of 1947 paintings like *Galaxy* and *Reflection of the Big Dipper.*
But where the lines of an astronomical chart make it easier to see the mythical creatures projected onto the night sky, the "stars" or accents of both Miro's and Pollock's pictures make it harder to see any linear figures. Instead of following the original outlines, the viewer's eye jumps from one accent to another. (In effect, it mimics the saccadic movements of ordinary vision.)

The imposition of heavier (and lighter) marks also transforms the spatial organization of the image. The original, mid-weight lines in Number 32, 1950 had defined a series of configurations arranged in graphic space. That is, there were lateral relationships among adjacent configurations, but no spatial relationships, since they all remained on a single visual plane. The additional marks create a definite sense of movement in space—the broader, denser accents seem to come forward while the narrower, interlacing lines recede—but because these marks are interspersed more or less evenly across the canvas, they still do not create spatial relationships among larger entities. No one configuration seems to lie in front of another. Rather, different elements within each configuration move forward and backward, implying that the configuration is neither a plane nor a solid but an array of points in three-dimensional space.

To put it another way, the distribution of differently weighted lines and accents suggests that the painting consists of a series of superimposed layers, each one covering the entire area of the canvas. Opaque in some areas, transparent in others, these layers create the impression of a kind of pocketed space, containing many volumes instead of a single large one. This, I think, is the specific quality that distinguishes the aloverness of Pollock's work from the different kinds of aloverness found in Monet, say, or Mondrian. The laminar arrangement of superimposed layers is radically different from the flat, decorative panels of the Indian Space painters, and also from the unified stage space that persists, behind the scrim of the interlace, in Picasso's Painter and Model, and in the countless works deriving from it.

Pollock's laminar space, in tandem with his use of the drip technique, created the impression that his paintings were random and uncomposed. In 1950, Time quoted the Italian critic Bruno Alfieri's remark that Pollock's paintings were distinguished by "chaos" and by a "complete lack of structural organization," but it was not aloverness per se that was shocking; no one was shocked by Mark Tobey. It was, rather, Pollock's refusal to locate his calligraphic forms either on a single plane (as Tobey did) or in a coherent unified space (as Hayter did). Since Cubism, viewers had become accustomed to the breakup of the object. But Pollock proposed an unprecedented fragmentation of space.

This innovation marked a decisive advance beyond Picasso and the School of Paris. In another passage (not quoted by Time), Alfieri called Pollock "the modern painter who sits at the extreme apex of the most advanced and unprejudiced avant-garde. . . . Compared to Pollock, Picasso . . . becomes a quiet conformist,
a painter of the past. Recalling how Pollock had once thrown down a book of Picasso's work because, "God damn it, that guy missed nothing," one can imagine how deeply gratifying Alfieri's remark must have been to him.

Artists are the most important critics, and it is worth taking a moment to see what later artists made of Pollock's discovery. A few aped his style; others, in the 1960s, found ways to translate the process of "action painting" into three dimensions, imitating his process without making work that looked imitative. But perhaps the most important response occurred in the work of Robert Rauschenberg, a leader in the generation that followed Pollock. Combining Pollock's drip with the grid of Analytic Cubism, Rauschenberg retroactively created the connection proposed in Greenberg's writings of the same years.

The abstract painters of the 1930s had conventionalized Cubism by setting its floating planes in a traditional stage space. Rauschenberg liberated Cubism from this convention, rendering it usable again as a source for new art. But he could not have done so without Pollock, who demonstrated the pictorial impact of a shallow, densely layered space. Pollock's example is crucial to works like Rebus (1955; fig. 22), where dripped and smeared paint serves as a kind of visual glue to bind together a varied assemblage. As in Pollock, the space is honeycombed with unsuspected apertures, expanding and contracting at every point, containing not just different images but also different types of images: photographs, reproductions, text, bric-a-brac, and even other artworks. Rebus contains a drawing by Cy Twombly. Combine paintings like Monogram (1959) returned the canvas to the floor, where Pollock had placed it, and later, in his Hoarfrost series of 1974-75, Rauschenberg literalized the idea of laminar space by making pictures from overlapping layers of fabric. With a thousand variations, these devices have become the lingua franca of contemporary art.
Notes


2. Jonathan Weinberg’s “Pollock and Picasso: The Rivalry and the ‘Escape’,” Arts no. 35 no. 10 (Summer 1987): 42-44, also in Mark Godfrey, Exploring Pollock’s relationship to Picasso, but proposes a different resolution than is offered here.


4. Clement Greenberg, “American-type Painting,” in Art and Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 218. It should be noted that this influential passage was inserted in “American-type Painting” (first published in 1955) only when it was republished, in 1961.

5. The closest Pollock gets to Analytic Cubism, it seems to me, is the small oval Untitled (Interior with Figures) of c. 1936-41 no. 76 in Francis Valentine O'Connor and Eugene Victor Thaw, Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Drawings, and Other Works (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978; hereafter referred to as ctt). This work recalls Picasso works of 1911-12 (like Violin and Grapes [Diaz 482, The Museum of Modern Art] or The Architect's Table [Diaz 456, The Museum of Modern Art]), but without the passage of open-ended planes that contributes to the "allower" quality of the Analytic style. See the thoughtful discussion of this issue in Landau, Jackson Pollock, p. 71.


10. See Angelica Zander Rudenstine, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1985), no. 52, plate 247. A photograph of The Kits installed at Art of This Century is the frontispiece in Sotheby M. Conney, Art of This Century, Fin de Siècle to Pop (Hampton, N.Y.: Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, 1977). It should be noted that Max Ernst’s experiments with dripping paint from a can hanging on a string, sometimes cited as a precedent for Pollock’s dripping, resembled the kind of interface composition that Ernst was already creating freehand.


13. Picasso’s Crucifixion drawings were reprinted in 1928 and 1929, culminating in a small painting of 1930, exhibited in New York in 1939 (and reproduced in Barr, Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art, p. 167). As Barr notes, Picasso returned to the subject in 1932, starting a new series of drawings inspired by Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece. The link between the 1927 drawings and Painter and Model (1926) is underscored in Zervos VII, 29 and 30.

14. Barr, Picasso: Forty Years of His Art, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1939), p. 150. Indeed, Barr here reproduced the picture with the head at the bottom; when he revised the book seven years later, he showed the picture with the head at the right (Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art, p. 184).


18.intendant New Yorkers could have seen these works reproduced in *Cahiers d'Art* 5 (1930): no. 1, p. 23, and no. 10, p. 540. Amédée Ozent-
tant himself lived in New York from 1919 through 1955, but his new- work was quite different from his father's 1928-30, See Françoise Ducros, *Amédée Ozentant*, exh. cat. (Saint-Ours: Musée Antoine Lécuyer, 1985), pp. 70-72.

17. Sidney Janis, *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*, exh. cat. (New York: Reinhard & Hitchcock, 1944), no. 89. Other works from this series were exhibited in October 1942 at Buchholz, where Léger showed regularly. See also the drawing reproduced on an invitation to the opening of the exhibition *Picasso-Léger: The Collection of Mrs. Merci Gallery* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, January 9, 1945).


20. As previously noted, Pollock owned a copy of Baldwin Brown's book *The Art of the Cave Dweller*. In addition, *Cahiers d'Art* had published consistently on the subject; in 1930 alone (vol. 5): the journal ran Hans Mildestein's "Des Ongres de l'art et de la nature" (pp. 57-64); Henri Béjoul's "L'Art oriental de l'Espagne" (pp. 136-38) and "L'Artique préhistro-
tique" (pp. 449-52); and Leo Frobenius's "L'Art africain" (pp. 385-407). The exhibition Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and America, at the Museum of Modern Art in 1937, was based on Frobenius's research.


23. Amédée Ozentant is reproduced in, for example, Landau, *Jackson Pollock*, p. 61.


26. The genesis of this style seems to lie in Picasso’s set designs for the hit-
let Marceau, of 1924. Picasso refers to the role of "ostomatological charts" in "A Letter on Art," *Creative Art* 6 no. 8 (June 1930): 383. The authenticity of this text (originally published in 1926 in the Russian review Ogotolov) has been questioned—see the note in the bibliography at Barr’s *Picasso: Sixty Years of His Art*, item 2, p. 200 (item 3a, p. 266, in the 1946 edition, *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*). The piece is still being planned with Pikasso’s other work of the period.


28. *Art News* 43 (January 15, 1945): 27. Miró had been regularly in New York in the 1930s (at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, the same gallery that showed the Constellations in 1945). Like Klee, he was also the subject of a 1941 retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art.


30. Despite Hans Hofmann’s vast influence, his teachings have remained somewhat obscure, because he never published his most important, theoretical treatise, *Cristata in Form and Color*. Fortunately, Cynthia Jennifer Goodman’s dissertation, "The Hans Hofmann School and Hofmann’s Transmission of European Modernist Aesthetics to America," 1982) provides a detailed summary of his ideas; on the topic of slapping planes, see pp. 72-79, plate 27. This element of Huffman’s instruction is not well documented in the standard collection of his wri-

31. According to the entry for 1942. Male and Female in *Search of a Symbol* (also known as *Search for a Symbol*) was added to the exhibition after the catalogue was printed. O’Gorman and Thaw suggest that the painting was done in 1942 or early 1943, before Stenographic Figure (c. 1942) and Guardians of the Secret (1943). But Krasner later recalled that Pollock was a curious individual who had called himself "undisciplined" in the catalogue for the exhibition, painted *Search for a Symbol* after the show opened, "just to show how disciplined he was. . . . He brought the wet painting to the gallery where he was meeting Jim Sweeney and said, ‘I want you to see a really disciplined picture.”’ Krasner, quoted in Francine du Plessix and Cleve Gray, *Who Was Jackson Pollock?* (Art in America 55 no. 3 (May-June 1967): 51. This account would seem to be supported by a contemporary-reviewer’s reference to an untitled punk picture: “he brought in, still wet with new birth.”’ See Maurice Riley, "Exploding First Show," *The Art Digest* 18 no. 4 (November 15, 1943): 18. The little *Stenographic Figure* may have been suggested by a passage in Wilhelm Worringer’s *Form in Gothic* (1912, Eng. trans. 1927, rev ed. New York: Schocken, 1957), p. 18, that speaks of primitive man trying to extract fixed images from the flux of perception, and thus arriving at artistic types that are "stenographic" and "abstract" (p. 18).

32. This kind of inscription-as-juan was not uncommon in Surrealist work of the early 1940s. See, for instance, the frontispiece to Masson’s book *Anatomy of My Universe*, published in New York in 1943.

33. Compare the triangular forms at the upper left and lower right of Unitié (Composition with Pouring II) to the triangular hoods in the untitled 1946 drawing from the Thysen- Bornemisza Collection (plate 92, p. 201, in Kirk Varnedoe and Pepe Karmel, *Jackson Pollock*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998)), A long blue radiator or

34. See p. 16.
spermatogenous shape at the upper right of Untitled (Composition with Pouting Girl) also resembles the yellow spermatozoa at the upper left of Guardian of the Secret (see detail in ibid., p. 176).

26. Dated c. 1952 in 1956, this work was redated to 1946 in O'Connor, Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Drawings, and Other Works, Supplement Number 1 (New York: The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Inc., 1995), p. 80. The new dating is based on comparison to Untitled (Yellow Collage) (no. 25 in the Supplement), which is inscribed "Jackson Pollock 1946" and was first purchased in the summer of 1947. Untitled (Yellow Collage) also exemplifies the figure-ground relationship found in Untitled (Black Painting over Color) and Untitled (Composition with Pouting Girl).

27. Moller seems to have specialized in adapting European styles for an American audience. His interface-styled drawing of a Roman charioteer, done for a 1944 advertisement, seems to have been modeled on a drawing by Ileto that had recently been reproduced in Cahiers d'Art 15 (1940-44): 3. Moller had previously absorbed another version of the interface style, from Klee; indeed, his paintings had been criticized as virtual copies of Klee's. See Hans Moller, "Art News 42 no. 13 (November 15, 1943): 23. The following year, Moller's charioteer advertisement was discussed favorably in the same journal; see Rosamund Frost, "Advertizing Art Improved," Art News 43 no. 11 (September 1944): 10.

28. In The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin 12 no. 1 (August 1944), devoted to "Hayter and Studio 17," Hayter notes that in engraving, the direction of the line is "controlled" by rotating the plate rather than by movement of the hand (p. 8). In his book New Ways of Graining (New York: Fantlith, 1949), p. 56, he writes more specifically that "curves are produced by rotating the plate, the bird hand moving very slightly." I am grateful to Berenice Rose for mentioning Hayter's influence in this respect at the Pollock symposium, June 23, 1959. Another colleague, Elizabeth Levine, points out that Pollock was exposed to this kind of multidirectionality even earlier, in his high school art classes with Frederick John de St. Vian in Schwanen-}

sky, where students poured colors onto a sheet of glass that was then rotated on a wheel to make "cracked-looking" patterns (Naideh and Smith, Jackson Pollock: Art American Saga, p. 121).

29. Reviewing American and French Paintings, the exhibition that Graham organized at McMillen in 1942, James Lane wrote that "Pollock [is] the most exciting artist in the general whirling figures," Art News 40 (January 15, 1942): 25. Pollock's work in this show, Birth, may have been painted as a horizontal before he decided to exhibit it as a vertical.

30. William Stanley Hayter, "Art News 48 (January 15, 1945): 40. In the mid-1940s, the most immediately accessible example of a Picasso interface pattern would have been the trivial pair of decorations published in Others' Art 16-19 (1944-45): 80-82.


33. The closest antecedent for Tetsumy Lesson 3 is Picasso's Embrace of 1925, but it seems unlikely that Pollock ever saw this work, even in reproduction.


35. "Jackson Pollock," Art News 48 no. 5 (May 1949): 83. The move toward larger shapes placed against flat, monochrome backgrounds does not seem to have been limited to Pollock: It is also evident in works like Felix Ralston's untitled photograph of the Etruscan (c. 1946), reproduced in Kenmer, Best of Art, plate 51.

36. We don't know whether the illustrations in Possibilities were selected by Pollock or by Robert Motherwell, the journal's editor. In either case, it may have been on Greenberg's advice that the new work was omitted, since Greenberg seems to have had reservations about it. When Galerie, one of Pollock's first "servlet" drop paintings, was shown in the Whitney Annual of December 1947, Greenberg condemned it as "rather unsatisfactory painting. . . a fragment" ("Art," The Nation, January 10, 1948, p. 52; reprinted in Aragonageo: 1945-1949, p. 199). In January 1948, Betty Parsons exhibited a critical mass of the new drip pictures. Greenberg praised two paintings (Cathedral and Enchanted Forest), opined that the quality of the other two (Sea Change and Fall Full Swath Five) was still "too bold," and warned that Pollock's use of aluminum paint brought him "starkly into the hands of the purists." ("Art," The Nation, January 24, 1948, p. 108, reprinted in Aragonageo: 1945-1949, p. 202). He also scanned that the new pictures would be compared to "wallpaper patterns" as indeed Harold Rosenberg would in "The American Action Painters." Art News 51 no. 8 [December 1952]: 49, with its notorious reference to "apocryphal wallpaper." Conversely, Robert Coates, in The New Yorker (January 17, 1948, p. 57), admired the "poetic suggestion" of Sea Change, Fall Full Swath Five, and Enchanted Forest, but condemned Cathedral and several other pictures as "mere unorganized explosions of random energy." 


38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., and [Dorothy Seiberling], "Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?" Life 27 no. 6 (August 8, 1949): 45.


no danger then, anyway, because the idea of the object will have left an indefinable mark.”

What Picasso meant could be garnered by poring over old images of Cahiers d’Art, as Pollock and his friends did: the transformations of *Interior with Girl Drawing* were documented in a suite of drawings and photographs in *Cahiers d’Art* 10 (1935): 247-59, and two years later the evolution of *Germina* was traced in the article “Histoire d’un tableau de Picasso,” *Cahiers d’Art* 12 (1937): 105-6. It seems likely that Pollock studied these documents closely. In December 1938 I asked Harold Lehman, a close friend of Pollock’s in the 1930s and early ’40s, whether they had looked at *Cahiers d’Art.*

“Was it our Bible?” he replied. Even without photographic documentation, however, it would be clear that many of Picasso’s paintings of the 1920s and ’30s had been heavily reworked. Ridges in their impasto often reveal the presence of buried forms, and earlier colors show through gaps in the paint surface. Picasso did not advance toward a predetermined image; rather, each stage of his picture served as a jumping-off point for the next.

58. Sweeney described how Miró had “callused his genius” man, "...by spilling a little color on the paper... then as his brush moved over the surface, the image would gradually take shape without any conscious direction." In Joan Miro, *Cahiers d’Art* 9 nos. 1-4 (1934): 14. Greenberg paraphrased this description in his book *Joan Miro* (New York: Quadrangle, 1948), writing that the artist would "begin pictures by letting his brush wander, haphazardly over the canvas, only afterwards applying himself consciously to their formal organization and to the working-up of chance resemblances he had come across." p. 26. As Siska Stich and Christopher Green have argued, Miró was influenced by theorists such as Lucien Levy-Dhurville’s and Georges Luquet, who equated art with the art of children. Luquet in particular had attracted the attention of the Surrealists by arguing that the procedure of discovering a resemblance in a form created by chance lay at the origins of *natural* art. See Stich, Joan Miró: The Development of a Sign Language, *University of Washington* University Gallery of Art, 1980, especially pp. 12-13 and 27, and Green, "The Infant in the Adult: Joan Miró and the Infantile Image," in *Joma-


Despite the widespread belief that the importance of subject matter in Pollock’s work, it seems worth noting that Moller’s chessplayer finds a counterpart in Pollock’s *Tea Cup* (1946), which also depicts two figures at either side of a game board.

57. [Sobertier], “Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?” p. 45.


59. Motherwell quoted in Sidney Simon, “Concerning the Beginnings of the New York School: 1939-1943,” *Art International* 11 no. 6 (Summer 1967): 23. It is interesting to note that Pollock was especially influenced by Picasso works from the 1930s in the collection of Mary (Merr) Getty in particular *Girl with a Cock* (1938), which seems to be a source for Pollock’s *Like the Moon, Woman Can Tinkle the Circle* (c. 1943).

56. One drawing of c. 1945 (plate 102, p. 208, in *Varneside with Kar- mel, Jackson Pollock*), for example, seems to have begun as a horizontal image of a ramshackle creature, its narrow eyes flanked by hornlike spirals enclosing long-lashed eyes. At left, a narrow paw and leg supported the creature’s lump. But this image was obscured first by interfacing curves and then by long straight lines that literally creased it out. Contained forms were divided while separate forms were joined together. Somewhere in the process, Pollock rotated the composition 90 degrees counterclockwise. The cumulative effect was to retain the rhythmic energy of the original mythical creature but to make it virtually unrecognizable.


61. Actually the correlation between the changing widths of Pollock’s dripped lines and the speed of his execution can be misleading: see Karmel, *Pollock at Work: The Films and Photographs of Hans Namuth.* In *Varneside with Kar- mel, Jackson Pollock,* pp. 128-30.

62. According to a conversation in the summer of 1951, where discernible figures are often upside-down or sideways in relation to the bottom edge (as indicated by the signature). But Pollock seems occasionally to have rotated earlier works as well. See *Jackson Pollock at Work,* pp. 128-31.

63. See ibid., pp. 105-32.


66. Compare, for instance, Peter Miller’s *Inception* (exh. cat. Minneapolis University of Minnesota, 1979). I am indebted to O’Connor for bringing Stich’s work to my attention.

67. If Pollock was not attracted to the cave-painting model of a weightless space, his willingness to consider different orientations for his works recalls the indefinite space of Picasso’s and Léger’s divers (also open to different orientations, as discussed above). Kramer said, “Sometimes he’d ask, ‘Should I cut it here? Should this be the bottom? . . . Working around the canvas—in the arena’ as he called it—there really was no absolute top or bottom.” Quoted in Friedman, “An Interview with Lee Krasner Pollock,” n.p. Kramer was discussing the black paintings of 1951, where discernible figures are often upside-down or sideways in relation to the bottom edge (as indicated by the signature). But Pollock seems occasionally to have rotated earlier works as well. See *Jackson Pollock at Work,* pp. 128-31. Willem de Kooning too seems to have responded to this idea of multiple orientations. In his later decades.
and perhaps also earlier, he routinely rotated his pictures as he worked on them, deciding on their permanent orientation only at the very end of this process. See Robert Storr, "Al Last Light," in Gary Garrels and Storr, William de Kooning: The Late Paintings, The 1980s, exh. cat. (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1995), p. 50.

70. The depiction of a long-linear torso atop short,forking legs may have been suggested by Navajo drawings that Pollock would have known from several sources, including The Museum of Modern Art's 1941 exhibition Indian Art of the United States (see for example fig. 45, p. 134, in the catalogue for that exhibition). For an overview of this topic, see W. Jackson Rushing, "Ritual and Myth in Native American Expressionism," In The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1886-1985, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), pp. 273-85. Pollock may also have seen Maud Oak's paintings after Navajo designs, shown at the Willard Gallery in May 1943 and reviewed in Art News 43 no. 7 (May 15, 1944). 21. Oak's paintings were also reproduced in Jeff King, Oak's and Joseph Campbell, Where the Two Came to Their Father: A Navaho War Ceremonial (New York: Pantheon, 1943). Oak's work as an anthropologist could have been a common interest for Pollock and for Namuth, who provided the photographs for Oak's second book, The Crosses of Today: Survivals of Mayan Religious Ritual (New York: Pantheon, 1951).

71. Digital analysis of the three mural-scale paintings of 1950, Autumn Rhythm, reveals a different kind of underdrawing (see Karmel, "Pollock at Work," pp. 118-24), closer to the loose interface of Braque's and Matisse's "classical" illustrations and to the Picasso: Crucifixion drawings of 1927.

72. In 1950, Pollock said, "I approach painting in the same sense as one approaches drawing; that is, it's direct. I don't work from drawings. I don't make sketching and drawings and color sketches into a final painting. Painting, I think, today— the more immediate, the more direct—the greater the possibilities of making a direct—of making a statement." Quoted in Wright, "An Interview with Jackson Pollock" (transcribed by Namath, Pollock Painting, n.p. In a manuscript note dated to 1950, Pollock writes, "No sketches / I acceptance of / what I do—" (reproduced in or 4-253). Rosenberg reiterated this idea in "The American Action Painters," where an anonymous "leader of this mode" is quoted dismissing another artist as "not modern;... He works from sketches. That makes him Renaissance." (p. 22).

73. "When we are learning to walk, to ride, to swim, skate, fence, write, play, or sing, we interrupt ourselves at every step by unnecessary movements and false notes. When we are proficient, out the contrary, the results... follow from a single instantaneous line. The marksman sees the bird, and, before he knows it, he" has aimed and shot... A glance at the musical hieroglyphics, and the pianist's fingers have rippled through a cataract of notes." William James, "Habit," in The Principles of Psychology, 1890 (rev. ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 119.

74. Karmel, "Pollock at Work," pp. 107-11 and 118-24. Close study of Number 32 reveals the strategy necessary to achieve the effect of spontaneity. In several places, for instance, the black paint seems to spatter into a series of narrow lines elongating forcefully from one side of a large dark area. In smaller pictures, Pollock could produce this dramatic effect simply by throwing paint sideways onto the canvas. At the scale of Number 32, however, this technique was not feasible, and Pollock instead dripped a series of thin parallel lines to one side of a denser sploch laid down without spatters. Instead of being dripped from a stick or brush, these fine lines were poured from a small paint can with a punctured lid. (Pollock can be seen using this technique in Namuth's film of him painting on glass.)


77. It might even be argued that Mondrian's work perpetuates a version of this stage spare. His pictures, as Greenberg wrote in "The Cross of the Easel Picture" (Armaggedon, p. 223), are "the flattest of all easel painting," but the canvas "still presents itself as the scene of forms rather than as one single, indivisible piece of texture."


80. See Rosalind E. Krauss's essay in the present volume.

81. As discussed above, Greenberg first compared Pollock's drip style to Analytic Cubism in "American-Type Painting," published in 1935—the year Robert Rauschenberg painted Rebus. The comparison is made more specific in the rewritten version of the essay that Greenberg published in Art and Culture in 1961, by which time Greenberg would unquestionably have been aware of Rauschenberg's work.


83. In his seminal lecture "Other Criteria," Steinberg argued that the defining characteristic of much advanced art of the 1940s was what he called "the flattened picture plane"—one in which the top of the picture no longer mirrored the erect position of the human head, nor the lower edge our feet. It was Rauschenberg, Steinberg argued, who first "dreamed that "correspondence with human posture," his "flattened" pictures corresponding instead to "tabletops, studio floors, chairs, bulletin boards—any receptive surface on which information may be received, printed, impressed." "Other Criteria," 1968, reprinted in Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 82-84. Steinberg specifically excludes Pollock from this category, but if Pollock's figurative markings qualify as "information" impressed on the "receptor surface" of the canvas, perhaps he should be included. The concept of the flattened picture plane, with its refusal of anthropomorphically-erect-ness, seems to me to anticipate Krauss's idea of "horizontality as medium," discussed elsewhere in this volume; although Krauss purifies his version of horizontality by excluding figuration.
Jackson Pollock

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