

**Michael Fried, *Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2002, 313 pp., 100 black-and-white and 70 colour illus., \$55.00 U.S.**

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worthy is the volume's detailed bibliography, which provides the reader with a vital research tool.

Langford bases her research on an examination of amateur photographic albums in the collection of the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal. She makes the argument that photo albums as repositories of memory are significant because of their performative nature. They exist as a means of communication that carries a narrative to their viewer. The act of looking through a photo album is often a shared activity where the album owner or creator explains or "reads" the images to the viewer as the pages are turned. It is important to keep in mind that the impact of an image may not only be a found meaning discovered by the viewer but, also, a coded sign constructed by the image's producer or the editor of the family album. The making of the family photograph album is a form of social practice; however, the maker of the family album should not be seen as a social historian searching for a kind of "truth", but rather as a constructor of personal truth. This act of "showing and telling" the album links to the oral tradition of storytelling. Langford states that her approach to examining these albums combines ideas taken from Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982) with "interactional techniques employed by sociologists, ethnologists, folklorists and photo theorists who bring photographic albums into their work" (p. 21). It is this linking of "orality and visuality" that sets Langford's study apart from those of other writers who have examined the significance of the photo album.

The book's chapters are a thorough investigation of the nature of the photo album and include: *The Idea of the Album,*

*The Album as Collection, Memoirs and Travelogues, The Idea of Family, Orality and the Family* and "Photographs" 1916–1945. While the book contains numerous insightful readings of images, it is the final chapter I find to be particularly intriguing. It examines closely a number of photographs from a private album with photographs of two sisters. Langford details a way of studying these images that she refers to as "reading the album". She guides the reader through the sisters' album through an oral photographic framework that includes "patterns of inclusion, patterns of organization and patterns of presentation" (p. 159). It is in such unassuming images, the family photographs arranged carefully and presented in the narrative photographic album, that we can find clues to the identity of their makers and the society in which they functioned.

Langford's study of Canadian photographic albums is a thoughtful addition to the reading of photographic history. For readers with a passion for the photographic image, this book will not disappoint. For those readers with an academic interest in photography and whose bookcases lack in Canadian content, it is a must.

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#### Notes

- 1 See, for example, Marianne Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover and London, 1999); and Patricia Holland and Jo Spence, eds, *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London, 1991).

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In 1909, art historian Richard Muther wrote that Adolph Menzel would be remembered as "the first German to have discovered the poetry of the everyday".<sup>1</sup> Just as Courbet displaced history painting with painting of contemporary life, Menzel "stepped forward into the present. Instead of focusing on the past, in which he had whiled away perforce, he now focused his camera, which he carried in his head, directly onto life."<sup>2</sup> Writing a century later, Michael Fried similarly compares Menzel to Courbet and retains the notion of the everyday as crucial to Menzel's artistic endeavour. But unlike Muther, Fried distances Menzel from any sort of photographic or optical realism, preferring to describe Menzel's modernism in terms of embodied vision.

*Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin* is a continuation of Fried's examination, begun in the 1960s, of issues related to absorption and theatricality. There is consistency and conviction in Fried's writings, whether he is discussing the sculpture of Anthony Caro or the painting of Chardin. Fried situates his latest book synchronically, as part of his realist trilogy, with *Realism, Writing, and Disfiguration: Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* (1987) and *Courbet's Realism* (1990), as compared to his diachronic series on French painting, consisting of *Absorption and Theatricality* (1980), *Courbet's Realism* again, and *Manet's Modernism* (1996). In *Menzel's Realism*, Fried expands not only his earlier conception of realism in terms of his categories (embodiment, absorption, anti-theatricality), but also his views on modernity in the years 1840 to 1880.

One of the problems facing the historian working on Menzel is the diversity of his *oeuvre*, which includes but is not limited to history paintings, landscapes, genre scenes and book illustra-

tions. As proficient with his left hand as with his right, Menzel was constantly drawing, or so it seems. He sketched almost everything he saw, from his sister sleeping to suits of armour to animals in the Berlin zoo. His attention to detail led the French critic Edmond Duranty to quip famously: “he is neurotic about the truth” (“il a la névrose du vrai”).<sup>3</sup> His *oeuvre* has been divided between the works of the “young Menzel”, as Julius Meier-Graefe called him, who painted interiors and landscapes in a proto-impressionist style (the so-called “private” pictures), and those of Menzel the great German artist, who illustrated and painted scenes from the life of Frederick the Great of Prussia (the “public” pictures). This division is played out in his critical reception. As Françoise Forster-Hahn remarks: “just as advocates of the avant-garde discovered in Menzel a precursor of modernity, Emperor William II stages a spectacular state funeral for him, because Menzel was for him ‘the most distinguished of German artists’.”<sup>4</sup> Fried acknowledges the diversity and suggestiveness of Menzel’s art and structures his book accordingly – he calls his chapters “sections” in order to veer away from any notion of linearity. At the same time he wants to make sense of Menzel’s *oeuvre* by establishing “the terms of an approach to Menzel that will not be captive to a ‘French’ model of pictorial accomplishment” (p. 12). Thus in his virtuosic third section (“An Art of Embodiment: I”), Fried discusses within his rubric of embodiment six pencil landscape drawings, two oil landscapes (one on paper, one on canvas), an oil interior, a watercolour sketch, a gouache historical genre scene, and an oil history painting.

The thesis of *Menzel’s Realism* is quite simple: “the heart of Menzel’s practice as both painter and draftsman consists in its relation to his own, and implicitly to the viewer’s, *embodiment*” (p. 19). A more complicated issue is Fried’s notion of embodiment itself. He describes it, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, as the “lived perspective” of the image as a whole (p. 19). This “lived perspective” cannot be delineated succinctly, but must be understood more loosely as a form of engagement with or projection into the physical world. Fried thus discusses embodied vision in a variety of ways, some of which can be listed as follows. In many Menzel drawings and paintings (e.g., *The Schafgraben Flooded*), there are zones in the foreground and background of equal visual clarity, which make the viewer aware of the physical movements of his or her eye. Menzel frequently depicts bodily or multisensory experience, such as the movement of the wind (*Garden of Prince Albert’s Palace*) or manual activity (*Moltke’s Binoculars*). Menzel emphasizes his and thus the viewer’s situatedness: paths extend from the artist/viewer’s body (*Path Lined with Bare Hedges*); depictions of the artist’s foot or hand seem to be an extension of the body. Figures in his works stare at other figures (*Coming out of Church*); they are aware of the other’s situatedness. Menzel depicts inanimate

objects (unmade bed, drapery, armour, masks) as if they are alive. He seems fascinated with those prosthetic devices, such as binoculars, glasses and hearing horns, which aid the senses. In his paintings, and even more so in his gouaches, the viewer is made aware of traces of paint, which suggest that painting is a bodily activity. Menzel frequently depicts night scenes, which strain the viewer’s eyes and thus make him or her aware of vision as a sensual experience.

As this partial list suggests, Fried fleshes out the notion of embodiment in terms of formal properties, subject matter, points of view, application of paint, and so on. One can perhaps describe Fried’s approach as a form of “critical communication”, to use Arnold Isenberg’s term. “The critic’s *meaning*,” Isenberg explains, “is ‘filled in,’ ‘rounded out,’ or ‘completed’ by the act of perception.” The function of criticism is thus “to bring about communication at the level of the senses; that is, to induce a sameness of vision, of experienced content”.<sup>5</sup> Fried’s ostensive use of language, however, is not intended “to induce a sameness of vision” if that vision is purely optical. In the first section of *Menzel’s Realism*, Fried goes to great pains to distinguish the type of optical realism developed in John Ruskin’s writing from his own notion of embodied vision. Fried has described his method as “existential phenomenology” that concedes nothing to historicity.<sup>6</sup> I take Fried to mean that a work of art only exists through the experience of the viewer. And the role of the critic or historian is to recount in language his or her experience of the work of art.

Fried’s phenomenological approach is sophisticated, in the sense both of complexity and sophistry. By sophistry I mean not a subtly deceptive reasoning or argumentation, but rather, as Susan Jarratt argues, a form of argumentation that evinces a “special interest in human perceptions as the only source of knowledge in all fields, including nature, and emphasizes the significance of language in constructing that knowledge”.<sup>7</sup> There is a similar awareness in Fried’s work of the importance of human perception and its articulation in language, as there also is in the German tradition of aesthetics. In Baumgarten’s *Reflections on Poetry*, for example, the section immediately after the definition of aesthetics as the study of *things perceived* deals with rhetorics.<sup>8</sup>

Fried’s phenomenology is consistent with his rhetorical style. In fact, the one is dependent upon the other. He can be described as an “embodied” writer in the sense that the reader is always aware of his presence. He uses the personal pronoun “I”, writes in a rather colloquial tone, frequently refers to his own writing, and has long descriptive passages on Menzel’s works. Fried, following phenomenological principles, assumes that the object exists only through experience. It follows, as Stephen Melville points out, that the subject (the historian or critic) is bound to the object (the work of art): “we can no longer

separate subject (and so the 'subjective') and object (and so the 'objective') in the way that a more 'scientific' art history might prefer.<sup>9</sup> In other words, historians looking for arguments from intention, whether defined, following Panofsky, as "intuitive aesthetic re-creation" or, following Baxandall, as "a relation between the object and its circumstances", will be disappointed with Fried's book.<sup>10</sup> For *Menzel's Realism*, as critical communication, "is nothing but a second moment of [Fried's] aesthetic experience, a retrieval of experienced values".<sup>11</sup>

Fried's consistent phenomenological approach is also evinced in the way he develops his argument through textual sources, some contemporary to Menzel, some not. The work of empathy theorists such as Robert Vischer, Heinrich Wölfflin and August Schmarsow represent for Fried "a current in German-language writing about art that bears a close analogy with the very features of Menzel's paintings and drawings that I have been emphasizing in this book" (p. 35). Specifically, these writers attest to an awareness of the body and of "living space" that Fried finds in Menzel's work. Fried also compares the way Menzel's depicted objects exhibit the property of having been used, or having a history of their own, with the notion of the "everyday" that is developed in the essay on marriage by Judge William, a fictive author in Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. Fried furthermore situates the "everyday" within a larger philosophical tradition that includes Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin and Stanley Cavell. For Fried, these sources are more methodological than contextual. In other words, their importance lies not in developing either an argument from intention or a *Zeitgeist*, but in helping Fried work through his ideas about Menzel and embodiment. He can thus write: "Not that in the absence of a contemporaneous theory of empathy my account of Menzel's art would be in any way invalidated" (p. 39). Such a concurrence, however, does give "added historical weight to my claims even as it helps justify a descriptive vocabulary" (p. 39). Fried's sources thus do not speak to Menzel, but to Fried's notion of embodiment in Menzel's work. He avails himself of his sources in accordance with his assumption that the work only exists in and through experience.

Fried's use of sources points to a tension in his work between historical and ahistorical or universal categories. On the one hand, absorption seems an ahistorical category: it is present, according to Fried, in eighteenth-century genre painting, nineteenth-century realism, and twentieth-century abstraction. On the other hand, Fried always tries to historicize his material. He goes to great efforts to justify his reading of paintings through contemporary sources, even though he sometimes denies the dependence of his readings on these sources.

It should be pointed out that while Fried's discussion of Menzel's embodiment is without precedent, some of the obser-

vations he makes are present in the Menzel literature, as Fried states clearly in his text and notes. For example, Forster-Hahn has commented on the immediacy of Menzel's illustrations.<sup>12</sup> Peter-Klaus Schuster has observed that the strange perspectives in Menzel's work produce an "optical empathy" that makes the viewer see "Menzel's characters as immediately present." He depicts details, "as if they had been captured from close up in passing and projected into the picture".<sup>13</sup> In some ways, then, Fried's work concurs with recent writing on Menzel that focus on the artist's modernity. The difference, however, lies in how modernity is being defined.

Most recent Menzel scholars have embraced the artist's diversity and ambiguity, and in fact see these as the source of his modernity. (The division between Menzel's "private" and "public" works is now viewed mostly in historiographical terms.) Claude Keisch, for example, writes that "Menzel's art abounds in ambiguities and contradictions, discouraging clear definition."<sup>14</sup> Forster-Hahn writes that "the fragment and fragmentariness so central to modern and postmodern artistic production and theory are at the core of Menzel's *oeuvre*: they shape the artist's experience of place and time, his vision, and ultimately also his complex working procedure."<sup>15</sup> Keisch similarly sees these ambiguities and the fragmentary quality of his paintings as "an important component of modernity".<sup>16</sup> Schuster argues that Menzel's work displays a subjective viewpoint that has a "fundamentally bipolar structure: isolation and multiplicity, precise rendering of detail and calculated synthesis giving rise to a diverse and living unity, are the opposing poles of Menzel's practice as an artist. It is this double position that makes Menzel's reaction to the realities of his time so topical."<sup>17</sup> In summary, there has lately been general agreement that the apparent contradictions in Menzel's work, the sense of fragmentation and the overabundance of detail, are signs of subjectivity and thus modernity. This interpretation of Menzel fits well with the experience of modernity in the mid-nineteenth century described by Marshall Berman as contradictory in nature, juxtaposing self-discovery and self-mockery or self-delight and self-doubt.<sup>18</sup>

Fried does not want to see Menzel, or the notion of modernity for that matter, in terms of fragmented artistic principles and social standards. He prefers to understand Menzel's modernity as whole or unified, in terms of the "relation of painted image to a body keyed to the modern world" (p. 252). As this quotation suggests, Fried views modernism through the lens of artistic production and reception; he comes to his conclusion through his phenomenological approach. The essentials of his argument emerge in the section of the book entitled "'The Disenchantment of the World': Walter Benjamin on Traces", where he takes issue with Benjamin, Adorno and T. J. Clark's views of modernity. This discussion continues Fried's debate, going back to at least 1982, with T. J. Clark.<sup>19</sup> To simplify

Clark's argument, he views modernist art as creating and reflecting the disenchanting, incoherent and contradictory nature of modern capitalist society. (The Menzel scholars quoted above would by and large see Menzel's work in this context.) Fried rejects the socio-political content of modernism, describing it as "both crude and demeaning".<sup>20</sup> He deems it necessary to view art on its own terms, which does not mean adhering to Clement Greenberg's pictorial and teleological formalism.<sup>21</sup> Melville points out that Fried rejects Greenberg's "valorization of 'opticality'" and prefers Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology with its "holistic understanding of perception as the activity of a fully embodied subject that could not be reduced to an abstract eye".<sup>22</sup> In other words, Fried's phenomenological approach offers a way out of Greenbergian formalism, while continuing to privilege the work of art over supposed causal factors (social ones, for example). It also allows Fried to view the period of 1840–80 in holistic terms, in the sense of a "reenchantment" with the physical world (p. 232). For Fried, the experience of Eakins, Courbet and Menzel's work does not lead to the conclusion that the world was perceived as fragmented or disjointed. On the contrary, their work suggests that artists were attempting to engage physically with the world, to project themselves into the world. In Fried's words, they attempted "a total saturation of the world by empathetic projection" (p. 246).

Given Fried's understanding of modernism, it becomes clear why he also takes issue with Jonathan Crary's argument about the autonomy of vision in the nineteenth century. For Crary, the relocation of vision in the subject in the 1830s and 1840s led to "two intertwined paths" later in the century: the affirmation of the autonomy of vision (vision as a distinct and separate sensory system) and the increased standardization and regulation of the observer.<sup>23</sup> Fried deems Crary's argument too reductive; he cites an array of theorists and artists (Helmholz, Menzel, and so on) to suggest the existence of a history of embodied vision left unexamined by Crary (pp. 61–62). More importantly, Crary's notion of autonomous vision does not accord with multi-sensory experience and the unified subject, which are at the heart of Fried's project of embodiment. As well, Crary restricts the subject's freedom to explore new possibilities, which is at the heart of Fried's understanding of modernism as "radical self-criticism." The latter is to be understood as an attempt "to discover not the irreducible essence of all painting [à la Greenberg] but rather those conventions which, at a particular moment in the history of art, are capable of establishing [the modernist painter's] work's nontrivial identity as painting. ..."<sup>24</sup>

For Fried, the period 1840–80 is *the* period of embodiment, and after 1880, the body is still "a crucial category, but embodiment no longer stakes out a distinct terrain" (p. 253). Menzel, according to Fried, fits this mould perfectly. After the mid-1880s, "empathy and projection ... find less and less pur-

chase in Menzel's art" (pp. 226–27). Even though Fried believes that Menzel's late works are compelling and show resourcefulness and originality, "the overarching project of his long career was effectively in ruins" (p. 229). The discussion of Menzel's late work demonstrates all of the characteristics of Fried's approach: sensitivity to the visual image, commitment to a critical structure, and powerful rhetoric. Fried has constructed a consistent, well-built edifice, not unlike a David Smith sculpture. In fact, the book, a unified project, which runs no risk of falling to ruin, has many of the qualities Fried attributes to modernist works. It is absorptive in the sense that the critic is fully engrossed by his critical tools. In its rigour and consistency, it shows the "politics of conviction" that Fried claims to be crucial to modernist art.<sup>25</sup> While Fried's own absorption and conviction produce a critical structure that is admirable in its consistency, they also produce a somewhat closed system in terms of its engagement with the reader. Fried's critical apparatus is so highly developed and personal to the author and his authorial voice that *Menzel's Realism* seems in the end more monologue than dialogue.

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#### Notes

- 1 Richard Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei* (Leipzig, 1909), III, 509.
- 2 Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, III, 506.
- 3 As quoted in Phillip Conisbee, "Menzel Seen from America," *Adolph Menzel, 1815–1905: Between Romanticism and Impressionism*, eds Claude Keisch and Marie-Ursula Riemann-Reyher, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington (New Haven, 1996), 17.
- 4 Françoise Forster-Hahn, "Adolph Menzel: readings between nationalism and modernity," in *Adolph Menzel, 1815–1905*, 103.
- 5 Arnold Isenberg, "Critical Communication" (1949), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, ed. Joseph Margolis (New York, 1962), 148.
- 6 Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago, 1990), 47–49.
- 7 Susan C. Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1991), xviii.
- 8 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954), 78–79 (sections 116–17).
- 9 Stephen Melville, "Phenomenology and the Limits of Hermeneutics," *The Subjects of Art History*, eds Mark Checham et al. (Cambridge, 1998), 152.
- 10 Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline," *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, New York, 1955), 14; Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven, 1985), 42.
- 11 Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 152.
- 12 Françoise Forster-Hahn, "Adolph Menzel's 'Daguerreotypical' Image of Frederick the Great: A Liberal Bourgeois Interpretation of German History," *Art Bulletin*, 59 (1977), 261.

- 13 Peter-Klaus Schuster, "Menzel's modernity," in *Adolph Menzel, 1815–1905*, 147–48.
- 14 Claude Keisch, "Menzel Junctures Disjunctures," in *Adolph Menzel, 1815–1905*, 77. The view of Menzel's work as fragmented goes back at least to Werner Hofmann, "Menzels verschlüsseltes Manifest" (1977), *Menzel der Beobachter*, ed. Werner Hofmann, exh. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle (Hamburg, 1982), 31–40; and more recently Hofmann, "Menzel's Universality," in *Adolph Menzel, 1815–1905*, 91–102.
- 15 Françoise Forster-Hahn, "Public Concerns – Private Longings: Adolph Menzel's *Studio Wall* (1872)," *Art History*, 25 (2002), 230–31.
- 16 Keisch, "Menzel Junctures Disjunctures," 80.
- 17 Schuster, "Menzel's modernity," 77.
- 18 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (New York, 1982), 23.
- 19 T. J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," *Critical Inquiry*, 9 (1982), 139–56; Michael Fried, "How Modernism Works: A Response to T. J. Clark," *Critical Inquiry*, 9 (1982), 217–34. For Clark's more recent views on modernity, see his *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, 1999).
- 20 Fried, "How Modernism Works," 226.
- 21 As Fried mentions in *Courbet's Realism* (p. 47), he is not a "formalist"; but is trying to efface the form/subject matter distinction. For the view of Fried as a formalist, see David Carrier, "Greenberg, Fried, and Philosophy: American-Type Formalism," *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, eds George Dickie and Richard J. Sclafani (New York, 1977), 461–69.
- 22 Melville, "Phenomenology," 148.
- 23 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 150.
- 24 Fried, "How Modernism Works," 227.
- 25 Fried, "How Modernism Works," 227.

*L'esthétique naît-elle au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle?*, coordonné par Serge Trottein, textes de Laurent Jaffro, Agnès Minazzoli, Yves Radrizzani, Baldine Saint Girons, Serge Trottein. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (collection Débats philosophiques), 2000, 160 p.

Nommée par Baumgarten et fondée par Kant, l'esthétique serait née au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ce constat amène cinq auteurs à examiner la contribution des Lumières en matière d'esthétique, à partir des écrits de Baumgarten, Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Diderot, Burke, Kant et Fichte. L'ouvrage rassemble des textes diffusés pour la première fois sous forme d'une série de communications, le 10 mars 1999, lors d'une journée d'étude sur l'esthétique, organisée par Serge Trottein à Villejuif au Centre d'histoire de la philosophie moderne du CNRS, sous l'intitulé *Naissance de l'esthétique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Dès l'introduction, Trottein soutient que les enjeux relatifs à la question de la naissance de l'esthétique sont philosophiques, bien plus qu'historiques. Pour cette raison, on ne doit pas chercher une quelconque sociologie de l'esthétique dans les pages de ce livre, pas plus qu'une critique de son idéologie. Il n'y est pas non plus question de théorie de l'art ou alors seulement de manière allusive. L'exercice consiste plutôt, par un *oui* implicite à la question du titre, à identifier ce qui démarqua cette *science* de la philosophie à ses débuts, les préjugés dont elle dut se défaire et les apories auxquelles elle se heurta.

Il ne faut toutefois pas espérer trouver dans ce livre une synthèse de l'esthétique des Lumières. Ainsi, l'articulation fine entre les sujets abordés par les cinq auteurs n'est pas toujours évidente, de sorte que persistent quelques vides, quelques hiatus. C'est peut-être la seule réserve qu'on puisse exprimer à

l'endroit de ce recueil dont il faut saluer la qualité des idées exprimées et la cohérence du ton et du propos.

Baumgarten bénéficie du premier d'une telle attention puisqu'il est extirpé de son folklore par Trottein. Avec nuances, justice lui est rendue sans qu'on méconnaisse pour autant les limites inhérentes à sa proposition. Son mérite principal, en plus de celui d'avoir forgé le néologisme *esthétique*, serait d'avoir ébranlé la domination de l'intelligible sur le sensible au sein de la philosophie, en élevant l'étude de la connaissance sensible au rang d'une science à part entière. Même si Baumgarten resta finalement empêtré dans des considérations empiriques, l'esthétique, comme discipline, venait remettre en question une hiérarchie du savoir pratiquement figée depuis Platon. La notion d'affranchissement qui marque la pensée de Baumgarten décrit bien la façon dont l'esthétique a peu à peu précisé son domaine et ses compétences propres, et ce de façon irréversible. C'est d'ailleurs le sens que Saint Girons donne à la naissance de l'esthétique, celui d'un affranchissement radical interdisant tout retour à la situation initiale.

Parmi ces affranchissements des Lumières, Laurent Jaffro présente la contribution anglo-écossaise à la transformation du concept d'imitation artistique et à la soustraction du beau de l'emprise de la morale. Spécialiste de la philosophie morale et de la philosophie de langue anglaise du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (il est un traducteur et commentateur assidu de Shaftesbury), Jaffro soutient que cette étape décisive aurait permis non seulement de rompre avec le modèle aristotélicien de l'imitation, mais aussi d'en finir avec la « subordination des questions esthétiques aux questions morales et métaphysiques » (5).

Rompant avec Shaftesbury, qui demandait à l'art d'imiter un beau chargé de sens moral, Hutcheson aurait franchi une