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Between Impure and Pure: The Sketch for a History of *Blotch*

Abstract: Throughout the history of Western painting the *blotch* often exposed its capacity to operate in seemingly opposite directions, to be simultaneously engaged in engendering material impurity and optical purity. While in earlier instances it mostly obtruded on the picture's integrity, with the rise of non-mimetic painting blotch became the main vehicle of purity and cohesion. However, its unstable and versatile nature is revealed in a vetero-testamentary passage, where the purity or impurity of *blotch* is measured according to whether it invades the whole or just a part of the infected surface. In this brief sketch, the bipolarity of painterly *macchia* is described by pointing to its predominantly blemishing function from the Renaissance to 18th century; to growing acceptance of its material and formless impurity, and its consequent purification during the formation of pictorial formalism; and finally, to its revived uncleanness in the artistic interventions of Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol. The survey ends with the conclusion that the being of *blotch* resides in its itinerant, ever-shifting character, and that our experience of it as pure or impure depends on its quantity and pervasiveness.

Keywords: blotch; *tzaraath*; *macchia*; *tache*; pictorial impurity/purity; materiality/opticality; formalism; *all-over* painting.

But if the blotch [*tzaraath*] breaks out in the skin, so that it covers all the skin of the blotched person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see, then the priest shall make an examination, and if the blotch has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the blotchiness; since it has all turned white, he is clean. (Leviticus, 13: 12–13)¹

This short declaration from The Third Book of Moses seems to strikingly summarize a curious and paradoxical play between purity and impurity: a play that brought

¹ Usually construed as “leprosy” or “decease”, *tzaraath* is here generically translated as *blotch*. The rationale for this decision is to be found in that this phenomenon invades clothes and walls as well as human skin. Since etymologically it fuses *blot* and *patch*, *blotch* could equally refer to visual and immoral implications of the Hebrew word. The quote from Bible is consequently modified.

forth, in the art of painting, an astonishing history of *blotch*. Describing *tzaraath* as a symptom of sinful decease, remediable by the process of ritual ablution, The Old Testament reveals the fundamental antagonism of dirty and clean, permissible and forbidden, moral and immoral, spiritual and corporeal. The point is quite simple: if the immaculate dermal surface was corrupted and infected by a patch, for restoring the shine of its purity the problematic patch has to vanish. It turns out, however, that the purifying process is not necessary if the blotch has taken the entire surface, whereby the covered area becomes optically homogenous, consistent, and clear.

Since a picture primarily consists of active surface–mark relationships, it could be said that the Levitical paradox is especially transposable into the pictorial domain. Moreover, the history of painting could be described – at least generally and from the standpoint of the formal pictorial constitution – as a variation of degree in the balance between normative uniformity of painted surface and formlessness of the pictorial mark, between transcendentalism of representation and material immanence of *blotch*. In short, paintings could be graded in terms of the amount of their blotchiness, that is, according to their proximity either to the purity–pole or impurity–pole. And while in its earlier manifestations blotch mostly operated as a befouling of the visual integrity of the pictorial surface, with the growing accent on factual autonomy it paradoxically became the essential condition of optical integration and formal purity. Due to the increasing affirmative appreciation of manual strokes and marks, its original blotching function – which in painting from Renaissance to Romanticism more or less have to be suppressed – was converted into the purifying function, thus becoming a condition of pictorial cleanness. After the whole pictorial plane in the 19th century became a configuration of blotches, once mandatory disinfection ritual – i.e., subduing of the visual and material presence of blotch – was no longer needed. As a further matter, becoming a dominant element in picture-making, in what comes to be called *pictorial formalism* it will take the exclusive role of purification, while all that has deviated from blotch would be considered to cause disorder and disrupt the consistency of overall painterly maculation.

Hence it can be argued that the gradual transition of painting from mimetic, imitative mode to factual, non-mimetic mode – a standard line of reasoning in formalist art history – is deeply marked by the efficiency of blotch. The macular logic, however, does not strictly follow this linear development which would imply straight progressive conversion from pure to impure. Instead, thanks to its protean nature, blotch often finds itself halfway between clean and unclean, manifesting its itinerant character and power to act in seemingly opposite directions.

It is well-known that for the illustration of a narrative [*historia*] Renaissance painters sought to attain as much clear and lifelike representation as possible, striving to camouflage support's opacity and with their composing skills keep hidden rough and tangible material: in short, to create a uniformity which could give the picture required smoothness and make it a flawless optical continuum. To keep safe the mimetic character of the image, it was desirable to avoid any kind of material, optical, and

physical disturbance of its visual unity. But even then materiality of the painterly mark was dually read: either as something foul, or something that could serve the purpose of the composition. While Leonardo had a pareidolic proclivity in “walls soiled with a variety of stains” to recognize shapes and increase his imagination and invention, Botticelli encouraged coherence and perfect execution, certainly sharing the more prevalent opinion that “such study was of no use because by merely throwing a sponge soaked in a variety of colours at a wall there would be left on the wall a stain in which could be seen a beautiful landscape.”² There was, however, an unanimity on this point: to compose *in forma di una macchia* is permitted only in sketches and preparatory works, while finished artworks must be *sine macula*. Nevertheless, just a few decades later the underlying material substance began slowly to emerge on the surface of finished works, while sketchiness, accentuated brushstrokes, rough execution, were starting to be appreciated as a personal stamp of the artist. Vasari thus writes that Giorgione smeared [*macchiarle*] paint on support without preparatory drawings and that Titian worked with “bold, broadly executed strokes and blotches [*macchie*].”³ Yet besides being a sign of artist’s singular style, his *maniera*, theoretical discourses treated *macchia*, the blotch, as a bipolar and bidirectional phenomenon: one which, if seen up close, reveals its intrinsic materiality and disturbs the representational transparency and compactness; but which also endows composition, when it is viewed from afar, with a peculiar liveliness and vivacity. Topos concerning the invitation to look at pictures from distance, inaugurated in literature by Horace⁴, reveals that blotch can be subjected to the representation and deprived of its soiling, blemishing, and conspicuous nature just if the spectator stands at a proper distance. Yet more frequent in the *Kunstliteratur* are assertions, mutually opposed, concerning either impure effects of blotch or its contribution to purity and vividness of the image. Vasari thus criticized Andrea Schiavone for presenting “*macchie* or sketches without being finished at all”, while Giovanni Battista Armenini blames in his precepts the growing group of painters who dare to exhibit half-finished, “scarcely dabbed [*macchiate*]” pictures.⁵ The dictionary definition of blotch as a “sign that liquids leave and the mess on the surface that they touch”⁶ had never been dismissed from mind, although *macchia* became an inevitable theoretical and practical motif: actually, the worry of its contaminating and unsettling effect continued to haunt plenty of artists and scholars. While he welcomed both the smooth and rough working manner, Carel von Mader still advised avoiding too strong and overemphasized hues, as well as any kind of accentuations

² Martin Kemp, ed., *Leonardo on Art*, trans. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 201, 222.

³ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori. Tomo VII* (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1881), 427, 452.

⁴ E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 181–203.

⁵ Philip Sohm, “*Maniera* and the Absent Hand: Avoiding the Etymology of Style,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* No. 36 (Autumn 1999), 123.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

and protrusions.⁷ Similarly, Samuel van Hoogstraten noted that “there are some who claim to be masters of the art even though their nudes seem to be flayed or smeared with red paint or the juice of berries”, while for formless color elements Jose Garcia Hidalgo wrote that “without good contours true to the original, and well-placed darks and lights, they are only blotches of good color and are of interest only to those who are ignorant and lack understanding of art.”⁸ With more loose and thick applying of pigments, the reactions took rather biblical overtones, pointing to an almost sacrilegious, sinful, fecal nature of blotch: with Rembrandt’s viscous impasto in mind, Gerard de Lairese warned younger artists to not let their paint “flowing down over the piece like feces [*drekk*]”, and not to work “through daubing [*kladder*]”.⁹ Yet no one was as explicit as Jean-Étienne Liotard, who in the mid-eighteenth century challenged even the widespread view that accentuated brushstrokes and stains disappear if the composition is seen from a distance, saying that smears in sloppily executed paintings invariably stick out. For him, *tache* is the Levitical disease, a real physical lesion, a wound inflicted on a painted figure’s body or whole picture’s skin:

The more perceptible a touch is, the harsher it becomes, and the more it will shock the sharp eye of anyone filled with the true beauties of nature [...] A touch on carnations, having no relation to the real colour of the object it represents, is like a burn mark, a cut or a scar. A face, or any figure, painted with an excess of touches, resembles the ugliest or most defective parts of nature.¹⁰

Instances of interpreting strokes and blotches as incidents in composition were copious and appeared with no less intensity even in more recent times when the painting was primarily defined as a group of material marks arranged on a flat surface. Severe attacks on impressionist pictures convincingly demonstrate that the hostility was proportional to the quantity and prominence of their smudges. Even more astute critics and later defenders of this kind of painting were at first assured that Impressionists’ pictures are made up of “flickering strokes, light spots unreasonably scattered”, and that “stains [*taches*] come to obfuscate and obliterate everything”.¹¹

Certainly, even apologists of the late-Renaissance *pittura di macchia* seemed to feel a slight fear of too conspicuous, bulgy flecks, as any brushstroke at some point could be metamorphosed into a sore: *tzaraath*. That they insist marks and blots must be consolidated into a flawless and polished image, holding that the picture should

⁷ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 196.

⁸ Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, Jason Gaiger, eds., *Art in Theory 1648–1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 277, 287.

⁹ Nicola Suthor, *Rembrandt’s Roughness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 93.

¹⁰ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, eds., *Art in Theory 1648–1815*, 674, 676.

¹¹ Georges-Charles Huysmans and Gustave Geffroy as cited in Oscar Reutersvärd, “The Accentuated Brush Stroke of the Impressionists: The Debate concerning Decomposition in Impressionism,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 10, 3 (March 1952), 273.

be preferably observed from a distance, confirms their view that basic mimetic order still must be preserved; in fact, blotch could be beneficial only as a contributory element to the overall picture's effect. Perhaps the first who unequivocally elevated Venetian *colorito* – i.e., working *alla prima* and in bold strokes – was Marco Boschini, who claimed *macchie* to be what makes the painting *pure*. Fervently advocating painting in blots, he points not only to the dual nature of *macchia* but anticipates the later formalist rhetoric of purity where pure and autonomous color patches will become favored plastic elements. Boschini puns on *macchia*, claiming that in its macular and mudding nature, paradoxically, lies its inherent purity. “Oh stains [*machie*] without a blemish [*machia*], even splendors that brighten as if they were light”, he states and adds, “Whoever shrinks from *machia* will soil his colors and stain [*machia*] them...”¹²

Indeed, the gradual adoption of blotch as the principal plastic element will guide its further passage from a polluting role to purifying one. During this process whereby painting would steadily gain its factual autonomy, the cliché that in our perception all blotches are materially subdued and optically merged into a representation – will still abide. Whether the fleck is a product of bold brushstrokes or is a salient color area, artists believed employment of middle hues and even distribution of blots could secure a chromatic and optical integration. The whole discourse on ‘broken colors’ was concerned with the problem of how to obtain compactness from which no element could protrude.¹³ Du Fresnoy thus instructed painters to never lose from sight that most prevailing hue should be evenly dispersed throughout the picture, regardless of painting manner, “for a single colour will make a spot or blot.”¹⁴ In a sense, this method of uniform and harmonious chromatic or tonal distribution will be used in pictures of all sorts, even radically modern ones. In the same way will be embraced the cliché that paintings need to be observed from a distance, as Courbet's knife-applied paint, impressionist blurry facture, Seurat's speckles, facets of analytical cubism only from distance could be shaped into more or less comprehensible and recognizable images.

Although nonimmune to this old cliché, Alexander Cozens was daring enough to devote himself to careful investigation of *blot*, at the same time when Liotard recoiled from this dishonorable taint of painting. Fearlessly leaving on paper various inkblots, he would discern in arrangements of black and white patches, in shapes “rude and unmeaning”¹⁵, rudimentary traits of a landscape. Cozens is aware, and for that reason resorts to the blot method, that

If a finished drawing be gradually removed from the eye, its smaller parts will be less and less expressive; and when they are wholly undistinguished,

¹² Sohm, “*Maniera* and the Absent Hand: Avoiding the Etymology of Style,” 123–4.

¹³ For a genealogy of ‘broken color’ see Ulrike Kern, “The Origins of Broken Colours,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 79 (2016), 183–211.

¹⁴ Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, *The Art of Painting*, trans. William Mason (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 103.

¹⁵ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, eds., *Art in Theory 1648–1815*, 851.

and the largest parts alone remain visible, the drawing will then represent a blot, with the appearance of some degree of keeping.¹⁶

From this insight, Cozens drew an inference that if it is to be observed from a distance the blotted composition must indicate some general relationships and rhythms which should be optically blended into a pleasant, vivid image. He was the first to assign blot, albeit still in the domain of its mimetic efficiency, an unequivocally positive role. This affirmation of patches, as well as the notion that “an assemblage of accidental shapes”¹⁷ generates the most striking images, will shape the later impressionist view that a spectacle is above all disposition of blotches. The belief that the eye perceives nature as a multitude of atomic color sensations was also prepared by the observations of John Ruskin, who wrote that the external world appears to us as “an arrangement of patches of different colours variously shaded”, that “we see nothing but flat colours”, and that the whole power of painting lies in “a kind of childish perception of these flat spots of color, simply as such, without an awareness what they signify.”¹⁸ In the same scientific manner, Hippolyte Taine claimed that colorist painters rely on the precognitive perception of reality as a constellation of colored blotches:

In this state, which is that of the person born blind immediately after the operation, the eye has the sensation only of variously colored patches more or less clear or obscure [...] Painters in color are well aware of this state [...] their art consists in seeing their model as a *patch* [*tache*].¹⁹

The most literal affirmation of blotch in art literature of that time undoubtedly comes from the pen of Vittorio Imbriani, an Italian critic who situated “the soul of painting” in the first impression we receive before a picture: in “the *macchia*, the mark or stain”²⁰. With a slight irony, Imbriani gives rather unexpected examples to describe the sum and substance of painting, such as the beauty of blotches created by “splashes of wine, sauce, or coffee which spill upon the tablecloth”²¹. “If in an ink spot”, he writes, “in a squashed fly, there can be a painting – in a rudimentary state, of course – this means that the essence, the constitutive element of a painting is not the expression of the figures, nor the perspective, nor the composition of the groups, nor any other of the incidental elements on which people habitually place too much

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (New York: Dover, 1971), 27–8. While he considered that good painting inevitably contains a certain amount of visual ambiguity, thus repudiating precise *Düreresque* contouring, Ruskin also rejected paintings made of muddy and blurry blots, pejoratively calling them *Blottesque*.

¹⁹ Hippolyte Taine, *On Intelligence. Vol. II*, trans. T. D. Haye (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1875), 69–70.

²⁰ Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, Jason Gaiger, eds., *Art in Theory 1815–1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 542.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 542–43.

importance.”²² He theoretically outlines what many painters from Macchiaioliism and Impressionism to the present day have demonstrated in their practice: the “formless harmony of colours”²³, the interplay between daubs and patches, is ultimate and *pure* pictorial syntax.

The realization that the human eye primarily sees reality as a flat arrangement of blotches, as well as increasing awareness that the picture is the surface made opaque through accumulation and organization of painted mass, led to the theoretical foundation of the so-called formalist painting. Throughout the modern period one can follow the line of pictorial practice that is more and more anxious to get rid of superfluous or extraneous elements and meanings – of perspective, illusionism, figuration, narration, etc. – and reduce itself to a flat arrangement of pure plastic elements. In this purist system, which culminates with the doctrine of Clement Greenberg, each painter brings his distinctive way of direct handling of material, a singular manner of color organization, a novel utilization of the medium. The pure is the painting that entertains only its syntactic elements – color, shape, surface, facture, etc. – striving to arrive at the specific condition which demarcates painting from other activities and domains, namely: flatness.²⁴ The task of painting, as stated by this doctrine, is to assert its inherent flatness, creating through various arrangements of color patches, strokes, areas a consistent optical coalescence whereby underlying material conditions and causes could be sublimated. Yet “a welter of blurs, blotches, and scrawls”²⁵ to become an optically unified whole, it is necessary to disseminate them on the surface in all directions and all parts, to apply them *all-over*, so as they can seize and activate the entire available space. This scheme certainly brings us back to the Levitical paradox which epigraphs this essay: by invading the whole picture plane, infecting its dermal body, blotches unexpectedly turn the messy support into a homogenous, pure optical image. The work of Jackson Pollock is the most appropriate and obvious instance where the bipolar nature of blotch is unfolded, simultaneously expressing its power to be materially impure *and* optically pure. His swirls and twists of paint create in a beholder’s eye, exposed to this all-pervading macular chaos, the impression of an optical order, an almost uniform and flawless state of blotchiness. The modern, pollockian reformulation of the mutable *tzaraath* could probably read like this: “If we had a thoroughly chance world with items arranged randomly throughout the field, the results

²² *Ibid.*, 543.

²³ *Idem.*

²⁴ Even though his arguments were largely based on the contrast between the purity of painting as a medium and the impurity of everything that diverges from *malerisch*, Greenberg often repudiated accusations for purist dogmatism, underlining that his intention was not to establish a law but simply to describe the situation. For him “purity” in Western art “has been a useful idea and ideal, with a kind of logic to it that has worked, and still works, to generate aesthetic value and maintain aesthetic standards.” In a later conversation, indirectly denying his allegiance to the concept of purity, he briefly stated: “I don’t believe in impurity.” Robert C. Morgan, ed., *Clement Greenberg. Late Writings* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 69–70, 227.

²⁵ John O’Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 193.

would be orderly.”²⁶ In his essay “Impurity”, Allan Kaprow rightly argues the role of purity and order in Pollock’s paintings is often overlooked due to their apparent material messiness and uncleanness, and he quotes an illustrative remark by Thomas Hess concerning their calm and pure side:

After short observation ... violence is consummated. The image reverts to its enigmatic space on the wall, acquires a cool, almost fragile independence ... [but the] impulse to movement returns; the vertiginous ride always starts again.²⁷

Kaprow observes that in Pollock’s paintings poles of purity and impurity, disorder and order, movement and rest, are perpetually being transmuted into one another, and that “strokes can also be applied so endlessly on a picture that they eventually become nearly a blank surface with little perceivable motion.”²⁸ But he also recognizes an inverse process in the paintings of Barnett Newman, whose plain and seemingly pure color fields dissolve into impure chaos of sensations. Comparing two artists, Kaprow concludes:

Pollock erupts with frenzy, only to burn into thin air. Newman begins with the premise of a perfect vision in a calm, unruffled world and ends with a cataclysm.²⁹

This tendency to move from entropic to negentropic and vice versa is what distinguishes paintings of Pollock and Newman from a vast number of non-objective compositions where blots and patches are thoroughly subjected to the principle of static purism, and where pictorial pureness is achieved by mere homogenization of *matière* or through an organization of various flat shapes. In such conditions, whether it is a patch or a blot, the blotch is divested of its initial uncleanness, its soiling, smearing capacity. Hence it seems that to restore its defiling and maculating function it was necessary to revive *tzaraath*, and that was possible only through sheer transgression, by resorting to the sinful causes that at first, according to Leviticus, led to the blotchy disfiguration of skin: discharging of body fluids, urinating or ejaculating.

A lesser-known work of Marcel Duchamp, *Paysage faitif* (1946), inspires us to take it as a tacit response to all kinds of *pittura di macchia*, and perhaps more specifically as an implicit criticism of what in this time comes to be known as *art informel* and *tachisme*. On an astralon placed upon the piece of black satin, the artist spilled blobs of his semen which were over time transformed into a picturesque blotch. This

²⁶ Paul Grimley Kuntz, “The Art of Blotting,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 25, 1 (Autumn 1966), 96.

²⁷ Jeff Kelley, ed., *Allan Kaprow. Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 38, 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

polluted surface, a product of Duchamp's onanism intended as a love offering, was baptized "Faulty Landscape", yet this name could also mean "Indecent Landscape", "Improper Landscape", and "Flawed Landscape". By referring to this blotch as *paysage*, the artist seems to indicate he was aware that landscape art in the West was mostly identified with painting in blots and therefore considered inferior and even unworthy of serious consideration. The *fautif* can also refer to the fact that viscous, liquid, shapeless stains throughout the history of painting were seen as contaminating incidents that destroy spotless picture surfaces. To these conjectures could be added one more: in the time when the pure pictorial stain was *conditio sine qua non* of painting, Duchamp's seminal daub seems to point out, in his characteristically witty yet lascivious manner, that the real criticism of the pictorial purity implies restoring of *tzaraath*, that is, blotch as a sinful mark of actual sperm.

When in the 1970s Andy Warhol decided to try his hand at *non-representational* painting, he invented a rather odd painterly procedure: on copper-coated canvases he conducts, with the aid of assistants, micturating sessions, waiting for the etching process to produce formless blotches, ulcers, and scabs. These chemically generated surface lesions, according to Warhol, were the product of deliberate direction of urethral jet, of controlled spattering which certainly called to mind Pollock's pouring of paint. Yet this body of work, *Piss Paintings*, he conceived not as a merely cynical gesture or a vulgar mockery of abstract-expressionist gesturalism, but as a significant endeavor to make an innovation in the ever-changing painting medium. Thus rather than drawing too obvious conclusions that with urine splotches Warhol wanted to refer to Pollock's drips, or allude to the rumor that he used to relieve oneself on his canvases, or that he emulates the disheartened piss-painter from Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Theorem* (1968),³⁰ we are more inclined to see these paintings as one of the latest examples in recent art to reveal the blotch *both* as impure *and* pure. Using the gush of urine as a painting method, Warhol implicitly tried to bring back to blotch the status it had enjoyed before purist formalism disinfected and made it smooth. During the period when every painterly blotch shines with inviolable purity, the only way to draw attention to it is to make explicit its impure, excretal being. Yet, on the other hand, the artist also recognized a holy purity in the uncanny and *all-over* smeariness of these paintings, comparing them to *acheiropoieta*, venerating icons not-made-by-hand and Myrrh-flowing, well-known for their healing, purifying powers. As he explained:

When I showed them in Paris, the hot lights made them melt again; its very weird when they drip down. They looked like real drippy paintings; they never stopped dripping because the lights were so hot. Then you can understand why those holy pictures cry all the time.³¹

³⁰ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, *Pissing Figures 1280–2014*, trans. Jeff Nagy (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2017), 99–109.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

Indeed, pure blotches in these pictures were not created manually, but by the urinary stream and through the process of chemical oxidation. They burst on the picture surface as if support is infected by some inexplicable or supernatural force rather than by human deed. Yet while they are not made by hand, and while the urine lachrymation bathes the skin of paintings and makes it evenly pure, their accompanying stench and sores reveal that in body's secretions lurks a maleficent, spoiling, even necrotic impurity, leaving on innocent and immaculate surfaces ulcers and scabs, blotches and flecks, *macchie* and *tzaraath*.

Perhaps the history of *blotch* in painting is nothing but a vivid chronicle of its incessant swinging between impurity and purity, its alteration from maculate to immaculate, its passage from material immanence to optical transcendence. For in this ambiguous interstice, betwixt and between, takes place its unpredictable, sometimes dichotomous, yet always duplicitous play. *Oh MACHIE, che xe tante stele PURE!*³²

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³² "Oh *machie*, like so many *pure* stars." Boschini's line as cited and translated in Philip Sohm, "Maniera and the Absent Hand: Avoiding the Etymology of Style," 124 (capitalization and emphasis added).

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