

ADRIAN STOKES, EZRA POUND
AND THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE IN TASTE
FOR MODERNIST SCULPTURE

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In this paper I chart the strengthening hold of psychoanalysis on Adrian Stokes's intervention on Ezra Pound's taste for medieval literature and abstract modern sculpture from the combined angles of his own tastes for Italian Renaissance sculptors and a contemporary generation of "organic" sculptors whom he got to know at Hampstead in the early thirties. Pound's rejection of Stokes's early theory of carving and modelling is at the heart of the matter, and a short history of their collaborative rivalry will help to explain why.

Adrian Stokes (1902-72) was born in Bayswater, London, the son of a self-made stockbroker and a Sephardic Jew of the Montefiore family. Educated at Rugby School and Magdalene College, Oxford, where he studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics, Stokes had written two immature books of metaphysical speculation before he met Pound on the tennis courts of Rapallo in November 1926. There he was able to show Pound the frontispiece of his *Sunrise in the West, a Modern Interpretation of Past and Present* (1926), featuring the relief of Capricorn by Agostino di Duccio from the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini,¹ the Renaissance building that had served Pound as a metaphor of aesthetic and political order and aspiration in the Malatesta Cantos. Stokes jealously protected the independence of his discovery of the Tempio on 5 July 1925 before meeting Pound (1: 261), but close examination of *Sunrise in the West* reveals possible acquaintance with the *Cantos*.

Pound was impressed by Stokes's evocations of stone and water in an early essay on Agostino which responded with dynamic sexual fantasies of marine life to the serene conjunctions of the gods and Venetian metamorphoses in "Canto XVII" of 1925-26. Through his influence with T.S. Eliot at *The Criterion* and Faber's, Pound secured publication of Adrian Stokes's earliest publications on art, of which the most important were the first two volumes of a trilogy

¹ See Stokes, *Stones of Rimini* in *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, 1: plate 109. Subsequent references to this edition will be to volume and page numbers in parentheses within the text except where photographic plate numbers are given. Some of the ideas in this essay are amplified in Richard Read, *Art and its Discontents*.

that was never finished: *The Quattro Cento: a Different Conception of the Italian Renaissance* (1932) and *Stones of Rimini* (1934). The first of these books not only demonstrates a keen affinity with the outwardness of Pound's Mediterranean aesthetic but finds in the contrast between dynamic and incoherent qualities of Florentine Renaissance funerary monuments a visual equivalent to Pound's literary distinction between Cavalcanti's organic metaphors and Petrarch's rhetorical ornaments. Pound reviewed *The Quattro Cento* enthusiastically but was diffident towards *Stones of Rimini*.² Not only was the prose style of this second volume more remote from the fragmentary abruptness of his example, but during 1933 Stokes had evolved a comprehensive theory of the visual arts which categorized them according to the wholesome, objective effects of carving or the wilful, subjective effects of modelled art, a distinction that Pound rejected as theoretically reductive ("Review of *Stones of Rimini*" Zinnes 169). Stokes's new aesthetic may have been designed to rival the theory of medieval literature of which Pound had boasted to Stokes in letters and which Stokes helped him to publish as *Make it New* in 1934.

Another factor in their mounting rivalry was a series of essays defending the sculptural art of Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore which Stokes published in the *Spectator* of 1933.³ These short, brilliant reviews had the effect of making the aggressive masculinity of an older generation of sculptors applauded by Pound in *Gaudier-Brzeska—a Memoir* (1917) look distinctly old-fashioned, though Pound would soon claim with some justice that Stokes had plagiarized aspects of his *Gaudier* in *Stones of Rimini*. Perhaps the major cause of Pound's tepid response to *Stones* was recognition that Stokes was championing the visual manifestations of the Italian Renaissance against his own enthusiasm for medieval philosophy and literature. Stokes's celebration of Sigismondo also depended on an overtly bisexual reading of the Tempio and its reliefs that flew in the face of Pound's use of that building as a focus for the moral, aesthetic and heterosexual virtues of its patron, Sigismondo Malatesta, foretype of Mussolini in his long, experimental poem.

Despite these challenges to his former mentor, Stokes expressed his bitter disappointment at the review in letters to Pound and subsequently abandoned the third volume of his trilogy. This volume would have returned to "Four Essays on the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini" begun under Pound's guidance

2 *Symposium* 3 (1932) 518-21 (Zinnes 222-225) and *Criterion* 13 (April 1934) 495-497 (Zinnes 167-170).

3 "Art Today" (20 October 1933) 523; "Mr. Ben Nicholson's Painting" (27 October 1933) 523; "Miss Hepworth's Carvings" (3 November 1933) 621; "Mr. Henry Moore's Sculpture" (10 November 1933) 661; and "Matisse and Picasso" (24 November 1933) 769. All are reprinted in *Reviews of Modern Art, Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, 1, 305-14.

from 1927 of which only the third and the first essays, on Agostino and Pisanello, were published in 1929 and 1930 respectively. These early essays were to have served as a historical commentary on the *Cantos* in a format which Stokes's new aesthetic tastes, theories and artistic allegiances had outgrown. Not only did his daily sessions in London with the child psychologist Melanie Klein from December 1929 curtail his visits to Rapallo, they are likely to have undermined his support for the abrasive qualities that Pound admired in Sigismondo and Mussolini. After-echoes of each others' work are to be found, nevertheless, after 1938, when Stokes saw Pound in Rapallo for the last time.⁴

Here is an excerpt from Stokes's crucial letter to Pound of 1934 which bears most closely on their divergent attitudes to sculpture. It begins without salutation by quoting back at Pound a segment from his review of *Stones of Rimini*: "Reverse, for a moment Stokes' stone-blossom criterion—or rather augment it by the idea of the flattened sphere... That seems to me the formal adjunct which might aid in pursuing Mr Stokes' analysis further'. That is monstrous."⁵ Stokes should not have been surprised by Pound's lukewarm reception of *Stones of Rimini* in his review of 1934 for in the penultimate chapter of the book he had repudiated the medieval philosophy that Pound had espoused in his publications on Cavalcanti's love poetry from 1928 to 1932, concluding that "Literature of no kind [...] can attain the tensity, the immediacy of presentation that is the distinctive virtue of visual art" (1:290). A battle between Medievalism and Renaissance, then, literature and the visual arts. But was Pound wrong to infer in his review that Stokes had taken his idea of the flattened sphere from *Gaudier-Brzeska: a Memoir* (1917) without acknowledgement?

Pound was certainly right to suspect that Stokes's ekphrases of Agostino's reliefs on the walls of the Tempio were based on ideas from *Gaudier*, but he was probably more offended by telling differences in Stokes's use of them. Compare Pound's description of *Gaudier's Red Stone Dancer* with Stokes's description of an Agostino relief in *Stones*:

We have the triangle and circle asserted, *labeled* almost, upon the face and right breast. Into these so-called "abstractions" life flows, the circle moves and elongates into the oval, it increases and takes volume in the sphere or hemisphere of the breast. As the triangle moves toward organism it becomes a spherical triangle [...] We have the whole series of spherical triangles, as in the arm over the head,

4 For fuller accounts of these events, see Richard Read, "Art Criticism versus Poetry: An introduction to Adrian Stokes's 'Pisanello'"; "The Letters and Works of Adrian Stokes and Ezra Pound"; and "The Unpublished Correspondence of Adrian Stokes and Ezra Pound: Modernist Myth-Making in Sculpture, Literature, Aesthetics and Psychoanalysis."

5 Stokes to Pound, circa 1934, Tate Gallery Archive.

all combining and culminating in the great sweep of the back of the shoulders, as fine as any surface in all sculpture. The "abstract" or mathematical bareness of the triangle and circle are fully incarnate, made flesh, full of vitality and of energy. The whole form-series ends, passes into stasis with the circular base or platform. (GB 137-138, illustr. 20)

Then *Stones of Rimini*:

A characteristic attitude, of which the child is an example, is a sideways bending of one or both knees, thus bringing in the curve of a buttock; or an arm thrown across the body bringing in the shoulder and even the shoulder blade. The first attitude [...] requires one leg in rounded profile, so that one sees almost the whole calf, while the other leg, represented frontally, is, when the cutting has been crude, so flattened as to appear without a shin bone. Furthermore, the bending knees cause the part of the legs between knees and thighs to be represented at a receding angle that is easily foreshortened; which, in turn, enhances the circular and ovular swirls, represented on eye-level, around the stomach and the hips. [...] This attitude entails a nodal vortex about the stomach and around the hips, out from which the rest of the figure undulates. Such figures appear to float rather than stand. The effect is increased by swirling hair and swirling drapery that now conceal, now disclose, limbs and breasts. (1: 252-253; and 1: plates 106, 116, 107)

What Stokes indisputably takes from Pound's descriptive prose is the finality of time turned into static, spatial form and the capacity to re-present temporal sequences of artistic action and intent as immediate impressions on the spectator.

Against this debt, on the other hand, Stokes has carefully revised away those tendencies towards abstraction in Pound's descriptions and the modernist sculptures they refer to. The organic and naturalistic qualities attributed to the Tempio reliefs in *Stones of Rimini* are polemically anti-Poundian in this respect, for although Pound sees life "flow" into Gaudier's "abstractions" which are consequently "incarnate," one feels that at the very moment the shapeless material hardens into the geometry of slabbed forms, feminine material is obliterated by masculine patterns of control so as to fend off a disastrous merging of genders. The "triangle moves towards organism" (he implies "orgasm") and is "made flesh, full of vitality and of energy" but never loses the static geometrical quality that characterizes the aggressive masculinity of the artist: "The whole form-series ends, passes into stasis with the circular base or platform." Such phallic locking of the form-series into the circular base *stiffens* female material into masculine form to the extent that "the triangle and circle" need

to be “asserted, *labeled* almost, upon the face and right breast” as a necessarily remote indication of separated female identity. Stokes avoids over-determination of gender distinctions in this way because it jeopardizes the female “rights” of sculptural material (1: 235). He claims by contrast that modelled or “plastic shape in the abstract is shape in the abstract, while carving shape, however abstract, is seen as belonging essentially to a particular substance” (1: 230).

Pound was not to know that Stokes’s new interest in the illusionistic roundness and solidity of Agostino’s flattened reliefs in *Stones of Rimini* was prompted by his analyst’s critique of an excessive emphasis on masculine exteriors in *The Quattro Cento*. There he had applauded Donatello’s sculpture for

so marked a preference for the male nude, a figure far less easily composed to beauty than the female nude. Such unique choice shows a predominance in sculptural fantasy of a feeling [...] for material as being the fruitful female block that will give birth to the most active shapes full of prolific sap. (1: 118)

Klein rejected such claims of heterosexual affection in Stokes’s appreciation of masculine forms. “To him”—and it is Stokes himself she is referring to—

only the male, in whom all was manifest and clearly visible and who concealed no secrets within himself, was the natural and beautiful object. As he displaced all that was capable of arousing his fear from his father’s body on to his mother’s interior so he very strongly repressed everything concerning the inside of his own body and accentuated everything that was visible, in particular his penis. (*The Psycho-Analysis of Children* 266)

What Stokes had relished in “the dust of the studios, the hack hack, pieces flying and stinging” as trousers fall to reveal the genital that like a tiny sun edges away the huge and shredded clouds from Donatello’s *Atys Amorino* to an enframing margin (1: 120; and 1 plate 34), she interpreted as sadistic “phantasies of beating those ‘sticking out’ parts” of the female body “until they became, as it were, ‘beaten in’ and thus ‘reduced’, and then perhaps, he said, he would be able to love women.” (265) From his first encounter with Ruskin’s famous critique of the Renaissance Vendramin monument at Venice as “monstrous semi-sculpture” (9: 51), Stokes had developed a preference for what was in front to what was behind. His schoolfriend, later poet and broadcaster, Joseph Macleod, vividly remembered Stokes’s reaction to the senior classics master’s reading of this passage at Rugby School, probably his first encounter with art criticism:

There was a point at which Ruskin, having climbed up a ladder and seen some sculptures in niches in a cathedral, a Gothic cathedral, had discovered that they

were more beautiful behind,⁶ which you never saw, than in front, and Bunchi took great exception to this.⁷ He said: "That's absurd, because if they're put in a niche nobody ever *can* see their backs. What's the good of putting them in?", he said. "That's all wrong."⁸

Pound, of course, had his own metaphors of flattened form that reached him from a long tradition in English and German aesthetics. They appear in his ekphrasis of Venice and Agostino's reliefs in "Canto XVII":

“ the stone trees—out of water—
“ the arbours of stone—
“ marble leaf, over leaf,
“ silver, steel over steel,
“ silver beaks rising and crossing,
“ prow set against prow,
“ stone, ply over ply,
“ the gilt beams flare of an evening” (78)

From the marine origins of limestone in Agostino's reliefs of Aphrodite-trees rising out of water, to serried ranks of Venetian façades, to clashing swords and bobbing bows of gondolas, trebled into metal birds and prows of contending warships, we return to Agostino's embryonic layers of stone, the processes of poetry, and warm light on the gilded timbers of Renaissance or Medieval interiors. In an ambiguously vast and minute scale, this condensed history passes from erection to detumescence within a phallic column of speech delivered by a lone sailor who is Ulysses but also Ruskin traversing the Venetian lagoons, for Donald Davie was wrong to "forget about the Venice of Ruskin" in approaching this canto (Davie 421). "Marble, leaf over leaf" is Lawrence's sexualization of Ruskin's entrance into the Byzantine cathedral of St Mark's transposed from Venice to the Gothic cathedral at Lincoln: "Spanned round with the rainbow, the jewelled gloom folded music upon silence, light upon darkness, fecundity upon death as a seed folds *leaf upon leaf*... Brangwen came to his consummation" (Lawrence *The Rainbow* 202; my emphasis). As embryonic tissues growing in the womb they are associated with the reflexive inspiration of planar carving defined by Adolf von Hildebrand in his Neoclassical treatise on *The Problem of Form*: "In stone carving the laying out of the big masses in various planes must precede the working up of details. [...] In this way the existence of form not

6 Macleod misremembers Ruskin's complaint (9: 51), which was that the effigy was unfinished on its hidden side, not more beautiful.

7 "Bunchi" was Stokes's familial nickname.

8 Joseph Gordon Macleod, unpublished interview with the present author, 31 August 1982.

yet carved out is constantly suggested to the imagination" (132). Thus "Silver beaks" from Ruskin align the rhythmical movements of oars through water with sexual intercourse: "Stroke by stroke, we count the plunges of the oar, each heaving up the side of the boat slightly as her sliver beak shoots forward" (9: 414). "Ply after ply" is Mallarmé's appropriation of reflexive processes in visual art to the unfolding of poetic lines one after another.⁹ "Gilt beams flare of an evening" takes up Hildebrand's further suggestion that the "conception then remains natural—as in Nature herself a portion of a figure is sometimes illuminated while the rest remains indiscernible in the darkness" (132). It returns from the masculine world of swords and ships flashing in daylight to nocturnal chiaroscuro of a softer, female kind, but its naturalism is qualified by the artificiality implied in an earlier line of the canto: the "light not of the sun." That was Pater's fantastical image of the godly palace where Psyche meets Cupid in *Marius*. Pound praised it in *The Spirit of Romance* for its "weird and marvellous" quality (17): "In the flow of its precious metal *the house is its own daylight, having no need of the sun*" (Pater 39; my emphasis). In the Victorian battles between Ruskin and Pater over the competing claims of nature and culture, Pound is backing the artificiality of Pater through reverence for modernist sculpture. In "Brancusi and Human Sculpture" (undated but perhaps circa 1926), he had referred to the Venetian context of the "white stillness of marble. The rough eternity of the tree trunks" (Zinnes 307). The "birth" of Venice had struck Ruskin with all the horror of a primal scene when he imagined "the slow settling of the slime of those turbid rivers into the polluted sea" (10: 14).¹⁰ "Silver beaks," then, in the middle of the phallic column of speech with double inverted commas down its side are not just Ruskin's gondolas pushing through water but Brancusi's *Infinite Column*¹¹ or his dry, hard, sharp and shining metal birds rising like arrows from the water against the downward path of our reading. This bears on the gendered meaning of the whole sequence, for the aqueous flatness of the beginning and the warm interiority of the ending make way in the middle for sharp edges and spikey points, bristling with the masculinity of ancient and modern war to protect the domestic interiors of Venice *virginale* from outside intruders.¹² Thus Ruskin's naturalism is finally eclipsed by Victorian and Modernist artifice.

⁹ See Brooker 265.

¹⁰ Tanner first applied the term "primal scene" to this passage in *Venice Desired* 92. See also Bullen 515-516.

¹¹ Roxana Preda pointed out in her lecture on "*The Cantos as Infinite Column: Pound and Brancusi*," that Brancusi began his *Infinite Column* series in 1918. It was therefore within the possible scope of Pound's awareness when he wrote "Canto XVII."

¹² For the myth of Venice *virginale*, see Cosgrove.

By its title alone, Stokes's *Stones of Rimini* heralds a reaction from modernism to the naturalism of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, if not to the respectability of its inhibited masculinity. It is not that Agostino's angels appear anatomically illusionistic to Stokes, but rather that their distortions entail a "vortex" that is at the furthest remove from Pound's and Gaudier's definition of a masculine inrush of intellect upon material, "the radiant node or cluster [...] from which and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing," (GBM 106) itself a theft from Ruskin's definition of the Grotesque (5: 132). For Stokes, by contrast, "vortex" is something organic to the mythological origins of stone "cut by Agostino to show its original liquidity and condensation" in swirling whirlpools (1: 253). It has not been dried out by total separation from female moisture, though to splice Stokes and Lawrence together, rocking "by his hand to and from a breakwater" (1: 248), the "baby was restless on his mother's knee, clambering with his hands at the light" (Lawrence *Sons and Lovers* 50). It strives away from the maternal waters which continue to detain him.¹³ Espousal of such "naturalism" did not mean that Stokes was content to be old-fashioned, either.¹⁴ Like Aby Warburg's,¹⁵ Pound's taste for Agostino's "shallow eddying fluid" (IV 15) was somewhat pre-Raphaelite or Art Nouveau, whereas Stokes sees its many-sidedness more in the light of Cubist ambiguities of surface and depth, into and out of, rather than across, the plane.

More significantly, however, the dust-jacket of *Stones of Rimini* modernizes Piero's pair of warriors that W.H. Auden wrote to say he liked "v. much" on the cover of *The Quattro Cento* two years earlier.¹⁶ The second features a design by Ben Nicholson which Pound glibly dismissed in his review as "anything but fortuitous but the key not quite distinctly indicated" (Zinnes 168).¹⁷ The criticism reverberated angrily twenty two years later when Stokes rehearsed a letter of response to Davie's questions about his attitude to the *Cantos*: "because there is no key, no other form of projection, it is also diffuse, a rambling locked to precision in words."¹⁸ It was, however, another remark in that review that incensed Stokes more in his crucial letter of protest to Pound. Again he quotes Pound back at him: "He refused to be entangled by a set of axioms which my decade has erected for the totally different problem of sculpture 1910-1930,

13 See *Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, 1: plate 112.

14 For Stokes and fashion, though in a different respect, see Potts 44.

15 See Gombrich 258.

16 Postcard from Auden to Stokes with postmark 21 May 1932, Tate Gallery Archive.

17 For reproductions of the dust-jackets of both books, see the Adrian Stokes website: www.pstokes.demon.co.uk.

18 Notes in preparation for a reply to Adrian Stokes to a letter of enquiry from Donald David, 16 May 1956, Tate Gallery Archive. Stokes's letter is dated 30 May 1956, but Davie's subsequent reply is dated 22 May. These notes were not entirely incorporated into the letter Stokes sent to Davie.

in an attempt to interpret the use of stone in fifteenth-century building.”¹⁹ Then he comments: “Yes, and not only for that but in order to help create the sculpture of 1930–50.”²⁰ The fact of the matter is that in his review of Nicholson’s exhibition in 1933 Stokes had striven to make the carving idea of Renaissance Rimini a mythical origin for contemporary art within a psychoanalytic framework of new attitudes to gender, though they will not sound very new to us. In recent times Stokes had been luring Nicholson away from Continental biomorphic abstraction towards his own preference for organic carving.²¹ It was a process that eventuated in Nicholson’s flattened *October 2 1934 (white relief—triplets)* in the series he admitted Stokes had “predicted” and which came to stand as the creative idea of the triplets—“(one of course being expected)” — that Hepworth bore him four hours after its completion.²²

Stokes’s separate 1933 reviews of Nicholson’s and Barbara Hepworth’s recent exhibitions need to be taken in tandem since Stokes was pandering to the open secret in relevant society that despite their marriages to other people, Nicholson and Hepworth were lovers.²³ Stokes links their work through a web of complementary terms. Nicholson’s forms appear “debonair” as a result of coaxing, titillation, “confidence and command” (1: 307), whereas Hepworth’s show a complementary “gravity” and “pure complacency” through “repose” and “reassurance” (1: 309–310). Stokes’s task was to translate into polite terms the highly sexualized language of his analyst, which he warned potential readers in a book review of the same year, “portends an attack below the belt” (Stokes “Review of Melanie Klein” 527). In epitomizing Nicholson’s sculptured paintings Stokes had identified modelling with something akin to a female domestic sphere in which oil painting, for example, amounts only to “a sort of cookery with tints.” Carving attitude, meanwhile, is characterized as “a straightforward titillation of the picture plane which oil painting sometimes tends to override” (1: 307). The nuance of difference here is not just between male and female creativity, but between two kinds of masculine sexual behaviour: one involves the desire to gratify through foreplay, the other is a forcing without preliminaries that infringes the “rights” of the material. Oil painting may be too like female cooking or too like rape (or premature ejaculation). Likewise in the Hepworth review,

¹⁹ See Zinnes 167.

²⁰ Stokes to Pound, circa 1934, Tate Gallery Archive.

²¹ His book cover for *Stones of Rimini* is very much in contrast, for example, with the Miro-inspired cover, c. 1933 (*composition*), he did for the author’s copy of Amédée Ozenfant’s *La Peinture Moderne* (1925) and other works of this period. See Lewison 41; 96 n19; 124 plate 20; 212.

²² See Lewison 41; 144 plate 55; 96 n19; 218.

²³ Nash 613 drew attention to this by considerably pretending to avoid “research into the personal psychological sympathy between these two artists as too dangerously inquisitive and inevitably misleading.”

Stokes dissociates the true carver of either sex from the aggressive masculinity that Pound applauds in Gaudier's abstractionism. Pound would not have praised "*unstressed rounded shapes*" (1: 307, italics mine) as Stokes does Hepworth's. There are further repudiations of Pound's phallic violence in the review's vocabulary of "reassurance," "incontrovertible," "smooth and gradual," "certainty of smooth, caressed stone"—"poignant," "complacency," and "mature" (1: 309-310).

In a useful article of 1993 to which I am already indebted, Lisa Tickner wanted to identify Stokes's attitudes with Pound's. She identified a particular difficulty in Stokes's attempt to accommodate the masculine activity of carving to female artists:

he notes that "in common with the majority of 'advanced' carvers, Miss Hepworth has felt not only the block, but also its potential fruit, to be always feminine." This seems to be a problem... The whole cohort of "advanced carvers" is, in metaphor, ambiguously gendered as *inadequately* masculine: they carve (which is masculine) the stone (which is feminine) but with insufficient vigour and attack. Their wooing of the block produces (only) "feminine" progeny (though Miss Hepworth's carving is astonishingly "mature"). (59)

Stokes certainly ignored sculptures in Hepworth's exhibition whose stone could not possibly be mistaken as feminine. The rounded, graspable phallic shapes of *Figure* in pink ancaster stone and *Carving* in alabaster are real rejoinders to the inorganic geometry of Gaudier's *Phallic Head of Ezra Pound* in their daring expressions of female attraction to the masculine.²⁴ More explicit still is *Two Forms* in pink alabaster of 1933 in which a vaginal halter (marked with Hepworth's signature profile) unmistakably cradles a phallic wedge whose jaunty eye is also an urethral opening.²⁵ Where I think Tickner is wrong to identify Stokes with Pound's alleged mysogony is that his request for male offspring from the mother and child is actually a Freudian defence of Hepworth from the charge of female narcissism, though on somewhat narrow grounds.

The contemporary risk of defending either the art of Donatello as a homosexual or Hepworth as a woman is that both are tainted with narcissism, but in radically different ways. Stokes acclaimed Donatello for the dynamic sexual energy with which he broke through the emotional inhibition of Florentine artistic convention. Hepworth, like the other modernist sculptors, lacks this energy (ebullience), due to a "complacency" that Freud defined in a passage of

24 See Herbert Read *Barbara Hepworth* plates 24 a and b. Gaudier's Head is reproduced in Compton plate 58.

25 The sculpture is reproduced in Gale and Stephens facing 43.

his essay that has understandably offended feminists: "Women... develop a certain self-contentment which compensates them for the social restrictions that are imposed upon them in their choice of object. Strictly speaking, it is only themselves that such women love with an intensity comparable to that of the man's love for them" ("On Narcissism" 11:82). The famous exception, of course, is in their roles as mothers in which even "narcissistic women" may find "a road which leads to complete object-love. In the child which they bear, a part of their own body confronts them like an extraneous object, to which, starting out from their narcissism, they can then give complete object-love" (83). As Freud elsewhere says, this is especially true "if the baby is a *little boy* who brings the longed-for penis with him" (*New Introductory Lectures* 2: 162; italics mine).²⁶ Hence Stokes's praise of Hepworth for "the child which the mother owns with all her weight, a child that is of the block yet separate, beyond her womb yet of her being" (1: 310).

Stokes had made a similar attempt to defend Donatello from the charge of narcissism in *The Quattro Cento*: "the sculptor's attendant statuary are her lovers and sons rather than her daughters or a mere projection of herself" (1: 118). Henry Moore had stated in a letter of 1924 that "in the influence of Donatello I think I see the beginning of the end—Donatello was a modeller, and it seems to me that it is modelling that has sapped the manhood out of Western sculpture" (quoted in Hall 56). The rumour of Donatello's degenerative homosexuality was intensified in 1929 when Albert Wesselski published a collection of documents from the 1470s which named Donatello in several homosexual anecdotes from that time.²⁷ Pound takes the same line as Moore in his review of *The Quattro Cento*: "you might... maintain that sculptural rot came in with Donatello" (Zinnes 224). By the time of *Stones of Rimini* Stokes had given up on Donatello and opposed him to Agostino as modeller to carver (1: 242).

The problem was very much the over-identification of pigment or stone with caressable "meat" that Pound had condemned as "the stupidity of Rubens" in the 1928 Cavalcanti essay (Anderson 208; 207). Hepworth's bill of health was clean on this score at least. Despite the degree to which she fails to make her stone offspring pointedly masculine and hence more separate from herself, she partakes neither in what Pound called a loss of values "due usually to lumping and to lack of dissociation" (Anderson 207) nor in the disassociated abstraction which Stokes felt Pound and Gaudier were guilty of: "So poignant are these

²⁶ Cf. an even more pertinent passage for Stokes's purposes in *Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis* 1: 242, where Freud writes that the mother and son relationship "provides the purest examples of an unchangeable affection, unimpaired by any egoistic considerations."

²⁷ See Janson 85.

shapes of stone, that in spite of the degree in which a more representational aim and treatment have been avoided, no one could mistake the underlying subject of the group." Stokes asserts at the end of his review of Hepworth that "her carving is astonishingly mature: whereas the appreciation and critique of sculpture remain fatuous" (1: 310). This is not, I think, as Alex Potts has argued, an admission of failure on Stokes's part (46), but on the contrary a castigation of Pound's lack of psychoanalytically informed thought about the delicate torsions of masculinity and femininity in Oedipal representation. "Carving" in the larger sense, he said in *Stones*, applies when "one feels that not the figure, but the stone through the figure, has come to life" (1: 230). Pound attacks illusionism with abstractionism, but Stokes regards them both as modelling.

What did Pound make of all this? He requested Stokes to take a set of photographs for a new book on Gaudier that only ever appeared as "Gaudier: a Post-script 1934" in which sculpture amounts to a kind of eugenic surgery:

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What we call social necessity is nothing but the temporary inconvenience caused us by the heaped-up imbecilities of other men... which sodden mass it is up to the artist... to carve into a fitting shape, as he hacks off unwanted corners of marble. (Zinnes 197)

Stokes did not carry out the photography himself but sent a beautiful ex-girlfriend and Slade-trained sculptor, Mollie Higgins, round to do it. Meanwhile, Stokes had praised Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure*, which, being made of concrete, somewhat hovers between modelling and carving: "her long body is in such unison with the boat that her propped-up head, as though the topmost section of a rudder oar, guides, steers and governs" (1: 312).²⁸ Some an image of female authority probably reflects Stokes's admiration of his analyst and his opposition to Pound.

Why am I sceptical about Stokes's concern for the feminine? Partly because of Klein's essay on depression in 1935 in which Stokes makes another appearance, though here her remarks are collective:

In some patients who had turned away from their mother in dislike or hate [...] I have found that there existed in their minds nevertheless a beautiful picture... but one which was felt to be a *picture* of her only, not her real self. The real object was felt to be unattractive—really an injured, incurable and therefore dreaded person. ("A Contribution" 290)

One wonders about the counter-transference here because Klein was herself receiving treatment for depression at the time (Grosskurth 218-219). Is she

²⁸ See Herbert Read *Henry Moore* 1: plates 69 and 69a.

analyzing Stokes's unreal picture of his mother or unconsciously picturing his insight into her depression? One wonders about it again when she resorts to Stokesian carving metaphors to indicate a way out of depression through "splitting [of the imagos]... carried out on planes which gradually become increasingly nearer and nearer to reality" (Klein "A Contribution" 308). Stokes derived much benefit from Klein, including an improvement in his relations with women, but one wonders if he made a gift of his sexuality to her for motives of professional performance in which rivalry with male critics was predominant? In the unpublished remainder of a late interview he made an astonishingly frank admission: "It was as an *appreciator* that I took to writing about art. I was forced to be analyst to enhance my reputation. I am waging a war with the psychoanalysts' approach to art. They don't understand it."²⁹ This matches the reason that he gave to an old schoolfriend before his analysis began: "I want more power."³⁰ Plotting Stokes's relationships against the developments of his writings during these years allows us to see the ambiguous role that psychoanalysis played for him during these years. On the one hand it served him as a powerful laboratory for inventing a new sculptural aesthetic in which feminine values were respected, while on the other hand it allowed him to pursue the cultural ambition of defeating an older male rival such as Pound in the vexatious realm of aesthetic criticism.



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²⁹ Unpublished section of a transcript in the Tate Gallery Archive of an interview with Adrian Stokes by Guy Burn otherwise published in Burn 2.

³⁰ Macleod interview.

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