







**I Feather god from the Pacific, first mentioned eighteenth century. Represents, or could be inhabited by Ku, the god of war, or, occasionally, by Lono, the god of rain. Basketry sculpture, clothed in feathers, with mother of pearl for eyes and dog teeth for the mouth; 63 cm (height). London: British Museum (AOA HAW 78). Photo: Courtesy of the British Museum, London.**

a statue – Théophile Gautier, perhaps, who famously declared that he preferred statues to women, and marble to living bodies – or kisses a painting takes a work of art as the object for feelings that should be reserved for living beings.

In this article I would like to suggest a different account of such responses, arguing first that Alfred Gell’s book on the anthropology of art, *Art and Agency* of 1998, offers a new departure in understanding such responses by concentrating not on the art works that elicit such responses, but on the agency they exert. I argue that even when such responses are considered in terms of Gell’s view of agency, they still only make sense if living presence response is understood as an experience, the experience of a work of art becoming alive. And finally, to understand such experiences historically, that is, to connect Gell’s ahistorical, systematic, anthropological account of the agency of art with an art-historical approach, I suggest that the sublime offers a way of both articulating the experience of living presence and of understanding the history of such responses. To illustrate all this I will use a series of living presence responses to classical sculpture, taken mainly from the eighteenth century, from the decades when the traditional praise of lifelikeness based on classical rhetoric was replaced by a rejection of such

responses in favour of aesthetic attitudes that favour disinterested enjoyment of the formal qualities of art.

### **Art Considered as Agency**

Since its posthumous publication, Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency* has been both hailed as a major new departure in the anthropology of art, and dismissed as a deceptively complicated *jeu d’esprit*, whose intricacy fascinates its readers in the same ways as the Trobriand canoe prows that Gell analyses acted upon their Polynesian viewers.<sup>4</sup> But it also offers a new way of understanding living presence response because it singles out precisely that aspect of the interaction between works of art and their viewers that makes them similar to living beings: their agency, the power to influence their viewers, to make them act as if they are engaging, not with dead matter but with living persons.

Because Gell’s is an anthropological theory of art, his stress is on the art nexus, the network of social relations in which art works are embedded.<sup>5</sup> It considers objects of art in terms neither of their formal or aesthetic value, nor their appreciation within the culture that produced them. Nor does it consider them as signs, visual codes to be deciphered or symbolic communications. Instead, Gell defines art objects in performative terms as systems of actions, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. Art works thus considered are the equivalents of persons, more precisely, the equivalents of social agents. To understand why and how art objects exercise such influence on their viewers, Gell argues for art as a special kind of technology. In an earlier article he called works of art ‘devices for securing the acquiescence of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are



**2 Head of the emperor Augustus, Roman, c. 27–25 BCE, found in Meroe, Sudan. Bronze, with inlaid eyes of mother of pearl; 47.75 cm (height). London: British Museum (GR 1911.9-11). Photo: Courtesy of the British Museum, London.**

enmeshed'.<sup>6</sup> Technology fascinates the viewer because it is the result of barely comprehensible virtuosity which exemplifies an ideal or magical efficacy that people try hard to achieve in other domains (plate 1).

Gell's main concepts are agency, index, prototype, artist, and recipient. Agency is mediated by indexes, that is material objects which motivate responses, inferences or interpretations. Indexes can stand in a variety of relations with their prototypes, artists, and recipients. Prototypes are the objects or persons that indexes represent or stand for, mimetically or non-mimetically, visually or non-visually. Recipients are those who are (or are intended to be) affected by the indexes. Artists are those persons considered to be the immediate cause or author of the existence and properties of the index. For example, the emperor Augustus was the prototype for the index which is now known as the Prima Porta statue; those people attending a court case in a basilica where one of the many copies of this statue stood, and which they treated as if the emperor was present in person, are the recipients; its artist's technical ability to create the illusion of lifelikeness by suggesting movement, sight and speech fills the public with awe and admiration. But in an ironic reversal, Sudanese conquerors of the Roman colony of Meroe severed

the head of another statue of Augustus and buried it beneath the steps of a native temple dedicated to Victory, to lie permanently under the feet of its Meroan captors (plate 2).<sup>7</sup> Agency is achieved through technical virtuosity. It can enchant the viewer: 'The technology of enchantment is founded on the enchantment of technology.'<sup>8</sup> But although Gell mainly discussed technical virtuosity in the handling of material, other varieties of technical refinement may also achieve agency. Stylistic virtuosity, and in particular the artifice that results in vivid lifelikeness, is an instance.

Using Gell's theory to configure the social networks in which artworks exert such agency on their viewers that they believe the work of art is a living presence is useful in helping us to identify the actors involved, the network of relationships in which the viewer becomes enmeshed, and the effects of agency on the viewer's behaviour or beliefs. It thus helps to integrate the analysis of living presence response in a much wider range of anthropological and psychological enquiry.

The living presence response that a work of art elicits can thus be redefined as a kind of agency. But the two ideas do not overlap entirely. I would argue that there is a defining characteristic of living presence response that is not covered by Gell's theory: its experiential character. *Art and Agency* maps the ways in which indexes make viewers do things (in the widest sense of the word), and this mapping depends heavily on the cognitive psychology of Pascal Boyer.<sup>9</sup> But it does not engage in much detail with the actual experience of those affected by the index. Yet it is precisely the experience of a work of art that turns out to be alive, of the creeping awareness or sudden appearance of the inanimate as an animated, living being that defines living presence response, making it resistant to any form of scientific explanation, and at the same time profoundly unsettling.



**3 Giustiniani Minerva, Roman copy after Greek original of the late fifth century BCE. Marble; 2.04 m (height). Rome: Vatican Museums (MC 278, formerly in the Giustiniani Collection). Photo: Centrum voor Kunsthistorische documentatie, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.**

### The Experience of Living Presence

Most people, at some stage of their life or in some situation, have reacted to, or treated objects as if they were living beings: that is, persons that act upon them share a significant number of characteristics with living beings such as sentience, motion, sexual attractiveness, the power to affect the viewer emotionally, or the power to act or influence actions and beliefs.<sup>10</sup> This is no new observation; nor is it new to say that such response to inanimate objects as if they were animate, acting persons, often causes embarrassment to the viewer involved, or becomes the object of derision or rejection. While in Rome in 1787 Goethe observed how viewers kissed the hand of the statue of the Giustiniani Minerva (plate 3). The wife of the guardian asked him whether he had a girlfriend that looked like the statue, ‘since the statue attracted him so much’; and despite his disdain for such adoration of a statue, where there should only be brotherly admiration for a human spirit, he confessed that he did not want to leave the statue.<sup>11</sup> That other author of an *Italian Journey*, Johann Gottfried Herder, moved in his unusually frank description of the statue of a hermaphrodite in the Villa Borghese from an analysis of the way the sculptor had represented his theme to a description of a living, breathing body that aroused him sexually, but did not hide the mixture of fascination and discomfort he felt while gazing at the statue (plate 4).<sup>12</sup>

These cases of living presence response are not unique, but what distinguishes them from most others is that they articulate the ambivalent feelings such responses cause. This points to an important aspect of living presence response that has received comparatively little attention in the fast-growing literature on this subject: such response is not simply behaviour triggered by inanimate objects. Put in these reductive terms, this type of response becomes totally incomprehensible, because we know that works of art are made of lifeless matter, and that therefore reacting to them as if they were alive can only be a mistake, delusion, projection, or an expression of idolatry, fetishism, magical thinking or hysteria. But the feelings of ambivalence, derision or shame I have mentioned indicate that living presence response is not exclusively a matter of behaviour. Instead, I would argue, living presence response can be understood adequately only when thought of primarily as the viewer’s *experience* of an artwork coming alive. It is this experience that causes the feelings of discomfort, shame and so forth, which indicate not only how the subject feels about such response, but also, and primarily, that he or she is conscious of such response, is experiencing it. Only when the locus of living presence is moved from the object to the viewer’s experience can such responses become understandable. Viewers react to works of art as if they are living and acting persons not because they have come alive for some miraculous or supernatural reason, or because these spectators suffer from cognitive or semiotic confusion – which is a way of redefining living presence response, but not of explaining it – but because they *experience* the work of art as living. The next question

then is, what kind of experience is this, and what is its relation to the works of art that excite it?

### Living Presence as Experience or Agency

One way of defining living presence response is by singling out the phenomenon in which viewers report that the work of art looks at them, speaks to them, makes them do things. In other words, like real living persons the works act upon the viewer; they exercise agency. Put in these terms living presence response becomes similar to the agency enacted by the indexes or their prototypes in Gell's theory.

Gell rejected most existing anthropologies of art because in his view they apply western aesthetics and art theory to non-western art. Anthropology for him was not part of the humanities but a social science, studying 'the social context of art production, circulation and reception'. Anthropology cannot be an aesthetic, because it should not concern itself with what Gell sees as the main task of aesthetics, the evaluation or criticism of art. Aesthetics for him is not a universal cultural discipline. The desire to study the art of other cultures in aesthetic terms tells us more about the value attached in the west to beauty and the enjoyment of art than anything about the art of other cultures. It is part of 'our own ideology and quasi religious veneration of art as aesthetic talismans'. An anthropology of art therefore should not consist of the application of aesthetics to non-western art, but of anthropology to art, which for Gell means the study of the network of social relationships in which art works are made, circulate and exert their agency. The task of the anthropology of art is to 'explain why social agents in particular contexts produce the responses they do to a particular work of art'. It is Gell's stroke of genius to develop such an anthropology by replacing social agents by art objects. His anthropology of art is an anthropology of the agency of objects.<sup>13</sup>

One could argue that by replacing persons by art works as the core of the art nexus and the object of anthropological study, Gell's anthropology of art is in fact one big living presence response. But it avoids the paradox underlying such a response because it is built upon a definition of personhood whose defining characteristic is agency.<sup>14</sup> The core of living presence response in Gell's theory is thus transformed from the *explanandum*, the problem to be explained, into the

**4 Borghese Hermaphrodite, Roman copy of a bronze original of the mid-second century BCE by Polycles; mattress restored by Gianlorenzo Bernini, 1620. Marble; 1.47 m (length). Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Centrum voor Kunsthistorische documentatie, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.**



explanans, its explanation. From this perspective the novelty and explanatory power of his theory of art as agency resides in its development of a theoretical account of the field of social relationships in which art works are made, viewed and commissioned. As Gell put it himself, it is concerned with their 'production, circulation, and reception'. Gell's ideas provide a theoretical framework with global scope for how art can act on people, one that offers an explanation for the paradox that people believe inanimate objects share qualities with living beings when they are perfectly aware of the difference between dead matter and living beings in the biological sense. That is, Gell takes as his starting point the logical and factual impossibility of inanimate matter being animate, and solves it by arguing that objects can indeed be seen to possess considerable characteristics of animacy if they are considered not as living beings but as agents.

His explanation of idolatry illustrates this. He argues that the distinction between animacy and inanimacy does not overlap with that between being alive and not being alive. Devotees believe, for instance, that the idol into whose eyes they gaze also looks at them, just as one can say, and see, that a camera looks at something without claiming that it is alive. That is, idolatry can be understood if a distinction is made between the attribution of human characteristics to an animate object and the belief that the object is alive in a biological sense. So, if animacy does not need to be defined in biological terms, what is the mysterious capacity worshippers believe the cult objects possesses? How do they reconcile their awareness that the objects of their devotion are dead matter, but at the same time their belief that they can act, listen and see? The solution is to consider the idols as *social agents*, because social agency does not depend on biological life, agents in this sense do not have to be alive, that is, be sentient, able to move or possess a metabolism.<sup>15</sup> Money is the supreme example of this, but one can also think of the effectiveness of performative speech and of official documents like passports, or the functions of heraldic or military insignia. All these objects or acts make those who see or hear them act, but they are not therefore considered as living beings.

This is a very elegant solution, but one that depends on Gell's decision to concentrate almost exclusively on behaviour, and, more fundamentally, on his refusal to differentiate between aesthetic and religious experience. Because of this refusal Gell's solution is both extremely illuminating and overly reductive from an art-historical point of view. For Gell there is no difference between the behaviour of the art lover in front of Mondriaan's *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* and the devotee in front of a religious image or object. But of course Kant, Schiller and many other proponents of the aesthetic experience would argue that there is a fundamental difference, not to say opposition and incompatibility between the two, and that aesthetic experience can only come into being once the true character of idolatry has been revealed, that is as the enslavement of the rational mind by superstition.

Another defect which arises from this explanation's character as an anthropological theory is that there is no historical dimension. Gell's theory operates in the here and now, but does not consider whether viewers' responses, the objects or their agency have developed or changed over the course of time. He analyses living presence response by means of a distinction between animacy and agency, but does not systematically investigate whether this is how people actually thought about their response in sixteenth-century Italy or twentieth-century India. From an historical point of view it is not enough to concentrate on behaviour, whether of the viewer, maker or the art work itself, and consider only how they act within the social networks they are part of, because very few

living presence respondents thought about their reactions in these terms. Gell's concentration on an object's agency within its art nexus cannot account for the particular kinds of response individual works of art trigger in some viewers but not in others. A conceptual analysis like Gell's solves the logical conundrum of such responses but does not make them go away. His account makes it impossible to dismiss these reactions as cognitive confusion, paraphilia or illogical primitivism. Rather, by understanding them conceptually he has cleared the way for a historical and artistic understanding of such responses. Gell himself proceeded to analyse agency in terms of present-day cognitive psychology and philosophy and arrived at two basic ways of understanding how inanimate matter can be transformed into agents, one of which is simply by claiming or stipulating such a role, the other by assuming a hidden agent.<sup>16</sup>

Here I will favour a more historical approach, and consider how, or in what terms, viewers attributed agency to art at particular moments of history. My starting point is to look at such responses as experiences. At first sight *Art and Agency* seems to offer little scope for a study of living presence response in terms of experience. The only extended discussion of the recipient's experience of agency occurs when Gell describes what he calls 'the primordial kind of artistic agency': fascination. This feeling – a logical bind – is caused by gazing at a virtuoso work of art (Gell gives an example of his own fascination with Vermeer's *Lacemaker*) while the viewer, because of his or her own attempts to create an art work, realizes both that such a work is possible and part of the viewer's world and that it is the result of a virtuosity that far surpasses any that the viewer might possess. This may be a central aspect of many living presence responses, although possibly the source of fascination is artistry and virtuoso craftsmanship rather than the contrast between the technical virtuosity of the artist and the limited artistic powers of the viewer.<sup>17</sup> In any case technical virtuosity certainly does not account for every kind of living presence response. When people gave the Madonna of Impruneta money for a new dress for instance, or reported that the Madonna of Auxerres dissuaded her viewers from idolatry, the virtuosity of the artist played no role in such a response.<sup>18</sup>

But perhaps Gell's starting points are not as unchallengeable as they seem. In the first place his definition of aesthetics is too narrow: it reduces aesthetics to the criticism or evaluation of art, but – not surprisingly given his social scientific ethos – completely ignores its other established part, the study of the experience of art and beauty. Second, behaviour cannot be fully understood without taking into account the consciousness of the person whose actions are studied. This suggests that a Gellian anthropology of art could be devised whose main subject is not the agency of art works defined as social behaviour but the response to the agency of these objects, as may be observed in social interactions defined in the broadest terms – behaviour as well as verbal and visual accounts of such response. Art description for instance is an intensely social genre. It is not only art criticism or an account of an artistic or aesthetic experience, but also an interaction with the artwork, fellow viewers, or fellow readers. And, although Gell would probably not have agreed with this, I would argue that such accounts can only be understood by taking into account the experience behind them, not least because it is in studying these experiences in their historical context that art history and a Gellian anthropology of art may meet.

One way of seeing whether the viewer's experience can be integrated into Gell's analysis of the art nexus is by extending the nature of the response by the recipient, whether the latter subsequently turns out to be an agent or a patient. One of Gell's



simplest relationships, Index-A à Recipient-P is the ‘elementary formula for passive spectatorship’. As Gell puts it, ‘whoever allows his or her attention to be attracted to an index, and submits to its power, appeal, or fascination, is a patient, responding to the agency inherent in the index. This agency may be physical, spiritual, political, etc. as well as “aesthetic”.’<sup>19</sup> Note that Gell defines the range of possible impacts of the artwork on the viewer very widely, leaving room both for action and experience. Gell might therefore consider the proposed extension of the recipient’s reaction as superfluous: only the actions resulting from these experiences count for the Gellian anthropologist. But I would argue that, at least for the study of art, the recipient’s experience needs to be included and to be differentiated, in order for Gell’s diagrams to retain some explanatory value.

Robin Osborne has recently argued in his discussion of Gell’s treatment of ‘Slasher Mary’s’ 1914 attack on the *Rokeby Venus* that his division of the world into agents and patients is not enough, the character of that art nexus also needs to be defined because otherwise Gell’s tree diagrams lose their coherence – and I would add, they are not complete. In Gell’s diagram of Mary Richardson’s treatment of Velázquez’ painting, the main arrows connecting the actors have emotions added to them: violence and outrage. But, as Osborne shows, Gell’s analysis elides the role Venus’ beauty plays in this art nexus, both for Velázquez and for Richardson. She did not put a knife to any old painting of the goddess, but to this particular one, and placed her strokes with great intensity in her back, and near her heart. In other words, the art nexus is built here not around the idea of beauty, embedded in the name ‘Venus’, but around one individual version, that by Velázquez. As Osborne puts it, ‘the relationship of resemblance that an index has to a prototype can and does have a role to play in determining its agency’.<sup>20</sup> More particularly, the aesthetic aspect of that relationship is vital in determining the agency of an index. Otherwise it cannot be explained on the basis of Gell’s theory why one painting of Venus does not elicit such violent response whereas another does.

The aesthetic relationship between index and prototype has to be taken into consideration, but so has the kind of response it excites. Gell himself tacitly seems to admit this by adding various kinds of emotions to his arrows in the tree diagram of what he called the ‘Slasher Venus’. Reasoning along the lines of Osborne’s argument, it could be argued that just as the aesthetic nature of the relation of the index to the prototype needs to be differentiated, the nature of the response, and that includes the nature of the experience of agency, needs to be differentiated. If recipients did not experience indexes in different ways, there would be no way of accounting for the differences in agency exercised by them: most viewers simply gaze or stare at the *Rokeby Venus*, but Richardson felt compelled to take a knife to the painting.

If reacting to, or treating works of art as if they are persons acting on the viewer can be conceived as a particular kind of experience, the next question then becomes, what kind of experience this is. And, if looking at this issue may help to connect Gell’s anthropological analysis of art as agency with the historical study of art, the obvious question to ask now seems to be: when was living presence response considered for the first time primarily in terms of an experience? To begin answering this question an historical detour is first needed, to look at what is in my view the largest body of reflection on living presence response before the 1750s: classical rhetoric. Doing so will allow us to obtain a better understanding of what happened in the eighteenth century, when experience became a central feature in discussions of living works of art.

### **The Experience of Living Presence Considered Historically: Living Presence and *Enargeia***

Classical rhetoric, it could well be argued, offered the first European reflection on works of art acting on their viewers as if they were living beings, or at least on how such agency and response could be achieved, both in oratory and in the visual arts. Treatment of these issues occurred in discussions of *enargeia* (vividness) and its Latin equivalents *evidentia* or *illustratio*, and *energeia* (actuality). The Greek *enargeia*, derived from *argos*, shining light, meant clearness, distinctness or vividness, and by extension putting something before the audience's eyes by highlighting it. In Aristotle's *Rhetorica* (1411b24 ff) it is defined together with the etymologically unrelated term *energeia* in his discussion of particularly persuasive stylistic strategies. A vivid representation (*enargeia*) puts what is discussed before the eyes of the audience by using words that signify actuality (*energeia*), in particular by using metaphor that represents inanimate objects as animate. Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and Longinus all considered *enargeia* or vivid, lifelike representation as one of the most important means of persuasion.<sup>21</sup> In his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian argues that 'oratory fails of its full effect ... if its appeal is merely to the hearing ... and not displayed in its living truth to the eyes of the mind'.<sup>22</sup> Persuasion is at its most effective when the viewer believes he or she is in the presence of the person or scene described. Classical rhetoric is distinguished by a constant stress on the power of visual persuasion, authors are always advising students that the orator should act on the eyes not the ears of the public, and should excite vivid images before the eyes of their minds. 'Vividness ... makes us seem not so much to narrate the actual scene as to exhibit it, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.'<sup>23</sup> In some of the more suggestive formulations of this interest in vivid visuality Quintilian literally calls figures of speech such as metaphor or metonymy the gestures and face of oratory and 'the lights or as it were the eyes of eloquence'.<sup>24</sup> The result would not be persuasion by force of rational argument, but fascination. Cicero and Quintilian were not unique in this. Longinus as well strongly develops the experience of the sublime in terms of an experience of extreme vividness.<sup>25</sup>

The brilliance – another visual metaphor, caught by Cicero when he called striking arrangements of words 'quasi lumina',<sup>26</sup> almost lights or even eyes – lent to speech by figures of thought and speech ultimately results in an illusion of life. In the visual metaphors Quintilian and Cicero use, speech becomes alive, it has hands that gesture, eyes that see and a face that expresses emotion. Without figures speech is lifeless and without force, but if rightly used they endow a speech with life and the power to act on the public. This could be achieved both by the use of figures of speech or thought and by what would now be called narrative techniques, such as detailed description constructed with telling details, the introduction of an eye witness, or a sudden address to the public. If successful, speech appears to dissolve into what it describes. Expressed in such terms the persuasive power of vivid lifelikeness comes very close to Alfred Gell's account of agency.

#### **'Laocoön I am'**

There is one group of viewers' response that illustrates this experience of representation dissolving into what it represents very well, the poems inspired by the recovery of the Hellenistic statue of Laocoön (plate 5). When the statue of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons was dug up on 1 January 1506 near the Coliseum it caused an enormous stir, galvanizing archaeologists, architects and poets into action. One theme is very prominent in the immense amount of poetry



**5 Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus, Laocoön Group, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original of c. 200 BCE. Marble; 1.84 m (height). Rome: Vatican Museums (Museo Pio-Clementino, Octagon). Photo: Centrum voor Kunsthistorische documentatie, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.**

written in reaction to this event: the statue, though made of marble, lives. In one of the first and best known Laocoön poems, *De Laocoontis statua* by Jacopo Sadoletto, the sculptors are praised because they were able to render rigid stone animate with living figures and endow the marble with living senses.<sup>27</sup> As a result the beholder sees movement, anger and grief, and almost hears the groans of Laocoön and his sons. This may be described as a not very original example of the cliché of the work of art that seems to breathe. But many poems go much further. The poem by Elio Lampridio Cervo opens by exclaiming that ‘the stone image lies true colours’, in an interesting

ungrammatical transitive use of the verb ‘to lie’, which here takes an object, viz. the true colours of the living body.<sup>28</sup>

Evangelista Maddaleni de’Capodiferro’s Latin poem offers an even more original, and very subtle, take on this topos. In the opening lines it is not the poet, but Laocoön himself who speaks: ‘Laocoön I am’. Then in the course of the poem the speaker is transformed from the person into the statue: ‘you will say, when you look at me, that the pains are real for the stone, and that death and fear are not fictive for my sons’.<sup>29</sup>

A short poem by Antonio Tebaldi offers yet another account of the statue’s agency on the beholder. The statue again speaks: ‘I am Laocoön, so expressive and alive/that, if you are not made of the material/out of which I am made and my sons, you will make of your eyes a sorrowful river’.<sup>30</sup> This statue is so lifelike that looking at it the viewer, if he is a human being, is overcome by pity: ‘I, Laocoön, though a stone statue that is nonetheless able to speak, will not cry, but you, living human being, will.’

In Sadoletto’s poem already mentioned, another dimension is added to the viewing experience, the sublime, in the sense of a combination of terror and aesthetic enjoyment caused by a sight that the mind cannot really encompass:

What shall I speak of first? ...  
 Real agonies of stone that really dies?  
 The mind recoils, and the mute image strikes  
 The heart with a pity joined with no small terror. ...  
 Scarce can the eyes support the sight of cruel  
 Death and dreadful fates.<sup>31</sup>

The poem by Tebaldi quoted above ends with what many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists of the sublime and uncanny would call the most terrifying sight of all: the return of the dead from their grave under the earth: 'Now I rise again ... and leave the dark night.'<sup>32</sup>

These poems describe not the statue, but what is represented. They do not single out for praise the work of art as an aesthetic object, for instance, the way the marble is handled, or the composition of its figure. Instead in many of these, it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty whether the poet is addressing the statue, the unfortunate priest, or the priest through the statue. In some cases the speaker in these poems has become Laocoön. Moreover, this blurring of the boundaries between the statue and what (or whom) it represents, is intentional, and often the *conchetto* at the basis of the poem. Its intense projection of life onto dead matter also recalls the interaction between believers and the statues they adore described by Gell to clarify the distinction between animacy and life.

### Living Presence Response and the Sublime

Rhetorical analyses of *enargeia* tell us much about how orators, artists and their public thought about the technique of dissolving the boundaries between representation and what it represents. Rhetoric also gave viewers a vocabulary with which to put into words what they saw and felt when looking at art, as the poems on the *Laocoön* show. They all formulate the intense presence of the statue by stating in one way or another how it acts upon their viewers: they are transformed from living, articulate beings into mute stone, or, conversely, from unfeeling hearts of stone into fully realized humanity, full of pity with their fellow sufferers. These viewers are spellbound by the statue, and the result is what may be described as a transformation, or even a temporary loss of the rational, reflective powers of the self.

To help us come a little closer to such past understandings of this experience Longinus' *On the sublime* offers some clues. Sublime speech, as he declares in the opening section, springs like a thunderbolt or whirlwind on the audience and carries them away.<sup>33</sup> One of the ways to create sublime speech is visualization or *phantasia*, the speaker's power to see in the mind's eye what he or she is saying, and thereby to make the audience see it as well. Its purpose is to excite the emotions of the public and sweep them along. But what all the examples Longinus gives show, is that what speaker and audience see before their mind's eye is living beings. This is particularly clear from the two examples from Greek tragedy quoted by Longinus, Aeschylus' line 'the palace was possessed, the house went bacchanal', and Euripides' 'the whole mountain went bacchanal with them'. These recall Aristotle's observation that effective metaphors animate the inanimate.<sup>34</sup> In fact it could be argued that practically all examples in the surviving text derive their effectiveness from *enargeia* leading to a close identification of what is presented as the author's *phantasia*, put into speech as vividly as possible and as a result seen by the audience. This is what eighteenth-century versions of the sublime would identify as one of the mainsprings of the impact of sublime art.<sup>35</sup>



**6 Antoine Coysevox, Statue of Louis XIV, 1682. Bronze; 1.80 m (height). Paris: Place des Victoires. Photo: Author.**

The effect of this vivid grandeur of speech is that the audience is carried away. Demosthenes' readers are struck with amazement: *phantasia* not only persuades the audience, but makes them the slave of the speaker; and metaphors, if rightly chosen, carry away all rational awareness.<sup>36</sup> The sublime can also be observed in the Laocoön poems discussed before, even though they do not explicitly mention it. They all record an experience of extreme vividness and almost supernatural powers of representation,

in which the sculptor's dead medium comes alive, and the viewer or poet is carried away by the power of the sculptor to visualize the death of the Trojan priest.<sup>37</sup>

In Boileau's translation of *Peri hupsous* or *On the Sublime*, published in 1674 as *Traité du sublime ou du merveilleux dans le discours*, the experiential aspects of the sublime move to the centre, because he explicitly distinguished between sublime style and the techniques belonging to it, and the sublime as an artistic quality or experience.<sup>38</sup> This he makes particularly clear in the *Dixième Réflexion*, in which he defends Longinus' quote of Genesis as an example of the sublime: 'And God said, let there be light; and there was light'. His critics had argued that these words are too simple and lack grandeur, but Boileau replied that Longinus did not mean a sublime, that is grand, intricate or elevated style of speaking, but the effect sublime speech, or acts, or even silence, have on the audience:

One must know that Longinus did not mean by the *Sublime* what the rhetoricians call a sublime style, but the extraordinary and wonderful which makes a work lift, enrapture, transport. The sublime style always needs grand words, but the *Sublime* can be found in a single thought, a single figure, a single way of putting things.<sup>39</sup>

By arguing so strongly for a distinction between a sublime style and the sublime effect, Boileau not only seems to imply that the sublime is an experience, but also that in this experience the representation dissolves into the presence of what is represented. This is particularly clear in his repeated mention of silence as a particularly effective instance of the sublime, the absence of any utterance, and the lack of any representational intention this suggests, draws all attention to the presence of the person who refuses to speak. Such sublime silence also opened the way for painters to attain the same sublimity orators could achieve. Félibien, for instance, praised Poussin's power to give his paintings the efficacy of sacred eloquence by

applying the rhetorical precepts listed under the heading of *actio*, gesture and attitude indicating elevated thoughts and noble emotions.<sup>40</sup> Boileau also mentions painting in this context of silent sublimity. Figures of speech are among the most effective means of achieving the sublime but they are best hidden by pathos so that the listener does not note them. The intensity of pathetic speech draws so much attention to itself that the skill deployed in using figures remains hidden, just as the intensity of the sun hides lesser lights. The same happens in painting:

In fact, when one gives colour to several things drawn on the same plane, and adds light and shadow, it is certain that what first presents itself to the view will be the luminous, because of its great brilliance, which makes it seem to come out of the painting, and to approach us somehow.<sup>41</sup>

The sublime experience is based on the effective use of figures. This dissolves the representational character of painting or speech and transforms art into living beings. In a discussion of the agency of royal statues, the seventeenth-century writer on sculpture François Lemée, who was involved with the design of the Place des Victoires in Paris, observed that there is a very widespread tendency among viewers of statues to confuse the representation with what it represents, the *figurant* with the *figuré*, in this case Coysevox' statue of Louis XIV with the King himself (plate 6). Statues, because they represent a definite situation, movement or action, transform their material to the extent that their materiality is no longer perceived as such. Instead of bronzes, viewers only speak of statues, that is, the figure, the statue as a material representation, is often confused with the person or object represented.<sup>42</sup> Speaking in rhetorical terms one could say that statues can achieve such a degree of vivid liveliness or *enargeia* that the representation dissolves into the living being who is represented.<sup>43</sup>

A century later, Etienne Falconet mused that the sculptor would only do half of his duty if he only expressed the form of his subject without adding the feelings that go with it: 'To express the form of bodies, but without adding feeling, is to do one's duty only by half.' The true sublime in sculpture resides in a union of feeling and stone form: 'To fuse these two parts (but what a difficulty!), that is the sublime in sculpture.'<sup>44</sup>

### **Eighteenth-Century Versions of the Sublime**

The most far-reaching ways of conceiving living presence and its agency in terms of the sublime can be found in the transformation of the rhetorical theory of style into an aesthetic theory of sublime experience by Burke, Lawson, and Usher. Although instances of living presence response occur rarely in eighteenth-century writing on the sublime, I would argue that many of these texts address the underlying mechanism leading to the experience of inanimate matter appearing to be, or being treated as, animate, the dissolution of the representation into what it represents. William Duff, for instance, repeats the classical, Longinian, view, that the orator or artist, in order to move the passions of his audience, must represent his own feelings in the strongest and liveliest way, and be swept away himself in order to sweep along the public.<sup>45</sup> David Fordyce described the imagination as the 'power to present to us various images of things, and make them act on us ... it shows us things as if even present to its very tense ... [to] allure, seize and transport the hearer'.<sup>46</sup> Stephen Lawson described some figures of speech – hyperbole, apostrophe, personification (the latter two attributing life to the object described and much used in the Laocoön poems quoted above) – not as an artificial repertoire of stylistic techniques to be

acquired by study, but as the natural and universal language of passion, which everybody uses when in the grip of very strong emotion.<sup>47</sup>

These authors still write mainly about the technique of achieving a sublime style, but things become more interesting once the question of the relation between the sublime object and the subject being affected by the sensation or experience of the sublime moves centre stage. In Burke, the sublime experience leads to the dissolution of the awareness of the boundaries between the self and the object of perception. For James Usher, the ultimate source of the sublime is the divine that surpasses all understanding. The poet cannot represent it adequately in words: 'Yet, as he feels strongly, he still hopes and ushers into view another great prospect. The variety of his efforts show the object his mind labours with ... to be beyond the powers of art.' Yet this mysterious divine presence is the source of the sense of living presence man feels in the presence of the skies, and made the ancient Greeks revere groves and statues as a living presence:

Say, ye stars of heaven, almost lost in immense distance, does not the Father of Being sustain ... the world around you, who receives life and rapture from his presence? ... The Greeks never mistook the divine presence, but only divided it out, as the imagination happened to be struck ... if man falls down to worship in the grove, it is because the sacred image makes him sensible of the presence of divine power.

This unattainable absolute escapes definition, and the rapturous enthusiasm its experience causes goes against all logical reasoning. If it were merely the object of sense perception, it might be called beauty, but 'that is only a figurative name, of that beauty of which we have no conception'.<sup>48</sup>

What all these attempts at delineating the sublime have in common is the implicit conviction that it is essentially an agent working on the mind, and that it can only affect the mind because the experience of the sublime is so strong that it completely takes hold of it, and abolishes all awareness of the representational nature of ideas of the sublime. The list of examples of the sublime given by James Beattie in his *Dissertations Moral and Critical* of 1783 illustrates this very clearly: all the passages from epic poetry listed, from the appearance of Jupiter in Vergil's *Georgics*, to the Witch of Endor's 'deed without a name' in *Macbeth*, illustrate the effect of a view the mind cannot encompass. Milton's is the supreme example because of his application 'by means of figurative language, [of] the qualities of a superior nature to what is inferior. The passions and feelings of rationality ascribed to that which is without reason and without life: "Earth then bled from her entrails ...".'<sup>49</sup>

This last passage is of particular interest because it implies that the attribution of life to the inanimate is a source of the sublime; but even more so, because it shows that figuration, an important source of the sublime (and according to Aristotle's definition of metaphor as presenting the inanimate as animate, an important technique for achieving *enargeia*), is in itself a form of living presence response, because ultimately it works by attributing living forms to inanimate and unformed matter.

Like Gell's theory of art as agency, theories of the sublime can therefore be considered as theories not of beauty or any other quality of the object itself, but as theories of how art or natural objects affect, that is act upon, the mind. This is clear from the entire tenor of Burke's treatise, concerned as it is with the powers of art and nature to affect the mind, and the causes of that power. Burke is not interested in sublime objects as such, but in the ideas of the sublime some objects excite. Pain and

danger, and the terror they cause, excite these ideas, so do infinity, vastness, darkness and obscurity, power, and the difficult and intricate. The great and sublime in nature cause astonishment, that state of the soul in which 'all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror'.<sup>50</sup> Sublime objects or events terrify us because they make us fear for our self-preservation.

As in Longinus, the Burkean sublime can sweep the self away or make the viewer fear the self will be annihilated by the vastness, impenetrability or obscurity of what the subject confronts, but simultaneously make the viewer take some delight in the sense that the self nonetheless survives. But in a fundamental reversal of Longinus' views, the sublime is no longer associated with the brilliance and clarity of *enargeia*. Instead, Burke consistently locates the sublime in the obscure, the dark and the impenetrable. As Burke observes, 'the mind is hurried out of itself, by a crowd of great and confused images; which affect because they are crowded and confused'.<sup>51</sup> In obscure, metaphor-laden poetry, or in sights that are too vast, too terrible or too intricate, the mind is confronted with a sight that it cannot comprehend. In Kant's treatment of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*, this epistemological aspect will become much more prominent, but Burke already implies that the chief characteristic of the sublime is not so much rapture verging on terror that takes viewers outside themselves, but the struggle of the mind to reconcile conflicting ideas that are presented in poetry as a unity, or comprehend something that surpasses its understanding, such as the vastness of the interior of Saint Peter's in Rome.

Although Burke does not include works of art coming alive among his examples, I would argue that the experience of art coming alive fits in very well with his new analysis of the sublime.<sup>52</sup> As in Longinus, the majority of his poetic examples are about the animating effect of metaphors and images, and, when they are taken from real life, they are above all about events or sights that threaten life or safety. They are not about the disinterested enjoyment of beauty but about more ultimate forms of agency. More fundamentally, experiencing the inanimate as animate on this showing is one of the greatest conflicts of ideas the human mind can confront. Sixteenth-century poems about the *Laocoön* move beyond the traditional *topos* of the speaking marble to find new ways of giving words to such an unsettling experience. In it, the viewer is confronted with a transgression of boundaries between dead matter and living beings, and the human and the divine, that is the most extreme case of what Burke called a union of 'two ideas not presentable but by language; and an union of them great and amazing beyond conception'.<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

If we try to understand living presence response primarily in terms of experiences of agency, and want to reconstruct the historical and artistic contexts of particular experiences, considering such responses as a variety of sublime experience offers a way of thinking about them that keeps intact their almost supernatural and paradoxical character. This allows us to balance the opposing ideas of inanimate matter and living beings in an experience that stretches the human mind to its limits, threatening a loss of rational self. At the same time, the sublime as described by Longinus, Boileau, and Burke offers one of the earliest ways of conceptualizing these experiences, and thus helps to historicize Gell's anthropology of art as agency.

Put slightly differently, the sublime offers both historical and analytical instruments to think about living presence response as an experience, because it was defined by Longinus and Boileau as both a style and an experience. They discuss the rhetorical techniques to be used to produce such a style, but they also stress its experiential



character: the sublime does not have to be expressed in a sublime style, as the often-discussed example from Genesis shows.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the sublime is so transcendent that it makes the viewer forget its representational character. It thus encapsulates two ways of looking at art: a rhetorical or poetic object-oriented theory, interested in stylistic techniques, and an aesthetic concept centring on the listener's or viewer's experience. As I have argued here, living presence response shows similarities to both aspects of the sublime. The rhetorical side of the sublime considered as style offers instruments to study historically how works of art achieved living presence response. Its increasingly aesthetic aspect allows us to at least begin to write the history of living presence response considered as an experience of the representation of the unrepresentable.<sup>55</sup>

#### Notes

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- 1 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/si/europe/6910377.stm>; consulted 5 September 2008.
- 2 Rémy Clerc, *Les théories relatives au culte des images chez les auteurs grecs du Ier siècle après J.C.*, Paris, 1915; Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult – eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich, 1990; English edition *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago and London, 1994; David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago and London, 1989, in particular, 436–7; Georges Didi-Huberman, *La Peinture Incarnée*, Paris, 1985, 77–84; Didi-Huberman, 'Ressemblance mythifiée et ressemblance oubliée chez Vasari: la légende du portrait "sur le vif"', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 106, 1994, 422–5; William Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago and London, 2005; Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria. Spirit Visions, Metaphors and Media into the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford, 2006.
- 3 The terms 'presence' and 'living presence response' are used here to refer to the (perceived) identity of the image with what it represents, instead of 'living image', a term that was used in particular by David Freedberg in *The Power of Images*, but was criticized because it tends to blur the distinction between two different responses: one in which an image is perceived to be alive, the other in which a fusion occurs between an image and the living being it depicts. See the reviews of Freedberg's book by John Nash, 'Art and arousal', *Art History*, 13: 4, 1990, 566–70, and Arthur Danto, *Art Bulletin*, 72: 2, 1990, 341–2.
- 4 A good sample of reactions can be found in the contributions by Layton, Graburn, and Derlon and Jeudy-Ballini in Michel Coquet, Brigitte Derlon and Martine Jeudy-Ballini, eds, *Les cultures à l'oeuvre. Rencontres en art*, Paris, 2005, and in Jeremy Osborne and Robin Tanner, eds, *Art History's Agency*, Oxford, 2007. Matthew Rampley's 'Art history and cultural difference: Alfred Gell's anthropology of art', *Art History*, 28: 4, 2005, 524–51, is the most detailed and thorough analysis of Gell's importance for art history to date. See in particular 529–42 for an overview and critique of Gell's theory, and 542–5 for a discussion of the methodological importance of *Art and Agency* for art history, in particular where the agency of images is concerned.
- 5 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, 1998, 6–7.
- 6 Alfred Gell, 'The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology', in Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, eds, *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, Oxford 1992, 43; see e.g. Cicero *De oratore* I.202, II.35 and II.337; Brutus II.7–8.
- 7 Peter Stewart, 'The image of the Roman Empire', in Rupert Shepherd and Robert Maniura, eds, *Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects*, Aldershot, 2006, 243–59.
- 8 Gell, 'The technology of enchantment', 4.
- 9 Pascal Boyer, 'What makes anthropomorphism natural: Intuitive ontology and cultural representations', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2: 1, 1996, 83–97.
- 10 According to S. Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds*, Oxford and New York, 1993, 'anthropomorphism' or the tendency to attribute human characteristics such as will, sentience or animation to inanimate objects, is a constant feature of human cognition. He accounts for this tendency on cognitive grounds: it is always safer to attribute the highest degree of organization to what we encounter. As Gell points out, there is a strong empirical basis to Guthrie's theory, but it does not explain 'what a thing must be or do to count as "animate" or "anthropomorphic"' (Gell, *Art and Agency*, 121).
- 11 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italianische Reise*, Hamburg, 1967 [1950]), vol. XI, 158–9, 13 January 1787. See also Goethe's *Briefe*, Part IV, Weimar, 1887–96, vol. VIII, 130–1. On the reception of this statue from the Renaissance onwards see Frances Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, New Haven and London, 1982, 269–71.
- 12 Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Tagebuch', in *Italianische Reise. Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 1788–1789*, Munich, 1988, 602–3.
- 13 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 2–4.
- 14 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 5, 66 and 96.
- 15 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 96–122, in particular 118–20 and 121–2.
- 16 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 133.
- 17 In a recent article in the *London Review of Books* (June 2007), Peter Campbell noted that museum visitors spend much more time looking at painters copying great masters than at the masterpieces themselves.
- 18 On the Madonna of Impruneta near Florence, see Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, New York, 1980, 61–71; on the Auvergne Madonna see K. M. Ashley and P. Sheringorn, 'An unsentimental view of ritual in the Middle Ages', *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 6: 1, 1992, 63–85.
- 19 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 29.
- 20 Robin Osborne, 'Sex, agency, and history: The case of Athenian painted pottery', in Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, eds, *Art's Agency and Art History*, London, 2007, 185.
- 21 For a more extended treatment of *enargeia* in the arts with bibliography, see Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge and New York, 2007, in particular the Introduction and Chapters III and V.
- 22 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, VIII.iii.62.
- 23 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, VI.ii.32; see also Ps-Longinus XV.1.
- 24 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX.i.21 and VIII.v.34.
- 25 Longinus, *Peri Hupsous* XVI–xii.
- 26 Cicero, *Orator* XXXIX.134: 'Et reliqua, ex collocaione verborum quae sumuntur, quasi lumina ...' In *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.v.34, Quintilian calls epigrams 'lumina orationis'.
- 27 On reactions to the rediscovery of the *Laocoön* see L. D. Ettlinger, 'Exemplum Doloris: Reflections on the Laocoon Group', in Millard Meiss, ed., *De artibus. Opuscula XL. Essays in honour of Erwin Panofsky*, New York, 1961, 12–26; M. Winner, *Zum Nachleben des Laokoon in der Renaissance*; Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture*, New Haven and London, 1999, 42–65; and Salvatore Settis, *Laocoonte. Fama e stile*, Rome, 1999, from which all of the *Laocoön* poems quoted here are taken. Jacopo Sadoletto, *De Laocoontis statua Jacobi Sadoleti Carmen*: 'vos rigidum lapidem vivis animare figuris/eximii et vivos spiranti in marmori sensus/inserere', in Settis, *Laocoonte*, 120.
- 28 Settis, *Laocoonte*, 122: 'Saxea quam veros mentitur imago colores/et simulat verum Laocoon lapis!'

- 29 Evangelista Maddaleni de 'Capodiferro, *Laocoon in Titi imperatoris domo Julio II Pontifici Maximo repositus*: 'Laocoon ego sum ... Dices, me aspicias, vero lapidi esse dolores, /et natis haud fictum exitum atque metum. / ... / Si mortem atque metum saxo vivumque dolorem /qui dederunt, possent vocem animamque dare, /abnuerent: mirum magis est sine voce animaque /niti, ferre, queri, flere, timere, mori', quoted from Settis, *Laocoon*, 126.
- 30 Antonio Tebaldi, from his *Rime* (quoted from Settis, *Laocoon*, 132): 'Laocoon son, si espresso e vivo /che, se de la materia tu non sei /onde son io formato e figli mei, /farai de gli occhi un doloroso rivo.'
- 31 Jacopo Sadoletto, De *Laocoonis statua*, quoted from Settis, *Laocoon*, 118: 'Quid primum ... loquar? ... /Vulneraque et veros, saxo oriente, dolores? /Horret ad haec animus, muta que ab imagine pulsat /Pectora non parvo pietas commixta tremori.' The translation is by Michael Baxandall, 'Jacopo Sadoletto's *Laocoon*', in *Words for Pictures: Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism*, New Haven and London, 2003, 98.
- 32 Settis, *Laocoon*, 132: '... abassando i déi /Roma, anch'io caddi, e sepolto con lei, /stato mille anni son di luce privo. /Hor che risorge e ... /esco di notte oscura.' On a definition of the uncanny as the sensation of life where there could – or should – be no life, see Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, Oxford, 2006, 53–4.
- 33 Longinus, *Peri Hupsous* 1.iv; cf 8.iv, where the noble emotions are presented as a source of sublimity. They 'inspire our words with madness and divine spirit'.
- 34 Longinus, *Peri Hupsous* 15.i–vi. The quotations are Aeschylus *Fr* 58 Nauck and Euripides, *Bacchae* 726.
- 35 See for instance Joseph Lawson, *Lectures concerning Oratory*, Dublin, 1758, Lecture XV 'Of Figures and Tropes', 251–3.
- 36 Lawson, *Lectures concerning Oratory*, 8.iv, 15.ix and 32.ii–iii.
- 37 As Weinberg, Brody and Fumaroli have shown, *Peri hupsous* was known in the Middle Ages and by Italian humanists before the printed editions by Robortello and Manutius of 1554 and 1555. See Bernard Weinberg, 'Translations and commentaries of Longinus' *On the Sublime* to 1600, a bibliography', *Modern Philology*, 47, 1950, 145–51; Jules Brody, *Boileau and Longinus*, Geneva, 1958, 9–13; Marc Fumaroli, 'Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 86, 35–36 and 39–40, and Fumaroli, *L'Ecole du silence. Le sentiment des images au XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 1988, 126–9. See also Sophie Hache, *La langue du ciel. Le sublime en France au XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 2000, which includes a selection of sublime writing before Boileau. On the history of the sublime see in particular Baldine Saint-Girons, *Fiat Lux: Une Philosophie du Sublime*, Paris, 1993, and *Le Sublime de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris, 2005; for the British eighteenth-century tradition Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, eds, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*, Cambridge and New York, 1996.
- 38 Nicholas Boileau, *Traité du sublime, ou du merveilleux dans l'art de parler*, Paris, 1674.
- 39 Nicholas Boileau, 'Réflexion X ou refutation d'une dissertation de Monsieur Le Clerc contre Longin' (1710), in N. Boileau, *Oeuvres complètes. Introduction par Antoine Adam Textes établis et annotés par Françoise Escal*, Paris, 1966, 546: 'Il faut sçavoir que par Sublime Longin n'entend pas ce que les Orateurs appellent le stile sublime; mais cet extraordinaire et ce merveilleux qui fait qu'un Ouvrage enleve, ravit, transporte. Le stile sublime veut tousjours de grands mots, mais le Sublime se peut trouver dans une seule pensée, dans une seule figure, dans un seul tour de paroles.' All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are by the author. See also, in the same volume, *Traité du sublime* (1674), Préface, 338. Ann T. Delehanty has recently argued that in the decades around 1700 French theories of the sublime gradually moved away from object-oriented poetics to experience-oriented aesthetics: Ann Delehanty, 'From judgment to sentiment: Changing theories of the sublime, 1674–1710', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 66, 2005, 151–72, in particular 153.
- 40 See Fumaroli, *L'Ecole du silence*, 198.
- 41 Boileau, *Traité du sublime*, Chapitre XV, 370: 'En effet, que l'on colore plusieurs choses également tracées sur un même plan, et qu'on y mette le jour et les ombres, il est certain que ce qui se présentera d'abord à la veüe, ce sera le lumineux, à cause de son grand éclat, qui fait qu'il semble sortir hors du tableau, et s'approcher en quelque façon de nous.'
- 42 François Lemée, *Traité des statues*, Paris, 1688, 82: 'Après tout la figure, qui est souvent confondue avec la chose figurée, étant sortie de la situation, & du geste, comme j'ay dit, n'est jamais plus ou moins figurée, ne reçoit aucune contrariété, & donne le nom & l'être à la chose figurée. Le bronze, si vous voulez, dont on fait la figure d'un homme, n'est plus appellé bronze, mais statue.'
- 43 A similar sublime blurring of the boundaries between representation and what is represented can also be observed for instance in Juillard du Jarry's *De la parole de Dieu, du stile de l'Ecriture sainte, et de l'Eloquence évangélique*, Paris, 1689, speaking about a description of a funeral: 'Cette description n'est-elle pas aussi touchante & aussi triste que la chose même? Toutes les paroles qui y entrent, ne sont-elles pas revêtues de la livrée de la mort? Et ne semblent-elles pas transporter toute la pompe d'une cérémonie funebre, dans l'imagination du Lecteur?' See also Marc Fumaroli, 'Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte', 37, referring to Paul Pellisson's *Discours sur les oeuvres de M. Sarasin* of 1656. Hache, *La langue du ciel*, includes a few other cases of such sublime experiences caused by *margeia*.
- 44 Etienne Falconet, *Reflexions sur la sculpture*, in *Oeuvres diverses*, Paris, 1787, 25: 'Exprimer la forme des corps, et n'y pas joindre le sentiment ce n'est que remplir son devoir qu'à demi ... Joindre ces deux parties (mais quelle difficulté!) c'est le sublime de la sculpture.' See also his discussions of the sublime in Burke, Mengs and Winckelmann in 'Sur le beau dans l'art', *Oeuvres diverses*, vol. II, 140: '[le sublime c'est] joindre les idées du possible et de l'impossible dans un même sujet.'
- 45 William Duff, *An Essay on Original Genius, and its various Modes of exertion in Philosophy and the Fine Arts, particularly in Poetry*, London, 1767, Book II Section III, reprinted in Ashfield and de Bolla, eds, *The Sublime*, 173–7.
- 46 David Fordyce, *Theodorus: a Dialogue concerning the Art of Preaching*, London, 1752, *passim*, reprinted in Ashfield and de Bolla, eds, *The Sublime*, 166–8.
- 47 Stephen Lawson, *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, Dublin, 1758, Lecture XV, 'Of Figures and Tropes', 253 ff.
- 48 John Usher, *Clio or a Discourse on Taste. Addressed to a Young Lady*, London, 1769, 2nd, enlarged edn, 102–19.
- 49 John Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical*, London, 1783, quoted from Ashfield and de Bolla, eds, *The Sublime*, 188–9.
- 50 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, Part II, Section I, 57.
- 51 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, Part II, Section I, 57.
- 52 That he does not discuss these probably may have to do with the fact that the epistemological basis of his aesthetics is sensationalism: objects when they are viewed cause ideas in the viewer, and these ideas cause the experiences of the sublime or beautiful. There is no way in which the viewer directly experiences the object, and therefore Burke could not accommodate the dissolution of the representation in what it represents which is so characteristic of rhetorically informed living presence response. See for instance *Philosophical Enquiry* Part I, Section VII.
- 53 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, Part 5 Section VII.
- 54 Longinus, *Peri hupsous* IX. 9, in D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, eds, *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations*, Oxford, 1972, 470: 'Similarly the lawgiver of the Jews, no ordinary man – for he understood and expressed God's power in accordance with its worth – writes at the beginning of his Laws [i.e., Genesis 1]: "God said" – now what? – "Let there be light", and there was light; "Let there be earth", and there was earth.'
- 55 My argument for considering living presence response in terms of the sublime is in some respects very similar to Frank Ankersmit's arguments for thinking of the historical experience – that is, the sudden, unexpected and uncontrolled irruption of the past into the present – as a sublime experience (most recently in his *Sublime Historical Experience*, Berkeley, 2005). But Ankersmit articulates the sublime historical experience in Hegelian and Nietzschean terms as one of dissociation, discontinuity or trauma, and does not consider rhetoric or living presence. He does raise a fundamental question though, which cannot be addressed adequately here: how are *memoria*, the sudden experience of the past in the present, and *narratio*, the historical narrative, related? Or, reframed in art-historical terms, what is the relation between the experience of art becoming alive and writing art history? On that last question, see Gottfried Boehm's 'Der Topos des Lebendigen. Bildgeschichte und ästhetische Erfahrung', in Joachim Küpper and Carl Menke, eds, *Dimensionen ästhetischer Erfahrung*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 94–113, who argues not only that aesthetic experience is always an experience of life, but also that it might be very useful to rethink art history as a 'Wissenschaft vom Lebendigen'.