Essay in honor of Robert Motherwell’s centenary: “temporalized form”: mediating Romanticism and American Expressionism—Robert Motherwell, Henri Bergson, and the ontological origins of abstraction around 1800

Manfred Milz*
Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Gediz University, Seyrek-Izmir, Turkey

Abstract
The influence of process metaphysics on the development of abstraction between 1800 and the second half of the 20th century can best be exemplified with the case of the American Expressionist painter and theoretician Robert Motherwell (1915–1991). Taking as its starting point Motherwell’s exposure to the History of Idea of Romanticism, Arthur O. Lovejoy’s yearlong seminar at Harvard (1937–38), the artist’s affinity with fluid forms through motion brushstrokes in Romanticist painting is analyzed as a preformative stage of his own transitory creations. This is done by structural comparison between Motherwell’s written reflections and Romanticist art theory. Motherwell’s specific perception through Bergson’s and Whitehead’s lens of immanence and multiplicity, I argue, resonates Lovejoy’s principle of “Romantic Evolutionism,” in its turn from being to becoming, derived from the philosophies of the Spiritualist Maine de Biran and the Idealist–Empiricist George Berkeley.

Keywords: Henri Bergson; Alfred North Whitehead; Arthur O. Lovejoy; Eugène Delacroix; John Constable; immanence; multiplicity; temporalized form; evolutionary aesthetics; history of ideas

*Correspondence to: Manfred Milz, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Gediz University, TR-35 665 Seyrek-Izmir, Turkey. Email: manfred.milz@gediz.edu.tr

©2016 M. Milz. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

Citation: Journal of Aesthetics & Culture, Vol. 8, 2016 http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/jac.v8.29952
DISCOURSIVE FORMATIONS OF
EXPRESSIONISM AND ROMANTICISM
IN MOTHERWELL’S WORKS

The 100th anniversary of Robert Motherwell’s birth invites a reevaluation of his artistic theory and practice. In locating the origins of Robert Motherwell’s form-finding process, critics have traced it in detail in both literature and the visual arts. His literary inspiration has been found in both the French Symbolist poets Mallarmé and Baudelaire, as well as Joyce, while his debt to the visual arts includes principally Matisse, as well as Cézanne, Picasso, the Dada-movement, and the group of Parisian Surrealists who sought refuge in New York City during World War II. Philosophical influences have been noted, too. Motherwell’s approach toward “abstraction” as a definitive aesthetic ideology of the transitory image has been plausibly associated with the process philosophy of John Dewey and the late Alfred North Whitehead.

This argumentative line, I argue, has neglected the mediating key role of Bergsonian vitalism for iconoclastic modes of representation in Motherwell’s theoretical reflections and primary creation processes. Based on his reception of Bergson’s principles of immanence and multiplicity in correlation with his Dewey Studies at Stanford (1932–37) and his Whitehead-studies at Harvard (1937/38), Motherwell develops a particular affinity with those writers and visual artists of the European and American avant-gardes who are significantly influenced by Bergson at the beginning of the 20th century. Motherwell’s attraction to this generation of artists is decisively coined by his own Bergson-reception during the 1930s and 1940s. Based on this discursive formation, he initiates and historically reflects an ideological transformation from relative figurative and non-figurative abstraction within these avant-garde movements to absolute non-figurative abstraction in the second American Expressionist movement.

Motherwell’s essays, notes, and talks, however, display an at least equally strong affinity for European Romanticist painters who tend to reflect and render a heterogeneous interaction of elements, respectively represent permanent transformation of matter in nature: Eugène Delacroix, Francisco José de Goya, and especially William Mallord Turner and John Constable. Guided by Lovejoy’s characterization of Romanticism as “bio-evolutionary,” Motherwell develops attraction to both the artistic theory and the creation process or techniques of European artists around 1800. He does so through his confrontation with the writings of Bergson, who bridges through his notion of vitalism German Idealism (Schelling), French Spiritualism (Maine de Biran), and British Empiricism/Idealism (Berkeley) with James’s, Dewey’s and Whitehead’s paradigms of temporality and passage. Motherwell’s intertwining of philosophical and the pictorial tradition mediates between European Romanticism and evolving American Expressionism.

In order to trace Romanticist conceptions in the argumentative and stylistic structure of Motherwell’s literary works and visual Expressionism, I will therefore:

1. introduce the problem of dissociation, as discussed by Kant, in its relevance for Motherwell’s technique and creation process, in response to Kant;
2. situate Motherwell’s Bergson-reception in a dialogue with Dewey and Whitehead, explore Bergson’s relevance for Motherwell’s reception of European and American vanguards, his impact on the artist’s theories, and on his art practice;
3. debate Lovejoy’s historical paradigms of “Romantic Evolutionism” and “temporalized form” in their relevance for Motherwell’s mediation between Romanticism and Abstract American Expressionism and for Bergson’s mediation between Idealist and contemporary process metaphysics;
4. explain Motherwell’s affinity with Delacroix in the 1940s and with Constable in later years, in their impact on his art theory and practice, through Maine de Biran’s Spiritualist principle of heterogeneous moments (Delacroix) and Berkeley’s notion of immateriality (Constable), on which Bergson and Whitehead explicitly base their theorems.

DISSOCIATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL
FROM NATURE AS THE ORIGIN OF
ABSTRACTION: MOTHERWELL AND KANT

In his written reflections, talks, and interviews, Robert Motherwell stipulates in variations that the
problem of the modern artist consists in the
dissociation of subject (individual) and object
(nature).

To him, in this segregation through conscious
reflection lays the origin, and even the necessary
cause of abstraction in general and of American
Expressionism in particular, as he expressed in
“What abstract art means to me,” a contribution
to a symposium at the Museum ofModern Art, in
conjunction with the exhibition Abstract Painting
and Sculpture in America, in 1951:

Everything that might dilute the experience is
stripped away. The origin of abstraction in
art is that of any mode of thought. Abstract
art is a true mysticism [...] or rather a series
of mysticisms that grew up in the historical
circumstance that all mysticisms do, from a
primary sense of gulf, an abyss, a void
between one's lonely self and the world.
Abstract art is an effort to close the void
that modern men feel. Its abstraction is its
emphasis.2

Motherwell readdresses a philosophical chal-
lenge to the problem of perception and representa-
tion in the visual arts that was first, as he had
learned in a seminar on Immanuel Kant which he
took with Clarence Irving Lewis at Harvard
University in 1937/38, systematically explored by
the philosopher from Königsberg in his Critique of
Judgment, in 1790. When looking back upon his
university years in an invited talk at Harvard, “On
not becoming an academic,” he stated in 1986:
“I now regard Kant most highly.”3 Furthermore,
Motherwell emphasized the importance of Kant’s
distinction between phenomenon and noumenon
for his intellectual development as an artist in
“Reflections on abstract art,” in 1982, in its
subsection that he devoted to modernism:

The accomplishment of what naively could be
called “total abstraction”—although there is
no such thing, nor the possibility of it, by
definition—in my opinion (though again I
know of no one who has dealt with this
notion) is conceivably moving toward a new
pictorial language, drawing on a strange mix-
ture of modern abstraction (in getting rid of
the baggage of the past); Oriental calligraphy;
the art of so-called “primitive societies”; and
on our own century’s increasing interest in the
role of symbols and signs, all expressions that
may be closer to the categories of the human
mind as it perceives reality—“categories” in
the German philosopher Immanuel Kant’s
meaning—rather than “naturalistic” conven-
tions. I do deem it likely that music, when it
gave up words, whether a chorus or a mass or
lyrics, already had made a parallel leap, on
occasion.4

These conclusionary thoughts that Motherwell
wrote for the inaugural exhibition of a room
dedicated to his own work, at the Bavarian State
Museum of Modern Art, show Kant’s philosophy
as the embarkation point of an abstraction that
goes beyond non-symbolic representation, in aim-
ing at a reunion between subject and nature. In
this aspiration, Abstract American Expressionism
and especially the work of Motherwell, appears, as
he himself emphasizes, closely related to fluid
experimental modes of musical expression.

Since circa 1800, the driving force behind all
artistic activity related to what he terms as the
ideal, though unattainable “total abstraction,”
the search for absolute perception and representation,
is what Motherwell specifies as “a primary sense of
gulf, an abyss.” Along with works of certain
contemporary artists and German, French or
British Idealist philosophers of the Kant-era, his
œuvre may therefore be defined as an attempt to
“close the void between one’s lonely self and the
world that modern men feel” through a new
pictorial language (phrased outside any histori-
cal tradition of representation), in mere non-
conscious states of extensive sensitivity. With
some of the French and British Romanticist
painters, Motherwell shares an explicit inclination
toward the primary process of creating, a particular
longing for its immediacy, derived from “feeling
nature” that translates into transitory or intermedi-
ary forms of ultimately self-referential art.

Particularly during the period that directly
followed his academic training, Motherwell tended
to combine philosophical concepts with avant-
garde techniques of abstraction in search of his
individual pictorial vocabulary. In this respect,
scholars have been emphasizing the influence of
Picasso, Miró, Matisse, and the Surrealists, while
neglecting his equally strong reception of the
Romanticist painters Delacroix, Constable, Turner,
and Goya.

In what follows, I will discuss the most pertinent
philosophical and artistic sources for the four in-
extricably linked instrumental components of ab-
straction that Motherwell had exposure to, started
to practice in his formative years, and persistently
consulted as reference points throughout the evolution of his work: feeling, immediacy, creation process, and, subsequently, self-referentiality.

His attraction to specific modes of early abstraction in Romanticist painting is motivated, I argue, through contemporary Anglo-American and French process metaphysics in their root-correspondence with European Spiritualist and Idealist or Empiricist philosophy of the post- and pre-revolutionary periods. As such, the historical philosophical and pictorial influences of the 18th/19th century that are discussed here become a particularly powerful force upon his art theory and artistic practice during the most vivid experimental stage of Motherwell’s form-finding process, between the 1940s and the 1950s, but nevertheless remain a strong sub-current of his work in the second half of the 20th century.

MOTHERWELL’S ART THEORY, TECHNIQUE, AND STYLE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

What sets Motherwell intellectually apart from other Abstract Expressionists of his generation is the academic training in philosophy that he received under John Dewey at Stanford, from October 1932 to Spring 1937, and with Arthur O. Lovejoy, David Wight Prall, and Alfred North Whitehead during his years at Harvard, from Autumn 1937 to Spring 1938. A crucial common denominator of these contemporary thinkers is the notion of vitalism, explored by the French philosopher Henri Bergson from 1889 onward: in essence, fluid processes in a permanently changing world that could potentially be grasped through intuition. It is this ontological perspective of contemporary process philosophy that Motherwell would directly start to translate in the 1940s into experimental techniques of non-symbolic, respectively non-figurative expression:

I have continually been aware that in painting I am always dealing with—and never not—a relational structure. Which in turn makes “permission” to be “abstract” no problem at all. All paintings are essentially relational structures—whether figuration or not is present is not the real issue. So that I could apprehend, for example, at first sight, my first abstract art. For painters with either literary or art school backgrounds, at least in my time, to make a transition from figuration to abstraction was a threatening problem. I was able to be an abstract painter right off the bat; if I so chose. Which I did.

I understood, too, that “meaning” was a product of relations among elements, so that I never had the then common anxiety as to whether an abstract painting had a given meaning.5

Motherwell, who aimed with his core principle of relational structures at an organic unity in painting, in which no part could be changed without effecting others,6 received his initial impulses for introducing, and subsequently transforming the idea of process into artistic form while attending Dewey’s lectures at Stanford. It was Dewey who inspired Motherwell’s programmatic interest in directly linking and applying contemporary ontological world views, theoretical in intent, to his own experiential process of practicing art.

John Dewey: Radical empiricist pragmatism and artistic experiment

Through Dewey’s processual pragmatism of individual experience (self-creation through action), in which he relied to an extent on core quotations from the interdependent works of the American psychologist and philosopher William James and Henri Bergson, Motherwell came to realize at Stanford that to give creative form to experience implied an adaptation of any instantaneous form to each new individual experience in a transitional environment. It required furthermore, according to Dewey, a permanent consecutive revision of established forms through spontaneous response that is based on feeling. All of these elements Dewey extensively discussed in his book-length study Art as Experience (1934). More than four decades later, in December 1979, Motherwell concluded: “I owe Dewey a part of my sense of process. He demonstrated philosophically that abstract rhythms, immediately felt, could be an expression of the inner self.”7 As pointed out by Mattison (1987), Dewey’s pairing of processism and pragmatism is, synthesized with the methods of the early 20th century European avant-garde, reflected in the experimentally raw character of Motherwell’s paintings of the 1940s.8

However, with specific regard to immediacy and intra-subjectivity, Dewey proves to be admittedly on common ground with Bergson’s notion of vitalism that the French philosopher had advocated
in his three major publications, between 1889 and 1907. Taking these two fundamental aspects of experiencing the environment into account, it is understandable that Motherwell turned to primary readings of Bergson’s work. In February 1936/37, he acquired *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Figure 1), Bergson’s last major work, to explore the origins of Dewey’s pragmatist empiricism and to broaden this philosophical perspective for himself. This and other Bergson-editions complement the three works by Dewey that he had purchased to substantiate his lecture notes, among them *Experience and Nature* (1926).9

The case of Dewey sharpened the young student’s awareness for various prospective possibilities of related ontological philosophical systems, including that of Bergson, once being synchronized with or applied to the very process of creating art. Philosophy did not just seem relevant to art; it displayed a considerable potential to redirect its historical course and a capacity to arrive—without any representational prejudice—at unexpected shape- and color-configurations. After all, Dewey may well have shown Motherwell through his example that the visual arts, in turn, could possibly be a more adequate, viable medium to express the problems that philosophy itself was verbally struggling with.

**Alfred North Whitehead: Apprehending organic development in time**

During the postgraduate academic year 1937/38 that Motherwell spent at the Harvard Graduate School of Philosophy under the tutelage of the philosopher David Wight Prall and the intellectual historian Arthur O. Lovejoy, his parallel Stanford readings of Dewey and Bergson paved the way for his reception of likeminded interrelated processual paradigms.10 Motherwell attended the six lectures that the retired Alfred North Whitehead delivered at Wellesley College.11 The register of his studio library confirms that these lectures inspired Motherwell to further studies of Whitehead’s works *Process and Reality* (New York 1930), *Adventures of Ideas* (New York 1935), and *Science and the Modern World* (1926).12

Influenced like Dewey by the principle of an intuited processual experience that both James and Bergson represented in their writings, Whitehead gives center stage to transition: Actual occasions, not substances, processual units, not objects, are subjected to time, change, and, ultimately, to creative novelty. According to Whitehead, nature is composed of “events” (processes) rather than “atoms” (objects). Subsequently, the nature of reality cannot be adequately expressed through symbolic (static) representation. *Immediate experience* (knowledge), however, is inextricably linked with spontaneous activity. In line with Bergson, both Dewey and Whitehead propose an emancipation of expression from formal stereotypes that distort as clichés our perception of the authentic nature of reality. Whereas the lingual representation of “mere knowledge” that “is a high abstraction” that fails (Whitehead 1931), according to Motherwell, expression through painting would literally take place, as he pointed out in his public lecture *Symbolism*, delivered at Hunter College in 1954:

[...] one can only think in painting while holding a brush before a canvas, and this

---

**Figure 1.** Motherwell’s copy of Henri Bergson’s *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, published by Henry Holt and Company, signed and dated “Robert Motherwell Stanford U. February 1937.”
symbolization I trust much more than the thinking that I do about painting all day long. And I think that most artists trust the canvas much more than the words about it. [...] As Whitehead wrote, we suffer from a “deficiency of language. We can see the variations of meaning, although we cannot verbalize them in a decisive, handy manner. Thus we cannot weave into a train of thought what we cannot apprehend in flashes. ... For this reason, conventional English is twin-sister to barren thought. [...]”13

Whitehead’s critique of symbolic representation, respectively lingual abstraction, aimed at its substitution by what he termed in a key notion “concrescence of prehensions,”14 a process of growing together (“conscrescere”) of feelings (“prehensions”): During an initial phase of first impressions, feelings are segregated from each other, but grow together to a unity of feelings at subsequent stages. Once the unity of feelings is saturated in an entity, it perishes to make way for a new event.

Motherwell, who tended to read Whitehead’s process philosophy through the lens of Dewey’s empiricist pragmatism and Bergson’s vitalism, aspired to organically attain “a relational structure.”15 He would indeed translate Whitehead’s metaphysical concept of an experientially integrated whole eventually into tangible art practice based on the very principle of feeling that Whitehead explicitly advocated:

One might truthfully say that abstract art is stripped bare of other things in order to intensify it, its rhythms, spatial intervals, and color structure. Abstraction is a process of emphasis, and emphasis vivifies life, as A.N. Whitehead said.16

During the 1930s, the critique of symbolic representation that Bergson had proposed first and that had become common to contemporary Anglo-American process metaphysics, raised intellectual doubts in Motherwell and contributed to his abandonment of academic philosophy, due to its paradox incompatibility of stable form (language) and dynamic content (process). With the beginning 1940s, though, he felt a legitimate chance to establish an identity of form and content in the alternative, fluid medium of painting, as process metaphysics, by its own definition, appeared synonymous with experimentation. In the psychologically motivated Surrealist technique of automatism, Motherwell found a painterly equivalent to philosophical perspectives of process that could potentially bridge surrounding environment and resonating internal feelings—to spontaneously transform their confrontation into interacting “rhythms, spatial intervals, and color structure” on canvas. Bergson, who had inspired the ideological origins of the Surrealist movement in an equal way and whose work Motherwell had started to study at Stanford and continued to read at Harvard, played a central role in his formative development as an intellectually motivated artist.

Henri Bergson: Form changing in the passage of time

Apart from the direct influences Bergson’s principle of vitalism still had upon contemporary Anglo-American process philosophies of James, Dewey, and Whitehead, Motherwell’s personal interest in Bergson was fuelled by two seminars at Harvard, one facilitated by the mathematical logician C. I. Lewis and the other by Arthur O. Lovejoy.

Parallel to his aforementioned Kant-seminar, C.I. Lewis organized a course devoted to 20th-century epistemology. According to Motherwell, Lewis “made us students each identify with and defend a 20th-century philosopher, in my case Henri Bergson; and in case of my roommate [...] Bertrand Russell.”17

Most significant for Motherwell’s intellectual development as an artist is the simultaneous exposure to Kant’s principle of dissociation between individual and nature, defined as a principle problem of conscious reflection versus the metaphysical vitalism of Bergson, who suggests intuitively grasped processes as a potential solution to close the void that Kant systematically explores.

Motherwell’s affinity with Bergson prior to his arrival at Harvard suggests that he chose the French philosopher and his notion of immanence consciously as a subject to advocate. In fact, according to the register of his studio library, Motherwell acquires during his graduate and postgraduate studies, in addition to Bergson’s aforementioned last major publication, Morality and Religion (New York 1935; Figure 1), the American first folio editions of Creative Evolution (New York 1911) and An Introduction to Metaphysics (New York 1912), as well as an edition of Matter and Memory (London 1929).

His enduring attraction to the process metaphysics of Bergson is documented through his
acquisition of *The Creative Mind*, a book that he purchased after World War II and that was published in the Philosophical Library Series (New York 1946).

Significantly, the presence of two Whitehead editions of 1948, *Essays in Science and Philosophy* and *Science and the Modern World* in his studio library, shows that Motherwell sustained a firm simultaneous interest in Bergson’s and in Whitehead’s process metaphysics that reached beyond 1945. The fact that the artist remained curious about Bergson’s and Whitehead’s theorems, years after he had abandoned academic philosophy, attests to their relevance to his process of and theorizing about making art. *The Life of Forms in Art*, a 1948 edition of the Bergson-influenced French art historian Henri Focillon (1881–1943) in his studio–library, additionally stimulated his historical consciousness for vivified forms, evolving and transiting through metamorphosis in time.

Motherwell preferred to consult primary sources and annotated or underlined these in his reading process to gather a solid first-hand insight into the core of Bergson’s principle of vitalism. In doing so, however, he tends to be more interested in the immediate application of philosophy, in its transformation of words and images into at times inconclusive experimental processes. In this respect, the first generation of American and especially European avant-garde artists who were directly influenced by Bergson’s writings provided him with a model for transforming philosophy into art by introducing vitalism of evolving forms into space.

Like Dewey, James, and Whitehead, Bergson, who in 1889 had titled his PhD-thesis *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, gives with the notion of immanence and multiplicity center stage to temporal and pluralistic dimensions of unmediated, individual experience of change:

> So art, whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself.  

This aesthetic program that Bergson had formulated in his book on *Laughter* in 1900, though never structured into a stringent aesthetic theory, would become a guiding concept for Dewey and Whitehead in the 1930s and 1940s and turned by Motherwell into a primarily pragmatic process of making art.

Aiming at a non-symbolic perception and representation of reality, Bergson differentiates between two opposite world views in which dynamic nature is perceived within current time: Criticizing a ratio-based *homogeneous duration* that, in serving practical purposes of daily life, quantifies reality in time-sequences external to one another, Bergson advocates instead intuited *heterogeneous moments* that serve the purpose of grasping continuously interpenetrating elements in an indifferent, qualitative way. While in the case of *homogeneous duration*, the perception of the reflecting mind and the representation through symbols offer a mere *relative experience*, intuited *heterogeneous moments* resist symbolic representation and constitute *fundamental experience*. The first, functional, category of ordinary man is abstract; the second, *inutil* (“useless”) category is, according to Bergson, concrete and only accessible by “detached” individuals who stand outside society—artists, as he stresses in *The Perception of Change* (1911): “It is therefore a much more direct vision of reality that we find in the different arts; and it is because the artist is less intent on utilizing his perception that he perceives a greater number of things.”

Bergson, whose philosophy contains psychological components, situates in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) the novelty in spontaneous creation with the individual ego: “The consciousness we have of our own self in its continual flux introduces us to the interior of a reality, on the model of which we must represent other realities.” This sentence that captures the core notion of Bergson’s *vitalism*, encapsulates the major programmatically intertwined elements of Motherwell’s art and theory that he was to pursue with a persistent idealistic radicalism at least as strong as that of Wassily Kandinsky, who was equally influenced by Bergson: feeling, immediacy, creation process, and a subsequently self-referential artwork.

**Bergson’s Importance for Motherwell’s Reception of American and European Literary and Artistic Avant-gardes:**

The impact of the interdependent Bergsonian concepts of *duration* and *élan vital* on philosophy,
music, literature, and the visual arts peaked in Europe and in America before 1914, and experienced a gradual decline toward 1929.

Through the English translations of Bergson’s main works between 1910 and 1912 and his guest-lectures at Harvard, Columbia, and City College, New York, in 1913, the principle of élan vital became also a well-known though not uncontroversial part of American literature and visual culture.

It is with this particular introspective concept that Bergson was to profoundly inspire from about 1911 onward the novel iconoclasm of the first pioneering group of American Expressionists around the photographer Alfred Stieglitz: Georgia O’Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, but especially John Marin and Arthur Dove. As their ideological aesthetic repertoire, Bergson’s ontology became manifest through two publications in a journal edited by Stieglitz: “An Extract from Bergson,” from Creative Evolution, in Camera Work, No. 36 (October 1911) and “What is the Object of Art?” from Laughter, in Camera Work no. 37 (January 1912). Motherwell and the other American Expressionists though, would after World War II extensively revive and go beyond this earlier, in his view more imitative than innovative experimental Expressionist foundation.

Based on Bergson’s ontological fundament (a strategy of intuitively extracting form from the continuum of time and space), Motherwell developed a specific affinity for those 20th and 19th century European avant-garde novelists and painters who were in their aesthetic experiments primarily influenced by either Bergson himself or by his philosophical French and British antecedents: “But in the end I certainly learned more from Baudelaire and Mallarmé and Joyce than from philosophy, and even more from looking at Cubism and Matisse.” This quote, in which he links Symbolist and Romanticist aesthetics with first modes of 20th century abstraction, representatively documents that Motherwell’s lifelong project of art theory and practice is the continuous presence of the past—both in general historical and in individual creative, process terms. In his writings, Motherwell acknowledges Symbolism and Surrealism as intermediaries between Romanticism and 20th century art, but he also seems to strongly identify to an equal extent with the common origins and denominators of these styles in European Romanticism.

It is in their particular dependence on Bergson that Joyce and Matisse provide some of the most radically articulated literary and visual reference systems for Motherwell’s own approach toward abstracting from nature. Motherwell read Joyce’s Ulysses for the first time in 1935 while travelling through Europe and reflected his initial reading experience in a painting by this name in 1947, and in James Joyce of 1979. Joyce, who was familiar with Creative Evolution and referenced Bergson twice in his works, presented Motherwell with a guiding role model of transforming the philosophically theorized components of time, self and memory within the “stream of consciousness” into an associative literary composition. Matisse, whose art theory shows indications of Bergson’s influence since 1908, appealed to Motherwell lifelong, especially in the context of the Fauvist movement, with regard to spontaneous sensation and rhythmic transformation of interacting light, line, and color: “Fauvism represents that aspect of Henri Mattise’s work in which he began to separate color as a self-determining relational structure from its use in describing the objects in the external world, and consequently to move toward abstraction: . . .” In this regard, the fluid character of Matisse’s colors incorporated for Motherwell, in its substitution of firmly rendered form, more than in any other work of the early European avant-garde, Bergson’s élan vital.

Reflections of Bergson in Motherwell’s art theory

Motherwell’s Bergson-readings are at least as extensive as his Whitehead-studies. However, in contrast to his occupation with Whitehead, Motherwell does not reference or quote Bergson, even though his argumentation—in its amalgamation with process-related elements from Dewey and Whitehead—reads like Bergson at times, for instance in the following passage from his talk “What abstract art means to me,” written in 1951:

Nothing as drastic an innovation as abstract art could have come into existence, save as the consequence of a most profound, relentless, unquenchable need. The need is for
felt experience, intense, immediate, direct, subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic.  

He occasionally uses Bergson’s terminology in his theoretical reflections, for instance, when he comments on Mondrian’s interpretation of his own painting:

“I don’t see any squares or rectangles in my work,” he used to say, though there was nothing but horizontals and verticals at 90 degree angles. What he meant—though his remark was taken as one of these crazy painter’s jokes—was that the canvas was a continuum of space, sheer extension, energized by rhythm, which for him was the élan vital.  

In fact, it is only on one occasion that Motherwell does quote Bergson, but again enframed by a literary application, in citing a passage from Jean Paulhan’s The Flowers of Tarbes, or Terror in Literature (1936/1941), while referring to the French Romanticist poet Gérard de Nerval and his proto-surrealist definition of modern art as “the overflowing of the dream into reality”: “The problem is to take something ‘Confusing, infinitely mobile, inappreciable, without season, delicate and fugitive’ without fixing it in a form that is rigid and banal, as Bergson says.” Motherwell uses this description to characterize the contemporary art of Joseph Cornell in 1953.

Reflections of Bergson in Motherwell’s creation process of 1941

It is difficult to say which of the above process philosophers sustained the most eminent influence on Motherwell’s artistic techniques and theories. Fact is that the psychological components of intuition and spontaneity integral to Bergson’s principle of élan vital directly associate and align it with the formation of Surrealist psychic automatism, which Motherwell fully embraced in his earliest works, starting with the small impulsively organic ink drawings in his Mexican Sketchbook of July 1941. A few weeks later, in September 1941, he characterizes his drive toward inward-oriented expression by the ink and watercolor Landscape of the Inner Mind. Motherwell, who had also taken two introductory courses on Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung at Stanford, was certainly aware of the parallels between Bergson’s process metaphysics and psychology.

But, to the artist who creates a picture by drawing it from the depths of his soul, time is no longer an accessory; it is not an interval that may be lengthened or shortened without the content being altered. The duration of his work is part and parcel of his work. To contract or to dilate it would be to modify both the physical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal. The time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself. It is the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea.  

An organically coherent texture of such kind, in which no part can be altered without effecting the whole, Motherwell has repeatedly referred to as “a relational structure.” As such, it constitutes the very definition of self-referential art, in which subject and object are identical. The practical execution of Bergson’s theorem that had been of equal importance to Dewey, Whitehead, and
Prall, he learned in exchange with Matta and through the more radical Paalen, even though Motherwell’s watercolors from the Fall of 1941, Landscape of the Inner Mind and For Parajita do suggest spontaneous feeling (organic union) and intellect-directed control (geometrical scaffold).

It was particularly in 1962, with his series Beside the Sea, created at Provincetown’s coast, that he came close to fully realize an identity between his own creation process and that of nature, as suggested by Bergson:

I hit the laminated paper with the full force of my one hundred eighty pounds, with the painting brush moving in a six-foot arc—I remember the sensation as that of cracking a bullwhip. An adequate equivalent of the pounding summer sea spray appeared, in deep sky blue, on that lovely kid finish, creamy white laminated paper, without splitting and tearing, to my delight. 40

To Motherwell, the role of the body in the act of feeling and creating is as important as that of the mind. In Beyond the Aesthetic (1946), for instance, he characterizes the medium of interacting with the external world with Dewey’s fusion term “the body-mind.”41 It is most significant for Motherwell and for the development of gestural painting in the context of American Abstract Expressionism that Bergson highlights the function of the body in the conclusion of his most original work Matter and Memory (1896), a book that explicitly unfolds as a theory of mind: “The idea that we have disengaged from the facts and confirmed by reasoning is that our body is an instrument of action, and of action only. In no degree, in no sense, under no aspect, does it serve to prepare, far less to explain, a representation.”42 Bergson, though, sees the body paradoxically positioned both external to sensation and representation and integral to these, between difference and immenance, as lucidly explored by Worms (1997).43 Bergson thus identifies with the body as an instrument of action its potential role of mediating between our mind and matter in the stream of consciousness. It was Motherwell who translated this complex philosophical theory, intertwined with Surrealist psychic automatism, into a comprehensive and viable aesthetic strategy, from which Jackson Pollock and other American Expressionists would eventually draw in their gestural approaches toward their environment.

**LOVEJOY’S TEMPORALIZED FORM WITHIN “ROMANTIC EVOLUTIONISM”: BERGSON’S VITALISM BRIDGING CONTEMPORARY AND IDEALIST ONTOLOGIES**

From the distance of the late 1940s, Bergson’s doctrines would assume for Motherwell more and more the clearly recognizable function of a bridge between traditional European and contemporary American ontology. It was Lovejoy, one of Motherwell’s mentors at Harvard, who had aimed between the two World Wars in his history of ideas at an epistemological reconstruction of this still evolving bridge that Lovejoy himself would become a part of.

His specific historical perspective of a linkage between Modernism and Romanticism Motherwell especially owes to his participation in the yearlong seminar on “The History of Idea of Romanticism” by Arthur O. Lovejoy, in which philosophy was shown as being integrative to novel discursive formations in literature and the visual arts. For Lovejoy, who was influenced by, but critical of Bergson, interpreted the essence of Idealism as a foundational stage of Bergson’s process metaphysics.

Through Lovejoy, Motherwell came to realize that Bergson’ solution to Kant’s theorem of a dissociation through consciousness, an intuitive union between subject and nature, had its roots in the age of Romanticism.

Despite his critique, Lovejoy subscribed to Bergson’s novel perspective of duration as being directly experienced, and not measured. The evolutionary implications of Bergson’s vitalism influenced, in conjunction with James’s process pragmatism, Lovejoy’s own structural reading of a “unit idea” in its explicit ontological epistemology.

Subsequently, in his chef’d’œuvre, The Great Chain of Being—A Study of the History of an Idea (1936), concepts of time, change, and diversity are being examined: The static scheme of being went through drastic revisions during the Baroque period, though it did not unfold until 1800 to the fullest extent into becoming. By introducing the concept of time into that of a mere Newtonian space, Idealist philosophy ascribed fundamental value to “motion” and “process,” in a now pluralistic nature. It is for this reason that Lovejoy examines in most of his historical essays, 18th and
19th century ideas, (Pre-)Darwinian Evolutionism, and Romanticism.

It is significant for Motherwell’s appreciation of Romanticism in the light of his Bergson-studies that Lovejoy’s research dedication to the Romanticist era as the ontological turning point within the history of ideas coincides with the height of Bergson-reception in Europe and America in the 1910s and 1920s. Lovejoy frequently locates the historical precedents for Bergson’s notion of élan vital in certain rigorous forms of German and French Idealism:

Thus for emanationism and creationism came to be substituted by what may be best called radical or absolute evolutionism—the typically romantic evolutionism of which Bergson’s L’évolution créatrice is in a great part a re-editing. 45

It is “temporalized form” as the essence of Idealism 46 that Lovejoy himself titles and terms—in close association with Bergson—“Romantic Evolutionism.” 47 In an exchange with his students at Harvard, Lovejoy revealed that the motivation behind his seminar on the “History of Romanticism” was the effort to set up a conclusive foundation with firm coordinates for this paradigm shift. 48 According to Nicholson (1963), Lovejoy collected and categorized material for an additional, extensive (unrealized) research project on “The Romantic Theory of Knowledge.” 49

In order to illustrate the common notion of “radical evolutionism” and “temporalized form” in Friedrich Schelling’s System of Transcendental Idealism (1800) and Bergson’s vitalism, Lovejoy quotes in Bergson and Romantic Evolutionism the German Idealist, by addressing the integral component of time: “The transcendental philosophy, inasmuch as it regards all that is objective as at the outset not yet present, is by its very nature turned toward the living, toward that which is in process of becoming; for this philosophy is by its first principle genetric, and in it the spirit becomes and grows along with the world.” 50

Schelling’s paradigm appears to correspond to the aforementioned developed by Bergson, most notably in Creative Evolution, although Bergson stated as late as 1912 that he was not aware of Schelling’s writings. 51 In his second lecture, Romantic Evolutionism and the Philosophy of Religion, however, Lovejoy identifies with Félix Ravaisson-Mollien (1813–1900), who had attended Schelling’s lectures on natural philosophy in Munich, a mediating source. In his work Of Habit (1838), Ravaisson advocates a balance between spiritual and perceptual facts: whereas in a conscious state of reflection our knowledge remains external to objects, habit generates an implicit immediate understanding in which object and subject amalgamate. Bergson, who had been a student of Ravaisson at the École Normale, describes the central argument of habit:

Our internal experience shows us an activity in habit that has passed by insensible degrees from consciousness to unconsciousness and from will to automatism. Should we not then picture nature to ourselves in the form of an obscured consciousness and dormant will? Habit thus gives us the living demonstration of the truth that mechanism is not self-sufficient: it is, so to speak, only the fossilized residue of a spiritual activity. 52

In quoting at length from one of Ravaisson’s works, Lovejoy characterizes the concept of “psychovitalism” as the arbitrating element between Schelling’s transcendental Idealism and Bergson’s principle of immanence: Schelling suggests that mental life and nature are not mutually exclusive polarities, but interdependent activities—a notion described by Bergson as intuited duration.

Ravaisson’s argument is not just influenced by Schelling’s metaphysics, but it also relies to a great extent on the psychology of an earlier French Spiritualist whom Lovejoy does not mention in his writings, François-Pierre-Gontier Maine de Biran (1766–1824), a contemporary of Delacroix. Even though Bergson was only indirectly introduced to most of Maine de Biran’s ideas through Ravaisson—and started to study his primary texts after he had laid with his Essay on the immediate Data of Consciousness of 1889 the foundation of his process metaphysics 53—Bergson acknowledged the spiritualist’s influence as one of his maîtres veritables 54 and credited him for being “the great initiator of the method of deep introspection.” 55

Whereas Bergson places the emphasis on nature, Maine de Biran focuses primarily on the mind. Due to the predominant synthesizing influence that Ravaisson exercised on Bergson, Bergson shares with Maine de Biran and Schelling the principle that the absolute in nature can only be seized through the immediate consciousness of activity (or effort). Especially the psycho-physiological
approach that Bergson applies in *Matter and Memory* (1896) appears to be strongly influenced by Maine de Biran’s *méditations intérieurs*, as emphasized by Scharfstein (1943). In a more differentiated way, this and other parallels between Bergson and Maine de Biran have recently been systematically substantiated by the detailed comparative studies of Park-Hwang (1997) and Lecourt (2003).

Delacroix shows in his theoretical writings a specific attraction to Maine de Biran that corresponds to Motherwell’s affinity with Bergson. Motherwell’s affinity with Delacroix from the perspective of vitalism, in turn, is motivated through the origins of Bergson’s and Whitehead’s process metaphysics, as outlined above, in Delacroix’s immediate intellectual environment. Both Bergson and Maine de Biran interpret a transitory process, time-related disintegration of form in space, an understanding of creation and permanent novelty that both Motherwell and Delacroix closely relate to.

Their common denominators become historically explicable through the French philosophical tradition since 1800 that is intertwined with what Motherwell himself describes in his lecture “The Modern Painter’s World” (1944) as “increasing abstractness,” while ascribing it to “a long, specialized internal development in modern artistic structure.”

"TEMPORALIZED FORM" IN THE PAINTINGS OF EUGÈNE DELACROIX AND JOHN CONSTABLE

Intuited Heterogeneous Moments: Eugène Delacroix and the Spiritualism of Maine de Biran.

Looking back in 1986 upon the seminar on the history of the idea of Romanticism, Motherwell noted that Lovejoy, “whose obsession was with the history of major ideas throughout international culture,” guided him to examine Delacroix’s personal reflections on art: “I remember someone took the Schlegel Brothers, someone else Coleridge, someone else perhaps the young Karl Marx, and on learning of my interest in painting, Lovejoy assigned to me *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, the great French Romantic painter . . .”

Impressed by Motherwell’s paper, Lovejoy and his mentor Prall advised him to extend it into a thesis on Delacroix during a research-period in France, which he indeed started in May 1938 at the University of Grenoble, to improve his French. Soon after that he went to Paris, where he devoted himself to studying the work and art theory of Delacroix, until he left for Oxford, in July 1939. In Paris, Motherwell assembled a careful selection of books on Romanticism in general, and on Delacroix in particular. However, the manuscript of his thesis on Delacroix that he had prepared for publication and his translation of Paul Signac’s *D’Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionisme*, were “torpedoed at sea in the early days of World War II.”

His occupation with Delacroix’s work, technique and style runs significantly parallel to experiencing and rejecting the conventional canon of academic painting (at the Parisian Académie Julian). In line with his repudiation of academic philosophy, partially owed to Bergson’s critique of symbolic representation, Motherwell turns to autodidactic studies in painting that he would continue to pursue, more experimentally—under perspectives of process metaphysics—about a year after his return to America:

In the Summer of 1940 in Mexico, I abandoned scholarship for painting for good, but the image of Delacroix’s alert and cultivated mind constantly rolling, like an ever-changing tide, over the rocky question of l’art moderne, an art made by self-chosen individuals rather than the tribal artists of the past, remained a sustaining moral force in my inner life, [...] .

In this paragraph from Motherwell’s introduction to the 1972 translation of *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, by Walter Pach, he emphasizes the lasting importance of his French Romanticist precursor for the evolving course and content of his own artworks, especially of the Surrealist stage described above. At the same time, Motherwell stresses the individual independent character of modern art and especially of American Abstract Expressionism *per se*. This is confirmed by his talk “The Place of the Spiritual in a World of Property” (retitled for publication as “The Modern Painter’s World”) that Motherwell contributed to “L’art et la crise,” in the “Pointigny en Amerique” programs, five years after his return from Paris, in August 1944. It is in this wider context of relevance that the 3rd session, “Arts plastiques,” in which Motherwell presented, was chaired by the French
Surrealist André Masson, who saw the contemporary arts (both in Europe and America), placed “again in the midst of a Romantic Revolution.” In his talk, Motherwell reflects the origins of 20th century painting in characterizing the visual culture around 1800 at its vertex:

The term “modern” covers the last hundred years, more or less. Perhaps it was Eugène Delacroix who was the first modern artist. But the popular association with the phrase “modern art,” like that of medieval art, is stronger than its historical denotation. The popular association with medieval art is religiousness. The popular association with modern art is its remoteness from the symbols and values of the majority of men. There is a break in modern times between artists and other men without historical precedent [...] .

Emphasizing the successive negation of symbols and conventional values as a characteristic of modern art, Motherwell specifies in the course of his talk: “It is after the French Revolution and the triumph of the bourgeoisie that the human figure disappears from painting, and the rise of landscape begins. With Cézanne, landscape itself comes to an end, and from him to the cubists the emphasis is changed: the subject becomes “neutral.” Now certain painters wish to be called non-figurative …” Motherwell viewed contemporary art, including his own, from the addressed historical aesthetic perspective as linked to Delacroix’s art theory and practice. Based on his studies at Harvard and findings in Paris, what precise role does Motherwell grant Delacroix’s contribution to the genesis and evolution of abstraction, respectively to that of his own work?

According to Motherwell, it is the “spiritual underground” in which the modern artists, starting with Delacroix, find themselves intertwined with “increasing abstractness,” in explicit opposition to classically canonized “beauty” or “truth,” as he points out in the same paper: “It is the aesthetician’s error to suppose that the artist’s principal concern is beauty, any more than the philosopher’s principal concern is truth. Both are technical problems, but they do not represent the end in view.” Beauty is a matter of appearance; truth concerns being. Therefore, Motherwell adds core-programmatically, in following sensual Romanticist aesthetics: “To express the felt nature of reality is the artist’s principle concern,” not without having defined beforehand, arguing from a physio-spiritual perspective strikingly similar to that of Bergson, Dewey and their antecedent Maine de Biran: “By feeling is meant the response of the ‘body-and-mind’ as a whole to the events of reality.” With regard to creation process and technique, he specifies how to potentially capture nature as an organic whole:

Painting is a medium in which the mind can actualize itself; it is a medium of thought. Thus painting, like music, tends to become its own content. The medium of painting is color and space: drawing is essentially a division of space. Painting is therefore the mind realizing itself in color and space.

In Bergson’s terms, drawing is the adequate medium to express homogeneous duration, in which motion sequences are rendered mutually exclusive to each other in space, whereas the fluid property of painting, respectively watercolor (in its nearness to music) is most appropriate to depict an undivided flux of heterogeneous moments. This is a recurring, universal motive in Motherwell’s own art theory and practice, the distinguished graceful delineation of form as color, a concept in which he heavily relies, in association with Goya’s style, on a central notion of Baudelaire’s anti-classicist aesthetics:

“The draughtsmanship of colorists is like that of nature: their figures are naturally bound by a harmonious collision of masses.” And Goya adds: “Where do they find lines in nature? As for me, I can distinguish only luminous and dark bodies; planes that approach and recede; reliefs and concavities. My eye never perceives lines and details … and my brush cannot see more or better than I.’ But the truth is that Goya’s engravings are filled with lines.

Motherwell envisions an ideal absolute organic climax in which the artist’s creation process eventually fuses with nature’s own transitions: “The problem is to make an abstract painting as rich as nature.” In his “Thoughts On Drawing” of 1970, he concludes metaphorically, referring to Baudelaire’s distinction between draughtsmen being dialectic philosophers and colorists being epic poets, in his Salon of 1846: “Drawing is a racing yacht, cutting through the ocean. Painting is the ocean itself.” Motherwell’s distinction between drawing as a medium of homogeneous duration and painting as a means to express heterogeneous moments is in accordance with Delacroix’s
aesthetic theory. Time is integral to this creation process of perception and representation of objects in space, the generation of “temporalized form,” as defined by Lovejoy, in its accentuated expression of becoming. This essential component of “increasing ‘abstractness’” from the Romanticist era onward that Motherwell addresses as early as 1944, is, in line with Bergson and Maine de Biran, directly derived from inward experience (introspection).

In March 1857, Delacroix acquired Ernest Naville’s biography *Maine de Biran, sa vie et ses pensées*, which had just been released. He copied some of Maine’s key diary-entries from 1794 quoted by Naville at length into his own *Journal*. Through this source, Delacroix becomes aware that the spiritualist philosopher distinguishes at an early stage of his intellectual development between sensation and perception. Due to habit, Maine de Biran critically argues, the human mind tends to progressively minimize passive contemplative sensation to the benefit of active reflective perception:

... everything that touched my senses carried an indescribable sweetness and sadness to my heart. Tears were at the edge of my eyelids. If I could make this state permanent what would be missing from my happiness! [...] But an hour of that sweet calm will be followed by the ordinary stirring of my life: I already feel that this state of rapture is far from me; it is not meant for a mortal. Thus this unfortunate existence is nothing but a series of heterogeneous moments, which have no stability. They are floating, fleeing rapidly, and it will never be in our power to affix them. Everything affects us and we change according to our surroundings. I often enjoy seeing the flow of the diverse states of my soul; they are similar to a river stream, sometimes calm, sometimes agitated, but always flowing without any rest.

Decades after abandoning mere perception, Motherwell credited Dewey with having sharpened his sense for process, for immediately felt abstract rhythms that “could be an expression of the inner self,” a sensual approach toward nature and art that is firmly rooted in Bergson’s vitalism which he found confirmed in the diary and paintings of Delacroix and in Baudelaire’s art theory, a few years after his studies of Bergson and Dewey. Motherwell defines “abstracting” etymologically, as a process of selecting or directly extracting from nature, an artistic strategy that he shares with Delacroix. Delacroix’s preparatory drawing *Apollo Slays Python* of c. 1850 (Figure 2), for instance, reveals in its seismic *linea serpentinata*-style that his programmatic pictorial problem is a mode to let being, respectively “time-passage” itself into existence: Delacroix notes in his own diary that he has many ideas in common with Maine de Biran (problems related to the process of perceiving and representing reality). In fact, in many of his diary-entries, Delacroix reflects on the psycho-physiological aspects of his creation processes, as in this general comment, much earlier, on October 8 1822:

The art of the painter is all the closer to the human heart for seeming to be more material; for in it, as in external nature, a share is given openly to what is finite and to what is infinite, that is to say, to what the soul finds to move inwardly in objects which strike the senses alone.

Of particular relevance to Delacroix’s technique is the second stage of Maine de Biran’s philosophy, the philosophy of will (1804–18), expressed in his treatises *Décomposition de la Pensée* (1805) and *La Perception immédiate* (1807). According to Maine de Biran, our experiences of willing (effort voulu) reveal through inner awareness (sens intime)—in their confrontation with bodily resistance—an autonomous and unified individual self.

Instability of serial heterogeneous moments that cannot be pinned down or expressed without distorting their very nature, motion and temporality...
painting, in order to capture the transitory nature of an individually felt reality. Like Motherwell, Delacroix has two media at his disposition to put this project to a permanent test: word and image. Whereas his written reflections on art are of temporal character, the created image is instantaneous by nature. As meticulously shown by Hannooosh, Delacroix continuously juxtaposes the instantaneity of the image (concluded creation process) and the temporality of the diary-entry (reflection of creation processes).

As Bergson points out, the rendering of temporal, successive sequences of pictorial narratives is best realized in the rational Neo-classical medium of drawing (homogeneous duration), whereas color-based sensual Romantic painting captures the time-passages in an inclusive immediate mode and may even entail multiple perspectives of heterogeneous moments. Delacroix critically questions, in line with Maine de Biran: "Painting has only one moment; but are there not as many moments as there are details, phases, so to speak, in a painting?" To resolve this problem, he treats color as form, as potential ambiguous "formlessness": "Painting lives especially through forms, through the exterior of objects: line, color, effect, all qualities which have nothing in common with a literary idea—I did not say poetic idea, which is an entirely different matter." According to Delacroix, Classicists (e.g. Poussin and David) are "prosaic" painters; their pictorial solutions rely on temporal narrative conceptions in homogeneous duration, while "poetic painters" like Rubens, with whom Delacroix identifies and whose paintings he emulates, work instantaneously, by following the scheme of heterogeneous moments: "Contrary to common opinion, I would say that color has a force more mysterious and even more powerful; it acts, so to speak, without our being aware of it."

Color unfolding its own dynamics, however, is just the ideal medium; what counts, as Corot shares with Delacroix, is, as suggested by Maine de Biran, a more instinctively contemplated nature, a process that rests more upon improvisation in execution: "He told me to let myself go a little, and to yield to what might come. ... Corot goes deeply into an object: the ideas come to him, and he adds them as he works, that is the right way." Sharing this artistic attitude, Motherwell, who gives central importance to the role of feeling in the process of creation, wrote in Winter 1947/48: "The problem of the artist is to wait until reality speaks to him [. . .] to do nothing until a work, an image, a clear structure begins to unfold its meaning." At such a stage, mind-based perception is subordinated to spiritual intuition, opening toward a direct, unmediated reception of permanently changing forms. Delacroix and Corot aim at the primary impression of nature as immediately felt, sustained in representation through an unstable lineage and even through the very process of delineating form in motion (as evident in Fig. 2).

Form, individually intuited in the stream of time and space, is, as pointed out above, a concept suggested in Bergson's process metaphysics and embraced by Motherwell. In fact, intimately aware of the Spiritualists' and Idealists' roots of his pictorial prospects, Bergson himself had bridged French and British Romanticist painting in one of his rare attempts to combine process metaphysics with history of art, in his essay The Perception of Change (1911). Here, Bergson voices the contradiction between the permanent emergence and disintegration of elements in nature on the one hand and instantaneity of the executed canvas on the other:

If we reflect deeply upon what we feel as we look at a Turner or a Corot, we shall find that, if we accept them and admire them, it is because we had already perceived something of what they show us. But we had perceived without seeing. It was, for us, a brilliant and vanishing vision, lost in the crowd of those visions, equally brilliant and equally vanishing, which become overcast in our ordinary experience like "dissolving views" and which constitute, by their reciprocal interference, the pale and colorless vision of things that is habitually ours. The painter has isolated it; he has fixed it so well on the canvas that henceforth we shall not be able to help seeing in reality what he himself saw. The same can be stated about Delacroix, who, through his medium of color generates transitory forms like those described by Maine de Biran, fundamental components of visual physiology, immediacy and decomposition. His direct observations in front of an effervescent nature lead him to train in the technique of the old, though innovative masters Rubens and Rembrandt, to capture the vivacity of their colors. It is in this context that Delacroix emphasizes the value of spontaneous initial impressions, in which, as he
expresses, his mind outstripped his eye and grasped the thought almost before it was taking form. The word “uncertainty” in one of Delacroix’s reflections of viewing a painting by Rubens that evokes the illusion of organic motion, is therefore synonymous to the Biranian aspect of “instability”: “the imagination receives a shock, which is renewed every time one casts one’s eyes upon it, just as, in the Lion Hunt, it is always thrown into the same uncertainty by the dispersion of the light and the uncertainty of the lines.”

The improvisatory quality of delineated form, its uncertainty and instability, represented by means of color motion brushstrokes, constitute the unfinished character of Delacroix’s painting and establish, in this paradoxical way, the desired ensemble in the layered simultaneity of its parts. In such a condition, a painting is likened to the vivid character of nature itself. Toward the end of his life, Delacroix concludes: “It is only man who produces things which lack unity. Nature finds the secret of putting unity even into the detached parts of a whole. The branch detached from a tree is a whole little tree.” Organic union as a pictorial ideal, an identity of the parts with the whole, is precisely what Motherwell has in mind when he addresses, on the ground of his Whitehead- and Bergson-studies, the problem of a sensual “relational structure” in 1946: “To find or invent ‘objects’ (which are, more strictly speaking, relational structures) whose felt quality satisfies the passions—that for me is the activity of the artist, an activity, which does not cease even in sleep. No wonder the artist is constantly placing and displacing, relating and rupturing relations: his task is to find a complex of qualities whose feelings is just right—veering toward the unknown and chaos, yet ordered and related in order to be apprehended.”

Surprising here is that Motherwell does see Baudelaire’s stance of a reformed or modernized identity of content and form most adequately represented through English landscape painters, while not even acknowledging Delacroix’s contribution to this development. By 1970, he carefully differentiates in his “Thoughts on Drawing,” under the definitive influence of Kurt Badt’s authoritative study Constable’s Clouds (1950) that he treasured in his studio library, between the French and the British landscape tradition, with regard to their distinctive preferences in rendering form:

Even the celebrated remark of Ingres, that haunted Matisse, “Drawing is the probity of art,” doesn’t necessarily mean that drawing is different from painting. On the contrary,
Constable and the English of the Romantic period in general, seemed not to have entered real discussion with their French contemporaries, so convinced were the latter that painting and drawing are “form,” in the sense of clear contour and solid modeling.93

In this context, Motherwell exemplifies his preference for the painterly aesthetics of the British Romanticists in referring to Constable’s pencil and sepia wash *Trees and a Stretch of Water on the Stour* (Figure 3).94 Constable captures the fleeting moments in nature by contrasting light and dark tones, an aesthetic of opposite forces that Motherwell found equally at work in Goya’s series of etchings, *The Disasters of War* (1810–20).

But, in fact, rarely do any other artworks correspond to Lovejoy’s principle of “temporalized form” and the pictorial turn from being to becoming around 1800 in a more representative way than Constable’s preparatory cloud studies of 1821/22, sketched outdoors at Hampstead, usually dated with year, month, day, and hour.95 Dynamic processes as temporal phenomena, energetic transformation of almost immaterial matter: Through the lens of the art historian Badt, Motherwell learned that the British painter had created this whole series all at once, an effort which shows that he was after authentic representation of an entire time passage (evoking an animated chain reaction of consecutive sequences, corresponding to Bergson’s *immediate duration*) rather than a singular isolated moment.96

In his analysis of Constable’s most pertinent ephemeral works, Badt magnifies further a significant change in genre, from earthbound “landscape” to airborne “skyscape” painting that Constable justified in a letter in 1822: “It will be difficult to name a class of landscape in which the sky is not the keynote, the standard of scale and the chief organ of sentiments.”97 It is indeed particularly Constable’s individual approach toward clouds in their consecutive stages of formation from which Motherwell—in union with his readings of Bergson’s and Whitehead’s process metaphysics—receives one of his most vital impulses for his own abstractions, the principle “to express reality as felt,” a credo that Motherwell explicitly represents in the 1940s.98

Motherwell’s occupation with Whitehead’s ontology and with Bergson’s principles of immaterialism and multiplicity, however, did not just constitute—through Maine de Biran’s specific influence on Bergson and on Delacroix—a foundation for his affinity with the French Romanticist painter’s style and technique. Bergson and Whitehead furthermore identify, in their own turn toward Romanticism, with the British Empiricist and Idealist philosopher George Berkeley (1685–1753) a second major source of inspiration for their process metaphysics.99 With his primary notion of immaterialism, developed in his *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, Berkeley had introduced as early as 1709 a world-view that was to reform British literature and pictorial culture toward 1800 with what can be characterized as pure sensationalism.

Constable and Turner are striking examples for this reformist direction in British visual culture. Through *Science and the Modern World*, in which Whitehead investigated the roots of his process metaphysics in British Romanticist poetry and Empiricist/Idealist philosophy, Motherwell became well familiar with this paradigm shift.100

Motherwell reflected the ontological origins and the evolutionary course of abstraction since 1800 in his work as a painter, printmaker, critic, and

![Figure 3. John Constable, *Trees and a Stretch of Water on the Stour*, c. 1832–36, Pencil and Sepia Wash, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.](image-url)
editor. Just as Bergson was a mediator between 19th century Idealism and 20th century process metaphysics, he bridged European Romanticist and American Expressionist modes of emotive articulation. In 1970, he wrote in a memorial note, following the suicide of Mark Rothko, whose despair during the act of creation he had only months before compared to that of Turner.

During Goya’s lifetime, the English watercolorists, working outdoors from nature, began to lighten the painter’s palette (and incidentally to begin the Romantic tradition, of which perhaps Abstract Expressionism is the last outburst in painting); later on, chez the French Impressionists, sunlight began to permeate the mainstream of modern art.

Motherwell’s conclusions about and practice of synthesizing feeling and form, to arrive, without prejudice, at unexpected, not seldom inconclusive creations, as well as his emphasis on the substitution of God by a secular “Absolute” in nature, eventually converge in the 1970s with Robert Rosenblum’s examinations of the historical course of abstraction in his study From Friedrich to Rothko: The Northern Romantic Tradition.

Motherwell’s transformation of Constable’s and Goya’s dark and light tones as opposite forces of life and death within Romanticist aesthetics emerges in the course of his painting simultaneously from his theoretical studies of the movement: In 1948, he initiates with the overture to his requiem, Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 1, a rhythmic series of nearly 200 sequential paintings dedicated to the victims of the Spanish Civil War, painted during a time-span of 40 years, up until his death, in 1991.

Notes
1. The original idea for this study goes back to a talk of the author, “Concrescence of Prehensions: Whitehead’s Process Metaphysics in Motherwell’s Plastic Automatism,” delivered during the International Conference “100 Years of Abstract Art. Theory and Practice,” at Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany, 8–11 May 2013. The current study is based on subsequent research conducted at the Dedalus Foundation in New York City, at Mills College, Oakland and at the University of California at Berkeley, in summer 2013. Its author would like to thank Jack Flam, Katy Rogers, Tim Clifford and Gretchen Opie of the Dedalus Foundation for their support of this project. He further expresses his gratitude to his previous academic institution, the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (represented through the College of Graduate Studies and Research), for her generous funding and to his current institution, Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey, to allocate sufficient time for completion of this project.
2. Robert Motherwell, “What Abstract Art Means to Me,” The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 18, no. 3 (1951): 2–15; here in Dore Ashton and Joan Banach, eds., The Writings of Robert Motherwell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 159.
3. Robert Motherwell, “On not Becoming an Academic” text of a paper presented at a panel titled “Tradition and Innovation. The Realms of Scholarship,” organized for Harvard University’s 350th anniversary celebration and given in Cambridge, MA, September 4, 1986; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 344. Motherwell: “I also began a seminar with C.I. Lewis on Kant. I think I dropped out, though I now regard Kant most highly.”
4. Robert Motherwell, “Reflections on Abstract Art,” an address written August 20, 1982 and presented November 1982 at the University of Munich, Germany, on the occasion of the inaugural exhibition of a room dedicated to Motherwell’s art at the Bavarian State Museum of Modern Art; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 329.
5. Robert Motherwell, “Interview with Bryan Robertson, Addenda” (1965); here in Stephanie Terenzio, ed., The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 142.
6. Motherwell commented in a text that he wrote next to a passage in the book of his Harvard mentor, David Wight Prall, Aesthetic Analysis (1936): “The perfect work of art then is one in which a term cannot be changed without affecting all the systems of relations.” See Robert Saltonstall Mattison, Robert Motherwell: The Formative Years (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1987), 9.
7. Robert Motherwell in a conversation with Robert Mattison (1979), in Robert Saltonstall Mattison, Robert Motherwell: The Formative Years (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1987), 7.
8. Ibid., 7.
9. Motherwell autographed the title page of a copy of Henri Bergson’s The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, published in New York by Henry Holt and Company in 1935: “Robert Motherwell Stanford U. February 1937”. At Stanford, he also acquired John Dewey’s The Quest for Certainty, published by Minton, Balch and Co. in 1929, How we Think, published by Heath and Co. in Boston 1910, and Experience and Nature, by Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago 1926. Source: Convolute arranged in 1965 and etiquetted “New York University Library,
Donation 1 of 2,” in the Dedalus Foundation Archive (File “I.A. 46”), New York City. The complete list of books donated to the New York University Libraries was compiled in the process of the acquisition procedure, between June and November 1965, by Barbara Marks and her colleagues.

10. The dependence of Whitehead’s cosmology on the radical modes of empiricism suggested by Bergson, James, and Dewey, has been extensively examined in comparative studies, for instance by Victor Lowe, “The Influence of Bergson, James, and Alexander on Whitehead,” Journal of the History of Ideas 10, no. 2 (April 1949): 267–96. Whitehead himself acknowledges in the preface of Process and Reality his indebtedness to these three thinkers. See Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), vii.

11. See Mattison, Robert Motherwell: The Formative Years, 10–12.

12. Dedalus Foundation File “I.A. 46,” etiquette “New York University Library, Donation 1 of 2” (as quoted in footnote 9).

13. Robert Motherwell, Symbolism, lecture presented February 24, 1954, at Hunter College, New York; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 170.

14. Whitehead, Process and Reality, 321. The author of this article has explored this particular aspect in his unpublished talk “Concrescence of Prehensions: Whitehead’s Process Metaphysics in Motherwell’s Plastic Automatism,” on the occasion of “100 Years of Abstract Art: Theory and Practice,” International Conference at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany, 8–11 May 2013.

15. Robert Motherwell, “Interview with Bryan Robertson” (1965); here in Terenzio, The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell, 142.

16. Motherwell, “What Abstract Art Means to Me” (1951); and Ibid., 159.

17. Motherwell, “On Not Becoming An Academic” (1986); and Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 343.

18. Dedalus Foundation File “I.A. 46,” etiquette “New York University Library, Donation 1 of 2”.

19. Motherwell read this edition: Henri Focillon, The Life of Forms in Art, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler (New York: George Wittenborn, 1948), originally published as Vie des Formes (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1934). Bergson’s influence, as noted by art historiographers Walter Cahn and Willibald Sauerländer was most pertinent in this work by Focillon.

20. Henri Bergson, Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan, 1911), 157.

21. Henri Bergson, “The Perception of Change,” in Henri Bergson. Key Writings, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (New York: Continuum, 2002), 253. Originally published in Henri Bergson, La perception du changement; conferences faites à l’Université d’Oxford les 26 et 27 mai 1911 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911).

22. Henri Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 189.

23. See Robert C. Crogin, The Bergsonian Controversy in France 1900–1914 (Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1988), ix–x; and Scott Brown, Vitalism and the Modernist Search for Meaning, 2.

24. Georges Politzer, La fin d’une parade philosophique: le bergsonisme [The End of a Philosophical Parade: Bergsonism] (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1929).

25. For a detailed and well differentiated study of Bergson’s influence in America, see: Jeffrey Scott Brown, Vitalism and the Modernist Search for Meaning: Subjectivity, Social Order, and the Philosophy of Life in the Progressive Era (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2001); and Thomas Quirk, “Bergson in America,” Prospects 11 (1987): 453–90.

26. The Bergson-reception of the Stieglitz-circle has been widely discussed. See especially Sarah Greenough, “From the American Earth: Alfred Stieglitz’s Photographs of Apples,” Art Journal 41, no. 1 (1981): 46–54; Judith Zilczer, “Light coming on the Plains: O’Keefe’s Sunrise Series,” Artibus et Historiae 20, no. 40 (1999): 191–208; and Elizabeth Manken Kornhauser, “Marsden Hartley, ‘Gaunt Eagle from the Hills of Maine’,” in Marsden Hartley, ed. Elizabeth Manken Kornhauser (New Haven, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Association with Yale University Press, 2002), 18.

27. See Robert Motherwell, “Interview and Letter to Michel Ragon,” in Michel Ragon, Vingt-cinq ans d’art vivant: Chronique vécue de l’art contemporain, de l’abstraction au pop art, 1944–1969 [25 Years of Vivid Art: A Lived Chronicle of Contemporary Art, From Abstraction to Pop Art, 1944–1969] (Paris: Casterman, 1969), 309–15; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 238. Addressing the issue of novelty within the independent American School of painting before and after 1914, Michel Ragon confronted Motherwell with the statement that “Ben Shan, Hopper, and especially Dove do not seem to me negligible artists.” Motherwell replied “that they had learned their art from reproductions,” and added: “America was dying to possess the creative principle itself.”

28. Robert Motherwell, “Interview with Bryan Robertson” (1965); here in Terenzio, The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell, 142.

29. See Mary Ann Gillies, Henri Bergson and British Modernism (Montreal, QC: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 1996), 132–50.

30. For Bergson’s influence on Matisse, see Alfred Hamilton Barr, Matisse, His Art and His Public
36. See for instance Suzanne Guerlac’s discussion of Henri Matisse, Les Fleurs de Tarbes ou La Terreur dans les Lettres, ed. Jean-Claude Zylberstein (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 71. Jean Paulhan, Les Fleurs de Tarbes, or Terror in Literature, translated and critically edited by Michael Syrotinski (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

37. Robert Motherwell, “Preface to a Joseph Cornell Exhibition,” in Sandra Leonard Starr, ed., Joseph Cornell Portfolio—Catalogue, Exhibition Catalogue (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, Richard L. Feigen & Co., 1976), n.p.; text originally written on June 16, 1953 for a Walker Art Center exhibition of Cornell’s work in 1955; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 168.

38. See Mattison, Robert Motherwell. The Formative Years, 28.

39. Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution (New York: Random House, 1944), 370.

40. Robert Motherwell, “Provincetown and Days Lumberyard: A Memoir,” in Days Lumberyard Studios: Provincetown 1914–1971, Exhibition Catalogue (Provincetown, MA: Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 1978), 14–18; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 310.

41. Robert Motherwell, “Beyond the Aesthetic,” Design 47, no. 8 (April 1946): 14–15; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 54.

42. Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1919), 299.

43. Frédéric Worms, “Matter and Memory On Mind and Body: Final Statements and New Perspectives,” in The New Bergson, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 88–89.

44. See Lovejoy, Bergson and Romantic Evolutionism (Two Lectures delivered before the Philosophical Union of the University of California at the Opening of its Twenty-Fifths Year, September 5 and 12, 1913) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1914); Lovejoy, “On the Meaning of ‘Romantic’ in Early Romanticism,” Modern Language Notes XXXII/2 (1917): 65–77; Lovejoy, “Schiller and the Genesis of Romanticism,” Modern Language Notes XXXV/1 (1920): 1–10; and Lovejoy, “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms,” PMLA 39/2 (1924): 229–53.

45. Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, A Study of the History of An Idea (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 317.

46. Ibid., 269.

47. Lovejoy, Bergson and Romantic Evolutionism, 34–47.

48. Key indications for content and direction of his lecture on Romanticism provide his equally important later articles The Meaning of Romanticism for the History of Ideas (1941) and Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism (1948).

49. Marjorie Nicholson, who, in 1963, was the first to categorize the Arthur O. Lovejoy Papers, concluded this after her review of materials. See The Arthur O. Lovejoy Papers, Ms. 38 (Box 45 and Box 46), Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, here: Survey File, Scope and Content Note, 2.

50. Lovejoy, Bergson and Romantic Evolutionism, 32.

51. Georg Jäger, “Das Verhältnis Bergsons zu Schelling. Ein Beitrag zur Erörterung der organismischen Weltauffassung” [Bergson’s Relation to Schelling. A Contribution to the Analysis of an Organic Worldview] (PhD diss., Universität Leipzig, 1917), 15.

52. Henri Bergson, “Notice sur la vie et les œuvres de M. Félix Ravaisson-Mollien” [Comment on the life and works of M. Félix Ravaisson-Mollien], in Séances et travaux de l’Académie des sciences morales et politiques 161 (1904): 686. English translation by Ben-Ami Scharfstein, Roots of Bergson’s
mediating romanticism and american expressionism

53. Philip P. Hallie, Maine de Biran. Reformer of Empiricism 1766–1824 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 197.

54. Floris Dellaire, Ruskin et Bergson: de l’intuition esthétique a l’intuition métaphysique [Ruskin and Bergson: From Aesthetic Intuition to Metaphysical Intuition] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 12; and Gilbert Maire, Bergson, mon maître [Bergson, My Master] (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1935), 222.

55. Henri Bergson, “La philosophie française” [The Philosophy of France], La Revue de Paris III (1915): 254.

56. See Scharfstein, Roots of Bergson’s Philosophy, 67–9.

57. See Su-Yong Park-Hwang, “Habit in French Spiritualism: Maine de Biran, Ravaisson, Bergson” [Habit in French Spiritualism: Maine de Biran, Ravaission, Bergson] (PhD diss., Université Paris–Sorbonne, 1997); and Céline Lecourt, “Maine de Biran et Bergson: science et philosophie. La question de la psychologie subjective” [Maine de Biran and Bergson: Science and Philosophy. The Question of the Subjective Psychology] (PhD diss., Université Paris Diderot, 2003).

58. Robert Motherwell, “The Modern Painter’s World,” Dyn 1, no. 6 (November 1944): 9–14; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 28.

59. Robert Motherwell, “On not Becoming an Academic” (1986); here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 344.

60. Ibid., 344.

61. Robert Motherwell, Interview with Sidney Simon, “Concerning the Beginnings of the New York School 1939–1943,” Art International 11, no. 6 (Summer 1967): 17–23; here in Terenzio, The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell, 156.

62. Robert Motherwell, Introduction to The Journal of Eugène Delacroix, trans. Walter Pach (New York: Viking Press, 1972), 7–8; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 286.

63. Ibid., 286.

64. See Eugene Jolas, “Romanticism Is Not Dead,” in Vertical: A Yearbook for Romantic–Mystic Ascensions, ed. Eugene Jolas (New York: Gotham Book Mart Press, 1941), 157.

65. Robert Motherwell, “The Modern Painter’s World” (1944); here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 28.

66. Ibid., 32–3.

67. Ibid., 29 (Motherwell’s italics).

68. Ibid., 30.

69. Ibid., 31.

70. Ibid., 28 (Motherwell’s italics).

71. Ibid., 32.

72. Robert Motherwell, “Thoughts on Drawing” (1970), in Drawing Society National Exhibition—1970, exhibition catalogue (New York: American Federation of Arts for the Drawing Society, 1970), n.p.; here in Ashton and Banach, The Writings of Robert Motherwell, 248.

73. Motherwell, “Interview with Bryan Robertson” (1965); and Terenzio, The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell, 144.

74. Motherwell, “Thoughts on Drawing” (1970); here in Ashton and Banach, 249.

75. Eugène Delacroix, Journal, 29 March 1857, in Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857) (I/III), ed. Michele Hannoosh (Paris: José Corti, 2009), 1132. Full title citation of the original source for his diary-entries: Ernest Naville, Maine de Biran, sa vie et ses pensées [Maine de Biran, his Life and his Ideas] (Paris: Joel Cherbuliez, Libraire, 1857). The author of this paper would like to thank his colleague Andree Sonad Karaveli, at Gediz University (Department of Architecture), for the authenticity of her translation, close to the pulse of Maine de Biran.

76. Ibid., 1133.

77. Ibid., 1132.

78. Eugène Delacroix, Journal, 8 October 1822, in Hannoosh, Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857) (I/III), 90. Delacroix: “L’art du peintre est d’autant plus intime au cœur de l’homme qu’il paraît plus matériel; car chez lui, comme dans la nature extérieure, la part est faite franchement à ce qui est fini et à ce qui est infini; c’est-à-dire à ce que l’âme trouve qui la remue intérieurement dans les objets qui ne frappent que les sens.” English translation by Michele Hannoosh, Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 41.

79. Mattison, Robert Motherwell: The Formative Years, 7.

80. Hannoosh, Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix, 9–11.

81. Eugène Delacroix, Œuvres littéraires [Literary Works], ed. Elie Faure (I/II) (Paris: G. Crès, 1923), 74. English translation by Hannoosh, Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 41.

82. Eugène Delacroix, Journal, 29 October 1857, in Hannoosh, Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857) (I/III), 1181. Delacroix: “Ile est vrai, la peinture vit surtout des formes, de l’extérieur des objets; la ligne, la couleur, l’effet, tout conditions qui n’ont rien de commun avec l’idée littéraire, je n’ai pas dit avec l’idée poétique, ce qui est tout autre chose.” English translation by Hannoosh, Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix, 23.

83. Eugène Delacroix, Journal, 6 June 1851, in Hannoosh, Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857) (I/II), 564. Delacroix: “Contre l’opinion vulgaire, je dirais que la couleur a une force beaucoup plus mystérieuse et peut-être plus puissante; elle agit pour ainsi dire à notre insu.” English translation by Hannoosh, Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix, 87–8.

84. Eugène Delacroix, Journal, 14 March 1847, in Hannoosh, Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857)
(I/II), 365. Delacroix: “Il m’a dit d’aller un peu devant moi et en me livrant à ce qu’il viendra; c’est ainsi qu’il fait la plupart du temps. (...) Corot creuse beaucoup sur un objet; les idées lui viennent et il ajoute en travaillant. C’est la bonne manière.” English translation by Hannoosh, *Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix*, 44.

85. Robert Motherwell, *Editorial Preface to Possibilities I* (Winter 1947/48); here in Terenzio, *The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell*, 45.

86. Henri Bergson, “The Perception of Change” (1911); here in Pearson and Mullarkey, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, 252.

87. Eugène Delacroix, *Journal*, 25 January 1847, in Hannoosh, *Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857)* (I/II), 333. Delacroix: “Sur la description, ce tableau semblera de tout point inférieur au précédent; cependant par la manière dont les groupes sont disposés, ou plutôt du seul et unique groupe que forme le tableau tout entière, l’imagination reçoit un choc qui se renouvelle toutes les fois qu’on y jette les yeux de même que, dans la *Chasse aux lions*, elle est toujours jetée dans la même incertitude par la dispersion de la lumière et l’incertitude des lignes.” English translation by Hannoosh, *Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix*, 36.

88. Eugène Delacroix, *Journal*, 22 March 1857; III, 83, Hannoosh, *Eugène Delacroix. Journal (1822–1857)* (I/II), 1130. Delacroix: “Il n’y a que l’homme qui fasse des choses sans unité. La nature trouve le secret de mettre de l’unité même dans les parties détachées d’un tout. La branche détachée d’un arbre est un petit arbre complet.” English translation by Hannoosh, *Painting and the ‘Journal’ of Eugène Delacroix*, 74.

89. Robert Motherwell, “Beyond the Aesthetic” (1946); here in Ashton and Banach, *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*, 54.

90. See Patrick Noon, ed., *Constable to Delacroix: British Art and the French Romantics* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003).

91. Robert Motherwell, “A Tour of the Sublime,” *The Tiger’s Eye* I, no. 6 (December 15, 1948), 46–48; here in Ashton and Banach, *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*, 63.

92. Kurt Badt, *John Constable’s Clouds* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1950). The volume is part of the aforementioned bibliography compiled by Barbara Marks and her colleagues of the New York Libraries (as quoted in footnote 9).

93. Robert Motherwell, “Thoughts on Drawing” (1970); here in Ashton and Banach, *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*, 247.

94. Ibid., 248.

95. See Badt, *John Constable’s Clouds*, 41.

96. Ibid., 42; 44; 47; 52.

97. Ibid, 76.

98. Robert Motherwell, “The Modern Painter’s World” (1944); here in Ashton and Banach, *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*, 27–8.

99. Floris Delattre, *Ruskin et Bergson* [Ruskin and Bergson] (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), 12. In a conversation with Delattre, Bergson mentions Plotin, Spinoza, Maine de Biran, and essentially Berkeley, as his *maîtres véritables*. Whitehead expresses his affinity with Berkeley in three of his books, *The Principles of Natural Knowledge* (1919), *The Concept of Nature* (1920) and *Science and the Modern World* (1925).

100. See Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: New American Library, 1948), 87–96. Whitehead concludes: “The further discussion of the nature of enduring objects and of the conditions they require will be relevant to the consideration of the doctrine of evolution which dominated the latter half of the 19th century. The point that in this lecture I have endeavoured to make clear is that the nature-poetry of the romantic revival was a protest on behalf of the organic view of nature, and also a protest against the exclusion of value from the essence of matter of fact. In this aspect of it, the romantic movement may be conceived as a revival of Berkeley’s protest which had been launched a hundred years earlier. The romantic reaction was a protest on behalf of value.” (96)

101. Robert Motherwell, “The Universal language of Children’s Art, and Modernism,” *The American Scholar* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 24–27; here in Ashton and Banach, *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*, 268–69. Motherwell: “I suppose that is why Goya, if he did as reputed, put on the finishing strokes of his canvas by candlelight. The great Englishman, Turner, used to ‘emphasize’ in public before his colleagues on varnishing day, to their admiration (often grudging), and despair. (Because of him, perhaps, the English understood perfectly our own great abstract expressionist, Mark Rothko, whose recent tragic suicide we in America still mourn. But in Paris, as I understand it, his great colorful retrospective was shown below ground level in a certain museum and he was largely unnoticed, as Lorca was when he lived in New York, and Lenin during the Dada days in Zurich).”