



*The Tea Tax Tempest*, by Carl Goettlieb Gutenberg, born 1743 near Nuremberg, Germany.  
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# ONE

## AN AMERICAN EVENT ON THE FRENCH STAGE: NOTES ON AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGRAVING

Louis Marin

THIS PAPER is an attempt to read an eighteenth-century engraving, *The Tea Tax Tempest*,<sup>1</sup> by Carl Goettlieb Gutenberg.<sup>2</sup> It is based on the notes I took when I saw *The Tea Tax Tempest* for the first time. The paper is also part of a study I am pursuing on the semiotic and semantic features of iconic narration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I nonetheless feel that I owe the reader more explanations and justifications concerning the choice I made of this engraving for my contribution to the third issue of *Glyph*.

Indeed, my paper has two starting points: first, a set of hypotheses on historical painting that I elaborated mainly on pictorial material of the seventeenth century in France, by Ph. de Champaigne, Le Brun, Le Sueur, Coypel, Poussin, and the writings of the art theorists of the Academie Royale. Second, it is a manner of answering one of the goals of *Glyph*, that is, the critique of the notion of representation through a careful exploration of the projections of European trends of thought onto the American scene, and an analysis of the ways in which those contemporary philosophies, theories, and methodologies are provided a novel life when transplanted in a new soil, in another cultural tradition. When, in December, 1976, I visited in Paris the bicentennial exhibition,

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*America Seen From Europe*, I found in one of the Grand Palais rooms *The Tea Tax Tempest*, which appeared to me particularly relevant to the *Glyph* questions, since this European engraving represents a "real" projection displaying the image of an American event on a screen for spectators, as well as the allegories of the four continents: Europe, Africa, Asia, and America.

But the story is even more complex: the engraver, C. G. Gutenberg, actually remade a British picture of another historical event by completely displacing its political and ideological signification,<sup>3</sup> and at the same time in his representation he projected to "America" the very projection of the new-born American history belonging to the European eyes and minds. I realized that *The Tea Tax Tempest* could be analyzed as a symbol of what we intend to do here, that is, to trace, within the everlasting representational frame the intricate structure of influences and counterinfluences, projections and projections of projections, between the Old and New Worlds, a structure which sometimes appears sufficiently prominent to be called "History."

Indeed, such a conjunction in a small engraving of my theoretical preoccupations with the *Glyph* project seems to me a sign sent by the Goddess Fortune, enigmatic enough to deserve a careful study. Hence it followed that I wrote the notes I present today, in which my own philosophical problems concerning historical painting are mixed up with my amazing reading of the engraving on a certain chilly morning of December, 1976.

Let us begin with the general problems of reading a picture, the operations involved in the viewing-reading process, their implications on theoretical and practical levels, and the hypotheses which guide that process. My essay can thus be considered a tentative approach to a partial history of reading in the field of visual art, a problem which has been in fact raised *as such* by the seventeenth-century art theorists and those of the eighteenth century like Du Bos, Lahgier, Grimm, La Font Saint Yenne, and Diderot. To put my undertaking in more general terms, I wish to test some notions and procedures elaborated by contemporary semiotic and semantic theories, by using an engraving, Gutenberg's *The Tea Tax Tempest*, as an experimental device or model to validate, refine, or question those notions and procedures when they are displaced into a domain for which they were not primarily constructed. Nonetheless, although the study of that particular object aims at the constitution of a theory of reading and the determination of the notion of *reader* in visual art, the final result of the enterprise *will in fact* be a description of the engraving as such, in its irreducible singularity. My aim will be to discover the system that underlies the representational text, to make it coherent and noncomparable to other representational

texts, as well as to locate the viewer-reader in a position that is very specific, that is, appropriate only to this engraving. It seems to me that all studies of pictorial and literary texts made from the point of view I just described are exposed to such a tension, which may be a definition of ideology, a tension between the pole of theoretical and methodological generalization and that of unique and individual description, or an opposition I might rephrase as that of *the structure of messages* in visual art in general and that of the *system of a representational text* in particular. The concrete reading-viewing of a painting and the practical position of its reader-viewer thus have a twofold nature, a bidimensional constitution: on the one hand, *competence*, whose structure is constructed from the messages produced by codes and received by the viewer in the process of reading that particular painting as an example among many others, or as a cluster of visual "quotations" of several pictorial and extrapictorial codes; on the other hand, *performance*, whose system depends on that painting as a unique object of contemplation, which organizes it as an individual reading and is appropriate only for it in a unique situation or reception. The main problem such an approach encounters is the connection between these two dimensions, the determination of a level of analysis and, consequently, of a set of notions and relationships intermediate between competence and performance, structure and system, messages and text, codes and individual reading-viewing. In a certain sense, the analyses that follow are an attempt to construct such a level and to determine such relationships and notions.<sup>4</sup>

But before coming to a more precise analysis of the engraving, let me state the paradigms of my own reading and my basic presuppositions. My starting point will be the distinction made by Benveniste between discourse and narrative. As you know, the fundamental assumption of Benveniste is that in narrative, as opposed to discourse, the specific modality of its enunciation is to erase or conceal the narrator's marks in the narrative propositions. So the basic characteristic of the narrative enunciation is the exclusion of all "autobiographical" forms, such as "I-Thou," the dialogic person, "here, there, now, tomorrow, yesterday," the temporal and spatial deixis, the present tense, and the tenses of past and future connected to the present tense. On the contrary, it uses a well-defined past tense, the preterit and the third person, "he, she, they."

When this specific narrative apparatus of enunciation is translated to the iconic narrative, we have to ask difficult questions, for example: What are the level and the modalities of enunciation in this kind of representation? What is its narrative agency? How could a painting narrate a story?

In order to answer these questions, I must define a few terms characterizing the space of an iconic representation. First, the space of the icon as such, the representational screen or the representation as a window open to the world, and/or the representational mirror. I shall come back to this point. Second, the representation of space on that screen, the illusory depth created on the surface of the canvas, or the representational stage. Third, belonging to this stage, the *loci* or *topoi* where the various narrative propositions are located, propositions which basically consist in the representation of significant human actions and strong passions corresponding to the successive events of the story. The distinction between screen, stage, and loci is useful insofar as it permits a structural organization framing the narrative propositions, as well as a formal apparatus of communication or enunciation, the emission-reception process. The reading of an iconic representation would then consist in projecting the time of the story onto the stage and in putting the loci of the stage into order with respect to the temporal categories "before" and "after." In other words, the very time of the referential story regulates the spatial order of the loci and finally imposes a reading order on the viewer. As du Bos recognized, perhaps more clearly than any theorist before him, the intelligibility of the painting depends in large measure on the beholder's familiarity with the subject represented.

As you know, the so-called "classical" representation is characterized by the unity of its stage: there is only a single represented space in the space of representation, although the stage may be differentiated into, for instance, a foreground, a middle ground, and a background. These planes are the loci of the stage where the narrative propositions or sequences may be located. Now what would happen to that clear-cut organization when the painter wants to depict a narrative in which the same actors have to perform different actions successively according to the referential story? Painters have attempted to elaborate various compromises, but theoretically just one possibility is left to them: to displace the temporal diachronic sequences of the narrative into a synchronic, atemporal order or into a structural organization of space based upon the rational connection of the parts in the whole. As Charles Le Brun explained to the members of the French Academy in his lecture on Poussin's *Manna*, "the historical painter has only to represent one moment where simultaneous actions take place." Historical painting is a painting whose "tense" is present, whose time is the present moment in which it is seen. The only possible way of making the story understood or "read" by the viewer is to distribute all around this central represented moment various circumstances that are logically connected to it by implication or presupposition. This is the reason that historical painting is considered the most difficult and also the most prestigious genre of

painting, because in the present presence of the pictorial representation, it has to express diachrony, temporal relationships, yet can do so only through the network of a whole which generates its parts logically or achronically by its own signifying economy. The time of the story, its succeeding parts related to the succession of events, is neutralized in the intelligible space of a model that represents only the logical relationships of elements subordinated to a center. This is the paradox of the classical painting of history. The representational process cannot "presentify" time except in terms of a model, in all senses of the term: original, paradigm, absolute presence, pure rationality. The aporia consists precisely in the fact that time is definitely not a model: it cannot be a logical or metaphysical paradigm. It always admits a "before" and an "after," a "not-yet" and an "already gone." It is this "truth" that classical painting dismisses and points out at the same time through its own process of representation. Far from being a remote application of the "classical episteme" in the domain of art, historical painting, because it necessarily presents in a spatial medium a model of time-intelligibility, is instead its ultimate paradigm.

Nevertheless, in front of the painting, the viewer tells a story to himself, he reads the painting, he understands the narrative messages. This means that he converts the iconic representational model into language, and, more precisely, into a story, thanks to the expressive power, the fascinating attraction, of human actions and passions represented by the painting he looks at. On the one hand, a moment of representation is offered to our eyes as the center or the core of the intelligible structure of the whole. On the other hand, the reader narrativizes the model into a story that gives him presence in a temporal form. Between the two poles characterizing the historical painting and its reading, a "chiasmus" is operating: the model is built in its perfect structural intelligibility just in order for a story to be told: reading-enunciation. But such a reading, such an enunciation has to be dismissed from the painting itself in order to posit the moment of representation in its objective and universal truth. In other words, the subject of enunciation-representation has to be, at one and the same time, present and absent. When it is absent, events are manifestations of being itself, pure and universal essences; when present, they exist in their actual temporal succession. The painting is, at one and the same time, an instantaneous moment of evidence in the Cartesian sense, when an eternal truth is presented, and also an ontological proof in the same Cartesian sense, when from that essence existence is analytically unfolded.

That instantaneous eclipse of the subject of enunciation can be rephrased in less metaphysical terms as the subject's negation (in the Freudian sense). It is at the same time articulated in and excluded from

the representation: in Benveniste's terms, "the events seem to narrate themselves as if *nobody* was speaking."<sup>5</sup>

The way in which Gutenberg solves the aporia of the "classical" representation of time and succession is, from this point of view, very interesting, since his solution involves a contradiction that points out the aporia from which he attempts to escape. In order to give his representation its historical dimension, he projects the historical event onto a metaphorical plane: he represents an allegory of Time, projecting onto a screen (I mean, onto space) a metaphor of the historical event, and in so doing, he is obliged to duplicate the representational stage, showing spectators looking at a picture. In other words, the two- or three-times remote representation of the story *in space* is intended to give us, as viewer-readers of the engraving, the sense of a specific historical time: the outburst of a revolution and its historical meaning. We shall soon see more precisely the operations involved in such a compromise with the norms or the codes of classical representation.

Now, if this is the characteristic of the historical enunciation modality, this means that the whole deictic network has to be erased from the narrative message. Is it possible to point out in Gutenberg's engraving, for example, in its narrative content, the "negation" of the iconic deixis? Does such a question make sense in the iconic domain? My hypothesis is the following: Except for the very existence of the painting and the fact that we are looking at it, nothing in the iconic message marks it as a situation of emission and reception, and, more precisely, no figure is looking at us as viewers, nobody addresses us as representatives of the sender of the message. We are only the distant spectators of a story, separated by a spectacular distance that is the insuperable distance of the representation's narrator from the story he narrates. Moreover, what is represented on the main stage? Spectators looking at an image and commenting on it, performing the very operation that we are performing on our side, looking at a picture and transforming its model into a story. What is remarkable in *The Tea Tax Tempest* is that we find represented, set on the representational stage, a famous percept given by Alberti in his *Della Pittura*, in which he articulates very clearly the problem we have just raised: he advises the historical painter to introduce into his painting a specific figure he calls the commentator. Sometimes, Alberti says, it would be useful to make an historical painting more emotionally effective by such a character, who, by his gestures and emotional expressions, points out the important part of the story to the viewer at whom he looks and with whom he establishes a visual link. In our engraving, the fact that nobody is looking at us allows us to remark, according to our hypothesis that the represented scene operates in its propositional content, the negation of all marks of emission and reception in the narrative message. But at the same time the relationships that

do not take place on the plane of representation—I mean the relationships between the sender, the viewer-reader, and the message—are precisely the main subject of the “istoria” told by the engraving: five figures on the stage are related to a picture shown on a representational screen represented in the engraving. They speak together about that picture, they look at it, they point it out. In a sense, they all perform, in front of the picture projected at the background of the engraving, the various roles that an audience would have performed at an art history lecture on *The Tea Tax Tempest*. Even the projectionist, his slide projector, and the distinguished guest lecturer commenting on the engraving are there.

Let me analyze for a moment the various positions and expressions of the five figures on the foreground. All are captivated by the picture, but in very different ways. The character on the left, seen from the back seated on a “pack,” seems to be attracted by the scene projected. She is ready to stand up and join the battle. Maybe the American Princess recognizes her own image in the Indian warrior (a woman in fact) leading the insurgents in the middle of the explosions. Her raised left hand appears to grasp the image, as her double in the picture appears to grasp the Phrygian cap projected from the fire. On the extreme right, Father Time, the projectionist and the main commentator on the scene he projects, focuses the image by manipulating the machine with his left hand, while with his right he points out the scene with an open mouth: does he shout with surprise or does he enthusiastically comment on what is happening in the image? Between these two figures of America and Time are three others: two seated, Europe with a spear, a shield, and a feathered helmet and Asia with a censer on her lap, who speak together. With a serene expression and a relaxed attitude, Europe shows the image to Asia, who contemplates it calmly. Standing up, just behind Europe, is the third figure, Africa, who looks at the scene with a frightened gesture.

The matter, here and for the moment, is not the question of the meaning, but the fact that exhibited on the representational stage are actors who are the vehicles of the various functions of a communicational exchange (emission-message-reference-code), as if the Jakobsonian model of communication were allegorized or metaphorized there. On the right Father Time visually emits a message that the American Princess receives on the left, while Europe, by her gesture, refers to the context of the picture, the explosion, the battle, the fight of the three animals, etc., and explains what it means to Asia. Moreover, the *expresive* subfunction is performed by Africa and America, and the *conative*, whose effect on America is obvious, by Father Time himself. We can go further: since the powerful rays of light coming from the magic lantern connect all figures together, even the *phatic* function, the channel of communication, is also represented.



A few remarks about this brief description of the engraving,<sup>6</sup> which metaphorizes Jakobson's model of communication, not as an explanatory sketch, but as the very subject matter of the story that the engraving tells us:

1. In a sense, the engraving is the visual representation of that model.

2. The engraver and/or the beholder occupy the meta-linguistic position of the linguist, who constructs a model about a communication process.

3. The scheme is oriented from right to left for pictorial reasons (the balance and composition of the painting), an orientation that surprisingly reverses the reading of a legible text in our culture, which implies a starting point on the left. Does it mean that a revolution is, in a certain sense, a reversal of Time? Time, is allegorized in the mythic figure of the Father reclining on the celestial globe, with his attribute, the scythe that destroys every past thing. I shall try to show that such a reading, which might be now considered an overinterpretation, can be supported by formal arguments.

4. Figures can condense several functions, as, for example, Europe, who refers to the picture and comments upon or decodes it.

5. Father Time is the sender of the message in the very precise sense that he is producing the image with the magic lantern that he handles. With his optical machine, he is the very explicit metaphor—on the stage—of the viewpoint of the engraver. On her side, the American Princess, who turns her back on us and is going to stand up and “enter” the picture, is, in a sense, our representative, the representative of the beholders, entering into the representation through our gaze.

The third step of our description concerns the circular and irradiating image projected onto the screen, that focusses gazes and gestures of the figures on the stage, an image I just alluded to simultaneously as the message and its referent (its context in Jakobson's terms). What surprises me is the fact that the focal point of the image is the teapot exploding in the middle of a glowing fire surrounded by smoke and clouds, while the historical event, the battle, is represented on the periphery of the circle behind the explosion. In other words, the historical event is the context, the circumstances of the metaphor; it is the allegory that is the message. The referent is not the story or history and the allegory, its meaning: on the contrary, the metaphor is the message, and the context, history. And if the metaphorical dimension is the code dimension, the focal point of the image signifies that the message is the code. Moreover, the center of the image is a duplicated metaphor: the exploding teapot means allegorically that the tea tax is the cause of the war between the American colonies and England, a cause whose effect is

the battle. The relationship between the center and the periphery of the image is thus at the same time the relationship between the message and its context, the code and the referent, and between the cause (Before) and the effect (After). In other words, the message, thanks to that metaphorization, is constructed as the relation between code and referent on the one hand *and* between cause and effect on the other; more briefly, as a relation between intelligible synchrony and historical diachrony. But this is only the first level of the allegory: the exploding teapot in the middle of the irradiating fire surrounded by smoke and clouds is obviously a displacement of the very common representation of a theophany. It is an allegory of an allegory, but at the same time a dis-allegorization of allegory. A strange ambiguity appears here: I may read the teapot as a sign projecting a profane event pertaining to economic history onto the plane of theology and mysticism, or as a symptom of an ironic derision: God is no longer a stupefying eye, a blinding light surrounded by clouds; God is a teapot.

Before going further in my description, I have to come back to my set of hypotheses concerning classical historical painting and, more precisely, the system of the iconic deixis as it works in the classical representation. My hypothesis is the following: the formal device of enunciation in the iconic representation is defined historically as the optico-geometrical network of the legitimate perspective, as the dynamic relationship between a viewpoint and a vanishing point regulated by the laws of optics and geometry that permits the rational construction of an illusory three-dimensional space upon a flat canvas. Moreover, the structural equivalence between the viewpoint and the vanishing point has been established by an experimental device built by Brunelleschi, an optical box (something like a magic lantern) described very precisely by his biographer, Manetti. Brunelleschi's optical box shows or demonstrates the equivalence between the eye of the spectator and the vision of the painter, between the reception point and the emission point, operating through the identification of the viewpoint with the vanishing point in the panel that Brunelleschi painted and its reflection in the mirror that the spectator holds in front of it. The mirror in which the viewer's eyes looks at the reflection of the scene represented on the panel makes the painting itself into a vision: in turn, it looks at the viewer-painter as an eye. Brunelleschi's device affords us a model or an experimental analogy of the theory itself. I emphasize the fact that it is only an analogy, it refers to a specific representational structure among others equally possible. The viewer is posited in the system as a spectator; he is immobilized, caught in the apparatus as a Peeping Tom. Everything takes place as if what the viewer looked at through the small hole in the panel were the painting's vision, the mirror being the operator of that "as if."

But this function does not appear as such in Brunelleschi's device, since what the spectator will look at is a scene represented on the panel. He forgets the very fact that he is looking at a picture; he is fascinated by his own "scopic" desire (or drive).

So we may provisionally conclude that that apparatus of iconic representation constituted by the perspective network is a formal apparatus that integrates the propositional represented contents, the "discourse" of the painting presented by the painting. In a less abstract way, we may theoretically consider that in the vanishing point, in its hole, the things represented gradually disappear (reception-process), or that from the view point they gradually appear to be distributed in the represented space (emission-process). And the reversibility that constitutes that space theoretically neutralizes the temporal and successive "*parcours*" of the painting by the viewer's eye in a kind of permanent present of representation.

Before coming back to our engraving, I would like to emphasize the paradigm of the specular image in the pictorial representational model since the Renaissance. Indeed, the painting, a window opened onto the world, functions—in its theoretical and even technical constitution—as a mirror duplicating it. The actual "referent" of the picture is present on the canvas as absent, that is to say, as its image, its reflex, its shadow, scientifically built in its perceptual reality (an assumption whose universality can be questioned, as Panofsky has shown in his essay on perspective as symbolic form). More generally speaking, this is the contradictory axiom of the representational system: (1.) The representational screen is a transparent window through which the spectator, Man, contemplates the scene represented on the canvas as if he saw the real scene in the world. (2.) But at the same time, that screen, actually a surface and a material support, is also a reflecting device on which the real objects are pictured. In other words, the canvas as a support and a surface does not exist. For the first time in painting, Man encounters the real world. But the canvas as a support and a surface does exist to effect the duplication of reality. The canvas as such is simultaneously posited and neutralized. Technically and ideologically it has to be assumed transparent. Invisible and a necessary condition of visibility, reflecting transparency theoretically defines the representational screen.

Now I can redefine my working hypothesis concerning the transference of the distinction between discourse and history to the historical or narrative representation: the negation (in the Freudian sense) of the representational apparatus consists in the displacement of the vanishing point to the central moment of the story represented, and in the lateralization of the depth dimension from the level of enunciation (representation) to the level of *énoncé* (the story represented). It seems important to point out the operation implied in such a move, a ninety-degree

rotation of the network of optical rays (whose poles are the view point and the vanishing point). So the plane of the represented story is built as a plane parallel to the representational screen, a plane that our gaze scans by the lateral distribution of the figures. The equivalence of the view point and the vanishing point reappears there, but on the level of the story. In the engraving, the figure of Father Time, actually a complex representation of the view point, tells the story to the American Princess and the other continents of the world—a story whose location is the transformation (by displacement) of the vanishing point into the central event, into the moment of representation which is the focus of the story.

At stake in that transformation is the making of a representation that escapes its own process of constitution, which it nevertheless requires, the positing of representation in the "objective" autonomy and adequacy that it gets, but from a subject that constitutes it in constituting himself through it.

The story set on the stage by Gutenberg in his engraving, however, the event properly speaking, is not an historical event. The actual event, indeed, is the story of enunciation (representation), even at the level of the message emitted by Father Time. What is represented is the very process of representation. Moreover, what is represented is a kind of subversion of the specific frame of the historical representation as I have just defined it, a transgression operated by the exhibition of its very production. I would like to make that point clear and more precise by a formal and historical argumentation.

First: what about the spatial structure of the engraving, what about the formal organization of the representation? It is remarkable that, although our attention is captured by the scene set on the stage and, like that of the American Princess, by the image projected on the screen, this structure is clearly marked on the floor by geometrical lines that on the left lead our gaze out of the representational frame, to a vanishing point located on the horizon line, behind two columns ranked in the back. These columns frame a relief in the shadowy background representing, as far as it is perceptible, Cain killing his brother Abel.<sup>7</sup> The deep visible structure is thus confined to the left superior angle of the plane, and its articulating point is expelled out of the screen according to a general movement of rejection from the left inferior angle in the foreground to the right superior part in the background. This movement of expulsion and rejection, which nevertheless structures the represented space, is counterbalanced and more than balanced, is concealed and erased by a countermovement parallel to the representational screen that is punctuated by the figures distributed along a horizontal line of the floor and is underlined by the projection from the right to the left. That movement defines the space of a stage narrowed in depth by a big

curtain unfolded *before* the column on the right and drawn until the left edge of the representation. The curtain impedes any motion toward the background; it encloses and narrows the stage. The two diverging movements that I have just described define concretely, within the representation, the two processes converting the formal apparatus of enunciation into the explicit legible narrative *énoncé*. They define them, they describe them, they represent them. But they also subvert them, since the curtain enclosing the stage and completing the process of lateralization initiated on the right by the magic lantern and its light rays is illusorily open and hollowed by an image, a deep space with its central point in the teapot exploding far away on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. This central point is the central moment of the representation, but it plays the role of the vanishing point and is substituted for it. Moreover, a light distortion reveals the transgression, as if the artist feels the whole system escaping from his hands and still tries to recuperate and stabilize it. In effect, the curtain that seems at the first glance parallel to the representational screen is actually slightly oblique. Nevertheless, the limits (the frame) of the image projected is perfectly circular and not elliptic, a mistake in the perspective system which reveals that the image is projected for us, the "real" spectators, and not for the figures acting the role of spectators on the stage. What is mastered on the level of the stage with the two diverging movements is lost on the level of the story, for whose narration the whole operation was nonetheless planned and realized.

I may go further in my attempt to draw some iconographical inferences concerning the complex spatial structure of the engraving. I briefly alluded to one of them before. The very fact that Father Time is to the right of the starting point of the whole process, reverting and converting the deep visible structure of representation into the lateral legible organization of the "*représenté*" organization, which is completed with the image on the left and its privileged spectator, the American Princess, indicates first: an attempt to temporalize the present moment of representation, to figure such a temporalization of the representational space by that allegory, to give an historical dimension to the representation, to narrativize what is represented.

Second: that this temporal movement oriented from right to left is contrary to the reading orientation means very precisely a re-volution, an historical revolution. The fact that Time reclines upon a celestial globe that projects a circular image on the screen with the teapot in its center, signifies that this historical revolution, its initiating event, has a cosmic dimension.

Third: the symbolic significance of the relief of Cain killing Abel in the right background, the bad brother killing the good, is also reversed in the image on the left, since in the fight between the two brothers, the

American and English, it is the good one, the American brother, who triumphs over the bad one.

I now come to the historical argumentation. As you know, about 1750 historical painting in France was the field of a classical revival through administrative, academic, and pedagogical circumstances, and also through a transformation of the literary and aesthetic context of creation in visual art. A main tendency can be characterized: an effort toward the ennoblement of style, a will to achieve Ideal Beauty in a closer imitation of the great masters of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries and in a more direct meditation of the Ancients.<sup>8</sup> In the classical revival, two painters of the seventeenth century, Poussin and Le Sueur, were prominent paradigms for the historical painters of the second part of the eighteenth century. In his Salon of 1761, Diderot exclaims: "O le Poussin! O Le Sueur! Where is the *Testament of Eudamidas*? Where is the *Death of Saint Bruno*?" If Poussin and Le Sueur became the models for the historical painters, these two paintings by them became the paradigms of what had to be done. The neo-Poussinist movement reached its climax in 1783 with the solemn celebration of the Master in the Pantheon, an apotheosis that provoked enthusiastic eulogies.<sup>9</sup>

If we consider, then, all this production in the domain of the historical painting, especially in the years preceding the publication of our engraving, we may note that the painters used devices of setting the story on the stage that are the strict application of the rules of composition and organization that I tried to formalize with my hypotheses on historical narrative in visual art: the composition is ennobled by its rarefaction, by the distribution of groups of figures on the same horizontal plane, by the closure of the stage, by avoiding great displays of perspective. Many historical paintings of that period seem to be meditations on the *Testament of Eudamidas*<sup>10</sup> or other related paintings by Poussin, such as the *Extreme Unction* (Chantelou) or the *Death of Germanicus*. Let us have a look at the *Extreme Unction* and the *Testament of Eudamidas*. In the first we recognize the curtain enclosing the main part of the stage, the lateralized distribution of the figures in a frieze-disposition parallel to the representational screen. We also remark, half-concealed behind the curtain, a circular shield whose center is the location of the vanishing point. It is exactly the same in the *Testament*, where the formal role of the curtain is performed here by a blind wall, while a window is open on the right hand of the painting and a door on the left. Again in the *Testament* we find the shield as the place of the vanishing point: a circular shape that is, at the same time, like a blind eye, effecting by its very shape the conversion by rotation of the deep visible structure into a clearly and logically legible lateral one.

In other words, what I intend to say is that we find in *The Tea Tax Tempest* all those representational devices, the curtain, the disposition of

the figures on a horizontal plane parallel to the representational screen, the opening of the stage only in a part of the composition in order to reinforce the lateral distribution of the characters, the circular shape—but all these devices diverted, distorted. The curtain is no longer a way of closing the stage and focusing attention on the story, since it is a screen onto which is projected an image which reopens it, although illusorily. The figures are not acting, performing a story, they are only contemplating an image of it. The “actors-viewers” are not historical actors but allegories of Time or the Continents. Even the circular shape of the shield, the blinded eye of enunciation in Poussin’s paintings, becomes the frame of the message reproducing the circular eye of the magic lantern. My conclusion is that, when translating or transferring the formal device of historical iconic representation from the Ancient or Sacred to contemporary history, from the level of a story where characters are the narrative vehicles of philosophical, ethical, and religious virtues to another where economic events of trade policy are the motor of human actions, the whole apparatus of representation was shaken, or, if you prefer, was self-criticizing: As if, to use an analogy we often encounter in eighteenth-century art theory texts, the representational machine was raced, pushed to its limits. It reveals that representation is ideology and ideology, representation. Allegorization and metaphorization are simultaneously a way of representing a new kind of history through the patterns of an old one, of conjuring up the disturbances created by this change, and of revealing the ideological context of such a representation.

I would like to conclude by a few observations: first, on the Indian princess twice represented in the engraving, on the stage as a figure and in the image projected on the screen. This is not the place to enter into an historical account of the Indian problem and the problem of the frontier about 1760 in North America, an historical account that would exceed my competence.<sup>11</sup> I’ll just give a few iconographical indications.

The Indian Princess was for a long time an allegory of the fourth continent. In the engraving, we find her traditional attributes, the feather diadem, the bow and arrows, but with some interesting changes: America as an Indian woman is no longer nude, and all pejorative features are now avoided, such as the crocodiles and the beheaded corpses that usually surrounded her. But the main change concerns her seat: a pack (of furs, maybe) is substituted for the traditional tatoo we find in the drawings or engravings of the seventeenth century (in, for example, those of Stefano Della Bella, Paolo Farinati, or Martin de Voos). A natural attribute has been replaced by a cultural, or better, a commercial one.

Her duplicate image on the screen is a political allegory that dis-

places the geographical one located on the stage. The Indian Princess is a leader-woman who guides the insurgents to freedom. The allegorized allegory is thus on the right side in the War for Independence. This is a French projection, since the leadership of the Indian woman symbolizes not only the ideal of freedom characterizing the European Enlightenment, whose representatives in America are the Boston insurgents, but also the idealized relationships of the French settlement in America to the Indians,<sup>12</sup> whose very existence was threatened simultaneously by the French defeat in 1763 in Canada and by the English defeat in 1783.

The distance between the political and the geographical allegories, between America as a beholder of the image and America as an actress, displays the ideological contradiction of the European vision of America. It reveals the ideological disturbances created by the American revolution on the frontiers of the Enlightenment. It discloses the French projection of the Indian problem and the political, social, and economic problems of the frontier upon the philosophical and ideological stage of the Enlightenment.

Furthermore, we may remember the famous Boston Tea Party, which is in a sense evoked in the picture on the screen by the exploding teapot and its relation to the victorious move of the insurgents: a masquerade.

Is the image of the Indian woman as a leader of the angry colonists the duplicate of the Indian Princess who contemplates the projection or of one of the disguised Bostonians at the Tea Party? The question is: what kind of representation of the Indians did the Bostonians have, when they used them as masks in order to express in that spectacular way their contest with their English brothers? A means of deciding legal authority through a process of identification with the aborigines: we are Indians and we act like savages; or a way of holding that authority in derision by deriding the Indians, by using them as masks: the derogatory English attitude is not worthy of response except by using the most deprecated figures, those of savages who we are not.

The two figures of the Indian Princess in the engraving, the "actual" allegory and its allegorized representation, seem to express such an ambiguity and, beyond the historical event itself, the ambivalence of America seen from France and Europe, the Indian America and the colonists' America.

A last word to point out in *The Tea Tax Tempest* an object which is the token and the witness of the Enlightenment, its ideology of revolution and its representation: the magic lantern.<sup>13</sup> A representation of the view point, it is also the source of light; an optical box more complex than Brunelleschi's optical box, which needed the natural light of the



sun to work its fascination on the Florentine spectators of the Renaissance, an optical box and a cyclopean eye, a *machine* in which a transparent, preformed image, a stereotyped slide, is hidden upside down in order to be truly revealed and correctly projected to the Medused American Princess.<sup>14</sup> This is an Enlightenment version of the Marxian camera obscura of the *German Ideology*, and what is projected is not the real history, the history of the real life, but its allegory. But in another sense the magic lantern effects an extraordinary change when compared to Brunelleschi's box. Such a change, although only represented, is perhaps the actual revolution that happened at that time, or its anticipation. Light is no longer the universal power that makes everything visible; it is no longer, as it has been since Plato, the absolute medium of theory and representation. What happens in our engraving, through the process of projection from the magic lantern handled by Father Time to the allegorical image we see on the screen, is indeed the transformation of light, the power and means of vision, into energy, the fire that makes the teapot explode. The magic lantern, the theoretical optical box, has become the steam engine of the industrial revolution, but again displaced, diverted into the *allegorical representation* of an historical "accident" of English trade policy. Another version of the negation (in the Freudian sense) of enunciation, of the very process of representation, the viewpoint is not a living and creating eye, a thinking eye, but a mechanical one that produces and exhibits what is already produced and represented, an image of an image. But although allegorized, that eye machine ultimately is an engine, whose functioning we only contemplate in its representation.

As viewers we are within and without the allegory. Our representative in the engraving is the American Princess, who is going to stand up and join her sister who leads the insurgents to victory. But at the same time, that means that we are present within the representation only as allegories, twice removed from the battle of freedom: estranged participation, participating estrangement, whose name a century later will be alienation.<sup>15</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Catalogue of the exhibition *l'Amérique vue d'Europe*, le Grand Palais, Paris, September-December, 1976, no. 202. The date of the engraving is 1778. Its dimensions are 46 by 57.7 cm.

2. Carl Goettlieb Gutenberg, a German-French artist born in 1743 near Nuremberg. He worked there during his apprenticeship years with Preissler and Haner, then six years in Basel and afterwards in Paris, where he spent most of his life until his death in 1790. His work is principally composed of engravings after Greuze and Wille. Two of his works became famous: *Wolfe's Death*, after Benjamin West's painting, and *The Tea Tax Tempest*.

3. A satirical print by John Dixon, "The Oracle," representing Britannia,

Hibernia, and Scotia meeting together in order to consult the oracle about the present situation of Public Affairs. Father Time acts as the Great Priest. Dedicated to Concord. 1774.

Cf. M. D. George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires in the British Museum*, London, 1935 t.v., pp. 298-99. For a description of John Dixon's "The Oracle," see no. 5225 in the *Catalogue*.

4. Some of the theoretical parts of this essay are included in my study on Poussin's *The Arcadian Shepherds*, a contribution to a forthcoming anthology edited by S. Suleiman on the theory of reading (Princeton University Press).

5. For bibliographical references, see my article "La dénégation de l'énonciation: à propos d'un carton de Charles Le Brun," in *Prepublications*, Center of Linguistics and Semiotics (Urbino, Italy: University of Urbino, 1976).

6. For a more detailed description of the engraving, see M. D. George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, no. 6190.

7. In his description, M. D. George writes: "On the right, a picture or a tapestry of two nude men fighting. One lies prostrate."

8. On that point, consult, among others, Jean Locquin, *La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785* (Paris, 1912), and R. Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

9. Every year, articles, manifestos, and descriptions of Poussin's paintings were published: 1757, 1762, 1764, 1769, 1771, 1777, 1779, 1781, 1783, etc. . . . In that classical revival, the influence in Rome of Raphaël Mengs and Winckelmann on French, English, and German artists who stayed there cannot be underestimated: Gavin Hamilton, Benjamin West, James Barry, Dance Holland, Angelica Kauffmann, Salomon Gessner. Between 1765 and 1775 what has been called Raphaël Mengs's school attained greater and greater importance and gave the full measure of its originality. Among French artists, we may cite Vien, Lagrenée, Brenet, Deshayes, Doyen, Greuze with his reception piece, Fragonard with *Coresus and Calliroe*, Challe, and soon the young David with *Andromaque meditating over Hector's corpse*.

10. Cf. Richard Verdi, "Poussin's Eudamidas. Eighteenth-Century Criticism and Copies," *Burlington Magazine* (1971), pp. 513-24, and also Rosenblum, *Transformations*.

11. See the catalogue of the exhibition *l'Amérique vue d'Europe*.

12. Through the French-Canadian tradition of trappers and fur traders, the stereotyped idea of the "Bon Sauvage" was reinforced in France at the end of the eighteenth century. The existence of freemen's villages was known. "Freemen's villages" was a phrase designating clusters of half-bred French, Indian families, and Frenchmen living with Indian women. The idealized traits of those families were evoked a few decades later by Chateaubriand in *Natchez*.

13. One may find interesting *metaphorical* references to the magic lantern or the camera obscura in Rousseau, *Seventh Promenade in Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*, and in *Fragments autobiographiques* (Paris: La Pléiade, 1959), p. 1154.

14. As a matter of fact, it appears that it would have been technically impossible at that time to make a *real* slide as complex and sophisticated as that projected in Gutenberg's engraving.

15. I would like to cite here Michael Fried's superb essay published in *New Literary History* 6 (1975), "Toward a Supreme Fiction: Genre and Beholder in the Art Criticism of Diderot and His Contemporaries," pp. 543ff.