FULL FATHOM FIVE A WHOLE WORLD LIES: SHAKESPEARE, POLLOCK AND BEYOND

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***Abstract**: The paper aims to provide some illustrations of the ever-widening spectrum of intertextuality by visiting a number of literary and visual landmarks in the journey undertaken by one memorable phrase not merely from one text to another but across media as well. Rather than dwell on the relatively straightforward echoes of Ariel's hypnotic song that find their way in the Proteus episode of James Joyce's Ulysses and permeate T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, the analysis will focus primarily on the much more problematic relationship between the literary text and Jackson Pollock's 1947 Full Fathom Five, in an attempt to establish the extent to which an intertextual approach can function in the case of a nonfigurative work of art whose Shakespearean title was not the product of authorial intent. This quest will also entail a comparison between the iconic abstract expressionist work and Edmund Dulac's 1908 illustration, as well as an exploration of John Kinsella's 1993 "Full Fathom Five," a poem inspired by a reproduction of Pollock's painting that closes the page-canvas-page intertextual circle.*

***Keywords**: Abstract Expressionism; illustration; intention; intertextuality; modernism; (non)figurative; title.*

Half a century after its first appearance in print, intertextuality seems to have outgrown both its postmodern buzzword status and its quite limiting initial definitions, no longer merely denoting the "interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it" (Cuddon 424) but rather the connections noticeable between "virtually all cultural and artistic productions" (Allen 174). Awareness of the fact that films, symphonies, buildings and paintings can also represent complex tissues of "quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 146) and engage in constant dialogues with one another while occasionally "talking to other arts" (Allen 174-5) is therefore very likely to yield a wider understanding of both the notion of language and the significance of any given work of art:

> It is possible to speak of the 'languages' of cinema, painting or architecture: languages which involve productions of complex patterns of encoding, re-encoding, allusion, echo, transposing of previous systems and codes. To interpret a painting or a building we inevitably rely on an ability to interpret that painting's or building's relationship to previous 'languages' or 'systems' of painting. (Allen 174)

The main practical application attempted in this paper entails not so much an analysis of the threads linking works belonging to the same field of artistic endeavour as an exploration of the even more compelling communion between the offspring of "entirely different media of expression," one consisting of "articulated sounds in time," the other relying on "form and colour in space" (Lessing 101).

Instances of intertextual relationships between examples of the two creative pursuits that Lessing firmly distinguished as the art of time and of space respectively are anything but difficult to come by, with Greek and Roman literature and the Holy Scriptures accounting for the inspiration behind a vast percentage of the visual works of art produced in the Western space and a plethora of nineteenth and twentieth century artists drawing on texts often but not exclusively produced in less remote spaces or temporal frames. The influence of English literature alone has resulted in countless such paintings, from John Martin's *Pandemonium*

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(1941) and Ford Madox Brown's *Manfred on the Jungfrau* (1842) to Studio 1901's *Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy* (2010), with particularly fertile ground for intertextual analysis to be found in Eugène Ferdinand Victor Delacroix's Byron-inspired canvases and, on a considerably larger scale, in the Pre-Raphaelite fascination with texts ranging from medieval romances, Arthurian legends and Shakespearean drama to the poetry of Byron, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning and Robert Browning. The proliferation of examples in the second half of the nineteenth century is of course best understood if one is to consider the even wider scope and range of intertextual phenomena in that particular period:

> Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything — and in just about every possible direction; the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and *tableaux vivants* were constantly being adapted from one medium to another and then back again. (Hutcheon xi)

Naturally, the challenges as well as the epistemic rewards of an intertextual analysis are subject to exponential expansion in the case of protagonists and / or texts such as Shakespeare's Ophelia, Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott', repeatedly captured on canvas by a multitude of artists. While more sparsely populated in this respect, the American cultural space can also yield representative examples belonging to a variety of art movements, running the gamut from Romantic landscapes such as Thomas Cole's *The Last of the Mohicans* series (1826-1827) to Charles Demuth's precisionist tribute to William Carlos Williams: *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* (1928).

While the figurative nature and indubitable authorial intent defining all of the examples above are likely to result in a relatively straightforward if not necessarily less captivating exploration of their relationship with the printed page, an attempt to analyse Pollock's *Full Fathom Five* (1947) in terms of its connections with the alliterative first words of Ariel's spurious dirge would necessarily have to overcome obstacles that go beyond the "whole history of pronunciamentos on the continuity, discontinuity, and hierarchical relations of the two arts" (Meiser 579). Such an endeavour would need to take into account the wide gap separating Elizabethan drama and Abstract Expressionism as well as the postproduction (to borrow from the terminology of contemporary filmmaking) choice of a title, and implicitly, suggestion of subject matter, concerns that do not apply to, say, an earlier and considerably less heralded landmark in the textual-visual journey undertaken by Ariel's song. For the sake of comparison (and, indeed, historical justice) it seems therefore appropriate to make at least a passing reference to Edmund Dulac's "watercolour, gouache, (…) pen and brown ink on paper" (Clarke 59) depiction of King Alonso's oceanic metamorphosis for a 1908 edition of *The Tempest* before embarking on the much more daunting task of analysing the debatable intertextual nuances of Pollock's canvas.

With the possible exception of Gustave Doré's mesmerizing black and white drawings for poetry volumes such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* or Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the history of British publishing features relatively few examples of illustrations likely to linger in cultural memory, unless of course the visual accompaniment in question happens to belong to a representative of a more respectable field of endeavour, as is the case with Blake's illuminated books and Dalí's artwork for the much-coveted 1969 edition of *Alice in Wonderland*. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a comparatively obscure colour plate in a discussion of work produced by one of the undisputed denizens of the artistic pantheon, once likely to have struck most art critics as little short of sacrilegious, has fortunately lost all of its shock value in the wake of the postmodern obliteration of high/low cultural distinctions:

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> Hitherto relegated to the closets of art history and literary studies, book illustration has entered mainstream scholarship. Recent research in the field of word and image studies has succeeded in rehabilitating the status of illustration by emphasising the coexistence of text and image within the material object that is the illustrated book. Under the influence of cultural studies, an image commissioned to accompany a text is no longer seen as an inferior art form, as necessarily subservient to the written word or redundant in meaning, or as potentially insignificant in its value and impact. (Ionescu 50)

No longer easy to dismiss by art historians and literary scholars alike as essentially unproblematic and unlikely to prompt any new readings of the text they accompany on account of their purely representational intent, book illustrations have the power to create a sense of character and setting that words alone might not have evoked, and Dulac's *Full Fathom Five* is no exception:

> For Ariel's song 'Full fathom five,' Alonso drowned, on the ocean floor, his white hair and beard splayed, his hands and feet turning to coral, his red robe merging with the red rocks, becomes 'something rich and strange' (1.2.404) before our eyes. He is watched by red-haired mermaids atop an undersea cliff; strange shapes of seaweed tower above him, and the largest area of the page is filled with the subtle, beautifully modulated bluish-grey wash of the watery atmosphere. (Orgel 86)

As far as possible similarities between Dulac's illustration and Pollock's canvas are concerned, the briefest side-by-side analysis seems sufficient to conclude that no two works with the same name could be as diametrically opposed, with differences that go beyond the obvious representational / abstract dichotomy and include considerations of size (8 ½ inches x 11 inches, allowing for quite wide page margins, versus 50 ⅞ inches x 30 ⅛ inches, relatively modest dimensions for a Pollock) but above of all colour palette and choice of materials. Dulac's ethereal watercolour, diluted gouache and sepia toned ink delicately blend into one another to create a fairy tale atmosphere, with the distinct orange, pink or ginger hue of every single starfish, coral branch or strand of mermaid hair clearly outlined in the soft light saturating the translucent aquamarine water. Shades of green are conspicuously absent from Dulac's underwater landscape, seaweed and water alike being deprived of the colour one would have expected to be most prominent and which represents the most salient chromatic coordinate of Pollock's riot of thickly applied oil paint. Although it entails a "dense, multicoloured weave" (Fuga 369) with "predominantly greenish-black tonalities slashed here and there by streaks of white and glints of silver," (Lanchner 23) *Full Fathom Five* results in the same visual paradox that characterises Pollock's other poured pictures: "color has become largely 'tonal'" making us "aware of color rather than colors through the richness of the dominant hue." (Rubin 231) Indeed, the only feature this early experiment with the dripping technique seems to share with Dulac's dainty illustration resides in the glow imparted by the warmer tones: "the colors dripped last, oranges and yellows, light up the tangle of darker colors with an almost fiery effect." (Fuga 369)

When it comes to an exploration of the intertextual dimension of Pollock's painting, the readiest argument against its relevance is to be found in the very absence of any Shakespearean echoes in the genesis of the painting, whose title was suggested by Ralph Manheim, Pollock's Long Island neighbour and reputed translator of the works of Jung (Lanchner 23), after the canvas was completed. Interestingly enough, this naming ceremony seems to represent the reverse of what had taken place four years earlier, when the art critic James Johnson Sweeney dismissed the artist's choice of a literary label for his latest canvas –

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Moby Dick, a title that had already incurred the disapproval of Pollock's patron, Peggy Guggenheim – as a cliché (Cotkin 1), leading Pollock to change the name to *Pasiphaë* but not to completely discard the Melville allusion, soon used as the bracketed subtitle of another canvas, *Blue (Moby Dick)*. As far as the informal baptisms conducted by Ralph Manheim (seconded according to some biographers by his wife Mary) are concerned, it is precisely the account of one such episode that seems to suggest a reasonable counterargument for those who would dismiss the painting's somewhat belated title as irrelevant:

> Pollock would stand back while the couple named the works. According to Krasner, Pollock would approve or not approve each suggested title. Apparently the couple chose the names also for *Enchanted Forest*, *Lucifer*, *Watery Paths*, *Magic Lantern*, *Sea Change*, and *Full Fathom Five*. (Wigal 165)

Despite Pollock's insistence "that each of his canvases was possessed of its own life, independent of any specifically descriptive function," (Lanchner 23) the fact remains that he accepted Manheim's title and in so doing not only tilted the balance of the "tension between figuration and abstraction" (Archias 90) but also set the scene for the emergence of a plethora of Shakespeare-guided interpretations that would otherwise have never seen the light of day.

It is indeed highly unlikely that "the alliterative title in combination with the painting's powerful presence" could fail to prompt "a vivid, if generalized sensation of human frailty in the face of nature's – here the ocean's – force" (Lanchner 23) in the mind of any viewer familiar with Shakespeare. More importantly, the first image triggered in Manheim's mind by his encounter with the abyss lurking beneath the "swirling mass of […] blue, green, grey, and black" (Poor 71) was phrased in the haunting notes of a very specific poetic account of the mysterious processes taking place below the surface of the tumultuous ocean and it seems inappropriate to dismiss this episode as a mere confirmation of the frequency with which a sense of intertextuality emerges from fortuitous yet hardly relevant mental associations, especially given that "the striking feature of these lines is their poetics of natural transformation and mutability […] also evoked by the optical rhythms of Pollock's painting with its incorporated elements of studio detritus" (Crowther 2009: 212). Nevertheless, it would be quite interesting to know to what extent Manheim's momentous choice was influenced by the contents of contemporary publications and whether the canvas in question would still have come to be inextricably bound to "one of the most well-known literary evocations of the underwater realm in the English language" (Clarke 59) had the relevant lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* not been featured in an issue of the New York artists' journal *Tiger's Eye* around the time of Pollock's painting (Crowther 2009: 212).

As it becomes apparent from the first stages of any attempt to navigate the sea of responses to *Full Fathom Five*, for every art critic or historian that insists on the absence of any "recognizable subject matter" (Poor 71) there seem to be at least thrice as many who are attuned to the "suggestions of arrested rhythms or slow processes of biological or other form of natural change which are unavailable to visual perception under normal circumstances" (Crowther 2009: 212). Reminders of Pollock's lifelong struggle against imagery (O'Toole 263) are powerless to silence or even discourage those who can discern "patterns of subaquatic (…) vegetal formations" (Crowther 2016: 82) and the "debris of everyday life" (Bernstein 210) lurking beneath a surface that "readily invokes mysterious ocean depths" (Lanchner 23) and threatening to disappear "into the slow swirl of water and weed" (Bernstein 210) as soon as one steps away from the canvas. While the hints of organic metamorphosis, redolent as they are of the "sea-change" allegedly suffered by Alonso's earthly remains from fallible flesh into "something rich and strange" (Shakespeare 37), remain elusive, the mundane detritus has a concrete dimension besides the conceptual one, as

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the “thickly encrusted surface” of Pollock’s “densely layered abstract work” (Brennan 246) conceals a trove of almost invisible items embedded in the wet paint and gradually “enveloped by the overall mass of the design” (Poor 71) that somehow manage to “retain their individuality despite a new role transformation” (Alfieri and Oliva 80). It almost feels as though the act of painting a canvas that ended up being almost universally associated with the ocean also functioned as a cleansing ceremony, “as though the artist had emptied out his pockets, swept up his studio, deposited the detritus onto his canvas, and then proceeded to build an abstraction on top of what he had eliminated,” (Brennan 246) not only turning litter into art but actually providing more grounds for Shakespearean analogy. Indeed, for those intent on an intertextual reading, not only does the painting evoke through its swirling greens, blacks and silvers punctuated by fleeting glimpses of red and orange the waves of a tempestuous ocean and the glint of pearls and corals, but the “hidden objects trapped beneath the painting’s fictive depth” (Brennan 246) are uncannily reminiscent of the fragments of wood and metal tossed about in the wake of a shipwreck.

Ranging from coins – minute echoes of pirate treasure – to actual waste – paint tube caps, tacks, cigarette ends, burnt matches – almost but not completely obscured by the layers of paint and unobtrusive in the final design (Alfieri and Oliva 80), they represent “mementos of the painting’s creation as well as metaphors for its status as a real physical object whose meaning lies entirely in the use of materials” (Solomon 180) but also give the surface texture and “add to the painting’s secrecy and mystery” (Archias 90) as soon as viewers are made aware of their existence: all one can do is “hunt for them, usually fruitlessly,” (Archias 90) a temptation intensified by the “density of Pollock’s paint skeins” (Brennan 246) but unlikely to yield significant results as long as one relies on the abilities of the naked eye. Unlike the scene at the bottom of Dulac’s aquarelle ocean, an insight into the kind of scenery readily accessible to sirens and spirits of the air, Pollock’s canvas perfectly captures the limitations of human perspective when it comes to the stories concealed beneath the surface of a raging sea. Fortunately for those who might find this unnecessarily frustrating, just as the invention of submersible craft and diving equipment enabled humanity to overcome that particular challenge, modern technology has led to the discovery of something more significant than mere studio debris masked by the paint’s opaqueness.

It has been argued that “geometric, biomorphic, or anthropomorphic” contours always inform Pollock’s paintings, “which may be seen or read as veils drawn over shapes we can recognize – and specify” (Heffernan 299) even though many viewers have been known to declare defeat and definite evidence to support the existence of “overpainted personages” among the thickly applied layers of other 1947 works such as *Sea Change* has yet to be discovered (Rubin 252). However, X-ray photographs of *Full Fathom Five* revealed the presence beneath the paint of “a stumpy figure whose heavily impastoed contours” were embellished and “reiterated with strategically placed nails, tacks, buttons, a partially torn cigarette, and a large key at the crotch,” items subsequently covered by “the engulfing web above them, their presence only sensed in the congested relief of the picture’s surface” (Lanchner 24-5). Considering the key’s location and how readily its associations with mysteries or enigmas come to mind, it would appear that this is the one item whose alternative meanings even the least knowledgeable viewer can confidently comment on without needing to resort to a dictionary of symbols, yet such bibliography would make one aware of the fact that the key can sometimes refer to “the threshold of the unconscious,” (Cirlot 167) a particularly interesting detail given that *Full Fathom Five* was interpreted at least on one occasion as a representation of this very part of the psyche (Emmerling 65). Yet, notwithstanding its powerful (and more likely than not Freudian) connotations, this item is quite unlikely to exert the same fascination on a dedicated pursuer of intertextuality as the comb also embedded in the painted depths; only apparently a less semiotically loaded

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element, the comb boasts a privileged symbolic status as the "attribute of some fabulous, female beings, such as lamias and sirens" (Cirlot 61) and ensures that Pollock's drowning figure also benefits from the presence of (conceptual if not figurative) sea-nymphs to "hourly ring his knell" (Shakespeare 37).

As soon as the focus shifts from the elusive anthropomorphic figure and the discarded remains of human existence to the paint(ed) ocean engulfing them, the strength of the voices raised against the relevance of the title fades in front of the overwhelming arguments supporting the centrality of water in Pollock's creation. From his own confessions of a lasting concern "with the rhythms of nature, the way the ocean moves" (Friedman 228) to the profusion of titles, "particularly during the phase when his signature style emerges," that "introduce watery associations, offering further evidence that water had come to function as something of a governing metaphor," (Clarke 143) the history of art abounds in hints of a symbiotic relationship that goes beyond the artist's suggestive surname. Clarke regards *Water Figure* (1945), *The Water Bull* (1946) and *Watery Paths* (1947) as the most obvious examples, whereas Stuckey also includes *Eyes in the Heat* (1946), *Enchanted Wood* (1947), *Ocean Greyness* (1953) and *The Deep* (1953) on the list of relevant titles of non-representational canvases that "refer to spooky presences embedded in or hidden behind tangled, nearly impervious barriers, and to the deep seas" (Stuckey 188). It is however two other works with underwater as well as Shakespearean associations that are especially relevant in the context of this analysis: the one already under discussion and *Sea Change* (1947), the "oil and collage of small pebbles on canvas" (Clarke 143-144) not merely relating to the general "idea of metamorphosis" (Solomon 181) evoked by numerous other titles, but actually echoing the magical transformation of King Alonso's body into pearls and corals. Under the circumstances, Clarke's comments on the importance of water as Pollock's first resort "when he needed to address issues of dissolution and flux in his paintings" (Clarke 142) and "a governing cosmological metaphor for understanding the universe in terms of flux and interconnectedness" (Clarke 144) seem particularly perceptive and apposite.

It is also important to remember that far from being confined to "the levels of subject matter and style" the relevance of water also extends to "the level of materials and technique" where its inherent fluidity "offered Pollock a model to aspire to" (Clarke 142); although hardly any of his signature works were "actually made with water-based paints," (Clarke 142-143) in his selection of oil-based materials (often including modern household paints and industrial paints meant for cars and metal coating) the artist generally opted for a "liquid, flowing kind of paint" (Pollock 21) whose application to the canvas further emphasized the aquatic impression. Hans Namuth's legendary film of Pollock dripping and pouring paint on the surface of a glass sheet is a particularly relevant document in this respect, as the shot "gave the distinct impression of painting in air or on the surface of water" up to the point at which its viewers "could easily imagine themselves inside a lake looking up" (Kahn 272). Not only does the by now blurry and shaky black and white footage provide posterity with a unique vantage point but it also constitutes, together with other cinematic records of Pollock's action painting routine, a reminder of the fact that *Full Fathom Five*'s canvas (like virtually all the other signature works) was initially placed horizontally, thus further adding to the sense of an image containing hidden 'depth' (Hopkins 10) suggested by the title.

What would be perhaps even more interesting to discuss is the extent to which Pollock's innovative methods and experiments with new materials contributed to the development of an approach in which the fluidity of one vital element plays an even more central part. Widely recognized as the first painter to "use and fully realize the importance of the soak-stain technique," a process in which "thinned-down, watery paint is spilled on and allowed to soak into raw canvas," (Carr 136) Helen Frankenthaler not only made ample use of Pollock's signature strategy (the horizontal positioning of work in progress) but also shared

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his fascination with the aquatic. It is once again at the level of titles that some of the most revealing kinds of discoveries are to be made, with Frankenthaler's relation to Pollock's "paternal codes" (Jones 486) clearly emerging from the Shakespearean name that her own acrylic *Sea Change* (1982) shares with one of Pollock's images (Clarke 271).

However gripping such an exploration of the Shakespearean echoes permeating twentieth century art, no discussion of the intertextual posterity of Ariel's dirge would be complete without some references to its almost obsessive recurrence in literature, especially given the fact that such an exercise is bound to entail a treasure hunt highly reminiscent of the quest for the elusive shapes perceptible underneath Pollock's thickly applied layers of paint and might occasion equally rewarding discoveries. In discussing the title of Pollock's canvas art historians have not failed to remark upon the extent to which Shakespeare's lines matched "the whole Oedipal staging of American masculinity at that postwar moment," (Jones 284) and Freudian nuances are equally prominent in literary appropriations of Ariel's song. Significantly enough, while its hypnotic lyrics are conspicuously absent from both Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and John Fowles' *The Collector* (1963) – two novels characterised not only by the same central intertext (Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) but also by deeply tormented young male protagonists whose early life is marked by absent fathers – they haunt the cadences of the two central texts of modernist literature.

Far from representing a minor act of borrowing easily lost among the scores of allusions and quotations woven in Joyce's convoluted and overwhelmingly intertextual narrative, Ariel's dirge mirrors and reinforces two major coordinates of the novel's relationship with its main Homeric intertext, the aquatic dimension and the absent father theme. Deconstructed, embedded within the protagonist's stream of consciousness and further qualified, Ariel's words lose virtually none of their original musicality in the process of conversion from poetry to prose and are moreover enriched with a new series of alliterations, initially revolving around the same 'f' sound and gradually drifting into more sibilant tones:

> Five fathoms out there. Full fathom five thy father lies. At one, he said. Found drowned. High water at Dublin bar. Driving before it a loose drift of rubble, fanshoals of fishes, silly shells. A seachange this, brown eyes saltblue. Seadeath, mildest of all deaths known to man. Old Father Ocean. (Joyce 63)

Equally at home in "The Burial of the Dead" section of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the motif introduced through the tarot card featuring "the drowned Phoenician Sailor" (31) produced by Madame Sosostris entails both a reiteration of the "rich, strange embalming operation" performed by the sea and a hint of "the mechanism of decay" (Booth) imaginatively reversed by Ariel's words. The intertextual leitmotif – "(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)" (Eliot 31), "I remember / Those are pearls that were his eyes." (Eliot 34) – so reminiscent of the sea's alleged ability to replicate otherwise fading body parts in materials that keep the corpse "intact and imperishable" (Booth) or, alternatively, of the song's ability to summon flesh into sculpture (Booth), evokes the idea of preservation, yet the more realistic process of disintegration is made equally tangible by the subsequent image of the rat creeping "softly through the vegetation / Dragging its slimy belly on the bank." (Eliot 36) As far as the relationship between fathers and sons is concerned, it is however another pair of lines – "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him." (Eliot 36) – that is likely to prompt the most interesting observations, ranging from the Oedipal dimensions of both family ties and artistic lineage to the multiple royal echoes – pointing to King Alonso as well as, more importantly, the Fisher King of Arthurian lore – woven in Eliot's intricate intertextual web.

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The last literary text (and indeed, the only contemporary example) featured in this paper seems bound to pale in comparison with the modernist landmarks discussed so far in all respects but one, as the title poem of John Kinsella's *Full Fathom Five* is not the result of the conventional text-to-text trophic process but a unique example of a longer intertextual journey across media, from page to canvas and back again. Literary works that draw their inspiration from visual arts represent a considerably less populated yet increasingly popular category than the one resulting from the reverse process, with examples ranging from William Carlos Williams' ekphrastic response to a panting attributed to Brugel in "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" (1960) to the intertextual dimensions of recent bestsellers, including the reference to a painting by Vermeer in the title of Susanna Kaysen's 1993 *Girl Interrupted*, the conspiracy-theory narrative woven around Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in Dan Brown's 2003 mystery-detective, the fictional biography of Vermeer's unknown model in Tracy Chevalier's 1999 *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, etc. While some of the above are likely to contribute (in varying measures) to a better understanding of the historical context in which a work of art was produced and of the numerous factors at work in the process of creation, as well as to suggest alternative angles from which to approach a particular painting, what makes Kinsella's text particularly relevant is the extent to which the lines written on "viewing a reproduction of *Full Fathom Five* in Ellen G. Landau's *Jackson Pollock*, and thinking over the recent death of a friend by drowning" (Kinsella *Poems* 248) amount less to a conventional poetic meditation and considerably more to an exercise in art criticism.

Not only do Kinsella's comments on the measureless depth and size of Pollock's canvas in *Disclosed Poetics* – "You drown in that painting" – echo ideas formulated by art critics regarding the intention behind Pollock's break from "the traditional smaller, easel-sized canvases" to produce paintings that "dominated the wall" (Binkiewicz 19) and almost literally absorbed the spectator, but they also reiterate the main point expressed in the poem's first stanza:

> Gallery-wise it rates
> as a painting
> of unfathomable depth.
> On my desk it is the surface
> of both a puddle or an ocean.
> As they say, you can drown
> in both. (248)

After the brief nod to art history and criticism introduced through the fugitive mention of "the 'eroded treasures' noted by Landau," (248) Kinsella dwells on the profusion of tiny remains embedded in the paint yet somehow captured in a state of constant flux rather than fixity:

> Pebbles and tacks
> pennies and buttons
> a pair of keys
> combs and matches
> cigarettes and paint
> tube tops
> fallen overboard
> and swallowed
> by dense sweeps
> of effluent
> and colouring

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agents. (250)

The haunting encounter between biography and art in the seventh stanza not only triggers memories of countless real and literary deaths but blends together daunting landscapes belonging to distant yet essentially related realms and reinforces the metaphor of the journey, equally applicable to personal evolution and to the quest for meaning:

In finding his way
Pollock may have joined
the path of suicides,
the ocean a forest
through which you
approach the circles
of Inferno (250)

In the context of this analysis the most relevant kind of journey consists in the incessant migration of ideas from one text and one medium to another and it is quite interesting to note how Kinsella's musings on the successive metamorphoses undergone by matter – "state-changing: vaporous, / liquid, solid" (249) – simultaneously evoke a central theme of Ariel's dirge and the variety of artistic moulds into which ideas can be cast. The alliterative Shakespearean phrase is a particularly representative example in this respect, as the three haunting words seem to feature equally prominently in virtually all fields of endeavour, from the names of a music band and a content production company to the titles of music albums and individual pieces belonging to wide variety of genres (quite appropriately, given the musical context of their first appearance in print), cinematic productions, TV series episodes, literary works including Alexander Woollcott's 1929 short story, novels by John Stewart Carter (1965) and Max Gladstone (2014) and at least one example of non-fiction, Mary Lee Coe Fowler's 2008 memoir *Full Fathom Five: A Daughter's Search*.

As far as Kinsella's own intertextual inclinations are concerned, while "Full Fathom Five" is the only relevant text as far as this analysis is concerned, this particular poet's work provides numerous more instances of the possibilities available to writers who seek their inspiration in art galleries, museums and albums rather than in the more conventional space of the library. While Pollock does seem to occupy a relatively prominent place among Kinsella's interests, with at least two more poems based on his canvases to be found among his collected works – "The Healing of the Circle" (suggested by *The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle*) and "Lavender Mist" (Denham 129) – the fact that the poet also wrote texts inspired by artists as diverse as Albrecht Dürer, Andrew Wyeth, Victor Vasarely, Andy Warhol, Morris Graves, Helen Frankenthaler, Kenneth Noland, Balthus, Susan Rothenberg, Arthur Boyd, Piet Mondrian, and Pablo Picasso (Denham 128) points to a possible reading of his poetic output as a lyrical and highly subjective history of art, much in the same way in which the two modernist texts discussed above represent veritable compendia of mythical references and other literary allusions, albeit with an added interdisciplinary twist.

The conclusions of this exploration of the variegated and ever expanding cultural universe gravitating around one memorable phrase entail enhanced awareness not only of the inevitable limitations of such an endeavour but above all of the at once daunting and heartening scope of intertextuality. Indeed, after stimulating the proliferation of a multitude of texts stemming from a single centre of culture, intertextuality can play a similar part in the elaboration of critical commentaries, encouraging readers and viewers alike to compare, contrast, and above all engage with different media, drawing analogies and tracing lineages that an analysis confined to an individual text or canvas would never have yielded. In a paper

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focusing primarily on the problematic relationship between the "Center of the Canon" (Bloom vii) – of universal culture rather than merely of Western literature – and a chief representative of the "canon of high modernism" (Marter 254) it seems hardly apposite to dwell on the painting's less conventionally acquired title and to insist on Pollock's need to cleanse the compositional function of all representation (O'Toole 263) in order to discover his true talent. While less likely to be taken very seriously by a committed scholar of Abstract Expressionism, an intertextual approach is almost guaranteed to result in fortuitous discoveries suggesting otherwise ignored angles, inexorably leading one to the conclusion that notwithstanding its unquestionable technical merits and its historical significance as one of the first pure drip paintings (Emmerling 65) ever produced, 'by any other name' Pollock's canvas would not have occasioned such compelling journeys into the painted abyss as well as across media, thus depriving cultural studies and art criticism alike of some truly insightful interpretations.

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