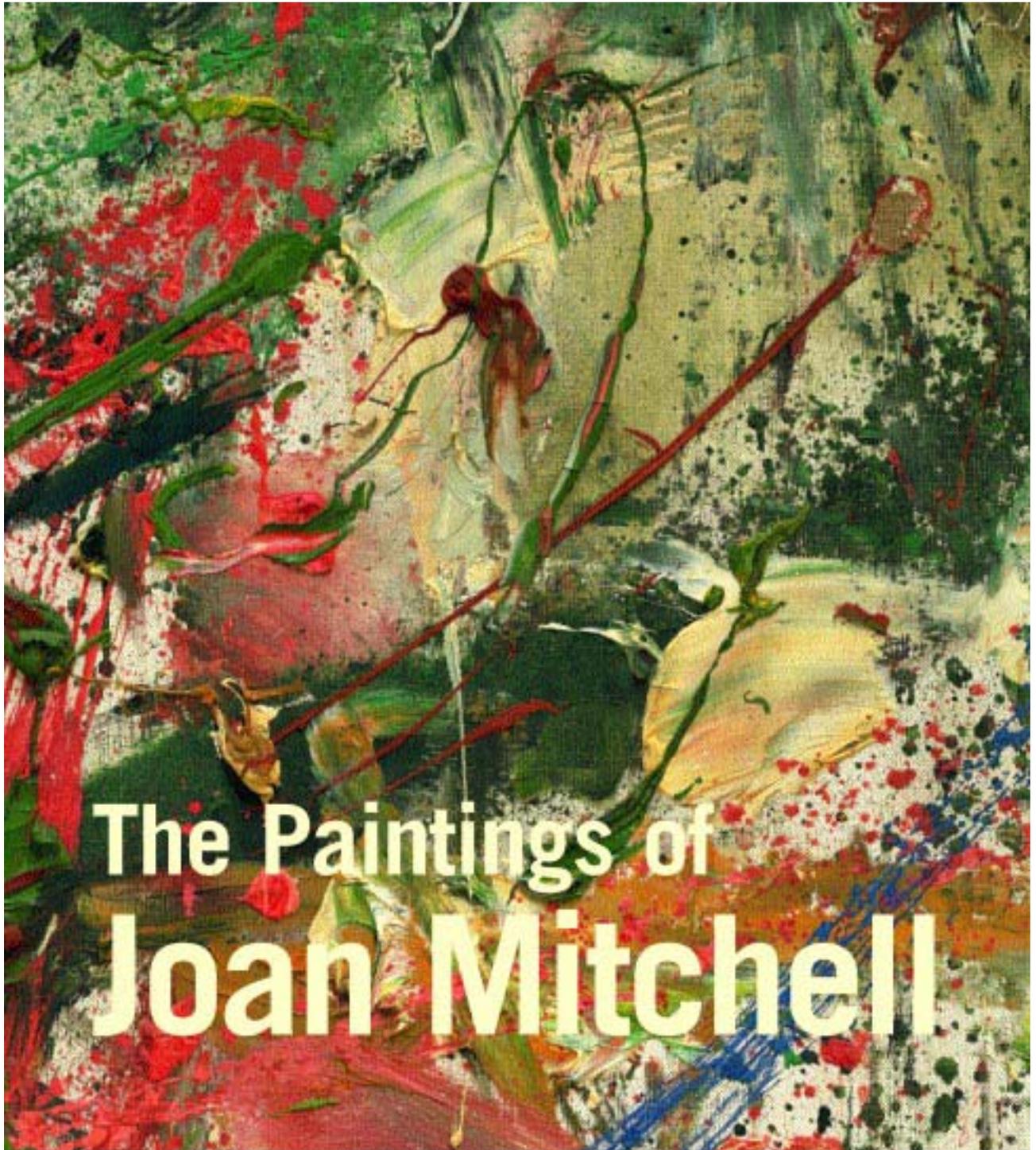


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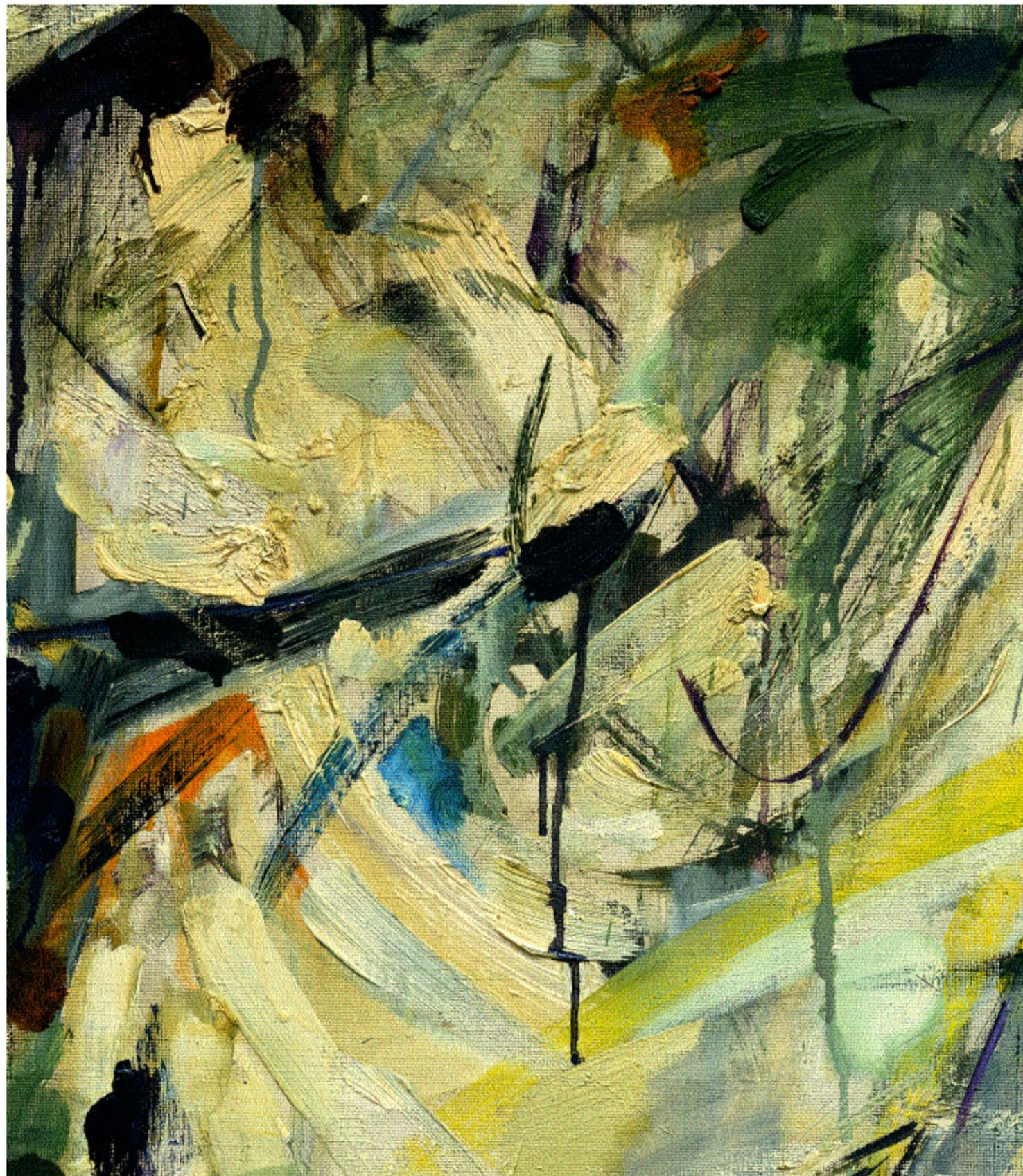


# The Paintings of Joan Mitchell

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LINDA NOCHLIN

# Joan Mitchell

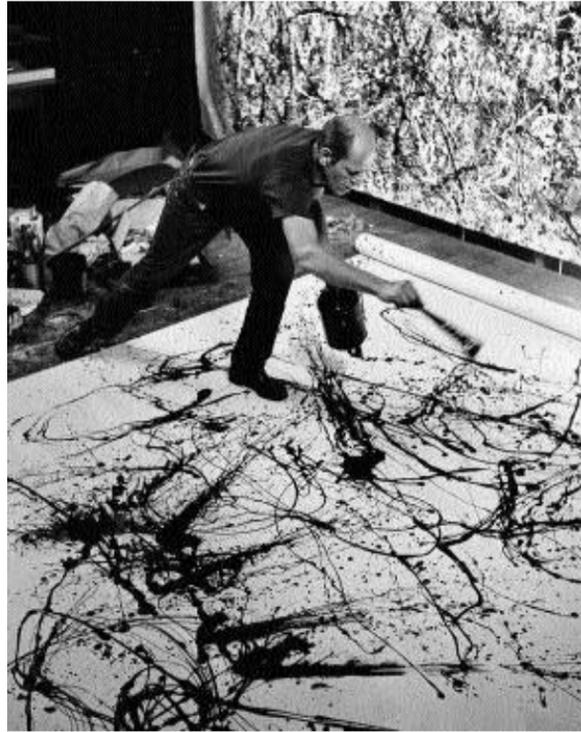
## A Rage to Paint

Rage, violence, and anger have often been deployed as heuristic keys in interpreting the work of Joan Mitchell, especially the early work. In her catalogue of a major 1988 retrospective of Mitchell's work, Judith Bernstock tied Mitchell's 1957 painting *To the Harbor-master* to the Frank O'Hara poem from which Mitchell derived her title by referring explicitly to the lines in which water appears as the traditional symbol of chaos, creation, and destruction. Taking account of Gaston Bachelard's theory that "violent water traditionally appears as male and malevolent and is given the psychological features of anger in poetry," Bernstock went on to maintain that both Mitchell's "frenzied painting" and O'Hara's poem "evoke a fearful water with invincible form ('metallic coils' and 'terrible channels') and voice-like anger, a destructive force threatening internal and external chaos." She concluded with a reference to the formal elements in the painting that evoke the menacing mood of the poem: "the cacophonous frenzy of short, criss-crossing strokes of intense color . . . the agitation heightened as lyrical arm-long sweeps across the top of the canvas press down forcefully, even oppressively, on the ceaseless turbulence below."<sup>1</sup> Of *Rock Bottom*, a work of 1960–61, Mitchell herself maintained: "It's a very violent painting, and you might say sea, rocks."<sup>2</sup>

Of the whole group of canvases created from 1960 to 1962—including *Flying Dutchman*, *Plus ou Moins*, *Frémicourt*, and *Cous-Cous*—the artist asserted: "[These are] very violent and angry paintings," adding that by 1964 she was "trying to get out of a violent phase and into something else."<sup>3</sup> This "something else" was a series of somber paintings Mitchell created in 1964, works that she called "my black paintings—although there's no black in any of them."<sup>4</sup> In their thick, clotted paint application and somber pigmentation they constitute a break from the intensely colored, energetic, all-over style of her earlier production. They also seem to mark an end to the self-styled "violent" phase of Mitchell's work and a transition to a different sort of expressive abstraction.

Issues of intentionality aside, what do we mean when we say that violence, rage, or anger—indeed, any human emotion—are inscribed in a work of art? How do such emotions get into the work? How are they to be interpreted?

In earlier art, when anger or violence is the actual subject of the work itself—as, for example, in Antonio Canova's *Hercules and Lica* (1795–1815)—the task of interpretation may seem easier, the emotion itself unambiguously present, even transparent, despite



23. Hans Namuth, *Jackson Pollock painting "Autumn Rhythm," East Hampton, 1950*. Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, New York

the smooth surfaces and Neoclassical grandeur of Canova's sculpture. Yet even here, in *Hercules and Lica*, with its furious hero and horrified victim, or in the convulsive image of hands-on murder in Paul Cézanne's *Strangled Woman* (1870–72), problems of interpretation arise. Is Cézanne's painting a more effective representation of rage than Canova's sculpture simply because we can read a coded message of violence directly from the formal structure of the work, from its exaggerated diagonal composition, its agitated brushwork, its distorted style of figuration?

Clearly the problem of just what constitutes and hence is read as rage or any specific emotion in art becomes both more and less complicated when the painting is abstract—that is to say, when there is no explicit subject to provide a basis for interpretation. In the case of Abstract Expressionist work like Mitchell's, even the titles may prove to be deceptive or irrelevant, appended for the most part after the fact. The task of interpretation is both exhilarating and daunting, the canvases functioning as so many giant Rorschach tests with ontological or, at the very least, epistemological pretensions. Biography, in fact, often looms large in such cases precisely because of the *absence* of recognizable subject matter. The gesture seems to constitute a direct link to the psyche of the artist, without even an apple or a jug to mediate the emotional velocity of the feeling in question.

Yet despite the unreliability of biography as a means to elucidate the work of art, it cannot be altogether avoided, although it certainly must be severed from the naive notion of direct causality (for example, "Mitchell was sad because of the death of her father, so she made dark paintings"). The role of rage in the psychic makeup of the artist and her production is daunting: anger may be repressed; it may be "expressed" in a variety of ways; it may even be transformed into its opposite, into a pictorial construction that suggests to the viewer a sense of calm, joy, or elegance. In any case, its role is always mediated.

Following the general issues of rage and its expression in abstract painting is the more specific issue of *gendered* rage. For Mitchell, of course, was a *woman* abstract painter, even though, quite understandably, she did not want to be thought of as such when she painted the works under discussion. Indeed, there is an apposite story about Mitchell told by Elaine de Kooning in 1971 involving the phrase "women artists": "I was talking to Joan Mitchell at a party ten years ago when a man came up to us and

said, 'What do you women artists think . . .' Joan grabbed my arm and said, 'Elaine, let's get the hell out of here.'" Mitchell was fleeing from what, at the time, was a demeaning categorization. Like other ambitious young abstractionists in the 1950s and 1960s who happened to be women, she wanted to be thought of as "one of the boys"—at least as far as her work was concerned. If she did not want to be categorized as a woman painter, it was because she wanted to be a *real* painter. And, at that time, a real abstract painter was someone with balls and guts.

Mitchell was one of many women trying to make it in a man's world, and on men's terms, even if they were not acknowledged as doing so. These women included painters, writers, musicians, and academics. It seems to me, then, important to examine not merely how rage might be said to get into painting or sculpture but also how it gets into women. In order to do so, it is helpful to consider the more general conditions existing for the production and valuing of women's work in the 1950s and 1960s.

Here I think it is instructive to look again at two photographs that have often been compared, and then at a third. The first is the famous Hans Namuth photograph of Jackson Pollock caught in the dancelike throes of sublime inspiration (fig. 23). It is a dynamic icon of the transcendent authority of (male) Abstract Expressionist creation. The second image, by Cecil Beaton, has been used to stand for, to put it bluntly, the corruption of the ideal (fig. 24). In it, a beautiful *Vogue* model stands before a Pollock painting, testifying to the transformation (inevitable in late capitalist society) of creative authenticity, which is a momentary illusion at best, into a saleable commodity.<sup>6</sup> As is usual in such visual demonstrations of social corruption—one thinks here of George Grosz's or Otto Dix's trenchant satires of Weimar society or, later, those of R.B. Kitaj—it is played out on, or with, the bodies of women—inert, passive, lavishly bedecked, sometimes nude or seminude. In Beaton's photograph the model functions as a fashionable femme fatale, embodying, so to speak, the inevitable fate of modernist subversion: the relegation of high art to the subordinate role of mere backdrop for (shudder!) feminine fashion, with fashion itself functioning as the easy-to-grasp sign of the fleeting and the fickle, high art's deplorable other.<sup>7</sup> Beaton's fashion photograph transformed Pollock's painting into "apocalyptic wallpaper," to borrow Harold Rosenberg's term, though in this case the wallpaper is not so much "apocalyptic" as merely pricey.

This comparison and its implications make me angry and uneasy because it is hard to side with either of these visions of art or fashion. My anger, and my uneasiness, have to do with the fact that although I was involved in contemporary art in 1951, I was a young woman who was highly invested in fashion as well. And for me, in my early twenties (only a few years younger than Joan Mitchell), a struggling instructor, a graduate student, and a faculty wife at Vassar, being fashionable was one of the things that helped me and my young contemporaries to mark our difference from the women around us in the early 1950s. Being elegant, caring about clothes, constituted a form of opposition to what I called "little brown wrenism," a disease imported from Harvard by Vassar faculty wives and their spouses along with the postwar revival of *Kinder Kirche Küche*. It was premised on a "womanly," wifely, properly subordinate look: no makeup, shapeless tweeds, dun-colored twin sets, and sensible shoes. Brilliance and ambition *had* to be marked as different. There were several possibilities: for artists like Joan Mitchell or Grace Hartigan, paint-stained jeans and a black turtleneck could be professional attire and constitute an assertion of difference at the same time. The philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe, a strong-minded British eccentric, insisted on complete menswear: jacket, tie, trousers, and shirt. I am told that a special podium, which hid the offending pants, had to be rigged up when she lectured at Barnard College.

As a woman who followed fashion, I could have told you who the model was in the Beaton photograph, just as easily as I could identify Pollock. And I could have told you who had designed the splendid gown she wore. My grandmother had given me a subscription to *Vogue* when I was still in high school, and I followed fashion, as I followed art, avidly. I certainly knew they were not the same thing, but my passionate involvement with both art and fashion (and, I might add, anti-McCarthy politics) made the fact that I was a woman, not a man (and a woman who thought of herself as different from many of the women around her), a vital differential in my relation to the elements of the Beaton versus Namuth opposition.

What, then, are we to make of the 1957 Rudy Burckhardt photograph of Joan Mitchell at work in front of her painting *Bridge* (fig. 25)? Where should it be placed? In the camp of the original, authentic creator, like the Pollock photograph, or in that of the Beaton model? The sitter here is, after all, like the model,

an attractive, slender young woman. I do not know whether Mitchell ever saw the *Vogue* photo, and she was certainly not interested in fashion, but the oppositions offered by the two images were certainly part of the context within which she lived and worked.

Different though they may be as visual objects, the position of the model in the *Vogue* picture is not so different from that of the figure in Willem de Kooning's *Woman I* (1950–52). Both Beaton's photograph and de Kooning's painting implied that woman's place was as the object of the image rather than the creator of it. Her passion was not the "rage to paint," but rather to be "all the rage." The Burckhardt photo of Mitchell, then, is something of an anomaly, the object taking over the subject position, albeit with a difference—and this despite the fact that Mitchell's body, qua body, is an athletic, dynamic, active one—as active in the picture-making process as Pollock's.<sup>8</sup> Yet in terms of the Namuth and Beaton photographs, she is twice "othered": once as the female "other" of the male Jackson Pollock, but once again as the female "other" of the elegant and proper female *Vogue* fashion model.

In other photos taken in front of her work, Mitchell is made to seem less self-assured, less like "one of the boys." But there is one photograph, taken in about 1953, of her with her poodle, George, that brings to mind one of the most famous youthful self-images of the artist as a young subversive, Gustave Courbet's *Self-Portrait with a Black Dog* of 1842.<sup>9</sup> In the photograph of Mitchell and her dog, although she is clearly the "other" of Courbet in terms of gender, she may now be seen as "same" in terms of the chosen elements of the artist's self-representation: like Courbet, she possesses her work and her dog. Mitchell's otherness, in the photograph, swerves back, in this trajectory, to identity; her rage is transformed into mastery, envisioned as a positive vector in the process of creation. For a photographic instant, at least, Mitchell is one of the boys—indeed, a very big boy, Courbet. And yet this is not a completely satisfying resolution to the dilemma of the woman artist. We do not see the brush in Mitchell's hand, after all, as we do in Courbet's in the center of *The Painter's Studio* (1854–55), and we all know, from simplified versions of Freud, if not from various artists and art critics, that the brush is the phallic symbol par excellence. Artists have even been said to paint with their pricks—and how can a woman do that? As Michael Leja has

succinctly put it: "A dame with an Abstract Expressionist brush is no less a misfit than a *noir* heroine with a rod."<sup>10</sup>

What a wholesome emotion rage is—or can be! "Menin aida thea peleadeo Achileus" (Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles). The *Iliad* starts on a high note of rage, connecting art itself—the singing of the goddess—with heroic anger. Nietzsche extolled the salutary potential of rage, above all, when it engaged the creative psyche. So did William Blake, who declared, "The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction." Yet how unbecoming rage, and the energy generated by it, is thought to be when it comes from women. And all too often women's rage is internalized, turning the justifiable fury they feel against both the social institutions and the individuals that condemn them to inferior status not on others but on *themselves*: cutting up their own work; making it small; rejecting violence and force as possessions of the masculine ego, hence unavailable to the female artist; stopping work altogether; speaking in a whisper instead of a roar; becoming the male artist's support system. Silence has always been a viable, indeed, a golden, alternative for women artists. The fact that Mitchell, though a woman, could take possession of her rage and, like a man, transform it into a rage to paint, was an extraordinarily difficult concept for a male-dominated art world to accept.

Yet it would seem to me that rage, and its artistic corollary, the rage to paint, are both central to the project of Joan Mitchell. Mitchell herself quite overtly rejected attempts to define her work as feminine, although she came to accept the notion of feminism as a political stance. Her paintings forcefully help establish the notion of a feminine other—energetic, angry, excessive, spilling over the boundaries of the formless, the victimized, the gentle, and the passive—but battling, at the same time, those other familiar demons, chaos and hysteria, with a kind of risky, ad hoc structure.

In a long, rambling, beautifully revealing letter she wrote to me in the late 1980s, Mitchell stated: "I have lots of real reasons to hate . . . and somehow I can't ever get to hatred unless someone is kicking my dog Marion (true story) . . . or destroying Gisèle [a friend] etc. and then I'll bite—(I can't get to killing—my 'dead' shrink kept trying to get me there—I have never made it—my how I loved her)."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Mitchell never thought of herself as angry or enraged. I do not suppose she thought of herself as a heavy drinker either. But, then again, neither did the various male artists who depended on rage and alcohol to stimulate their art—

or, at least, to make it possible for them to write or paint and not succumb to darkness and passivity.

Recently, however, women have been discovering the specificity of their rage and anger and writing about it. In 1993, in an article entitled "Rage Begins at Home," literary scholar Mary Ann Caws differentiated rage from anger, asserting: "Rage is general, as I see it, and is in that way quite unlike anger—specific or motivated by something—which can, upon occasion, be calmed by some specific solution, beyond what one can state or feel or see. Rage is . . . one of the great marvels of the universe, for it is large, lithe, and lasting. I have come to treasure my rage, as I never could my anger. My rage possessed and is still undoubtedly possessing me, from inside, and did not, does not, cannot demand that I control it. . . . Energy comes from, and is sometimes indistinguishable from this rage." Later Caws ceased to differentiate between the two, for, as she put it, "I believe they have me both."<sup>12</sup>

In 1992, in a special issue of *RE Search* entitled "Angry Women," Andrea Juno, in an interview with Avital Ronell, declared: "The only way a woman can escape an abusive misogynistic relationship is through full-fledged anger. Anger may also be the conduit by which women in general can free themselves from larger social oppressions." Ronell responded: "Anger must not be confined to being a mere *offshoot* of resentimental, festering wounds, but must be a channeling or broadcast system that, through creative expression, produces a certain *community*. That image of a mythical, Medusan threat is wonderful."<sup>13</sup>

For Mitchell, rage, or anger, was singular, consuming. When I was with her, I could often feel rage, scarcely contained, bubbling beneath the surface of her tensely controlled behavior. Sometimes it would burst forth, finding as its object a young curator, an old friend. It was icy, cutting, and left scars. Once, when I was staying the night at her house in the country, she had an acrimonious fight with a former partner. It was terrifying; I have never seen or heard a man and a woman so angry at each other, and it went on and on, mounting in its passion, with physical violence always lurking in the background, though it never actually came to blows. I wanted to hide under the table, but I was called upon as a witness to the iniquity of first one, then the other, by the contending parties, mostly by Mitchell herself. Certainly Mitchell's rage constructed no sense of community or connection between herself and other women.<sup>14</sup> Yet I think we must be aware of the power of



24. Cecil Beaton, *Model in front of Jackson Pollock painting*, March 1, 1951. Cecil Beaton/© *Vogue*, The Condé Nast Publications



25. Rudy Burckhardt, *Joan Mitchell at work on "Bridge," New York, 1957*. Estate of Rudy Burckhardt; courtesy Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

individual anger in women's achievement, as revealed in the work of Mitchell and many others of her generation—and after.

Without Mitchell's unerring sense of formal rectitude, however, without her daring and her discipline as a maker of marks and images, her work would be without interest. I would like to look now at a series of images that have often escaped careful examination: the ten original color lithographs, drawn on aluminum plates, that the artist made in 1981 with master printer Kenneth Tyler.<sup>15</sup> These works are in some ways anomalous in the artist's oeuvre in that they are small-scale and are *not* executed in oil paint, Mitchell's preferred medium. And yet for that very reason, because they are, let us say, more approachable, they offer a good starting place to chart the intersection of energy and its articulation in Mitchell's work—the explicit way that meaning comes into being in her imagery. Delicacy, grace, and awkwardness are all present in varying degrees in Mitchell's subtle, nonreferential calligraphy. The constant interplay of same and different is crucial to the production of meaning in these prints, which, though visual in every respect, nevertheless share in the distinctive character of language in the way their images are constructed.

How do visual structures of similarity and difference come into play in a reading of *Bedford I* and *Bedford III*? In both lithographs a bottom layer, which we see as earth or ground, is opposed to an airier, more lightly applied blue "sky" area above. Yet the feeling or mood of each of these prints is very different, the verbal lightness, sprouting bounce, and dancing rhythms of *Bedford I* (fig. 26) produce an atmosphere utterly opposed to that of the petulant, indeed outright angry animation created by the more solid facture of the choppy ground element and the fractured sky area of *Bedford III* (fig. 27). In another print from the same series, *Flower III*, a four-color lithograph, the relationship between more densely worked and more open areas is reversed: now it is the upper portion of the image that is filled with color and incident and meshed strokes of crayon, while the bottom is sketchily adumbrated by a series of open vertical strokes that leave plenty of leeway for the white paper beneath.<sup>16</sup> Two polarities of Mitchell's style are demonstrated in a later group of prints she created in conjunction with Tyler Graphics. In *Sunflowers II* of 1992 two related images are juxtaposed to form a diptych. The subject is really the relation of the downpouring energy of the crayon strokes. These dark, congested rectangles have nothing in common

with Vincent van Gogh's famous flowers except the palpating excitement of their facture, and there is something perverse about the title. These are dark sunflowers indeed; the one on the right—with its thick, blotchy smears of blue and green pigment and skinny bent supports—is especially ominous. In *Little Weeds II*, of the same date, however, the colors are brighter, the calligraphy dispersed over a broader, emptier horizontal field, the mood more frenetic, and the dynamic more centrifugal rather than contained.

From the very beginning, Mitchell's rage to paint was marked by a very specific battle between containment and chaos. In *Red Painting No. 2* of 1954 a shivering island of agitation is held in check by the composition's central focus, the mazing and amazing dynamism of the brushwork, which pulls together and layers in deep, jewel-colored skeins. A close-up detail of the upper central portion of the canvas reveals something of the complexity of Mitchell's facture, the almost excessive bravado of the gestural center compared with the cool pallor of the gridded margins, as though something wild had escaped from a cage—or needed to be pent up in one.

Mitchell's work has often been compared with that of her contemporaries and immediate predecessors. If we compare Mitchell's untitled canvas of 1956–57 with de Kooning's *Woman* of 1949–50,<sup>17</sup> we see that she accepted the sweep, the slash, the bravura brushwork of his style but rejected what is most striking about his image: the figuration. Comparison, of course, can bring out difference as well as similarity. Much is sometimes made of the "impact" or "influence" of Mitchell's longtime companion, the Canadian-born abstractionist Jean-Paul Riopelle, on her style. Yet I think comparison in this case brings out irrevocable difference: Riopelle's patterning is more regular, less aleatory, more allover, of equal density throughout, which gives his work a preconceived rhythmic formula utterly opposed to Mitchell's poignant visual searching.

In Mitchell's work, as I am trying to demonstrate, meaning and emotional intensity are produced structurally, as it were, by a whole series of oppositions: dense versus transparent strokes; gridded structure versus more chaotic, ad hoc construction; weight on the bottom of the canvas versus weight at the top; light versus dark; choppy versus continuous brush strokes; harmonious and clashing juxtapositions of hue—all are potent signs of meaning and feeling. It is this structural freedom and control, this complexity



26. Joan Mitchell, *Bedford I*, 1981. Lithograph on paper, 42½ x 32½ in. (108.3 x 85.6 cm). Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Walker Art Center, Tyler Graphics Archive, 1983



27. Joan Mitchell, *Bedford III*, 1981. Lithograph on paper, 42½ x 32½ in. (108 x 85.6 cm). Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Walker Art Center, Tyler Graphics Archive, 1984

of vision that accounts for the fact that, far from being a one-note painter, Mitchell explored a vast *range* of possibilities in her work, from the spreading, ecstatic panoramas to the inward-curdling “black paintings,” from the totally covered canvas to the canvas enlivened only by a few dashes of calligraphy. *Field for Two* (1973) could almost be a Rothko, but a Rothko highly implicated in Hans Hofmann’s “push and pull.”<sup>18</sup> The gridded planes of color hover over and retreat from the surface of the canvas. And what colors they are: pinks, oranges, a touch of vernal green, and then those streaks of hovering darkness that so often seem designed to disrupt easy comfort or harmony in Mitchell’s best canvases.

The diptych and the polyptych formats attracted Mitchell increasingly from the late 1960s on. Of course, the two-part or multipartite format was not her invention. On the contrary, it had had a long history, going back to the religious art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when it often assumed heroic proportions in the traditional Christian altarpiece. More recently, in the 1950s, Pollock made use of both the diptych and the polyptych in a series of dramatic drip paintings in which strings of pigment jump over barriers and respond to similar formations in their partner paintings.<sup>19</sup>

But Mitchell’s multicanvas creations were different from both the religious art of the past and Pollock’s more recent essays into the genre. First, they constituted a response to her own need for greater spatial expansiveness, yet an expansiveness that would nevertheless be held in check by the specific dimensions of the individual panels that constituted the object.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, the diptych or polyptych appealed to her because of the more complex relationships it could induce: not just the play of difference and analogy *within* the single canvas, but response and reaction against another related panel, both like and different. The range of inter-related expressions was vast and open-ended.

At times the notion of landscape, and of the topographic, almost inevitably enters the mind of the viewer of Mitchell’s work. There are titles—such as *Plowed Field*, *Weeds*, *The Lake*, or *River*—that conjure up a topographic or landscape experience. The fact that Mitchell lived for a great deal of her mature life in Vétheuil, on the Seine, with its splendid views already immortalized by Claude Monet (who had lived briefly in the gardener’s cottage near her property), increases the temptation to ascribe specific paintings to precise locales. But it is important to keep in mind that

almost all of Mitchell’s canvases were titled *after* the fact, not before. Far from being a painter who worked *sur le motif*, like Monet or Cézanne, one might say that Mitchell was a painter who worked the motif in after. She discovered the analogies to some thing, place, idea or feeling after she had completed the work, not before. Many of the titles are facetious or arcane, like *The Goodbye Door* or *Salut Tom*. Some of them are flatly descriptive, like *Cobalt* or *Bottom Yellow*. But in all of them we are aware of what art critic Barbara Rose denominated the “struggle between coherence and wild rebellion.”<sup>21</sup> That, if anything, is what Mitchell’s paintings are “about.” As such, they constitute a pictorial palimpsest of multiple experiences; they are never perfect, finished objects. From their brazen refusal of harmonious resolution rises their blazing glory.

In a wonderfully suggestive article about Virginia Woolf and Duke Ellington published in the *New York Times*, cultural critic Margo Jefferson turned her thoughts to “the place of beauty and fury in Woolf’s work,” explaining that “beauty restores and fury demolishes in her novels. The bond between them . . . is so psychically fraught it remained muted, even subterranean.” But, Jefferson continued, “Like grief or longing or moments of transcendence, . . . anger can be changed into something else and made new.” She ended her piece by asserting that “elegy and fury [may exist] side by side, beauty and the heart of darkness sharing one language.”<sup>22</sup> How apt a description this is of Joan Mitchell’s painting at its best, an art in which rage and the rage to paint so often coincide and, indeed, share the same ever-questing, always formulaic pictorial language.

1. Judith E. Bernstock, *Joan Mitchell*, exh. cat. (New York: Hudson Hills Press, in association with the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, 1988), pp. 47, 51.
2. Joan Mitchell, cited *ibid.*, p. 57.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 60 n. 4.
4. Mitchell, in *Joan Mitchell: “. . . my black paintings . . .” 1964*, exh. cat. (New York: Robert Miller Gallery, 1994), unpaginated.
5. Elaine de Kooning and Rosalyn Drexler, “Dialogue,” in *Art and Sexual Politics: Women’s Liberation, Women Artists, and Art History*, ed. Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker (New York: Collier, 1973), p. 56.
6. See T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 302–08, figs. 177, 178. Serge Guilbaut used one of the Beaton photographs for the cover of his *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945–1964* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990).
7. Although, it must be admitted, fashion was greatly admired by some of high modernism’s greatest supporters, beginning with the French poet Charles Baudelaire, who claimed that fashion constituted an essential half of beauty itself and wrote an essay in praise of *maquillage*. Likewise, the poet Stéphane Mallarmé wrote for a fashion journal.
8. Mitchell had been a successful ice-skater and always moved with assertive energy and economy. Burckhardt, unlike most of his contemporaries, photographed quite a few women artists. Besides a whole series of images of Mitchell in 1957, he photographed Ann Arnold, Nell Blaine, Elaine de Kooning, Jane Freilicher, and Marisol.
9. See Bernstock, *Joan Mitchell*, p. 212, for the photograph *Joan Mitchell and George, New York* (c. 1953).
10. Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 262.
11. Mitchell, correspondence with the author, undated.
12. Mary Ann Caws, “Rage Begins at Home,” *Massachusetts Review*, 34 (Spring 1993), pp. 65–66.
13. Andrea Juno, interview with Avital Ronell, “Angry Women,” *RE Search* (1992), p. 151.
14. It is hard to think of any sort of utopian community built solely on the power of rage!
15. These works are reproduced with an essay by Barbara Rose, in *Joan Mitchell: Bedford Series. A group of ten color lithographs* (Bedford, New York: Tyler Graphics, 1981).
16. See *ibid.*, p. 15, for illustration.
17. See *Joan Mitchell: Paintings 1956 to 1958* (New York: Robert Miller Gallery, 1996), unpaginated (the painting is the third one illustrated). De Kooning’s painting is located at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro.
18. Mitchell’s *Field for Two* is in the collection of Joanne and Philip Von Blon.
19. See, for example, Pollock’s *Silver and Black Diptych* of c. 1950 or his *Black and White Polyptych*, a five-panel piece of 1950.
20. It is interesting to note, in relation to the concept of spatial expansion, that Mitchell never, to my knowledge, worked on the floor like Pollock. She and her canvases had a vertical, one-to-one relationship. Although the paint might be freely and broadly manipulated, and it certainly dripped to good effect, this was not a result of the artist standing over the support and “dominating” it, so to speak.
21. Rose, in *Joan Mitchell: Bedford Series*, p. 6.
22. Margo Jefferson, “Revisions: Fearlessly Taking a Fresh Look at Revered Artists,” *The New York Times*, November 1, 1999, sec. E.