

**William Tronzo, ed., *The Fragment, An Incomplete History*.
Getty Publications, 2009, 232 pp., 57 colour and
40 black-and-white illus., 3 line drawings, 5 tables, 1 map,
hardcover \$50 U.S., ISBN 978-0-89236-926-3**

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[See table of contents](#)

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that Jarvis slipped by promising to purchase a painting from the Prince of Lichtenstein without having the official go-ahead, but this does not fly after Horrall's lengthy explanation. Jarvis became the victim of a political decision and change in government at a pivotal time when a long-negotiated art deal was coming to a head between the National Gallery and the Prince of Lichtenstein. The failure of this art deal forced his resignation and irreparably damaged his sense of self-worth. He was also too outspoken about trying to get Canada beyond its provincial habits in art appreciation and, in particular, about a symbolic relic of our colonial past—the Queen Mary's Carpet. The trustees of the Gallery knew that he did not possess a curatorial background and they justified this lack by using his vibrant personality and natural ability to speak freely in public. Significantly, such traits in a Gallery director did not sit well with the new majority government under John Diefenbaker. This is not the format for a detailed relay of Horrall's findings on the issue, but it is important to emphasize that politicians are perhaps the worst individuals to handle a major international art deal, which requires expert knowledge of the art market, swift action and payment, and necessary commissions. The Canadian government slipped on all of these necessary steps. Although Jarvis was blocked by the government from purchasing a Breughel painting from the Lichtenstein collection for \$400,000, he made an appeal and asked for permission to purchase the painting for \$350,000 with an added bonus of a Lorenzo Monaca painting for another \$95,000 from funds that the trustees felt had been set aside for Lichtenstein purchases. Government ministers approved this approach and authorized the said funds to be used. On these grounds, Jarvis contacted the London dealer who was arranging the deal to say that they would take the Monaca painting. Meanwhile, Minister Davie

Fulton discovered that a Lichtenstein fund was never officially created and surprised Jarvis with the orders to stop the purchase (p. 283). Jarvis had already given his word to the London dealer who went ahead and purchased the painting on the Gallery's behalf, which was normal practice. Although Jarvis tried to stop the purchase, the deal was already done. What followed was a storm of finger pointing in the media and on Parliament Hill, which finally resulted in Jarvis accepting the firm suggestion of Minister Ellen Fairclough to resign. The chapter that follows his resignation is peppered with descriptions of high-end cultural jobs, leadership positions and consulting roles that he accepted, but it is notably unfocused and dispassionate—much like the inner state of Jarvis from 1960 on.

What stands out most in the history of Jarvis is his departure from the National Gallery, which was so tragic that it inspired Robertson Davies to use him as the basis of an ill-fated character (Aylwin Ross) in his novel *What's Bred in the Bone* (1985). Perhaps it is appropriate that a work of fiction has stood to spark the greatest interest in Jarvis, since his actual life was, as Horrall paints it, made up of several masks. My hope is, however, that the non-fiction that Horrall presents will inspire an even greater interest in who Alan Jarvis really was.

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Notes

- ¹ Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal & Kingston, 2003), 134–35.
- ² Jean Sutherland Boggs, *The National Gallery of Canada* (Toronto, 1971), 46–54.

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There is something playful in this collection of essays. That is not to say it is not a serious critical work, but the heterogeneity of its subjects—from the *Laokoon* to B-movie ectobrain—reflects a sense of scholarly brio that is, frankly, fun to read. Under the rubric of “the fragment,” William Tronzo has brought together eleven very different, but interconnected perspectives on the material, aesthetics, and phenomenology of the relationship between parts and their wholes (and holes within parts). The strength of the book lies not in the acuity of the individual chapters (readers will find some essays more congruent with

their interests than others) but in its intellectual expansiveness. This expansiveness is heralded by both the cover and the frontispiece. The first shows Cornelia Parker's *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991), a garden shed destroyed in a controlled explosion and displayed as suspended debris lit by a single, central bulb; the second shows Raymond Pettibon's *No Title (In A Universe)* (1992), a pen and ink drawing of a diminutive, shouting figure whose gaping, black mouth utters random letters denying the *logos* of the biblical Genesis. The energy and outward momentum of both works constitute a manifesto that denies the volume an overarching *logos* and demands that readers construct their own critical narrative as each chapter provides branching-off points for new reveries and connections. Of course, all edited collections require this from their readers, but rarely do they call us to join in the play of ideas. The explosive

“VAVOOM” of Pettibon’s Big Bang/toddler is an invitation to participate in active reading; this is not a book that fits into neat, self-contained categories.

The Fragment: An Incomplete History consists of two parts. The first considers the fragment as an object received, the second as an object created, with Cornelia Parker’s essay “Avoided Object” as the fulcrum between the two. As a result, the second half is notably less integrated than the first, since it is concerned with the fragment as a work in progress, a process of becoming. Friedrich Schlegel’s definition of the fragment as something entirely isolated from the surrounding world and complete unto itself like a hedgehog (p. 125) relies on knowing where the “hedgehog” fits into our culture and on being able to posit the historicized fragment within a contextual whole. But the fragment as object created, like the materials that constitute the archaeological subjects of Cornelia Parker’s disinterred and reinterred *Different Dirt* series (p. 94), projects its meaning (its hedgehog-ness) on the conditional future, where connections and inferences are not easily drawn. In his introduction (pp. 1–7), Tronzo’s rationale for this two-part approach is that concentrating on the function of the fragment as a thing created, not simply received, encourages the reader to consider the volatility and unpredictability of the fragment in motion. The fragment is not just part of an ephemeral (and to some extent illusory) whole but an object in transit through time and space, on the way to creating a new synthesis. This perspective, inspired in part by Linda Nochlin’s presentation of the fragment as an embodiment of contrasting modalities in *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*, resonates in the current geopolitical climate of bodies voluntarily and involuntarily in transition to different nations and cultures. If consciousness of the fragment is an essential part of modernity (p. 64), what does this mean for Canadians living within their idiosyncratic bricolage of multi-cultural, post-colonial confederation? How conscious are we of fragmentation as a structuring force within our lives, and how do we process that consciousness?

One potential approach is posited in Glenn W. Most’s “On Fragments” (pp. 9–20), which discusses the fragment as a text, a datum within the economy of knowledge. Most emphasizes that our relationship with the fragment emerges predominately from the physical and textual fragments of Graeco-Roman antiquity. The identification, selection, conservation, and reapplication of such *disiecta membra* was a key part of cultural construction, and indeed remains so today: “Real human societies are never purely archaic or purely modernistic; all are engaged in constant transactions to negotiate the relative claims of past and present, to decide how much of the future will be determined by models transmitted from the past, how much by urgent present needs” (p. 9). This reuse of the Antique fragment to negotiate the claims of past and present is sustained through the

next three chapters. Paolo Liverani’s “The Fragment in Late Antiquity: A Functional View” (pp. 23–36) focuses on the reuse of figural and architectonic *spolia*, which have provided the archetypal examples of how we select fragments and locate meaning within them. Liverani notes that the location of meaning within fragments is problematized by the inevitable tendency towards reintegration; a fragment’s meaning is usually activated by its incorporation into a new physical or conceptual whole. If so, can we still read meaning into the fragment *qua* fragment? Does it retain its hedgehog-ness or are we responding to an entirely new beast? Liverani sidesteps his own question by focusing on hyper-codified fragments from the Arco di Portogallo and the Arch of Constantine in Rome, arguing that the very consciousness of their reuse sustained the metalinguistic communication established within their original context. Yet the question has been asked, and William Tronzo’s “The Cortile delle Statue: Collecting Fragments, Inducing Images” approaches the issue from another angle (pp. 39–59). Tronzo discusses the evolution of the Cortile delle Statue, from a garden adorned with sculptural fragments to programmatic gallery. In this context, the antique fragments were activated in their early garden environment without compromising their fragmentary nature; garden spaces are especially responsive to the passage of time, and the seasonal growth and decay of the garden complements the temporal erosion of the whole that is presented by the fragment. This happy congruence of space and content led to the discovery of the *Laokoon*. Reintegration demanded an architectural reconfiguration of the Cortile delle Statue into a “chapel-like” court to better display the sculpture. The resemblance to a *capella* was, Tronzo argues, not an accidental development. Juxtaposed with the upright and triumphant *Apollo Belvedere*, the metalinguistic suffering and death of the *Laokoon* affirmed the post-classical triumph of Christianity, establishing a conceptual dyad between fragmentation and resurrection.

Brigitte Bourgeois’s “Fragments of a Revolution: The *Laokoon* in Paris (1798–1815)” (pp. 61–80) continues the history of the *Laokoon* as paradigmatic fragment, and explores the relationship between movement, fragmentation, and national identity. Bourgeois’s account of the vicissitudes of the *Laokoon*’s restoration takes up Nochlin’s thesis, although Nochlin’s ideological investiture of fragment during the 1789 Revolution is somewhat undermined by the pride the French government displayed in relocating Graeco-Roman antiquities undamaged to Paris. The revolutionary amputation of a corrupt and repressive past had been augmented by a desire to appropriate Graeco-Roman “purity” *sans* its inferior Italian heritage. The intention was not only that the *Laokoon* be installed in France, but that it become French through the perfectly executed restoration of its missing arms by French artists. This proved to be an impossible goal, and initiated the curatorial trend towards preferring

the conservation of the imperfect fragment to the restoration of a dubious whole that informs much of our current attitudes towards the fragment.

The dubious whole is the subject of Ian Balfour's "The whole is the untrue": On the Necessity of the Fragment (after Adorno)" (pp. 83–91), a discursive essay on fragmentation as an aural and epistemological phenomenon. For Adorno, Beethoven's music represents the same break with past tradition that the French Revolution does for Noehlin: both present a radical new configuration of the relationship between the part to the whole. The fragment constitutes a resistance to the aesthetic totality posited by Aristotle and perpetuated by Augustine and Hegel. The Aristotelian whole is unsustainable, and the discord and dissonance encountered in Beethoven's music attests to its instability: the center cannot hold. To valorize the whole at the expense of marginalizing that part of the whole that resists its totality is to participate in "the guilt of integration" (p. 84), a phrase especially resonant to Canadian social history. The valency of the fragment is evident in the discomfort it produces, yet as a syllogism "the whole is the untrue" does not establish the converse. The fragment is not a static truth but a dynamic process, a stage in the Hegelian process of "becoming." And on this thought, the impetus of *The Fragment: An Incomplete History* moves from reception to creation, with Cornelia Parker's "Avoided Object" (pp. 93–113). Parker's short, but lavishly illustrated piece explores the concepts of fragmentation that inform and inspire her creative process. Much of Parker's work centers on the process of becoming, the transformation of an object's identity through conscious or unconscious fragmentation by cuts, burns, rips, and (*vide* the cover illustration) explosions. Others are decontextualised, eroded, overlooked, their resurrection as art contingent on the recognition of a new identity.

The transition from object to art—the process of becoming—is further explored in Jacqueline Lichtenstein's "The Fragment: Elements of a Definition" (pp. 115–29). A philosopher specializing in art and aesthetics, Lichtenstein in her essay extends Bourgeois's and Balfour's concerns with the dubious whole and readdresses the awkward question posed by Liverani: how can one negotiate the relationship between the fragment and whole, especially when that whole is non-existent and can only be inferred from existence of other fragments? The fragment generates its own version of Heisenberg uncertainty: its material presence as an object is perceived as the sign of absence (p.120). Yet, since the physical definition of the fragment encompasses temporal as well as material criteria, it can signify the future as well as the past (a sentiment that echoes Parker's practice). Lichtenstein concentrates on the semiotic fungibility of the fragment in both its literary and visual capacities, connecting *formes brèves* to *bricolage*.

Once again the fragment is presented as the paradigmatic sign of contemporary modernity, a worldview that conceives of a non-uniform totality.

Something that has been fragmented once can be fragmented and reused any number of times. Lichtenstein poses the question: in the archaeology of the future, who is to say that Picasso's *Bull's Head (Seat and Handles of a Bicycle)* will be recognized as a bull and not a bicycle? Much depends on the circumstances of fragmentation, the subject of John Chapman and Bisserka Gaydarska's "The Fragmentation Premise in Archaeology: From the Paleolithic to More Recent Times" (pp. 131–53). Inspired by the convergence of archaeological and sociological methods in the 1970s, Chapman and Gaydarska focus on the actual role of fragmentation as a process within societies, rather than seeking to understand the fragment *qua* fragment. Instead of perceiving the fragment as an evidential sign of loss and separation (the "trash heap of history" approach to archaeology), the fragmentation premise argues for fragmentation as a socially anchored process of deliberate breakage and reuse. Fragmentation can be construed as a generative practice of *enchaînement* within social networks and proto-societies; Chapman and Gaydarska even posit a correlation between it and the evolution of human consciousness since the capacity to perceive the world as simultaneously composed of both wholes and fragments is germane to the development of human intelligence.

For the last three millennia coinage has proved a most pervasive medium of social *enchaînement* and Lucia Travaini's "Fragments and Coins: Production and Memory, Economy and Eternity" (pp. 155–73) provides an overview of its role in producing social meaning. Travaini's essay on the relationship between coins and fragments itemizes the various uses of coins (as hoards, pieces, and clippings) as both money and magical ornament. In accordance with the principle of contagion, coins connect person to person or person to place. The corporeal associations of coinage—the connection between money and blood in Western thought—introjects the relationship between fragmentation and resurrection first noted in Tronzo's essay. Without Liverani's text to identify the ill-gotten loot of Ferdinand I, the bloody disk held by St. Francis of Paola depicted in the work of an unknown Umbrian artist could easily be read as the Catholic host. Both coin and host are tokens of departure and return, both are symbols of the fractured body.

The fragment as dismembered body is the subject of the final two papers. Thomas Crow's "Composition and Decomposition in Girodet's *Revolt of Cairo*" (pp. 175–90) returns the reader once again to revolutionary France. Commemorating the suppression of the 1798 uprising (incorrectly labelled as 1789), Girodet used fragmentation to drive the creative process of the painting. The composition rejects the obvious narrative of conquest and the imposition of order by the magnanimous Emper-

or-to-be and pitches the viewer into a vortex of flailing limbs. Instead of focusing on a regulated progression from center to periphery—the preferred arrangement for battle scenes—the canvas offers an intensely complex and shifting series of fragments that refuse to coalesce into the sum of their parts. In the confusion of the melee, sexual and corporeal identities are both exposed and concealed: a nude Berber cradles the body of his Mamluk officer whose skin is effeminately porcelain and whose robes fall into labial folds at his groin; the severed head of a French soldier gazes with Christ-like tenderness down on obscured bodies, one of which must be his own. The neatly severed head, the French Revolution's contribution to modern science via the guillotine (p. 3), is further reduced to a final fragment: a relict brain in Fernando Vidal's "Ectobrain in the Movies" (pp. 193–211). Vidal explores the twentieth-century

fascination with corporeal disassemblage and reassemblage and the potential of (mad) science to promise a secular resurrection in *Donovan's Brain* (1953), *Experiments in the Revival of Organisms* (1940), and *Cold Lazarus* (1996). Yet, as with the antique sculpture discussed in the first half of the book, a reintegrated body does not equate a restored identity. As in Girodet's painting, parts can only lead to other parts; however reconstituted, the fragment remains a fragment. Although Einstein's brain may take on the force of a holy relic in *Einstein's Brain* (1994), Vidal demonstrates that its power comes not from the potential resurrection of the man within the tissue but in the *enchaînement* of people and ideas promoted in this volume.

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