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**Arnold Schoenberg and Jackson Pollock as Neo-Classicists**

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At first glance, it might appear that the works of both Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) (Neighbour 1) and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) (O'Connor 1) are random and lack deeper meaning. There exists, however, a hidden mechanism of “systems” that these artists have independently developed, seemingly in order to curtail conscious expression, which operate as languages now intrinsic to modern music and painting.

Arnold Schoenberg was born of a poor Orthodox Jewish family in Vienna, few of whom were particularly musical (Neighbour 1.1). Schoenberg was essentially self-taught, and “heard very little music except what [him and his friends] could play themselves” (Neighbour 1.3). Schoenberg’s “natural” or “organic” music education may have ultimately set the stage for his development of serialism, a creation he described as being as natural as Creation itself (Schoenberg 214-215). Schoenberg’s early compositions do, however, employ tonality in the traditional style; atonality (or “pantonality” as Schoenberg preferred to call it) via serialism developed organically between 1908 and 1920 (Neighbour 5.1, 7.1). Commonly associated with the Expressionist artistic movement, Schoenberg also investigated Neo-Classicism in his 1921-1923 work, “Suite for Piano, op. 25”.

Jackson Pollock was, at a young age, “patchily educated and rebellious” (Golding 113), yet some of his earliest surviving works depicted traditional subject matter (landscapes or figures) in a representational style (Golding 138). Pollock suffered from alcoholism and underwent psychiatric treatment with two Jungian analysts; this “resulted in an obsessive exploration of his unconscious symbolism” central to the development of his “drip painting” style (O'Connor 1.4). Despite common associations with the Abstract Expressionist artistic

movement, Pollock's iconic drip paintings can also be viewed in a Neo-Classical context; one such example is "Number 2, 1949."

Musical Expressionism seeks to "retreat inward into the dark side of dreams and the unconscious" (Onderdonk 11/13/15), while avoiding the use of traditional "cadences, repetition, sequences, balanced phrases [or] reference to formal or procedural models" (Fanning 1.1). Schoenberg does, indeed, seek to retreat inward into the unconscious, however, his use of 12-tone serialism in "Suite for Piano" hints not at *expression* but at *objectivity*, resulting in his serial works typically being excluded from the Expressionist canon (Fanning 1.1). Expressionism in visual art lacks a concise definition, yet aims to "communicate man's spiritual life...[reflecting] deep intellectual unrest...about the destruction of the traditional relationship of trust between man and the world" and is "in part an artistic reaction both to academic art and to Impressionism" (Vogt 1.1). While Pollock's "Number 2, 1949" does reflect deep intellectual unrest and seems an artistic reaction to academic art, it could be more precisely classified.

Both "Suite for Piano" and "Number 2, 1949" must be understood as essentially Neo-Classical within an Expressionist context. At the core of this inter-relation is the "rejection of Romantic 'emotionalism' in favor of anti-Romantic 'objectivity'...[using] mathematical processes and intellectual 'systems'" (Onderdonk 11/06/15): Neo-Classicism. This artistic movement emerged both as a direct aesthetic response to Romanticism, as well as a response to World War I and a rejection of the complexities that came before it (Onderdonk 11/06/15). Neo-Classicism manifested this response as a revival of seemingly "dead" or "classical" forms and textures (Whittall 6). This was accomplished via neutral titles, traditional forms, and thematic integration, among other techniques.

There is no doubt that Schoenberg strived for absolute objectivity in his development of the 12-tone system. Schoenberg believed that if one were not to utilize *all* the constraints and relationships of traditional tonality, that the use of a tonic would be deceiving, disturbing, and would “create false expectations of consequences and continuations;” he was even apprehensive about the doubling of a single tone at the octave (Schoenberg 219). The 12-tone system is highly mathematical, employing endless permutations of retrograde, inversion, and combinations as are seen in “Suite for Piano.” Such a high level of pre-compositional planning is reminiscent of the traditional objectivist technique of thematic integration; serialism might even be considered the *ultimate* in thematic integration. “Suite for Piano” also employs traditional Baroque dance forms, such as Gavotte, Musette, Minuet/Trio, and Gigue.

Pollock employed mathematical/intellectual processes/systems in his creation of “Number 2, 1949”, he was particularly concerned with “carefully controlling his painterly effects” (O’Connor 2.1). Pollock chose not to use the more experimental *mixed media* favored by Modernists, but chooses rather paint and flat canvas with application by a paint brush. Pollock applies the paint systematically: poured lines and small drops via a saturated brush; first, thin grey and white lines, then bold black curves, next intertwining white, and finally delicate pourings of yellow, silver, scarlet, and red (O’Connor 2.1). Pollock even goes so far as to observe the interaction of the oils from areas saturated with black and white paint bled into the porous fabric of the canvas and applied paint similar in color to the red canvas in order to avoid “what would otherwise have appeared a drab mistake” (O’Connor 2.1). Another traditional “form” apparent in “Number 2, 1949” is the presence of bold, vertical white lines at regular horizontal divisions (most easily viewed from afar). Thomas Hart Benton had taught Pollock mural design theory, one element being that one should organize a wall with a series of basic

vertical divisions and that free-flowing forms could be placed around this basic form (O'Connor 2.3).

Both Schoenberg and Pollock's works employ neutral titles; "Suite for Piano" references a basic genre and "Number 2, 1949" implies a numerical catalog or opus designation. Both seek pure objectivity in an effort to communicate something greater. Schoenberg goes so far as to defend a single deviation from the "Basic Set" or 12-tone row in his Gavotte which could be interpreted as a subconsciously Expressionist "Freudian slip" (Klumpenhouwer 220). The substitution of a G-flat in place of a G-natural is an attempt to avoid implying tonicity by presenting a note doubled at the octave (Schoenberg 233-234). Analysis of Pollock's drip paintings reveals another layer of intellectual process. Pollock was found to employ fractals (mathematical patterns of shapes within shapes) consciously within his paintings since they were found increasingly in later works, such as "Number 2, 1949" (Micholich 422). Such a high level of strict adherence to mathematical and intellectual processes such as serialism and fractals is a basic tenet of Neo-Classicism. The success of Pollock's objectivist tactics can be seen in "Number 2, 1949's" tendency to "invite analogies with the forces of nature...in which the human figure is totally absent" (Golding 138).

Whether it is an effort to make their art appealing to some audience or a result of subconscious reliance on emotional communication, there are some elements of expression present in both Schoenberg and Pollock's works. Pollock makes conscious choices of color, including both that of paint as well as a red-dyed canvas. Schoenberg chooses not to serialize rhythm, duration, or dynamics; in fact, there is extensive dynamic notation and the use of technique markings such as *dolce*, which has the implication of sweet, tender, or adoring music.

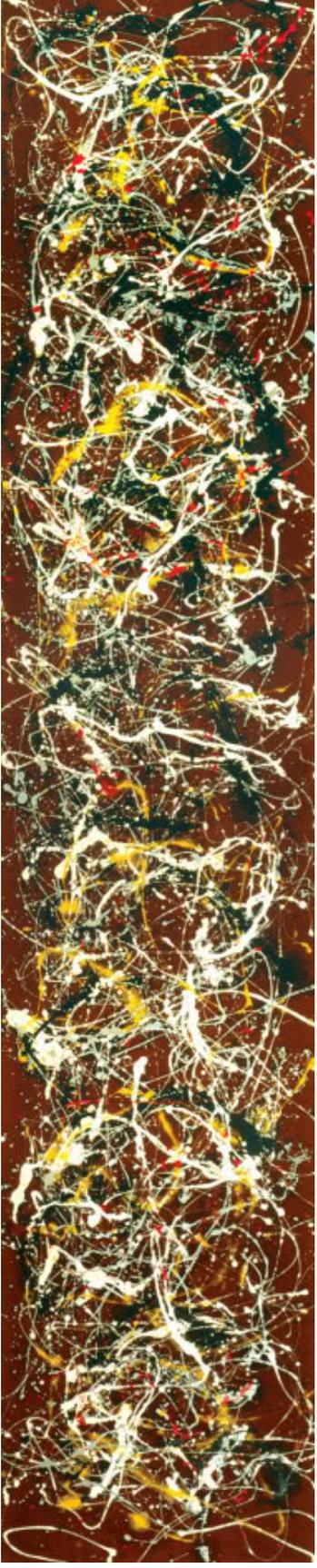
There is a moment in the Gavotte which sounds as if a harmonic sequence is present (mm. 13-14, illustrated below).



Understood within an Expressionist context, it is clear that both Schoenberg's "Suite for Piano" and Pollock's "Number 2, 1949" are essentially Neo-Classical. They contain the basic tenets of anti-Romantic objectivity, rejection of Romantic emotionalism, and mathematical processes/intellectual systems. Serialism, as a mathematical system, allows for the completely objective treatment of tonality and avoids stressing any one tone more than the other eleven. Similarly, Pollock's drip painting technique curtails any kind of conscious expression made by the artist by eliminating all direct contact between the brush and canvas. Both Pollock and Schoenberg succeeded in creating new languages which informed their pupils as the art and the music of the future.

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Appendix A: Number 2, 1949. Jackson Pollock.