

STOP THE WAR

Bykert Gallery

24 E 81 NYC

Continuous Project #8

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INTRODUCTION

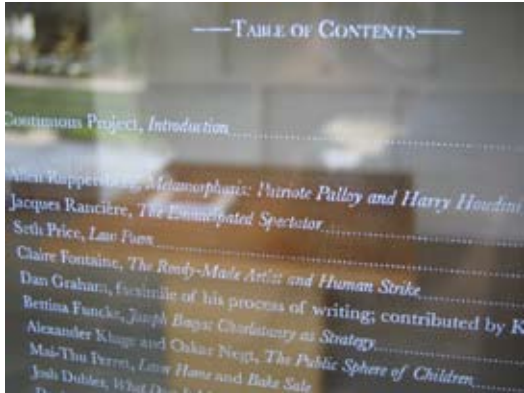
The Centre national de l'estampe et de l'art imprimé (CNEAI) invited us, as Continuous Project, to spend a month in Paris in the Spring of 2006 in order to realize a publication and an exhibition.

The art-world tends to celebrate the image. Art magazines and books are packed with photographs, advertisements, glossy colors. This book, we decided, would be black and white, and focused on the word, on texts. We were at the time thinking a lot about critical theory and how it relates to art. Loosely speaking, the relationship between art and politics. More specifically, art and spectatorship. We invited writers and artists to contribute pieces along these lines. We didn't want to ask what kind of theory is appropriate for art, but how art reacts to theory. The pieces in the book approach this intersection of interests from very different angles. They include a lecture by philosopher Jacques Rancière, never before printed in English; text pieces by artists, including Allen Ruppersberg, Mai-Thu Perret, Matthew Brannon, Josh Smith, Claire Fontaine, Dan Graham, and Melanie Gilligan; essays by writers such as Johanna Burton, Maria Muhle, Warren Niesluchowski, Bettina Funcke, Pablo Lafuente, and Simon Baier; reprints and new translations of work by Alexander Kluge, Charles Fourier, and Serge Daney; a couple of poems and a symposium we held in which we invited American religious scholar Joshua Dubler to present contemporary Evangelical Christianity and its uses of mass or popular culture.

The exhibition was directly linked to the book and its questions or issues. Because Continuous Project is a collaborative group that often works with others, we invited several artists and writers to make interventions in the CNEAI space. Japanese performance artist Ei Arakawa and German critic Simon Baier staged a private performance in CNEAI's attic archive room, revolving around a Donald Judd essay on Art and Internationalism that until now had been available only in a rare Japanese exhibition catalogue. Photo-documentation of the performance highlights the process of "installing" Judd's text over the course of a day. Swedish artist Fia Backström, who often engages with artists and printed materials while reflecting the form of exhibitions per se, responded to CNEAI's archive of printed matter by highlighting, through posters and a video, a 1982 issue of the artist's magazine *Intervention*, which critiqued that year's Documenta and ultimately questioned the notion of engaged art. Artist Claire Fontaine and curator Eva Svennung, both Paris-based, were invited to collaborate on a selection of French-language books to be sold during the exhibition in a makeshift bookstore, where they were presented on Backström's custom-made table cloths.

With the publication of *Continuous Project #8*, the final "issue", Continuous Project becomes Consultants.

August 2006





METAMORPHOSIS:
PATRIOTE PALLOY AND HARRY HOUDINI
ALLEN RUPPERSBERG

“In order to remain secret, the indirect must take shelter under the very figures of the direct....”*Roland Barthes*

“You just have to know how to do it. There’s nothing to it if you just know the trick.”*Harry Houdini*

What is metamorphosis? Who are Patriote Palloy and Harry Houdini? And what do they have to do with one another? We shall see. First the stage, then a trick, and finally the secret.

THE STAGE

Item: Harry Houdini was born Ehrich Weiss on April 6, 1874 in Appleton, Wis., the son of a Rabbi. Patriote Palloy was born Pierre-Francois Palloy on January 23, 1755 in Paris, the son of wine merchants.

Item: Separated by a century, Palloy sold Patriotism and became in his own words a “Patriot” and Houdini sold magic to become in his own words “a mysterious entertainer.” One was forgotten, the other became a legend.

Item: Events have their own ways of shaping a life; once they have taken place, they can never be undone or ignored. Both men stepped up out of the audience and crossed the dividing line to the performer’s side of the stage. They were not the public any longer for they had been invited to join the charmed and secret circle of those who knew the truth and who could themselves make magic for more credulous folk.

Item: Houdini’s career coincided roughly with the life-span of early vaudeville itself—developing before the turn of the century, and lasting until motion pictures replaced live performers in most theaters. He was a child of vaudeville and especially

skillful at the techniques of publicity. He was, for example, one of the greatest experts on handcuffs the world has ever known and was never defeated by any handcuff challenge the public could contrive. However, his success came when he learned that in order to present the trick in an effective manner he had to make it appear extremely difficult when it was in fact quite simple for him.



Item: After taking a commission in the army as a young man, Palloy became an apprentice mason who shortly married his master's daughter and launched himself in the construction industry. By 1789 he had amassed a sizable fortune and was considered a model success story of old-regime capitalism. On the 14th of July, he was acting commandant of his local district on the Ile Saint-Louis. Well within hearing range of the battle at the Bastille, he claimed that he had run to the scene and on arrival took a ball through his tricorn hat by the side of one Lieutenant Elie. He acquired a *brevet de vainqueur* to certify that he had been one of the sacred nine hundred.

Item: As a measure of his accomplishment, the standard dictionaries of the period contain the word *Houdinize* which was “to release or extricate oneself (from confinement, bonds, and the like) as by “wriggling out.”

Item: The reality of the Bastille, the Bastille itself, was far less important than its afterlife in legend. The Bastille gave shape and an image to all the vices against which the Revolution defined itself. The myth of patriotic unity became enshrined in a cult of the Bastille. No one grasped the creative opportunities better than Palloy. He became both the entrepreneur and the impresario of the greatest demolition job in modern history and the international symbol of liberated humanity.

Item: Each age invents its own spirit and the person who represents it. They then pass it on to the waiting public. The arena of consumption will vary but history will reveal the similarities.

Item: Palloy understood that the Revolution had created a demand for a new kind of history, one that told of the epic of the common man. This new history had to be related in a new way. History was to be made directly contemporary with the average citizen's life. He would insert his own experience, even at second hand, into the unfolding present. Instead of contemplating the vast centuries, the new history would be chopped up into memories of a single day or week. Finally, to lend immediacy to the events for those who were geographically distant, souvenirs had to take concrete form, so that by contemplating or touching them the citizen could share in the intensity of the event. The 14th of July being the great event, it took Palloy just one day to realize that as *Vainqueur*, construction engineer, and experienced boss of labor gangs he was in a position to acquire a most important piece of real estate. On the 15th he brought 800 men to the Bastille ready to begin the work of demolition. Once the first stone fell the free-for-all began: bonfires burned by day and fireworks exploded by night and good Patriots were everywhere with stories and tours. Through it all Palloy was planning his business. He not only provided work and pay, but he gave structure to the entire enterprise. He designed identity cards, he acted as boss-father, throwing parties for the workers, and playing with the children. Wielding a cane and clapper with which to call people to attention, he was also constable, judge and jury for those caught stealing or getting into drunken fights.

For all this chaos, the work proceeded with great speed. By the end of November, most of the Bastille was demolished. The physical work completed, Palloy's own Bastille business had only just begun. Some of this involved new projects, erecting a platform for a cannon from the Bastille on the Pont Neuf, clearing out the ditches and moats. But most of Palloy's energies went into promoting the cult of the Bastille as a political tourist attraction. The important thing was to produce – in a theatrical sense – events which would recapitulate both the horrors of the Bastille and the euphoria of its fall so that successive waves of visiting Patriots could be recruited for revolutionary enthusiasm. After one event, 700 workers made their way in procession to the Hotel de Ville carrying a model of the Bastille that they had fashioned from its



stones. Palloy turned this into a major enterprise and took credit for the scheme. Eventually, in order to bring into the patriotic fold the millions of Frenchmen remote from the actual event of the fall of the Bastille, Palloy produced 246 chests of souvenir, creating every conceivable kind of item from the debris of the Bastille. The myth of patriotic unity enshrined in the cult of the Bastille was the new gospel and for a while it was all his.

Item:“I, Harry Houdini, challenge...”

The American public is easily bored. Yet, for more than a quarter of a century, from the year 1900 until his death in 1926, Houdini’s name appeared day after day in newspaper headlines that made him the envy of all his fellow performers in the world of vaudeville. In a period and country of rapid technical development, in a land where whole cities, great railroads, huge industries, seemed to spring into being overnight, no single marvel, however impressive, could be granted more than its share of attention. What were Houdini’s secrets? How did he succeed in amazing others so completely for so long a time? No public performer can survive without public notice and Houdini won the public of his day over and over again. However, when the subject is a man whose life itself belonged in that strange limbo of the improbable, the field of entertainment, his fame resists analysis and goes beyond even his own hesitant claims. It was Houdini’s business to deceive the public but which deception was the more remarkable, the Houdini he wanted the public to believe in, or the Houdini he believed he was? Houdini’s make-believe was not imagination. He was Houdini and he sold the public on that single idea. He was not a magician in the ordinary sense, calling himself instead an “escape artist.” He was also more than just a man who believed in himself. Houdini believed in Houdini.

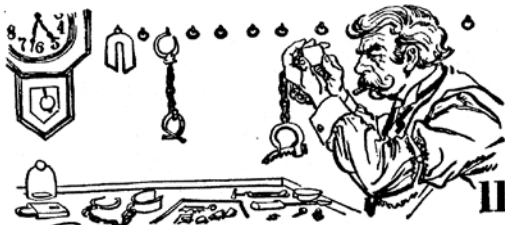
Success was the single, almost unvarying factor in his career, together with a stubborn determination which drove him to any conceivable length to achieve that success. The methods he used were various, the tricks he devised and practiced were without number, and although he never attempted to claim that he had invented the handcuff release, not any of its chain or rope-tie variations, he did contend that he had developed the so-called challenge escape. And this was



what truly defined him; his use of the word “challenge.”

All of Houdini’s escapes can be roughly divided into two groups: the prepared escapes and the challenges. The former caused him no difficulty once he had stepped onto the stage. Their difficulties had all been met and overcome beforehand and were basically bread and butter work. The challenge escapes were another matter. A challenge escape could not be worked out in advance the way a prepared escape could be planned and rehearsed before presentation. His spectacular success at meeting and defeating so many hundreds of these challenges, of such infinite variety, attests to not only a remarkable physical and mental ability but to something less tangible which Houdini clearly understood.

One of the greatest problems for any performer is the constant necessity of keeping his act new and fresh to prevent it from bogging down into monotony. Houdini achieved this superbly with his appeal for challenges. No spectator ever knew ahead of time exactly what he would see when Houdini stepped out on the stage. One night he might be tied in intricate bonds of rope, the next would see him twisting out of torturous chains and leg irons, on the third he might be nailed into a sturdy packing case by volunteers invited from the audience. “He can’t get out of this box. I made it myself of the toughest wood and the strongest nails could find. There’s no way for him to get out, once the lid’s nailed down.” His public was not a master demanding new tricks at every performance; it was his most eager assistant, daily providing the material for its own dramatic entertainment. The local people who attended the performances were sold, because of a very important role in the performance itself. They could then take for themselves the delight all human beings take in amazing others and in being amazed themselves and feel completely the courage and independence that cannot be bound by the any fetters the world has to offer.



A TRICK

The dictionary defines *metamorphosis* as “a change of physical form or substance.” “Metamorphosis, the Great Trunk Mystery” was a trick box that Houdini had purchased at the very beginning of his career from a down and out magician. The trunk trick was an old one but with Houdini’s skill and a grandiloquent title, “Metamorphosis” became not only an effective illusion but also an effective symbol, both of which were to serve him his entire life, from the Midway Dime Museums to the full evenings of magic which were the pinnacle of Houdini’s ambitions. The trick had drama and surprise and, in its most polished incarnation, which he performed with his wife Bessie, the transformation was performed with such speed as to seem truly unbelievable and beyond explanation.

First their equipment would be inspected by a committee from the audience; Harry’s hands would then be tied behind his back; he would be lifted into a large sack, the mouth of which would be drawn together, knotted and sealed over his head; and the sack would be put into the trunk which in turn would be locked, roped, and sealed. The committee would stand aside at that moment, and Bessie would take her place beside the curtains, holding one in each hand. “Ladies and Gentlemen,” she would say, spacing her words clearly and distinctly as Houdini had rehearsed her. “You see the locked and roped trunk into which Houdini has been placed with his wrists securely bound behind his back, his entire body sealed within the sack, and the sack locked within the trunk – he on the inside, I on the outside.” Slowly she would draw the curtains together. “I shall clap my hands three times – and you shall watch the effect.” One-two-three! She brought her small hands together in sharp claps, and immediately after the third one, she drew the curtains closed in front of herself with a flourish. Almost instantly they were flung wide again, and Houdini would be bowing to the audience, his hands free, the coat of his dress suit mysteriously missing. Bessie would of course thereafter be discovered inside the bag, inside the trunk, her hands bound by the original ropes – and wearing Houdini’s coat. The first prisoner had been “metamorphosed” into the second.



THE SECRET

Prisoners, chains, locks and keys, jail cells, straight-jackets, challenges, people, audience, authority, restraint, confinement, self, spirit, secrets, change, etc... The matching here of Palloy and Houdini is not a “matched pair” but more of a coupler – in post structuralist terms [language not as two sides of one sheet of paper (signifier/signified) but a “person or thing that couples or links together”]. One has a trace of the other in it; that’s what links them together. Houdini and Palloy are each an example of something contained in the other. Each in the same manner. Houdini made an elephant disappear in an instant; Palloy made a “white elephant” disappear piece by piece.

What then is this mystification that transforms culture into a universal nature? What exactly is the character of the transformation that takes place when a medal made from the chains of a former prisoner is sold to a citizen who then becomes a patriot? “It was a trick,” Houdini would say, “I did it by purely physical means.” After “Metamorphosis, the Great Trunk Mystery” had been performed nobody ever examined the bag and noticed that it had been slit open at the bottom; nobody ever found the concealed escape panel in the trunk. The secret, then, is in the examples and the examples of the examples. Transformation, dear friends, is the science of illusion and magic.

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Item: Los Angeles Times, September 9, 1989: Acreage in Canyon once owned by Houdini. Available for \$2.5 million is 3 1/2 acres in the Laurel Canyon of Hollywood Hills.

The house of the secluded estate, once owned by Harry Houdini, was destroyed by fire in 1959 and demolished thereafter. Still remaining are the brick and concrete stairs and walkways, concrete pillars, a stone and brick bridge, a cave, a waterfall and the landscaped acreage. There is a one-bedroom, one bath servant’s quarters on the property, which is set back from the street. For more details, call Merrill Lynch Realty.

GENEROUSTHANKSTO:

• CITIZENS a chronicle of the French Revolution, Simon Scharma •
The Great Houdini, by Beryl Williams and Samuel Epstein
Christine Burgin



THE EMANCIPATED SPECTATOR

Jacques Rancière

UNCORRECTED LECTURE TRANSCRIPT

I gave to this talk the title: “the emancipated spectator.” As I understand it, a title is always a challenge. It sets forth the presupposition that an expression makes sense, that there is a link between separate terms, which also means between concepts, problems, and theories which seem at first sight to bear no direct relation on each other. In a sense, this title expresses the perplexity that was mine when Marten Spangberg invited me to deliver what is supposed to be the “keynote” lecture of this academy. He told me that he wanted me to introduce this collective reflection on “spectatorship,” because he had been impressed by my book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. I first wondered what kind of relationship there could be between the cause and the effect? This is an academy bringing together artists and people involved in the world of art, theater, and performance on the issue of spectatorship today. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* was a meditation on the eccentric theory and the strange destiny of Joseph Jacotot, a French professor, who, at the beginning of the 19th century, made a mess in the academic world by asserting that an ignorant could teach another ignorant what he did not know himself, proclaiming the equality of intelligences and calling for intellectual emancipation against the standard idea of the instruction of the people. His theory sank in oblivion in the middle of the 19th century. I thought it necessary to revive it in the 1980s in order to put a new kind of mess in the debate about Education and its political stakes. But what use can be made, in the contemporary artistic debate, of a man whose artistic universe could be epitomized by names such as Demosthenes, Racine, and Poussin?

On second thoughts, I thought that the very distance, the lack of any obvious relationship between Jacotot’s theory and the issue of spectatorship today could be a chance. It could provide the opportunity of taking a radical distance from the theoretical and political presuppositions, which still shore up, even in post-modern disguise, most of the debate on theater, performance, and spectatorship. I got the impression that it was possible to make sense of the relationship, on condition that we try to piece together the network of presuppositions that put the issue of spectatorship at a strategic cross point in the discussion of the relationship between art and politics and draw the global pattern of rationality on the background of which we have been addressing for a long time the political issues of theater and spectacle. I am using here those terms in a very general sense, including dance, performance, and all the kinds of spectacle performed by acting bodies in front of a collective audience.

The numerous debates and polemics that had called the theater into question all along our history can be traced back to a very simple contradiction. Let us call it the paradox of the spectator, a paradox, which may prove more crucial than the well-known paradox of the actor. This paradox can be summed up in very simple terms. There is no theater without spectators (were it only a single and hidden one, as in Diderot’s fictional representation of *Le Fils naturel*). But spectatorship is a bad thing. Being a spectator means looking at a spectacle. And looking is a bad thing, for two reasons. Firstly looking is put as the opposite of knowing. It means being in front of an appearance without knowing the conditions of production

of that appearance or the reality, which is behind it. Secondly, looking is put as the opposite of acting. He or she who looks at the spectacle remains motionless on his or her seat, without any power of intervention. Being a spectator means being passive. The spectator is separated from the capacity of knowing in the same way as he is separated from the possibility of acting.

From this diagnosis it is possible to draw two opposing conclusions. The first one is that theater in general is a bad thing, that is the stage of illusion and passivity, which has to be dismissed in favor of what it forbids: knowledge and action: the action of knowing and the action led by knowledge. This conclusion has been drawn long ago by Plato: the theater is the place where ignorant people are invited to see suffering people. What takes place on the stage is a pathos, the manifestation of a disease, the disease of desire and pain, which is nothing but the self-division of the subject caused by the lack of knowledge. The “action” of theater is nothing but the transmission of that disease through another disease, the disease of the empirical vision, which looks at shadows. Theater is the transmission of the ignorance, which makes people ill through the medium of ignorance, which is optical illusion. Therefore a good community is a community, which does not allow the mediation of the theater, a community whose collective virtues are directly incorporated in the living attitudes of his participants.

This seems to be the more logical conclusion of the problem. We know however that it is not the conclusion that was most often drawn. The most usual conclusion runs as follows: theater involves spectatorship and spectatorship is a bad thing. Therefore we need a new theater, a theater without spectatorship. We need a theater where the optical relation – implied in the word *theatron* – is subjected to another relation, implied in the word drama. Drama means action. The theater is a place where an action is actually performed by living bodies in

front of living bodies. The latter may have resigned their power. But this power is resumed in the performance of the former, in the intelligence that builds it, in the energy that it conveys. The true sense of the theater must be predicated on that acting power. Theater has to be brought back to its true essence, which is the contrary of what is usually known as theater. What has to be pursued is a theater without spectators, a theater where spectators will no longer be spectators, where they will learn things instead of being captured by images and become active participants in a collective performance instead of being passive viewers.

This turn has been understood in two ways, which are antagonistic in their principle though they have often been mixed in theatrical performance and in its legitimization. On the one hand, the spectator must be released from the passivity of the viewer, who is fascinated by the appearance standing in front of him, and identifies with the characters on the stage. He must be proposed the spectacle of something strange, unusual, which stands as an enigma and demands that he investigate the reason for that strangeness. He must be pressed to switch from the status of the passive viewer to the status of the scientist who observes phenomena and looks for their cause. On the other hand the spectator has to leave the status of a mere observer who remains still and untouched in front of a distant spectacle. He must be dragged away from his delusive mastery, drawn into the magic power of theatrical action where he will exchange the privilege of the rational viewer for the possession of its true vital energies.

We acknowledge those two paradigmatic attitudes epitomized by Brecht’s epic theater and Artaud’s theater of cruelty. On the one hand, the spectator has to become more distant, on the other hand he has to loose any distance. On the one hand he has to change his look for a better look, on the other hand he has to leave the very position of the viewer. The project of reforming the theater ceaselessly wavered between these two poles of distant inquiry and

vital embodiment. This means that the presuppositions, which underpin the search for a new theater, are the same that underpinned the dismissal of theater. The reformers of the theater in fact resumed the terms of Plato’s polemics. They only rearranged them by borrowing from the platonic dispositif another idea of the theater. Plato opposed to the poetic and democratic community of the theater a “true” community: a choreographic community where nobody remains a motionless spectator, where everybody is moving according to the communitarian rhythm, which is determined by the mathematical proportion.

The reformers of the theater restaged the platonic opposition between *choreia* and theater as an opposition between the true living essence of the theater and the simulacrum of the “spectacle.” The theater then became the place where passive spectatorship had to be turned into its contrary: the living body of a community enacting its own principle. In the text introducing the topic of our academy we can read that “theater remains the only place of direct confrontation of the audience with itself as a collective.” We can give to the sentence a restrictive meaning that would merely contrast the collective audience of the theater with the individual visitors of an exhibition or the sheer collection of individuals looking at a movie. But obviously the sentence means much more. It means that “theater” remains the name for an idea of the community as a living body. It conveys an idea of the community as self-presence opposed to the distance of the representation.

Since German romanticism, the concept of theater has been associated with the idea of the living community. Theater appeared as a form of the aesthetic constitution – meaning the sensory constitution – of the community: the community as a way of occupying time and space, as a set of living gestures and attitudes, which stands before any kind of political form and institution: community as a performing body instead of an apparatus of forms and rules. In

that way theater was associated with the romantic idea of the aesthetic revolution: the idea of a revolution, which would not only change laws and institutions, but transform the sensory forms of human experience. The reform of theater thus meant the restoration of its authenticity as an assembly or a ceremony of the community. Theater is an assembly where the people become aware of their situation and discuss their own interests, Brecht will say after Piscator. Theater is the ceremony where the community is given the possession of its own energies, Artaud will state. If theater is put as an equivalent of the true community, the living body of the community opposed to the illusion of the mimesis, it comes as no surprise that the attempt at restoring Theater in its true essence take place on the very background of the critique of the spectacle.

What is the essence of the spectacle in Guy Debord’s theory? It is externality. The spectacle is the reign of vision. Vision means externality. Now externality means the dispossession of one’s own being. “The more man contemplates, the less he is,” Debord says. This may sound anti-platonic. Obviously the main source for the critique of the spectacle is Feuerbach’s critique of religion. It is what sustains that critique, namely the romantic idea of truth as unseparateness. But that idea itself still keeps in line with the platonic disparagement of the mimetic image. The contemplation that Debord denounces is the theatrical or mimetic contemplation, the contemplation of the suffering, which is provoked by division. “Separation is the alpha and the omega of the theater.” What man contemplates in this scheme is the activity that has been stolen to him, it is his own essence, torn away from him, turned foreign to him, hostile to him, making for a collective world whose reality is nothing but man’s own dispossession.

In such a way there is no contradiction between the search for a theater achieving its own essence and the critique of the spectacle. The “good” theater is posited as a theater that uses its separate reality in order to suppress it, to

turn the theatrical form into a form of life of the community. The paradox of the spectator is part of this intellectual dispositif, which keeps in line, even in the name of the theater, with the platonic dismissal of the theater. This dispositif still sets to work some ground ideas, which have to be brought back into question. More precisely what has to be questioned is the very footing on which those ideas are based. It is a whole set of relations, resting on some key equivalences and some key oppositions: equivalence of theater and community, of seeing and passivity, of externality and separation, mediation and simulacrum; oppositions between collective and individual, image and living reality, activity and passivity, self-possession and alienation.

This set of equivalences and oppositions makes for a rather tricky dramaturgy of guilt and redemption. Theater is charged with making spectators passive in opposition to its very essence, which allegedly consists in the self-activity of the community. As a consequence it sets itself the task of reversing its own effect and compensating for its own guilt by giving back to the spectators their self-consciousness or self-activity. The theatrical stage and the theatrical performance thus become the vanishing mediation between the evil of the spectacle and the virtue of the true theater. They propose to the collective audience performances intended to teach the spectators how they can stop to be spectators and become performers of a collective activity. Either, according to the Brechtian paradigm, the theatrical mediation makes them aware of the social situation on which it rests itself and prompts them to act in consequence. Or, according to the Artaudian scheme it makes them leave the position of spectators: instead of being in front of a spectacle, they are surrounded by the performance, dragged into the circle of the action, which gives them back their collective energy. In both cases the theater is a self-suppressing mediation.

This is the point where the descriptions and propositions of intellectual emancipation can get into the picture and help us reframe it. Obviously this idea of a self-suppressing mediation is well-known to us. It is exactly the process, which is supposed to take place in the pedagogical relation. In the pedagogical process the role of the schoolmaster is posited as the act of suppressing the distance between his knowledge and the ignorance of the ignorant. His lessons and exercises are aimed at continuously reducing the gap between knowledge and ignorance. Unfortunately, in order to reduce the gap, he has to reinstate it ceaselessly. In order to replace ignorance by the adequate knowledge, he must always run one step ahead of the ignorant who is losing his ignorance. The reason for this is simple: in the pedagogical scheme, the ignorant is not only the one who does not know what he does not know. He is the one who ignores that he does not know what he does not know and ignores how to know it. The master is not only he who exactly knows what remains unknown to the ignorant. He also knows how to make it knowable, at what time and what place, according to what protocol. On the one hand, pedagogy is set up as a process of objective transmission: one part of knowledge after another part: a word after another word, a rule or a theorem after another. This part of knowledge is supposed to be exactly conveyed from the master's mind or the page of the book into the mind of the pupil. But this equal transmission is predicated on a relation of inequality. The master alone knows the right way, time and place for that "equal" transmission, because he knows something that the ignorant will never know, short of becoming a master himself, something, which is more important than the knowledge conveyed. He knows the exact distance between ignorance and knowledge. That pedagogical distance between a determined ignorance and a determined knowledge is in fact a metaphor. It is the metaphor of a radical break between the way of the ignorant and the way of the master, the metaphor of a radical break between two intelligences.

The master cannot ignore that the so-called "ignorant" who is in front of him knows in fact a lot of things, that he has learnt on his or her own, by looking and listening around him, by figuring out the meaning of what he has seen and heard, repeating what he has heard and known by chance, comparing what he discovers with what he already knew and so on. He cannot ignore that the ignorant has made by this way the apprenticeship, which is the condition of any other: the apprenticeship of his mother tongue. But for him this is only the knowledge of the ignorant: the knowledge of the little child who sees and hears at random, compares and guesses by chance and repeats by routine, without understanding the reason for the effects that he observes and reproduces. The role of the master thus is to break with that process of groping by hit-and-miss. It is to teach the pupil the knowledge of the knowledgeable, in its own way: the way of the progressive method which dismisses all groping and all chance, by explaining items in order, from the simplest to the most complex, according to what the pupil is able of understanding, with respect to its age or its social background and social destination.

The first knowledge that the master owns is the "knowledge of ignorance." It is the presupposition of a radical break between two forms of intelligence. This is also the first knowledge that he transmits to the student: the knowledge that he has to be explained to in order to understand, the knowledge that he cannot understand on his own. It is the knowledge of his incapacity. In that way, progressive instruction is the endless verification of its starting point: inequality. That endless verification of inequality is what Jacotot calls the process of stultification. The opposite of stultification is emancipation. Emancipation is the process of verification of the equality of intelligence. The equality of intelligence is not the equality of all manifestations of intelligence. It is the equality of intelligence in all its manifestations. It means that there is no gap between two forms of intelligence. The human animal learns everything as he has learnt his mother tongue, as he has learnt to venture through the forest of things and signs which surround him in order to take his place among his fellow humans: by observing, comparing one thing with another thing, one sign with one fact, one sign with another sign, and repeating the experiences he has first made by chance. If the "ignorant" who does not know how to read, knows only one thing by heart, be it a simple prayer, he can compare this knowledge with something that he still ignores: the words of the same prayer written on a paper. He can learn, sign after sign, the resemblance of what he ignores with what he knows. He can do it if, at each step, he observes what is in front of him, tells what he has seen and verifies what he has told. From this ignorant up to the scientist who builds hypotheses, it is always the same intelligence, which is at work: an intelligence, which makes figures and comparisons in order to communicate its intellectual adventures and to understand what another intelligence tries to communicate to it in turn.

This poetic work of translation is the first condition of any apprenticeship. Intellectual emancipation, as Jacotot conceived of it, means the awareness and the enactment of that equal power of translation and counter-translation. Emancipation entails an idea of distance opposed to the stultifying one. Speaking animals are distant animals who try to communicate through the forest of signs. It is that other sense of distance that the "ignorant master" – the master who ignores inequality – is teaching. Distance is not an evil that should be abolished. It is the normal condition of any communication. It is not a gap, which calls for an expert in the art of suppressing it. The distance that the "ignorant" has to cover is not the gap between his ignorance and the knowledge of the master. It is the way between what he already knows and what he still does not know but can learn by the same process. To help him to cover it, the "ignorant master" needs

not be ignorant. He only has to dissociate his knowledge from his mastery. He does not teach his knowledge to the students. He commands them to venture forth in the forest, to tell what they see, what they think of what they have seen, to check it and so on. What he ignores is the gap between two intelligences. It is the linkage between the knowledge of the knowledgeable and the ignorance of the ignorant. Any distance is a casual one. Each intellectual act weaves a casual thread between an ignorance and a knowledge. No kind of social hierarchy can be predicated on that sense of distance.

What is the relevance of this story with respect to the question of the spectator? We are no more in the times when the dramaturges wanted to explain to their audience the truth about social relations and the good way to do away with domination. But it is not enough to loose one's own illusions. On the contrary it often happens that the loss of their illusions lead the dramaturges or the performers to increase the pressure on the spectator: maybe he will know what has to be done, if the performance changes him, if it sets him apart from his passive attitude and makes him an active participant in the common world. This is the first point that the reformers of the theater share with the stultifying pedagogues: the idea of the gap between two positions. Even when the dramaturge or the performer does not know what he wants the spectator to do, he knows at least that he has to do something: switching from passivity to activity.

But why not turn things around? Why not think, in this case too, that it is precisely the attempt at suppressing the distance, which constitutes the distance itself? Why identify the fact of being seated motionless with inactivity, if not by the presupposition of a radical gap between activity and inactivity? Why identify "looking" with "passivity" if not by the presupposition that looking means looking at the image or the appearance, that it means being separated from the reality, which always is behind the image? Why identify hearing with being

passive, if not by the presupposition that acting is the opposite of speaking, etc., etc.? All those oppositions – looking/knowing, looking/acting, appearance/reality, activity/passivity are much more than logical oppositions. They are what I can call a partition of the sensible, a distribution of the places and of the capacities or the incapacities attached to those places. Put in other terms, they are allegories of inequality. This is why you can change the values given to each position without changing the meaning of the oppositions themselves. For instance, you can exchange the positions of the superior and the inferior. The spectator is usually disparaged because he does nothing, while the performers on the stage – or the workers outside – do something with their body. But it is easy to turn matters around by stating that they who act, they who work with their body are obviously inferior to those who are able to look: those who can contemplate ideas, foresee the future or take a global view of our world. The positions can be switched but the structure remains the same. What counts in fact is only the statement of the opposition between two categories: there is one population that cannot do what the other population does. There is capacity on one side and incapacity on the other.

Emancipation starts from the opposite principle, the principle of equality. It begins when we dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection. It starts when we realize that looking also is an action, which confirms or modifies that distribution, and that "interpreting the world" is already a means of transforming it, of reconfiguring it. The spectator is active, as the student or the scientist: he observes, he selects, compares, interprets. He ties up what he observes with many other things that he has observed on other stages, in other kind of spaces. He makes his poem with the poem that is performed in front of him. She participates in the performance if

she is able to tell her own story about the story, which is in front of her. This also means if she is able to undo the performance, for instance to deny the corporeal energy that it is supposed to convey here in the present and transform it into a mere image, if she can link it with something that she has read in a book or dreamt about a story, that she has lived or fancied. They are distant viewers and interpreters of what is performed in front of them. They pay attention to the performance to the extent that they are distant.

This is the second key point: the spectators see, feel, and understand something to the extent that they make their poem as the poet has done, as the actors, dancers, or performers have done. The dramaturge would like them to see this thing, feel that feeling, understand this lesson of what they see, and get into that action in consequence of what they have seen, felt and understood. He sets in the same presupposition as the stultifying master: the presupposition of an equal, undistorted transmission. The master presupposes that what the student learns is the same thing as what he teaches to him. It is what is involved in the idea of transmission: there is something – a knowledge, a capacity, an energy – which is on one side, in one mind or one body – and that must be transferred onto the other side, into the other's mind or body. The presupposition is that the process of learning is not only the effect of its cause – teaching – but that it is the transmission of the cause: what the student learns is the knowledge of the master. That identity of the cause and the effect is the principle of stultification. On the contrary, the principle of emancipation is the dissociation of the cause and the effect. The paradox of the ignorant master lies there. The student of the ignorant master learns what his master does not know, since his master commands it to look for and to tell everything that he finds out on the way and verifies that he is actually looking for it. The student learns something as an effect of his master's mastery. But he does not learn his master's knowledge.

The dramaturge or the performer does not want to "teach" something, indeed. There is some distrust today regarding the idea of using the stage as a way of teaching. They only want to bring about a form of awareness or a force of feeling or action. But they still make the supposition that what will be felt or understood will be what they have put in their own dramaturgy or performance. They presuppose the equality – meaning the homogeneity – of the cause and the effect. As we know, this equality rests on an inequality. It rests on the presupposition that there is a good knowledge and good practice of the "distance" and of the means of suppressing it. Now the distance takes on two forms. There is the distance between the performers and the spectators. But there is also the distance inherent in the performance itself, as it stands as a "spectacle" between the idea of the artist and the feeling and interpretation of the spectator. This spectacle is a third thing, to which both parts can refer but which prevents any kind of "equal" or "undistorted" transmission. It is a mediation between them. That mediation of a third term is crucial in the process of intellectual emancipation. To prevent stultification there must be something between the master and the student. The same thing, which links them, must separate them. Jacotot posited the book as that in-between thing. The book is that material thing, foreign to both the master and the student, where they can verify what the student has seen, what he has told about it, what he thinks of what he has told.

This means that the paradigm of intellectual emancipation is clearly opposed to another idea of emancipation on which the reform of theater has often been predicated: the idea of emancipation as the re-appropriation of a self, which had been lost in a process of separation. The Debordian critique of the spectacle still rests on the Feuerbachian thinking of representation as an alienation of the self: the human being tears its human essence away from itself by framing

a celestial world to which the real human world is submitted. In the same way the essence of human activity is distanced, alienated from men in the exteriority of the spectacle. The mediation of the “third term” thus appears as the instance of separation, dispossession and treachery. An idea of the theater predicated on that idea of the spectacle conceives the externality of the stage as a kind of transitory state, which has to be superseded. The suppression of that exteriority thus becomes the telos of the performance. That program demands that the spectators be on the stage and the performers in the auditorium. It demands that the very difference between the two spaces be abolished, that the performance take place anywhere else than in a theater. For sure many improvements of the theatrical performance resulted from that breaking of the traditional distribution of the places. But the “redistribution” of the places is one thing, the demand that the theater achieve, as its essence, the gathering of an unseparate community, is another thing. The first one means the invention of new forms of intellectual adventure, the second means a new form of platonic assignment of the bodies to their good place, their “communal” place.

This presupposition against mediation is connected with a third one: the presupposition that the essence of the theater is the essence of the community. The spectator is supposed to be redeemed when he is no more an individual, when he is restored to the status of a member of a community, when he is carried in the flood of the collective energy or led to the position of the citizen who acts as a member of the collective. The less the dramaturge knows what the spectators must do as a collective, the more he knows that they must become a collective, turn their addition into the community that they virtually are. It is high time, I think, to bring back into question the idea of the theater as a specifically communitarian place. It is supposed to be such a place because, on the stage, real living bodies give the performance for people who are physically present together in the same place. In that way it is supposed to provide some unique sense of community, radically different from the situation of the individuals watching on the TV or the spectators of a movie who are in front of mere projected images. Strange as it may seem, the generalization of the use of the images and of all kinds of media in theatrical performances didn’t change the presupposition. Images may take the place of living bodies. But, as long as the spectators are gathered here, the living and communitarian essence of the theater appears to be saved so that it seems possible to escape the question: what does specifically happen between the spectators of a theater, which would not happen elsewhere? Is there something more interactive, more common to them than to the individuals who look at the same time the same show on their TV?

I think that this “something” is just the presupposition that the theater is communitarian by itself. That presupposition of what “theater” means always runs ahead of the performance and predates its actual effects. But in a theater, or in front of a performance, just as in a museum, a school, or a street, there are only individuals, weaving their own way in the forest of words, acts, and things that stand in front of them or around them. The collective power, which is common to the spectators, is not the status of members of a collective body. Nor is it a peculiar kind of interactivity. It is the power of translating in their own way what they are looking at. It is the power to connect it with the intellectual adventure, which makes any of them similar to any other in so far as his or her way does not look like any other. The common power is the power of the equality of intelligence. This power binds individuals together to the very extent that it keeps them apart from each other, able to weave with the same power their own way. What has to be put to test by our performances – whether it be teaching or performing, speaking, writing, doing art, etc. , is not the capacity of

aggregation of a collective. It is the capacity of the anonyms, the capacity, which makes anybody equal to everybody. This capacity works through unpredictable and irreducible distances. It works through an unpredictable and irreducible play of associations and dissociations.

Associating and dissociating instead of being the privileged medium, which conveys the knowledge or the energy that makes people active: this could be the principle of an “emancipation of the spectator” which means the emancipation of any of us as a spectator. Spectatorship is not the passivity has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt. There is no privileged medium as there is no privileged starting point. There are everywhere starting points and knot points from which we learn something new, if we dismiss firstly the presupposition of the distance, secondly the distribution of the roles, thirdly the borders between the territories. We have not to turn spectators into actors. We have to acknowledge that any spectator already is an actor of his own story and that the actor also is the spectator of the same kind of story. We have not to turn the ignorant into learned persons, or, according to a mere scheme of overturn, make the student or the ignorant the master of his masters.

Let me make a little detour through my own political and academic experience. I belong to a generation, which was poised between two competing statements: according to the first, those who had the intelligence of the social system had to teach it to those who suffered from it and would act in order to overthrow that system; according to the second, the supposed learned persons in fact were ignorant: as they knew nothing of what exploitation and rebellion were, they had to become the students of the so-called ignorant workers. Therefore I tried firstly to re-elaborate Marxist theory in order to give its theoretical weapons to a new revolutionary movement, then to learn from those who worked in the fabrics what exploitation and rebellion meant. For me, as for many other people in my generation, none of those attempts proved really successful. That’s why I decided to look in the history of the worker’s movement for the reason of all the mismatches between the workers and the intellectuals who had come and visited them, in order either to instruct them or to be instructed by them. I was lucky enough to find out that it was not a matter of relationship between knowledge and ignorance, no more than between knowing and acting or individuality and community. One day in May, during the 1970s, as I was looking at a worker’s letters from the 1830s in order to find what the condition and the consciousness of workers was at the time, I found out something quite different: the adventures of two visitors, on another day in another time of May, one hundred and forty years before. One of the two correspondents had just been introduced into the utopian community of the Saint-Simoniens and he told his friend the schedule of his days in utopia: works, exercises, games, choirs, and stories. His friend in turn told him the story of a country party that he had just done with two other workers in order to enjoy his last Sunday leisure. But it was not the usual Sunday leisure of the worker restoring his physical and mental forces for the following week of work. It was in fact a breakthrough into another kind leisure: the leisure of the aesthetes who enjoy the forms, lights, and shades of Nature, of the philosophers who spend their time exchanging metaphysical hypotheses in a country inn and of the apostles who set out to communicate their faith to the chance companions they meet in any inn.

Those workers who should have provided me information about the conditions of labor and the forms of class-consciousness in the 1830s provided in fact something quite different: a sense of likeness or equality: they too were spectators

and visitors amidst their own class. Their activity as propagandists could not be torn apart from their “passivity” as mere strollers and contemplators. The chronic of their leisure meant a reframing of the very relationship between doing, seeing and saying. As they became “spectators,” they overthrew the distribution of the sensible which had it that those who work have no time left to stroll and look at random, that the members of a collective body have no time to be “individuals.” This is what emancipation means: the blurring of the opposition between they who look and they who act, they who are individuals and they who are members of a collective body. What those “days” brought them was not the knowledge and energy for a future action. It was the reconfiguration hic et nunc of the distribution of Time and Space. Workers’ emancipation was not about acquiring the knowledge of their condition. It was about configuring a time and a space that invalidated the old distribution of the sensible, dooming the workers to do nothing of their night but restoring their forces to work the next day.

Understanding the sense of that break in the heart of Time also meant setting to work another kind of knowledge, predicated not on the presupposition of the gap but on the presupposition of likeness. They too were intellectuals, as anybody is. They were visitors and spectators, just as the researcher who, one hundred and forty years after was reading their letters in a library, just as the visitors in Marxist theory or at the gates of the fabrics. There was no gap to bridge between intellectuals and workers, actors and spectators, no gap between two populations, two situations or two ages. On the contrary, there was a likeness that had to be acknowledged and put at play in the very production of knowledge. Putting it at play meant two things. Firstly, it meant refusing the borders between the disciplines. Telling the (hi)story of those days and those nights forced me to blur the boundary between the field of “empirical” history

and the field of “pure” Philosophy. The story that those workers told was about Time, about the loss and reappropriation of Time. In order to show what it meant, I had to put it in direct relation with the theoretical discourse of the philosopher, namely Plato, who had told, very long ago, in his Republic, the same story by explaining that in a well-ordered community everybody had to do only one thing, his own business, and that workers anyway had no time to stand in another place than their workplace and do anything but the job fitting the (in)capacity that Nature had given them. Philosophy then could no more appear as the sphere of pure thought separated from the sphere of empirical facts. Nor was it the theoretical interpretation of those facts. There were neither facts nor interpretations. There were two ways of telling stories.

Blurring the border between academic disciplines also meant blurring the hierarchy between the levels of discourse, between the narration of a story and the philosophical or scientific explanation of the reason of the story or the truth lying behind or beneath the story. There was no meta-discourse telling the truth about a lower level of discourse. What had to be done was a work of translation, showing how empirical stories and philosophical discourses translate each other. Producing a new knowledge meant inventing the idiomatic form that would make the translation possible. I had to use that idiom to tell my own intellectual adventure, at the risk that the idiom remain “unreadable” for all those who wanted to know the cause of the story, its true meaning or the lesson for action that could be drawn out of it. I had to produce a discourse that would be readable only for they who would make their own translation from the point of view of their own adventure.

That personal detour may lead us back to the core of our problem. Those issues of crossing the borders and blurring the distribution of the roles come up with the actuality of the theater and the actuality of contemporary art,

where all artistic competences step out of their own field and exchange their places and powers with all others. We have theater plays without words and dance with words; installations and performances instead of “plastic” works; video projections turned into cycles of frescoes; photographs turned into living pictures or history paintings; sculpture which becomes hypermediatic show, etc., etc. Now there are three ways of understanding and practicing that confusion of the genres. There is the revival of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which is supposed to be the apotheosis of art as a form of life but actually proves to be the apotheosis of some strong artistic egos or the apotheosis of a kind of hyperactivist consumerism, if not both at the same time. There is the idea of a “hybridisation” of the means of art, which would fit in with a new age of mass individualism viewed of as an age of relentless exchange between roles and identities, between reality and virtuality, life and mechanical prostheses, etc. In my view, this second interpretation ultimately leads to the same as the first one. It leads to another kind of hyperactivist consumerism, another kind of stultification, using the crossing of the borders or the confusion of the roles only as a means of increasing the power of the performance without questioning its grounds.

The third way – the good way in my view – does not aim at the amplification of the effect but at the transformation of the cause/effect scheme itself, the dismissal of the set of oppositions, which grounds the process of stultification. It invalidates the opposition between activity and passivity as well as the scheme of “equal transmission” and the communitarian idea of the theater that makes it in fact an allegory of inequality. The crossing of the borders and the confusion of the roles should not lead to some sort of “hypertheater” turning spectatorship into activity by turning representation to presence. On the contrary, it should question the theatrical privilege of living presence and

bring the stage back to a level of equality with the telling of a story or the writing and the reading of a book. It should be the institution of a new stage of equality, where the different kinds of performances would be translated into one another. In all those performances in fact, it is a matter of linking what one knows with what one does not know, of being at the same time performers who display their competences and visitors or spectators who are looking for what those competences may produce in a new context, among unknown people. Artists, just as researchers, build the stage where the manifestation and the effect of their competences become dubious as they frame the story of a new adventure in a new idiom. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It calls for spectators who are active as interpreters, who try to invent their own translation in order to appropriate the story for themselves and make their own story out of it. An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators.

I am aware that all this may sound as: words, mere words. But I would not hear this as an insult. We have heard so many speakers passing off their words as more than words, as passwords enabling us to enter a new life. We have seen so many spectacles boasting on being no more spectacles but ceremonials of community. Even now, in spite of the so-called post-modern skepticism about changing life, we can see so many shows turned to religious mysteries that it might not seem outrageous to hear that words are only words. Breaking away with the phantasms of the Word made flesh and the spectator turned active, knowing that words are only words and spectacles only spectacles may help us better understand how words, stories and performances can help us change something in the world where we are living.

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(Music on) Law Poem

What are lawyers?

Instruments of the Law?

No

Rather, the individual
instances of the Law

i.e., the Law

So, you might even say, "Words".

Would the opposite, then, be

Silence, or

An undifferentiated scream of Noise

(The opposite of lawyers)

READY-MADE ARTIST AND HUMAN STRIKE:
A FEW CLARIFICATIONS

Claire Fontaine

“Thus instead of adding a film to the thousands of films already out there I prefer to expose here the reason why I chose not to do so. This comes down to replacing the futile adventures recounted by the cinema with an important subject: myself.”
Guy-Ernest Debord, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, 1956

“My immolation of myself was a somber dampened rocket. It certainly wasn't modern - yet I had recognized it in others, I had recognized it since the war in a dozen or so honorable active men.”
Francis Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, 1931

“I live solely from here to there inside a little word in whose inflexion I lose my useless head.”
Franz Kafka, *Diary*, 1911

We're not going to pull the death of the author on you again. No, not that again!
No, we're not going to say anything about it, nor speak in favor of therapeutic endeavor, nor on the possibility of cardiac massage or euthanasia.
We're going to approach the question from an entirely different perspective, which is that of processes of subjectivization and their relationship to power. The problem at the moment is not so much that of knowing whether the paradigm of the disc jockey may be extended to the situations of all contemporary creators, or whether any spectator/reader, sovereign by means of his or her zapping, short-lived attention, is comparable to any celebrated artist.
The crisis, which must be spoken of, is vaster and no doubt older; it reached its height in the twentieth century but its convulsions are shaking us even today. We are speaking of the crisis of singularities.
Foucault explained it clearly: power produces more than it represses, and its most important products are *subjectivities*. Our bodies are crossed by relations of power and our becomings are orientated by the means through which we either oppose this power or wed ourselves to its flux.
The construction site of the self has always been a collective matter, a matter of interference and resistance, of the distribution of competencies and the division of tasks. Marks of inferiority, sexuality, race, and class are inscribed on the self by a series of focused interventions on the part of the principle relays of power,

ARTISTES READY-MADE ET GRÈVE HUMAINE.
QUELQUES PRÉCISIONS.

Claire Fontaine

« Ainsi donc au lieu d'ajouter un film à des milliers de film quelconques, je préfère exposer ici pourquoi je ne ferai rien de tel. Ceci revient à remplacer les aventures futiles que conte le cinéma d'un sujet important : moi-même. »
Guy-Ernest Debord, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, 1956

« Mon immolation de moi-même était une fusée sombre et mouillée. Elle n'était certainement pas moderne - pourtant je la reconnaissais chez d'autres, je la reconnaissais depuis la guerre chez une douzaine d'hommes honorables et actifs. »
Francis Scott Fitzgerald, *La fêlure*, 1931

« Je ne vis que de-ci de-là à l'intérieur d'un petit mot dans l'inflexion duquel je perds pour un instant ma tête inutile. »
Franz Kafka, *Journal*, 1911

Nous n'allons pas une fois de plus vous faire le coup de la mort de l'auteur. Ah non, pas ça!
Non, nous n'allons pas nous prononcer du tout à ce sujet, ni en faveur de l'acharnement thérapeutique, ni sur l'opportunité du massage cardiaque ou de l'euthanasie.
Nous allons aborder la question par un tout autre biais qui est celui des processus de subjectivation et de leur rapport avec le pouvoir. Car à présent le problème n'est plus tellement celui de savoir si le paradigme du dj est extensible à la situation de tout créateur contemporain ou si le spectateur/lecteur quelconque, souverain de par son zapping et son attention à minuterie, est comparable à n'importe quel artiste que la critique célèbre.
La crise dont il nous faut parler est plus vaste et sans doute plus ancienne, elle a connu son pic au vingtième siècle mais ses convulsions continuent à nous secouer aujourd'hui même. Nous parlons de la crise de la singularité.
Foucault l'avait expliqué clairement : le pouvoir produit davantage qu'il ne réprime, et son produit le plus important ce sont *les subjectivités*. Nos corps sont traversés par les rapports de pouvoir et nos devenirs sont orientés par les moyens avec lesquels nous nous opposons à ce même pouvoir ou nous en épousons les flux.
Le chantier du moi est bien une affaire collective depuis toujours, affaire d'ingérence et de résistance, affaire de distribution et de division des tâches et des compétences. La marque de l'infériorité, la sexuation, la race et la classe sont inscrites dans le soi par une

which act in depth and leave often indelible traces. Black, French, heterosexual, attractive, Bachelors degree, above the poverty line... All of these parameters and others, which we easily introject, result from a social negotiation to which we were not even invited. The dispossession that we thus feel with regard to our presumed identity is the same as that, which we feel when facing history, now that we no longer know how to somehow take part in it. No doubt this feeling of indigence is intensified due to the fact that we know, as Agamben writes in *The Coming Community*, that the hypocritical fiction of an irreplaceable singularity of being in our culture serves solely to guarantee its universal representability.

Whether one speaks of “whatever singularities” or of men without qualities, it is by now almost unnecessary to enumerate those who have diagnosed an impoverishment of Western subjectivity in literature, sociology, philosophy, psychiatry, and so on. From Joyce to Pessoa, Basaglia to Lang, Musil to Michaux, Valéry to Duchamp, and Walser to Agamben via Benjamin, it is evident that the suture that democracy ought to have practiced on those lives mutilated by recent history has actually produced a hitherto-unknown infection. Those injured by modernity, rather than seeing their wounds scar over and regaining the ability to work, actually discovered all sorts of identity disorders, and found their nerves as well as their bodies marked by the crack-up. The more the “I” spawned and multiplied in all the cultural products, the less one might encounter the consistency of the self in real life.

In the last fifty years, democratic power, operating under cover of a promise of general equality, has produced equivalence between those previously separated by everything (class, race, culture, age, etc.). This process was not founded on shared ethics, which would have ultimately produced either full equality or conflict, but on the basis of a mall-like universalism. Of course, from the very beginning this universalism was conceived as a short-lived lie, designed to distract us from the fact that the development of Capital was going to debase civil society so profoundly and create such gulfs of inequality that no political tendency could subsequently emerge from this disaster with dignity, let alone propose a possible remedy.

The revolts of the 1970s and in particular the ones that took place in Italy in 1977 aired all sorts of dirty laundry that no political or biological family knew how to clean anymore: colonialism, whose racist heritage was doing rather well, after all, sexism, which only looked healthier after 1968, the “free” spaces of extra-parliamentary cells, which had become micro-fascist breeding grounds, the “emancipation” through work that was a postmodern version of Daddy and Grandpa’s slavery, and so on.

What triumphed was the sentiment of having been fooled and having received, in a rural and underdeveloped Europe, an outdated kit for the American way of life of the 1950s, while in the U.S. people were spitting on consumerism and the family and fighting to bring the Vietnam War home. These movements were unique, insofar as they did not fit into the sociological categories usually employed to mystify uprisings. In Italy a “diffused irrationalism” was spoken of, because young people refused to work and rejected the emerging global petit-bourgeoisie, believing in neither what society said of them nor the future they were offered.

série d’interventions ciblées des relais principaux du pouvoir qui agissent en profondeur et laissent des traces souvent indélébiles. Noire, française, femme, hétérosexuelle, jolie, bac + 3, au-dessous du seuil de pauvreté... tous ces paramètres et d’autres que nous introjectons sans difficulté sont le résultat d’une négociation sociale à laquelle la plupart du temps nous n’avons pas été conviés. La dépossession que nous ressentons donc à l’égard de notre identité présumée est la même que nous ressentons face à l’histoire, à laquelle nous semblons ne plus savoir prendre part d’aucune manière. Sans doute ce sentiment d’indigence est aiguisé par la conscience du fait que, comme l’écrit Agamben dans *La communauté qui vient*, la fiction hypocrite de l’irremplaçabilité de l’être singulier dans notre culture sert seulement à garantir sa représentabilité universelle.

Que l’on parle de singularités quelconques ou d’hommes sans qualités, ce n’est presque pas nécessaire d’égrainer la liste de ceux qui ont fait le diagnostic de l’appauvrissement de la subjectivité occidentale en littérature, sociologie, psychiatrie, philosophie et ailleurs. De Joyce à Pessoa, de Basaglia à Lang, de Musil à Michaux, de Valéry à Duchamp, de Walser à Agamben en passant par Benjamin on constate par des récits différents que la suture, que la démocratie aurait dû pratiquer sur les vies mutilées par le cours de l’histoire récente, a fini par produire une infection inconnue auparavant. Les grands blessés de la modernité au lieu de voir cicatriser leurs plaies et pouvoir se remettre au travail, se découvraient toute sorte de désordres identitaires, se retrouvaient fêlés aussi bien dans les nerfs que dans les corps, et plus le « Je » pullulait dans tous les produits consommables de l’esprit, moins on était capable de rencontrer sa consistance dans la vie.

Dans les dernières cinquante années le pouvoir démocratique, sous couvert d’une promesse d’égalité générale, n’a fait que produire l’équivalence entre des êtres auparavant séparés par tout (la classe, la race, la culture, l’âge, etc.) et cela non pas sur la base d’une quelconque éthique partagée – qui, elle, aurait bien fini par produire soit l’égalité effective soit un véritable conflit – mais simplement par un universalisme de grandes surfaces. Cet universalisme bien entendu était depuis le début conçu comme un mensonge aux jambes très courtes, censé nous distraire du fait que le développement du Capital allait balafrer la société civile si profondément et creuserait des fossés d’inégalité tels qu’aucune tendance politique ne pourrait par la suite triompher dignement de ce désastre et encore moins y apporter un remède.

Les révoltes des années soixante-dix et le 77 italien en particulier, ont déversé d’un coup sur le devant de la scène toute sorte de linge sale qu’aucune famille politique ou biologique ne savait plus laver : le colonialisme dont l’héritage raciste après tout se portait toujours bien, le machisme qui après 68 n’allait que mieux, les espaces de « liberté » des groupuscules extra-parlementaires qui étaient devenus des couveuses de micro-fascismes, l’«émancipation » par le travail qui était une version post-moderne de l’esclavage de papa et de papi, et ainsi de suite.

Triomphait le sentiment de s’être fait berner et d’avoir reçu dans une Europe paysanne et sous-développée le pack périmé de l’American way of life des années 50, alors qu’en Amérique au même moment on crachait sur la famille et la consommation et on se battait pour amener la guerre du Viêt-Nam à la maison. Ces mouvements

The fact that these years of unheard-of collective creative fertility, both in terms of life forms and intellectual production, passed into the history books as “the years of lead” [a literal translation of the Italian expression “gli anni di piombo,” referencing the material of the bullets; translator’s note] tells us a lot about what we are supposed to forget. The feminist movement triggered this transformation, which dissolved all the old groups that had channeled energies since ’68. “No more mothers, wives and daughters: let’s destroy the families!” was the cry heard in the street. People were no longer demanding rights from the state but making an *affirmation of foreignness* in regard to the state of the world, an affirmation that made itself heard: nobody wanted to be included to be discriminated on a new basis. These movements were manifestations of the human strike.

Pierre Cabanne: Your best work has been your use of your time.

Marcel Duchamp: That’s right.

Marcel Duchamp, *Conversations avec Pierre Cabanne*, 1966

- How are you doing?
- Fine! It’s been a while! Since Frieze...
- Oh my God! Are you going to Basel?
- Yeah, see you in Basel!

Conversation overheard between two unidentified people in the toilets during the opening of the Scottish pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale.

In art the symptoms manifested themselves violently early on. Dadaism, Duchamp’s urinal and other ready-mades, Pop Art, the détournement, certain presentations of conceptual art, to only cite the most obvious: all of these are luminous oscillations of the classical sovereign position of the artist.

But we are not going to trace a genealogy of transformation in the domain of the production of art objects; what interests us here is what happened in the domain of the *production of artists*. No doubt, the manner in which the most brilliant amongst them latched onto the flux of a still-Fordist Capital via the principle of “multiples” – in which they started to dematerialize production and exhibition – says something about a new relationship that even today binds us to objects, including art objects. But these initial waves of transformation in the relationship between artists and their practice seemed either harmless (for museums, galleries, and collectors, it was merely a matter of finding new criteria for commodification) or gently dissenting (this time for the critics it was simply a question of proving that there was value beyond the provocation). In fact these stirrings prepared the ground for vast changes. We won’t refer here to the mechanical *reproducibility of the artwork but to the reproducibility of artists during the epoch of “whatever singularities.”* In an era that has been qualified as post-Fordist, one in which on-demand has replaced stock, the only goods still produced on an assembly line – that of the education system – without knowing for whom, nor why, are workers, including artists.

The extension of the art market, on which there is already a sizeable literature, has in particular generated a mass of people,

présentaient la particularité de ne pas rentrer dans les grilles des catégories sociologiques habituellement employées pour mystifier les soulèvements. En Italie on parlait d’« irrationalisme diffus » car les jeunes refusaient le travail, rejetaient la petite bourgeoisie planétaire naissante, ne croyaient pas à ce que la société disait d’eux ni au futur qu’on leur proposait.

Que ces années d’une richesse créative collective inouïe, aussi bien du point de vue des formes de vie que de la production intellectuelle, soient passées à l’histoire comme les « années de plomb » nous en dit long sur ce qu’on veut nous faire oublier. Le mouvement féministe avait été le déclencheur de cette transformation qui voyait se dissoudre tous les groupuscules qui canalisait les énergies depuis 68. « Plus de mères, de femmes, de filles, détruisons les familles » entendait-on crier dans la rue, ce n’étaient plus les droits que les gens exigeaient de l’Etat ou de leurs employeurs, c’était une *affirmation d’étrangeté* par rapport à l’état du monde qui se faisait entendre : on ne voulait plus être inclus pour mieux être discriminés. Ces mouvements étaient des manifestations de grève humaine.

Mon plus grand chef d’oeuvre est mon emploi du temps.

Marcel Duchamp, *Conversations avec Pierre Cabanne*, 1966

- How are you doing ?
- Fine ! It’s been a while !
- Since Frieze...
- Oh my god ! Are you going to Basel ?
- Yeah, see you in Basel !

Conversation entre deux personnes non identifiées entendue dans les toilettes, lors du vernissage du pavillon écossais à la Biennale de Venise de 2005.

Du côté de l’art ces symptômes s’étaient manifestés violemment avec une certaine avance. Le dadaïsme, l’urinoir fontaine de Duchamp et les autres ready-made, le pop art, le détournement, certaines manifestations de l’art conceptuel, sont autant de vacillements lumineux de la position souveraine classique de l’artiste, pour ne citer que les exemples les plus grossiers.

Mais nous n’allons pas ici retracer la généalogie des transformations qui se sont manifestées du côté de la production des objets d’art, car ce qui nous intéresse est ce qui s’est passé du côté de la *production des artistes*. La manière dont les plus brillants d’entre eux se sont branchés sur le flux d’un Capital encore fordiste par le principe des « multiples », ou ils ont commencé à vouloir dématérialiser la production et l’exposition, disait sans doute quelque chose du nouveau rapport qui nous lie encore aujourd’hui aux objets, y compris les objets d’art. Mais ces premières vagues de transformation de la relation entre l’artiste et sa pratique, à l’air plutôt anodin (il ne s’agira pour musées, galeries et collectionneurs que de trouver des nouveaux critères de marchandisation et d’exposition) ou gentiment contestataire (il ne s’agira cette fois-ci pour les critiques que de prouver que par de-là la provocation il y a de la valeur), préparaient en réalité des métamorphoses plus vastes. Nous ne nous référons pas ici à la reproductibilité mécanique de l’oeuvre d’art mais

producer/consumers, who move from gallery opening to gallery opening in the capital cities, from residence to residence, from art fair to biennale. This mass buys more or less the same clothes, knows the same musical, visual, and cinematographic references, and conceives of its productions within the frameworks determined by the market with which it had been initially familiarized through art-schools and magazines. It is not a question here of moralizing about the tastes, attitudes, and aspirations of those who are called “artists.” It is rather a question of understanding the consequences of such an art market on the subjectivities of those who keep it alive.

Yet it is clear that the increasing circulation of works, images of works, and their authors has ended up generating a database of visual and theoretical information, as well as more or less uniform address books, while preserving the same discriminations and inequalities characterizing the rest of society, in line with the protocol of all democratization processes. The self-reproducing fabric called the “art world” has thus reached a stage where interrogating the term “creativity” no longer really makes sense. Nothing “new,” in the most naïve sense of the word, can see the light in this space. The “whatever singularities” who know the public’s judgment and taste and are submitted to analogous processes of in the stimulation of their creativity – in a context with, according to strict norms, will produce similar generic works. And if the novelty of the work is no longer even necessary for the market nor for the consumers, this massive generation of uniformity will nevertheless generate genuine dysfunction in the social space that surrounds contemporary art.

The reason we insist on this point is not linked to the superstition that artistic work, unlike other types of work, is supposed to emerge from a profound and direct connection with the singularity of the author. It is evident that if one were to pursue Foucault’s dream and, for a year or more, identify productions by their titles alone, eliding the names of the authors, nobody would be able to recognize the paternity of a given work. This is a debate that Fluxus and many others should have already closed because, given the relative transparency of the productive protocols adopted by the artists and the accessibility of the technical means employed, a considerable number of people find themselves, without knowing it, doing “the same thing” in workshops thousands of kilometers apart. Anything to the contrary would be astonishing.

When, wining and dining one evening, you discover that you have actually been speaking to an internationally celebrated artist whom you had taken quite sincerely for a truck-driver, you cannot stop yourself from comparing this impression with that made two weeks ago by a brilliant young man, extremely well read – prior, however, to visiting his website and seeing what he calls his artistic work.

The two distinct problems – that of the eternal discord between the qualities of human beings and the qualities of their works, and that of the crisis in the singular quality of artistic productions – have a common base: *the social space that shelters them, the ethic of those who people it, the use-value of the life lead within it. Or, in other words, the possibility of living in social relations that are compatible with artistic production.* The problem raised here, which might appear scandalously elitist, in fact says something about the policies applied to artistic creation and their relation to politics in general.

à *la reproductibilité des artistes à l’époque des singularités quelconques.* Dans une époque que l’on a qualifié de post-fordiste, où le juste-à-temps remplace les stocks, les seuls biens qui sont encore produits à la chaîne (du système éducatif) sans savoir ni pour qui, ni pourquoi, sont les travailleurs, y compris les artistes.

L’extension du marché de l’art, sur laquelle il y a déjà beaucoup de littérature, a surtout produit une masse considérable de gens qui se déplace, en producteur/consommateur, de vernissage en vernissage dans les grandes capitales, de résidence en résidence, de foire d’art en biennale. Cette même masse achète à peu près les mêmes vêtements, connaît les mêmes références musicales, visuelles, cinématographiques, pense sa production dans les cadres prévus par le marché avec lesquels les écoles d’art et les magazines l’ont familiarisée au préalable. Il ne s’agit pas ici de moraliser sur les goûts, les attitudes ou les aspirations de ce qu’on appelle les « artistes ». Il s’agit plutôt de comprendre les conséquences du marché de l’art tel qu’il est sur les subjectivités de ceux qui devraient l’approvisionner.

Or, il est clair que l’augmentation de circulation des oeuvres, de leurs images et de leurs auteurs a fini par produire une banque de données visuelles et théoriques ainsi que des carnets d’adresses plutôt uniformes, tout en gardant intact le même type de discriminations et d’inégalités qui caractérisent le reste de la société, conformément au protocole habituel de chaque processus de démocratisation. Ce tissu auto-reproductif qu’on appelle le monde de l’art a ainsi atteint un stade tel que le fait de s’interroger sur le terme « créativité » n’a plus véritablement de sens. Rien de « nouveau », dans l’acception la plus naïve du terme, ne peut voir la lumière dans cet espace, pour la simple raison que des singularités quelconques, qui connaissent les critères de jugement et les goûts du public, qui sont soumises à des processus analogues de stimulation de la créativité, dans un contexte fortement normé, produiront des oeuvres similaires. Si la nouveauté du travail n’est même plus nécessaire au marché ni aux consommateurs, cette conformisation massive produit néanmoins de véritables dysfonctionnements dans *l’espace social* engendré par l’art contemporain.

La raison pour laquelle nous insistons là-dessus n’est pas liée à la superstition que le travail artistique à la différence d’autres serait censé naître d’une connexion profonde et directe avec la singularité de son auteur. On voit bien que si l’on poursuivait le rêve de Foucault et si, pendant un an ou plus, on ne gardait que les productions et leurs titres en élidant les noms des auteurs, personne ne pourrait reconnaître la paternité d’un travail ou d’un autre. C’est un débat auquel déjà Fluxus et bien d’autres auraient dû mettre un terme. Car compte tenu de la transparence relative des protocoles productifs adoptés par les artistes et de l’accessibilité des moyens techniques employés, un nombre certainement considérable de personnes se retrouve sans le savoir en train de faire « la même chose » dans des ateliers distants de milliers de kilomètres. Le contraire serait étonnant.

Le soir d’un dîner arrosé, lorsqu’on vous apprendra que vous avez discuté pendant une heure avec untel, artiste à la renommée mondiale que vous aviez pris tout bonnement pour un camionneur, vous ne pourrez vous empêcher de comparer votre impression avec celle que, deux semaines auparavant, un brillant jeune homme, plein de bonnes

The only way of assisting creation is to protect those who create nothing and are not even interested in art. If every social relation extracted from capitalist misery is not necessarily a work of art in itself, it is definitely the only possible condition for the occurrence of the artwork. Contemporary artists have the same demands as everybody else: to live an exciting life in which encounters, the everyday, and subsistence are linked in a way that makes sense. They don’t need to be sponsored by the very same multinationals that ruin their life, they don’t need to take up residencies all over the world where nobody loves them and they have nothing to do with their days but tourism. All they need is a world liberated from the social relations and objects generated by Capital.

“*Niquez en haut débit*”

(“fuck on broadband”)

Hijacking of the Bouygues Telecom advertising slogan “*Communiquez en haut débit*”

(“Communicate on broadband”)

Metro Chatelet, November 2005

“...what cannot be commercialized is destined to disappear.”

Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, 2001

“Rirkrit Tiravanija organizes a dinner at a collector’s house and leaves him the necessary material for the preparation of a Thai soup. Philippe Parreno invites people to practice their favorite hobbies on the first of May, but on a factory assembly line. Vanessa Beecroft dresses twenty women in a similar manner and gives them a red wig; women that one can only see through the doorjamb. Maurizio Cattelan...” Everyone will have recognized in this interrupted list the beginning of Nicolas Bourriaud’s work *Esthetique relationelle*. The author’s intention is to present the “revolutionary” practices of a certain number of artists who should help us oppose behavioral standardization through the creation of “utopias of proximity.” We won’t judge here the pertinence of the examples chosen to develop his thesis, which starts out indeed from a shared acknowledgment of the homogenization of our life conditions.

The book has not aged well; both history and critics have shown to what degree this dream was naïve. Above all, experience has demonstrated to visitors/actors that these little utopias accumulate such a quantity of handicaps that they end up becoming grotesque. In addition to carrying the failures already encountered by participative theater – which at least evolved in the 1970s, in a climate of excess and social generosity unimaginable today – these practices advance with the arrogance of the immaterial and ephemeral work of art, laying claim to the obsolete and suspect principle of the “creation of situations.” If the infantile dream of the Avant-gardes was to transform the entirety of life into a work of art, they just transformed separate moments of our lives into the playgrounds of several artists.

To use another metaphor, if for example we take seriously the traditional reading of modernism, which claimed that abstraction in painting was a return to the primacy of the support, in the case of

lectures, vous avait laissé, avant que vous ne visitiez son site web et que vous voyiez ce qu’il appelle son travail artistique.

Les deux problèmes, qui sont distincts, celui de l’éternelle discordance entre les qualités des êtres humains et les qualités de leur travail, et celui de la crise du caractère singulier des productions artistiques, ont une racine commune : *l’espace social qui les abrite, l’éthique de ceux qui le peuplent, la valeur d’usage de la vie qu’on y mène.* Ou, en d’autres termes, *la possibilité de vivre dans des rapports sociaux compatibles avec la production artistique.* Le problème qu’on soulève ici, qui peut paraître scandaleusement élitiste, dit en réalité quelque chose sur les politiques appliquées à la création artistique et leur rapport avec la politique en général.

La seule manière d’aider la création est de protéger ceux et celles qui ne créent rien et ne s’intéressent même pas à l’art. Car si tout rapport social extrait de la misère capitaliste n’est pas nécessairement une œuvre d’art en soi, il est bien la seule condition possible pour que l’oeuvre d’art ait lieu. Les artistes contemporains ont les mêmes exigences que n’importe qui d’autre : vivre une vie passionnante où les rencontres, le quotidien, la subsistance soient liés de manière sensée. Ils n’ont pas besoin d’être sponsorisés par les mêmes multinationales qui leur ruinent la vie, ils n’ont pas besoin de partir en résidence aux quatre coins de la planète où personne ne les aime et où ils n’ont que faire de leurs journées, si ce n’est du tourisme. Ils ont juste besoin d’un monde libéré des rapports sociaux et des objets engendrés par le Capital.

niquez en haut débit

Détournement du slogan de la publicité pour Bouygues Télécom « Communiquez en haut débit », métro Châtelet, novembre 2005.

...ce qui ne peut se commercialiser a pour destin de disparaître.

Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, 2001

« Rirkrit Tiravanija organise un dîner chez un collectionneur, et lui laisse le matériel nécessaire à la préparation d’une soupe thaï. Philippe Parreno invite des gens à pratiquer leurs hobbies favoris le jour du premier mai, sur une chaîne de montage d’usine. Vanessa Beecroft habille pareillement, et coiffe d’une perruque rousse, une vingtaine de femmes que le visiteur ne perçoit que de l’embrasure de la porte. Maurizio Cattelan... » chacun aura reconnu dans cette liste tronquée le début de l’ouvrage de Nicolas Bourriaud qui a pour titre *Esthétique relationnelle*. Le propos de l’auteur est celui de présenter les pratiques « révolutionnaires » d’un certain nombre d’artistes qui devraient nous aider à nous opposer à l’uniformisation des comportements par la création d’« utopies de proximité ». On ne jugera pas ici de la pertinence des exemples choisis pour étayer cette thèse, qui part du constat partageable de l’homogénéisation de nos conditions de vie.

Le livre a mal vieilli, l’histoire et les critiques ont montré combien ce rêve était ingénu et surtout l’expérience a montré aux visiteurs/acteurs que ces petites utopies accumulaient une quantité telle de handicaps qu’elles finissaient par en être grotesques. En plus de tous les échecs déjà enregistrés par le théâtre participatif – qui pendant les années soixante-dix évoluait au moins dans un climat

these artists it is as though we were being asked to fabricate frames and canvases ourselves with an IKEA-style instruction manual.

Relational aesthetics exposes the most basic conditions of production of creativity: sociality, conviviality around a meal or a drink. But given that the authors’ singularities are impoverished, these conditions are no longer presented in the auratic distance of the autobiographies of the great. These are mere objects, furniture, totally prosaic, *which must be used*. If you still don’t believe this, recall, among other things, of one of Tiravanija’s works in which he exhibited the car that drove him from the airport to the place of the exhibition. A car touched, “miracled” by contact with the artist, but alas any old car, a ready-made justified by the simple history of its use-value, which is the exact opposite of the concept of the ready-made! (As if the bottle-rack or the Brillo boxes were works of art because they had been used by artists!)

The works of relational aesthetics, which have in common the fact of making an inappropriate usage of the gallery or museum space, oddly end up producing an astonishing impression of *familiarity*. (This is not the place to evaluate, according to a Platonist criterion, the quality of these works as simulacra of life or of the controlled liberation of life, in a semi-closed milieu. Art has always been more experimental than representative and thus has always needed a laboratory, a separate milieu in which this experimentation could be pursued, with the goal of contaminating – or not – the outside world.) The familiarity, which seizes us, is exactly the same as that which we experience with regard to Capital and its everyday operations. Between the zones consecrated to the relational experience of art, and the museum bookshop, or the dinner after the opening, there is no substantial difference; the affects and percepts which emerge are, in sum, similar to those of shops and commercial locales.

Of course, one could ask whether the public who saw Duchamp’s urinal reacted in the same manner. After all, what object was more familiar or more trivial? But the operation of the Duchampian ready-made was not designed to be unsettling in what it allowed to be seen; it was this way due to the position in which it placed the spectator, which was the exact opposite of any encouragement towards interactivity. Showing objects from which the use-value had been once and for all subtracted, such that an exhibition value could be assigned to them, tells us that use-value is a concept which concerns life and not art (the joke of the Mona Lisa and the ironing board is only another proof of this).

Today it is the place of the artist that is struck with impropriety, no longer the object that he decontextualizes, nor the installations that he fabricates with ordinary elements. It is the gesture of wanting to produce an “original” work, which transforms authors into multiples of “whatever singularities”. But it is not only the poor “relational” artists whom we are targeting here. Under the conditions of production of artistic subjectivity that we have just described, we are all *ready-made artists* and our only hope is to understand this as quickly as possible. We are all just as absurd and displaced as a vulgar object, deprived of its use and decreed an art object: “whatever singularities,” supposed to be artistic. Under the present conditions, we are, like any other proletariat, expropriated from the use of life, because for the most part, the

d’excès et de générosité sociale maintenant inimaginables – ces pratiques s’avancent avec l’arrogance du chef-d’oeuvre immatériel et éphémère, elles se réclament du principe périmé et douteux de la « création de situations ». Si le rêve enfantin des avant-gardes était de transformer la totalité de la vie en oeuvre d’art, elles transforment juste des moments séparés de nos vies en terrain de jeu de quelques artistes.

Pour utiliser une autre métaphore, si nous prenons par exemple au sérieux la lecture traditionnelle du modernisme qui voulait que l’abstraction de la peinture soit un retour à la primauté du support, dans le cas de ces artistes, c’est comme si on nous demandait de fabriquer les châssis et les toiles nous-mêmes avec un plan de montage type IKEA.

L’esthétique relationnelle nous expose les conditions de production les plus basiques de la créativité : la socialité, la convivialité autour d’un verre ou d’un repas. Mais étant donné que les singularités des auteurs sont appauvries, ces conditions ne se présentent plus dans la distance auratique de l’autobiographie des grands. Ce ne sont que des objets, des meubles, totalement prosaïques, *dont il faut se servir*. Si vous ne nous croyez toujours pas, on vous rappelle dans la foulée un des travaux de Tiravanija qui consistait à exposer la voiture qui l’avait conduit de l’aéroport au lieu d’exposition. Voiture touchée, « miraculée » par le contact de l’artiste, mais hélas voiture quelconque, ready-made justifié par la simple histoire de sa valeur d’usage, qui est l’exact contraire du concept du ready-made ! (Comme si le porte-bouteille ou les boîtes Brillo étaient des oeuvres d’art *parce qu’ils* avaient servi aux artistes !)

Les oeuvres de l’esthétique relationnelle, qui ont toutes en commun le fait de faire un usage inapproprié de l’espace du musée ou de la galerie, finissent étrangement par produire chez nous une étonnante impression de *familiarité*. (Il n’est pas question ici d’évaluer, selon un critère platonicien, la qualité de ces travaux en tant que simulacres de la vie ou de la libération contrôlée de celle-ci, en milieu semi-fermé. L’art a toujours été expérimental plus que représentatif et donc a toujours eu besoin d’un laboratoire, d’un milieu séparé où cette expérimentation pouvait se poursuivre, dans le but ou pas d’ailleurs, de contaminer le monde extérieur.) La familiarité dont on est saisi, pour revenir à notre inquiétude, est la même que nous éprouvons vis-à-vis du Capital et de son quotidien. Il n’y a, entre ces zones consacrées à l’expérience relationnelle de l’art et la librairie du musée ou le dîner d’après le vernissage, aucune différence substantielle, les affects et les percepts qui s’en dégagent sont en tout similaires à ceux des lieux commerciaux.

Certes, on pourrait se demander si le public qui a vu apparaître pour la première fois l’urinoir duchampien n’avait pas réagi de la même manière. Après tout, quel objet était plus familier, plus trivial ? Mais l’opération du ready-made duchampien n’était pas censée être dépayssante en ce qu’elle donnait à voir, elle l’était à cause de la position dans laquelle elle mettait le spectateur, qui était l’exact contraire d’un encouragement à l’interactivité. Montrer des objets auxquels la valeur d’usage a été une fois pour toutes soutirée pour que leur soit conférée une valeur d’exposition, nous disait que la valeur d’usage est un concept qui concerne la vie et non pas l’art (la plaisanterie de la Joconde et de la table à repasser n’en est qu’une preuve de plus).

only historically significant use that we can make of it comes down to our artistic work.

But work is only one part of life, and it is far from being the most important.

Ten years of work to pay for a new car and they get two months of prison for burning it.

Pierre, 48, painter in the building trade, *Libération*, 7 November, 2005

Jacques Rancière’s concept of an aesthetic regime of the arts clarifies for us the philosophical legitimacy of exhibiting everything today and the impossibility of employing ethical arguments against this. Under the aesthetic regime “everything is equal, and equally representable” the hierarchies and prohibitions that originated in the old world of representations are ruined forever. Our daily experience and its artistic transcription are of the order of “the parataxical linking up of little perceptions”; the promiscuity of everything and anything appears clearly in the syntax of the literature in which “the absolute liberty of art identifies itself with the absolute passivity of sensual matter.” In a text entitled “If there Is any Unrepresentability” Rancière places Antelme and Flaubert side by side:

“I went to piss. – this can be read in *L’espèce humaine* – It was still dark. Others beside me also pissed, we didn’t speak. Behind the urinal there was the trench for the loos with a little wall on which other guys were sitting, trousers around their ankles. A little roof covered the urinal, the loos. Behind us noises of boots, coughs; it was others arriving. The loos were never deserted. At that hour a vapor floated above the urinals... The night in Buchenwald was calm. The camp was an immense machine asleep. From time to time the projectors shone from the watchtowers. The eye of the SS opened and closed. In the woods, which surrounded the camp patrols, did their rounds. Their dogs didn’t bark. The guards were tranquil.” “She sat down and took up her work again which was a stocking of white cotton in which she made – we read in *Madame Bovary* – she worked with her head down; she did not speak. Charles neither. The air passing above the door pushed some dust over the threshold; he watched it dally, and all he heard was the internal pulse of his head, with the distant chicken’s squawk who laid eggs in the courtyard.”

If the juxtaposition of these two extracts is orchestrated so as to interpellate the reader, and if the critical and semiotic analysis of this grouping would take up an entire book, we will take it as one effect of parataxic syntax amongst others, even if it is particularly significant. Our intention is to support a hypothesis that Rancière openly rejects in his argument. According to him one must interpret the gesture of Antelme, whom, in the midst of disaster, uses the Flaubertian syntax as an act of resistance and re-humanization of his limit-experience. The silence of the people described in these two extracts and the relation between their resigned lack of words and the hostile surrounding objects raises another question: that of a continuity between the affects of the concentration camps and

C’est la place de l’artiste qui se trouve aujourd’hui frappée d’impropriété et non plus l’objet qu’il décontextualise, ni l’installation qu’il fabrique avec des éléments ordinaires. C’est le geste de vouloir produire un travail « original » qui transforme les auteurs en « multiples de singularités quelconques ». Mais ce ne sont pas seulement ces pauvres artistes dits relationnels que nous visons ici. Dans les conditions de production de la subjectivité artistique que nous venons de décrire, nous sommes tous des *artistes ready-made* et notre seul espoir est de le comprendre aussi vite que possible. Nous sommes tous aussi absurdes et déplacés qu’un objet vulgaire, destitué de son usage et décrété oeuvre d’art. Singularités quelconques censées être artistiques. Dans les conditions présentes nous sommes, comme tout autre prolétaire, expropriés de l’usage de la vie, car dans la plupart des cas le seul usage historiquement signifiant que nous puissions en faire se résume à notre travail artistique.

Mais le travail n’est qu’une part de la vie et de loin pas la plus importante.

Il faut dix ans de boulot pour se payer une voiture neuve et ils prennent deux mois de prison pour l’avoir brûlée.

Pierre, 48 ans, peintre en bâtiment, *Libération*, 7/11/05.

Le concept de régime esthétique des arts, créé par Rancière, nous éclaire sur la légitimité philosophique de tout exposer aujourd’hui et sur l’impossibilité de faire valoir des arguments éthiques contre cela. Dans le régime esthétique « tout est à égalité, également représentable », les hiérarchies et les interdits qui nous venaient du vieux monde des représentations sont pour toujours ruinés. Notre expérience quotidienne et sa retranscription artistique sont de l’ordre de « l’enchaînement parataxique des petites perceptions » ; la promiscuité de tout et de n’importe quoi apparaît clairement dans la syntaxe de la littérature où « l’absolue liberté de l’art s’identifie à l’absolue passivité de la matière sensible ». Dans le texte intitulé *S’il y a de l’irreprésentable*, Rancière met côte à côté Antelme et Flaubert :

« Je suis allé pisser. – on peut lire dans *L’espèce humaine* – Il faisait encore nuit. D’autres à côté de moi pissaient aussi ; on ne se parlait pas. Derrière la pissotière il y avait la fosse des chiottes avec un petit mur sur lequel d’autres types étaient assis, le pantalon baissé. Un petit toit recouvrait la fosse, pas la pissotière. Derrière nous des bruits de galoches, des toux, c’en étaient d’autres qui arrivaient. Les chiottes n’étaient jamais déserts. A cette heure une vapeur flottait au-dessus des pissotières (...) La nuit de Buchenwald était calme. Le camp était une immense machine endormie. De temps à autre les projeteurs s’illuminaient aux miradors. L’oeil des SS s’ouvrait et se fermait. Dans les bois qui entouraient le camp, les patrouilles faisaient des rondes. Leurs chiens n’aboyaient pas. Les sentinelles étaient tranquilles ». « Elle se rassit et elle reprit son ouvrage qui était un bas de coton blanc où elle faisait des reprises ; – nous lisons dans *Madame Bovary* – elle travaillait le front baissé ; elle ne parlait pas. Charles non plus. L’air passant par le dessus de la porte poussait

those of daily life in times of “peace,” and even with those of the “peace” that preceded the existence of the camps. Located in the forced intimacy between human beings and all sorts of vulgar and odious objects, which constitute the daily life of the majority under advanced capitalism, this continuity has produced effects on our subjectivities far more pernicious than those Marx was able to describe. Reification, real subsumption, and alienation say nothing to us of the lack of words afflicting us when faced with our evident familiarity with commodities and their language, as well as our simultaneous incapacity to name the most simple facts of life, such as political events, for a start.

No doubt it is to this talent at making everything coexist in one day, this capacity to call anything and everything “work,” that the extermination machine owed its astonishing efficacy during World War II. It was definitely a parataxical banality of evil that transformed an ordinary employee into Eichmann: all he did, after all, was draw up lists; he was only doing his work.

But beyond the appearance of fragmentation, which characterizes the assemblage of abstract and disparate activities that constitute works in the contemporary world, the task of permanently weaving some continuity to hold life together is offered by each of us, a task that collaborates with the entrenched system, made of tiny gestures and small adjustments. Since the 1930s total mobilization has not stopped; we are still and permanently mobilized within the flux of “active life” (*la “vie active”*). Being “whatever singularities” we are like blank pages on which any history could be written (that of Eichmann, that of a great artist, that of an employee with no vocation); we live surrounded by objects that could become ready-mades, *could* remain everyday objects, or traverse these two states. However, in front of these possibilities, in a light sleep, beneath the surface of the real, a spread of advertising slogans and a host of stupid tasks saturate time and space. Until an interruption, we will remain foreigners to ourselves and friends with things.

An image is that in which Another time meets the Now in an illumination to form a constellation. In other words, the image is the dialectic frozen. For whilst the relation between the present and the past is purely temporal and continuous, the relation between Another time and the Now is dialectical: it is not something which unfolds but an image.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 1940

Parataxis is thus the very form of our existence under a regime said to be democratic. Class difference remains calm, racism stays hidden, discrimination is practiced amidst a multitude of other facts, all flattened on the same horizontal plane of an amnesiac senile present. The images, impressions, and information we receive are a succession of “stuff” that nothing differentiates or organizes. Collage and channel-surfing are no longer separate activities, they are the metaphor for our perception of life. This is why we believe that it is no longer necessary to go one way or another on the death of the author: for if the author as “convention” seems more necessary than ever in the meaningless struggles to protect copyright and in the interviews with creators that infest the periodicals, we no longer

un peu de poussière sur les dalles ; il la regardait se traîner, et il entendait seulement le battement intérieur de sa tête, avec le cri d’une poule au loin qui pondait dans les cours ».

Or, si la juxtaposition de ce deux extraits est orchestrée pour interpeller le lecteur, et si l’analyse critique et sémiologique de ce rapprochement pourrait occuper un livre entier, nous la prendrons comme un effet de la syntaxe parataxique parmi d’autres, même s’il est particulièrement chargé de sens. Car notre propos est juste de soutenir une hypothèse que Rancière récuse ouvertement dans son argumentaire. Selon lui, il faudrait interpréter le geste d’Antelme qui, au coeur du désastre, se sert de la syntaxe flaubertienne, comme un acte de résistance et de ré-humanisation de son expérience-limite. Or, le mutisme des êtres décrits dans ces deux extraits et le rapport entre leur silence résigné et les objets hostiles environnants, soulève une autre question, celle de la continuité entre les affects des camps de concentration avec ceux de la vie quotidienne en temps de «paix» et même de cette «paix» qui a précédé l’existence des camps. Cette continuité, une fois localisée dans l’intimité forcée entre les êtres humains et toute sorte d’objets vulgaires et odieux qui constitue le quotidien de la grande majorité d’entre nous dans le capitalisme avancé, a produit des effets sur nos subjectivités bien plus pernicioeux que ceux que Marx avait pu décrire. La réification, la subsumption réelle, l’aliénation ne nous disent rien du manque de mots qui nous afflige face à notre familiarité évidente avec la marchandise et son langage, face à notre incapacité de nommer les faits les plus simples de la vie, à commencer par les événements politiques.

Et c’est sans doute à cette capacité de tout faire coexister dans une journée, à la capacité d’appeler « travail » tout et n’importe quoi, que la machine d’extermination doit son épatante efficacité pendant la Seconde guerre mondiale. Il y a bien eu une banalité parataxique du mal qui a transformé un employé lambda en Eichmann : ce n’étaient après tout *que* des listes qu’il rédigeait, il ne faisait *que* son travail.

Mais par-delà l’apparence de fragmentation qui caractérise l’assemblage d’activités abstraites et disparates des emplois du temps contemporains, un travail de tissage permanent de continuité pour tenir la vie ensemble est fourni par chacun d’entre nous, un travail de collaboration avec le système en place, fait de menus gestes et de petites attentions. Depuis les années trente la mobilisation totale n’a pas cessé, nous sommes encore, en permanence, mobilisés dans le flux de la « vie active ». Singularités quelconques, nous qui sommes comme des pages vierges où toute histoire pourrait s’écrire (celle d’Eichmann, d’un grand artiste ou d’un employé sans vocation), nous vivons entourés d’objets qui *pourraient* devenir un ready-made, rester une chose vulgaire ou traverser ces deux états. Mais face à cette puissance qui sommeille, inquète sous la surface du réel, un déploiement de messages publicitaires et une foule de tâches stupides saturent le temps et l’espace. Jusqu’à interruption, nous restons étrangers à nous-mêmes, familiers des choses.

Une image est ce en quoi l’Autrefois rencontre le Maintenant dans un éclair pour former une constellation. En d’autres termes l’image

even have to ask whether it was ever anything but a convention to serve the interests of power. We have always thought via assemblages, editing, and juxtapositions, but, as Deleuze argues, the most faithful mirror of thought is the *moving image*. If one takes this assertion to be a figure of the real rather than a simple metaphor, one is obliged to inquire into the ontological function of the still image amidst total mobilization.

In a 1987 article called “The Interruption,” Raymond Bellour remarks that the story of the still image has never been written. In a way we can identify the traces of that absence in Benjamin’s work: the definition he gives of the dialectical image responds in part to our inquiry: “the immobilization of thoughts just as much as their movement is part of the process of thinking. When thought stops in a constellation saturated with tension, the dialectical image appears.” Product of both a cessation and a saturation, the dialectical image is primarily a place where the past encounters the present. But this encounter happens as in a dream, as if the present were purified of any contingency and had given itself over to the pure movement of time and history. The past encounters the present as pure *possibility*.

The reasons why Benjamin spent so much time analyzing the processes of suspension and cessation in Brechtian theater are inextricably linked to his vision of history and the function that art can assume within it. A large part of his thought appears to be a site for the construction of a knowledge both verbal and visual, which would function as a bridge between the image and life, the fixed image and the moving image. At the center of his research appears always a change in rhythm, whether due to shock, or to other types of interruption.

When, in epic theater, Brecht insists on the processes that produce a strange gaze on both the part of the public and the actors, suspension appears as the technical device employed to release that affect. In 1931 Benjamin described the procedure thus:

A family scene. Suddenly a stranger enters. The woman was just about to roll up a pillow and smother her daughter; the father in the middle of opening the window to call the police. At that very moment a stranger appears in the doorway. A ‘tableau’ was what one called such a scene in 1900. This means that the stranger finds himself confronted with the situation: bed sheets all rumpled, the window open, furniture turned upside down. Now a type of regard exists before which the most habitual scenes of bourgeois life do not appear to be so different. Strictly speaking, the more the ravages of our social order increase (the more we are affected ourselves, as well as our ability to even notice this), the more the distance of the stranger will be marked.

The prism of the stranger in Benjamin’s thought allows us to grasp logical and political links that tend to remain hidden. One becomes strange by means of a halting, for, when the movement picks up again, it is as if the parataxic evidence of the sequence of things appears unbound, as if in that interruption an interstitial space gaped open, sapping both the instituted order and our belonging to it. In a commentary on Brecht’s poems in 1939, Benjamin writes “whoever fights for the exploited class becomes an immigrant in his own country.”

est la dialectique à l’arrêt. Car tandis que la relation du présent avec le passé est purement temporelle, continue, la relation de l’Autrefois avec le Maintenant présent est dialectique : ce n’est pas quelque chose qui se déroule mais une image saccadée. Walter Benjamin, *Paris Capitale du XIX ème siècle*, 1940

La parataxe est donc la forme même de nos existences sous un régime qui se dit démocratique. La différence de classe y reste sage, le racisme se cache, la discrimination se pratique au milieu d’une multitude d’autres faits, tous écrasés sur le même plan horizontal d’un présent amnésique et radoteur. Les informations, les images, les impressions que nous recevons sont une succession de « trucs » que rien ne différencie ou organise. Le collage, le zapping ne sont plus des activités séparées, ce sont la métaphore de notre perception de la vie. C’est pour cela que nous croyons qu’il n’est plus nécessaire de se prononcer sur la mort de l’auteur ; car si l’auteur comme « convention » reste plus nécessaire que jamais, dans les luttes sans espoir pour la défense du copyright et les interviews de créateurs qui infestent les journaux, on n’a même plus à se demander s’il a jamais été autre chose qu’une convention. Depuis toujours on a pensé par assemblages, par montages, par juxtapositions, mais surtout, comme le soutient Deleuze le miroir le plus fidèle de l’activité de la pensée est *l’image en mouvement*. Et si l’on ne prend pas cette affirmation comme une simple métaphore, mais comme une figure du réel il faudrait sans doute se demander quelle serait la fonction ontologique de l’arrêt sur image au sein de la mobilisation totale.

Raymond Bellour faisait bien remarquer en 1987 dans un texte intitulé *L’interruption. L’instant* l’histoire de l’arrêt sur image n’a jamais été écrite. D’une certaine manière nous pouvons repérer des traces de cette absence dans l’oeuvre de Benjamin et imaginer que la définition qu’il donne de l’image dialectique répond en partie à nos questions : « l’immobilisation des pensées, écrit-il, fait, autant que leur mouvement, partie de la pensée. Lorsque la pensée s’immobilise dans une constellation saturée de tensions, apparaît l’image dialectique. » Produit d’un arrêt et d’une saturation à la fois, l’image dialectique est tout d’abord un lieu où le passé rencontre le présent, mais il le rencontre comme dans un rêve et aussi comme s’il était épuré de la contingence et s’offrait dans le mouvement pur du temps et de l’histoire. Il le rencontre comme *possible*.

Les raisons pour lesquelles Benjamin avait longuement analysé les processus de suspension et d’arrêt dans le théâtre brechtien sont indissociables de sa vision de l’histoire et de la fonction que l’art peut y assumer. Une large partie de sa pensée nous apparaît comme un chantier pour la construction d’un savoir à la fois verbal et visuel qui fonctionne comme pont entre l’image et la vie, l’image fixe et l’image-mouvement. Au coeur de ses recherches apparaît toujours le changement de rythme, que ce soit par le choc ou par tout autre type d’interruption.

Lorsque, dans le théâtre épique, Brecht insistait sur les processus qui produisent un regard d’étranger de la part du public aussi bien que des acteurs eux-mêmes, la *suspension* apparaît comme le dispositif technique employé pour déclencher cet affect. En 1931, Benjamin décrit le procédé ainsi :

«une scène de famille. Soudain entre un étranger. La femme était juste en train de mettre en boule un oreiller pour le projeter sur

Becoming stranger, a process that operates via a successive halting of thought images as well as an abandonment of the self, is manifested by an interruption and its following counter-movement.

This process of salvatory defamiliarization, which allows us to gain lucidity, seems to have a close relation to art or, more precisely, to art as source and device of these newfound affects, rather than as a site of their realization. This may be explained by the status of art as a space for the de-functionalization of subjectivities: singularities emerge there emancipated from any utility. As a purely aesthetic space, the world of art harbors a potential critique of the general organization of society, and of the organization of work in particular.

The process of becoming stranger as a revolutionary act appears in Benjamin's work much earlier, in a 1920 text, which has nothing to do with art, entitled "Critique of Violence." Here one can read that "today organized labor is, apart from the state, probably the only subject entitled to exercise violence." But can one term strikes "violence"? Can a simple suspension of activity, "a nonaction, which a strike really is," be categorized as a violent gesture? In all, no, Benjamin responds, since it is equivalent to a simple "severing of relations." He adds, "in the view of the State conception, or the law, the right to strike conceded to labor is certainly a right not to exercise violence but, rather, to escape from a violence indirectly exercises by the employer, strikes conforming to this may undoubtedly occur from time to time and involve only a 'withdrawal' or 'estrangement' from the employer."

What happens in this singular moment of turning away that allows us to lose our familiarity with the misery of ordinary exploitation, suddenly rendering us capable of decreeing that for one day the boss is not the boss? It is an interruption of the normal routine, a mobilization following upon a de-mobilization. This occurs thanks to a halt that transforms us into astonished spectators, nevertheless ready to intervene. Foucault wrote that the implicit demand of any revolution is "we must change ourselves." The revolutionary process thus becomes both the means of this change and the goal, because this transformation must generate for itself a context of possible persistence. It is in this sense that, Benjamin says, a genuinely radical strike would be a *means without end*, a space in which the entirety of hierarchical organization tied to political bureaucracy would fall apart when faced with the power of events. Parataxis would be ruined by the irruption of discontinuity.

But does a means exist today for the practice of such a strike, neither union-based or corporatist, but larger and more ambitious? The question is complex, but perhaps because of our impoverished singularity we are the first citizens of history for whom the metaphysical affirmation of the human being as a being without professional or social destiny has a very concrete sense. Agamben writes; "there is definitely something humans should be, but this something is not an essence, nor is it even a thing: *it is the simple fact of their own existence as possibility or power.*"

Some Italian feminists in the 1970s already envisioned a strike that would be an interruption of all the relations that identify us and subjugate us more than could any professional activity. They knew how to engage in a politics that wasn't considered as politics. During struggles over the penalization of rape, the legalization of

la fille ; le père, juste en train d'ouvrir la fenêtre pour appeler un agent de police. A cet instant, l'étranger apparaît sur le seuil. « Tableau », avait-on coutume de dire en 1900. Ce qui signifie que l'étranger se trouve alors confronté à la situation : draps de lit tous chiffonnés, fenêtre ouverte, mobilier saccagé. Or il existe un type de regard devant lequel les scènes plus habituelles de la vie bourgeoise n'offrent pas un aspect bien différent. A vrai dire, plus augmentent les ravages de l'ordre social qui est le nôtre (plus nous en sommes atteints nous-mêmes, ainsi que la capacité de s'en apercevoir encore), et plus se marquera forcément la distance de l'étranger ».

Le prisme de l'étranger dans la pensée de Benjamin nous permet de saisir des liens logiques et politiques qui ont tendance à rester clandestins. On devient étranger par un arrêt, car lorsque le mouvement reprend c'est comme si l'évidence parataxique de la suite des choses apparaissait déliée, comme si dans cette interruption se creusait un interstice qui mine en même temps l'ordre institué et notre appartenance à ce dernier. Dans un commentaire aux poèmes de Brecht de 1939, Benjamin écrit que « quiconque se bat pour la classe exploitée est dans son propre pays un émigré ». Le devenir étranger, qui s'opère par des arrêts successifs sur images de pensée et des déprises de soi, se manifeste par une interruption suivie d'un contre-mouvement.

Ce processus de dépaysement salutaire qui nous permet de gagner en lucidité semble être en relation étroite avec l'art, mais justement avec l'art en tant que source, en tant que dispositif, et non pas en tant que lieu de réalisation des affects éveillés. Et cela s'explique parce que l'art est un espace de défonctionnalisation des subjectivités. Les singularités y surgissent émancipées de toute utilité. En tant qu'espace purement esthétique, le monde de l'art recèle une critique potentielle de l'organisation de la société en général et de l'organisation du travail en particulier.

Le processus du devenir étranger comme acte révolutionnaire apparaît chez Benjamin bien avant, dans un texte de 1920, où il n'est jamais question d'art et qui a pour titre *Critique de la violence*. On peut y lire que « les travailleurs organisés sont aujourd'hui, à côté des Etats, le seul sujet de droit qui possède un droit à la violence. » Mais est-ce qu'on peut appeler la grève « violence » ? Est-ce qu'une simple suspension de l'activité, « une non-action, telle qu'est bien la grève en fin de compte » peut être assimilée à un geste violent ? Après tout non, répond Benjamin, car elle équivaut à une simple « rupture de relations ». Et il ajoute : « selon la conception de l'Etat (ou du droit) ce qui est concédé aux travailleurs dans le droit de grève est moins un droit à la violence, qu'un droit de se soustraire à celle que l'employeur exercerait indirectement contre eux, il peut y avoir ici ou là, sans doute, un cas de grève correspondant à cette perspective qui soit simplement une manière de se «détourner » de l'employeur et de lui devenir « étranger ». »

Que se passe-t-il donc dans ce moment singulier de détournement qui nous fait perdre familiarité avec les misères de l'exploitation ordinaire et nous rend soudainement capables de décréter que pour quelque jour le patron n'est pas le patron ? Ce qui arrive est une interruption du cours habituel des choses, une mobilisation qui

abortion, and the application of a quota policy, they simply asked the law to remain silent about their bodies. In 1976 the Bolognian collective for a domestic salary wrote, "If we strike, we won't leave unfinished products or untransformed raw materials; by interrupting our work we won't paralyze production, but rather the reproduction of the working class. And this would be a real strike even for those who normally go on strike without us."

This type of strike that interrupts the total mobilization to which we are all submitted and that allows us to transform ourselves, might be called a *human strike*, for it is the most general of general strikes and its goal is the transformation of the informal social relations on which domination is founded. The radical character of this type of revolt lies in its ignorance of any kind of reformist result with which it might have to satisfy itself. By its light, the rationality of the behaviors we adopt in our everyday life would appear to be entirely dictated by the acceptance of the economic relationships that regulate them. Each gesture and each constructive activity in which we invest ourselves has a counterpart within the monetary economy or the libidinal economy. The human strike decrees the bankruptcy of these two principles and installs other affective and material fluxes.

Human strike proposes no brilliant solution to the problems produced by those who govern us if it is not Bartleby's maxim: *I would prefer not to.*

Paris, November 2005

Translated by Olivier Feltham and Continuous Project

suit une démobilisation préalable, et cela se produit grâce à un arrêt qui nous transforme en spectateurs étonnés des événements, mais prêts à intervenir. Foucault écrivait que la revendication implicite de toute révolution est « il nous faut changer nous-mêmes ». Le processus révolutionnaire devient donc à la fois moyen de ce changement et but, car cette transformation doit se donner un contexte de persistance possible. C'est en ce sens que Benjamin dit qu'une grève vraiment radicale serait un *moyen sans fin*, un espace où toute l'organisation hiérarchique liée à la bureaucratie politique s'effondrerait face à la puissance des événements. La parataxe serait ruinée par l'irruption de la discontinuité.

Mais existe-t-il aujourd'hui un moyen de pratiquer une telle grève, ni corporatiste ni syndicale, plus vaste et ambitieuse ? La question est complexe, mais nous sommes peut-être les premiers citoyens de l'histoire pour qui l'affirmation métaphysique de l'être humain comme être sans destinée professionnelle ou sociale a un sens très immédiat, à cause de notre pauvreté en singularité. « Il y a bien quelque chose que l'homme doit être, écrit Agamben, mais ce quelque chose n'est pas une essence, non ce n'est même pas une chose : *c'est le simple fait de sa propre existence comme possibilité ou puissance.* »

Une grève qui soit une interruption de toutes les relations qui nous identifient et nous asservissent bien plus que toute activité professionnelle, avait déjà été rêvée par quelques féministes italiennes dans les années soixante-dix. Elles savaient de s'engager dans une politique qui ne portait pas le nom de politique. Pendant les luttes sur la pénalisation du viol, la légalisation de l'avortement et l'application de la politique des quotas, elles demandaient le silence de la loi sur leurs corps. « Si nous faisons la grève, écrivait en 76 le collectif bolognais pour le salaire domestique, nous ne laisserions pas des produits inachevés ou des matières premières non transformées ; en interrompant notre travail, nous ne paralysions pas la production, mais la reproduction de la classe ouvrière. Et cela serait une grève réelle même pour ceux qui normalement font la grève sans nous. »

Ce type de grève qui interrompt la mobilisation totale à laquelle nous sommes tous et toutes soumis et nous permet de nous changer nous-mêmes, nous l'appellerons une *grève humaine*, car elle est plus générale de la grève générale et elle a pour but la transformation des relations sociales informelles qui sont à la base de la domination. Le caractère radical de ce type de révolte est qu'elle ne connaît pas de résultat réformiste duquel elle saurait se satisfaire. À sa lumière, la rationalité des comportements que nous adoptons dans notre vie quotidienne apparaît comme entièrement dictée par l'acceptation des principes économiques qui les règlent. Chaque geste et chaque activité constructive où nous nous investissons a un pendant du côté de l'économie monétaire ou de l'économie libidinale. La grève humaine décrète la banqueroute de ces deux principes et instaure d'autres flux affectifs et matériels.

Elle n'a aucune solution brillante à proposer pour les problèmes produits par ceux qui nous gouvernent si ce n'est le mot d'ordre de Bartleby : *I would prefer not to.*

Paris, novembre 2005

TWO-WAY MIRROR CYLINDER INSIDE TWO-WAY MIRROR CUBE

VIDEO: *N* piece

Dan Graham

TEXT: "The surrounding square and the interior cyclinder are both built in two-way mirror glass. Each of the forms can be entered by a spectator.

The cubical, outer form relates to the rectilinear grid of New York City. The cylindrical form echoes both the surrounding sky's horizon line the exterior skin of the spectator's body. The reflections of the interior observer's body anamorphically enlarge as the spectator moves back from the surface of the cylinder toward the center of the space. Similiarly, the spectator with the cube, looking at the outside of the cylindrical surface will see their body's image anamorphically compressed. Both the outer pavilion and the pavilion within this pavilion

The public space created by the two-way mirrorized cylinder and cube, surrounding empty space surrounding these forms on the roof and the interior room with a serving cart and 2 video monitors and a video library for selected videos mimics the

'public' 'private' corporate building atriums or mini-museum spaces in New York City:

TEXT: (seen in white on black ground roll of character-generator text)

My two-way mirror glass pavilions are lighted more or less equally on each of their sides so that its two-way mirror facades are both transparent and mirror reflective simultaneously. The side of the glass which is more reflective (than transparent) is the side most illuminated (by the sun). On a day where the clouds partially obscure the sun, and that this condition is continually shifting, the reflectiveness as against the transparency of a side of the glass will similiarly shift.

VIDEO: Cylindrical two-way mirror building across from the Battery Park.

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TEXT: "In the last decade, two-way mirror glass has replaced the use of sheer, transparent glass for corporate, urban office buildings. The previous all-glass facades had allowed the public to see how the company and its employees function. With the two-way mirror facade, daylight sun at work hours causes the outside of the office highrise to reflect the surrounding environment which is either the sky or the reflections of other highrise two-way mirror office buildings. The employees, contrastingly, ^{now have} a transparent view of the outside. A rationale for the use of two-way mirror on the window facades was it reflected not only light but heat by day and conserved heat inside (which was left lighted) by night. This was a energy efficient.

VIDEO: DIA piece

TEXT: "A glass and two-way mirrorized structure is an analogical replica of the surrounding cityscape and also evokes the notion of the 'rustic hut' as a utopian projection of the past or future ideal city."

VIDEO: Laugier's drawing of the 'primitive hut.'

The park within the city served to rationalize the contradictions between the city and the natural environment it now exploited as well as to obscure the true historical relation to the earlier system involving an aristocratic and land-based order. The idea of a 'primitive hut', postulated by the architectural critic, Abbe Laugier, and influenced by Rousseau's of 'Natural Man'. This 'hut' derived from the presumed origin of the elemental Greek order of post-column and lintel from the trunk and branches of a tree criticizes modern urban society. Architecture must again be derived from an uncontaminated Nature. Architecture (and society) must to be reduced to man's and architecture's original self-sufficiency and its original nature.

VIDEO: Park Ave. Atrium: camera view opens out to show many planters surrounding 'rustic-hut-like serving carts in the lobby'

Video: view from the "Founder's Room" moving to a general view of the Park Ave. Atrium's 'space capsule-like' environment

J. Walker Thompson
TEXT: This is the advertising agency's headquarters "Founder's (board) Room" on the 5th floor of the Park Avenue Atrium

3.

TEXT: A building's lobby atrium might be leased for private banquets. Just as the atrium's landscaping suggest a picturesque arcadia - a suburban retreat in the core of the city, the functions of many of these atrium spaces become parallel to the suburban shopping mall with stores and restaurants. Atrium spaces also take over some of the functions of the urban park or become branches of parent art museums."

VIDEO: view of the Whitney Phillip Morris branch on 42 nd St.

VIDEO: IBM Atrium showing the the surveillance control board visible, behind the transparent glass window.

TEXT: Privately owned and maintained, the atrium sanctuary is (unlike the public street in the city or the public park) being under surveillance through the building's electronic security system and presence of uniformed guards.

Visuals: Arcades (passages) in Paris and Escalator Tubes form Centre Pompidou and Charles de Gaulle Airport

Text: The glass-roofed passages that appeared in Paris in the 1830's interiorized the street so it became an interior devoted to shopping and the

display of commodities.

The arcade, the department store and the world (trade) fair came together in the Crystal Palaces of the World Expositions of the late 19th century. These Expositions often contained a Wintergarden conservatory, in which plants from the most tropical climates were able to survive throughout the year. Remaining after the World Expositions ended, the winter garden became a holistic escape from existing urban society. The

4.

meditative, private garden of the past was transformed into the botanical display as ~~mass~~ ^{of} entertainment education.

VIDEO: First, IBM Atrium/ then, CHEMCOURT botanical garden

VIDEO: Chemcourt

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TEXT: "The ~~garden~~ ^{makes a dream world} garden in the Chemcourt atrium ~~preserves the memory of a~~ ^{of the common, suburban gardens} natural, utopian world.

Plants displayed are changed with the seasons. Instead of the 19th century wintergarden's choice of exotic, tropical plants for winter displays, the plants selected here are appropriate for the season and are ^{simply greatly botanically} enlarged and labeled examples of everyday, suburban plants. "Chemcourt's " displays are curated by the New York Botanical Garden .

"Chemcourt's displays are curated by the New York Botanical Garden. As 'educational theme-park' and as corporate atrium mini-branch of a New York Museum, Chemcourt's atrium resembles the Equitable and Philip Morris branches of the Whitney Museum of Art and the IBM Museum, attached to its greenhouse-like Atrium lobby. These museum 'public ' 'private' spaces ^{exemplify corporate} ~~are~~ the 1980's urban park and the corporate-sponsored art museum.

VIDEO: IBM Atrium / IBM Museum ^{Graham}

The Atrium has a coffee and sandwich bar. While other corporate atriums have concealed the audio and visual surveillance security system, here it is fully visible on the monitors behind the stage. Perhaps this is in keeping with IBM's 'image' as an information-service corporation.

VIDEO: interior walls of Park Ave. Atrium, showing solar cells at top and glass elevators ascending the walls / view from inside the glass elevators showing the green terraced ascending balconies, the solar cell ceiling and a progressive view of the lobby as the elevator descends.

-- attempt to smooth over contradictions

5.

utopian, pastoral retreat from the stresses of urban life and as a user friendly corporate image it re-evokes the pre-urban Garden of Eden; it combines '70's ecological and energy concerns in its greenery and use of a solar cell power source with the technocratic, corporate dream of "better living through scientific progress as exemplified in the space capsule, gravity-free and topologically hollowed-out (inside out) central space. The Park Avenue Atrium is a hollow, streamlined central space with an atrium garden, balconied interior garden on three side and glass elevators which ascend and descend the reflective stainless steel walls.

VIDEO: "view from a glass elevator as it descends and ascends

TEXT: "The balcony hedges or hanging plants in sequence suggest the hedges of the formal, baroque garden seen vertically, rather than in horizontal perspective.

'Post-modernists serving carts resembling "rustic huts" offer lunch to visitors in the garden. The tree planters can be re-positioned into different garden arrangements for other uses of the space."

VIDEO: Dan Graham's "Triangle for the "New Urban Landscape" " exhibition at the World Financial Center

TEXT: The triangular, two-way mirror structure is placed in a rectangular niche on the Hudson River side of the new New York World Financial Center by architect, Peter Delli. It gives ~~an~~ ^{exactly} kaleidoscopic and ~~the~~ ^{the} voyeuristic view to the enclosed spectator. This spectator perceives ~~the~~ ^{his} body and gazes well as those of other spectators inside the building's lobby or outside in the pedestrian court. If not used by art spectators, it could also serve as temporary shelter for a homeless person.

VIDEO: Battery Park City's park which integrates public art works by Artswager, Ned Smyth, Scott Burton and Shagh Armajani.

TEXT: "Battery Park City is a development of luxury apartment houses adjacent to the new towers of the World Financial Center, which are connected to the twin towers of of the World Trade Center. The new 'privately built and

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This 'private' 'public park continues the city's Battery Park in terms of its green benches, hexagonal, asphalt pavement blocks and the same street lighting fixture. Similarly, each of the ~~co-op~~ ^{apartments} is design to mimic in the style of a 'classic' upper-class New York apartment complex, such as Tudor City or Riverside Drive Tudor-style or Chelsea and upper East-Side brownstone buildings. A private park along the lower Hudson River and an atrium "Wintergarden" which includes dining, shopping and open, Lincoln Center-like space for music, performance or dance programs are linked to the New York World Financial Center (itself added to the twin World Trade Center skyscrapers). Its style is neo-classical in its evocation of Boulees and Ledoux and neo-'30's 'Art Deco' in the late 1980's and early '90's urban style.

VIDEO: works of Artswager and then, of Smyth

TEXT: "The park and street areas between rows of apartment buildings contain overscale street furniture and fixtures by Richard Artswager in one section, and in another sections Gaudyque 'Decorative Art' plaza which functions for public seating and lunch eating or chess and checker playing by pedestrians."

VIDEO: Public plaza in front of ~~basin~~ ^{yacht} basin with works of Scott Burton and Shish Armijani.

TEXT: "The architect, Pelli, collaborated with Scott Burton, who designed the benches, canal with waterfall, and the beacon-like monument. The railing separating the plaza from the ~~basin~~ ^{yacht} basin ~~where the Hudson River connects to the ocean~~ has been inscribed by Armijani with quotes from a 19th century poet, Walt Whitman on the left and quotes from the 20th century poet, Frank O'Hara, on the right side:

Left Side: "CITY OF THE WORLD (FOR ALL RACES ARE HERE, ALL THE LANDS OF THE EARTH MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS HERE;) CITY OF THE SEA! CITY OF WHARVES AND STORES - CITY OF TALL FACADES OF MARBLE AND IRON! PROUD AND PASSIONATE CITY - METTLE SOME, MAD, EXTRAVAGANT CITY!" Walt Whitman

Right Side: "ONENEE NEVER LEAVE THE CONFINES OF NEW YORK TO GET ALL THE GREEN-ERY ONE WISHES - CAN'T EVEN ENJOY A BLADE OF GRASS UNLESS I KNOW THERE'S A SUBWAY HANDY, OR A RECORD STORE OR SOME OTHER SIGN THAT PEOPLE DON NOT TOTALLY REGRET LIFE." Frank O'Hara

The placing of public-scale sculpture or decoration by well-known environmental or decorative artists in city plaza or parks principally owned by corporations becomes commonplace in the late '80's and early '90's. The origin of the museum as a public, private outdoor garden in the Renaissance, baroque and its use as a theater of literary allusion and political allegory is a precedent.

The first Italian Renaissance gardens, built astride Roman ruins on hillsides, were sculpture gardens, theaters, archaeological museums, al fresco botanical encyclopedias, educational academies, and amusement parks that drew on special effects to entertain the public. Their meaning was either moral or allegorical, natural or scientific, and political lessons were incorporated into their designs.

VIDEO: Viet-Nam Memorial in New York in Wall Street area

Print or photograph of Elysian Fields of Stowe

TEXT:

The English landscape garden of the early eighteenth century continued the Italian tradition of the garden as an outdoor theater of moral allegory.

The Elysian Fields section of the garden at Stowe, constructed between 1720 and 1740, was a liberal Whig allegory against the restored British monarchy. Designed by William Kent and Charles Bridgeman for Lord Cobham, Stowe translated to garden plan an essay by Joseph Addison from "The Tatler", which presented a "dream" in which the walker experienced the human condition by passing through a garden whose paths provide insight into human and political motivations.

Approaching "middle age" the dreamer walked on a straight road with laurels behind which were trophies, statues of Statesmen, heroes, philosophers, and poets. This path led to a Temple of Virtue, which hid a Temple of Honor behind it. Visible through the arch of the temple of Honor, was a crumbling structure, the Temple of Modern Virtue.

VIDEO: "DIA piece

TEXT: The superimpositions of body surfaces and gazes creates an intersubjective intimacy. The interior and exterior spectstor is made psychologically more self-conscious. The observer becomes conscious of themselves as a body, as a perceiving subject and of himself in relation to or in isolation to a group audience. This is the reverse of the usual loss of 'self' when a spectator looks at a conventional work of art. There the 'self' is mentally projected into (identified with) the subject of the art.

URGENCY

Bettina Funcke

All I wish to underline is that Kant, like all philosophers, instead of envisaging the aesthetic problem from the point of view of the artist (the creator), considered art and the beautiful purely from that of the “spectator,” and unconsciously introduced the “spectator” into the concept of the “beautiful.” It would not have been so bad if this “spectator” had at least been sufficiently familiar to the philosophers of beauty – namely, as a great *personal* fact and experience, as an abundance of vivid authentic experiences, desires, surprises, and delights in the realm of the beautiful!

—Friedrich Nietzsche,
The Genealogy of Morals

Art has exhausted its public function as a basis for shared experience, and, with this, its potential to shape public debate. While it may even be that art has, as Hegel claimed, lost its “spiritual vocation” (“spiritual” lacks the connotation of the original “geistige,” which falls somewhere *between* body and spirit), this did not lead to the death of art, but to its continuation in what he termed a “self-annulling” mode, yielding now familiar schisms between the artwork and its spectator, the appearance of genius and the look of taste, and form and content. These are symptoms that may have begun to develop with modernity itself. Nietzsche’s critique already intimates the presence of deep confusion about who the intended spectator might be, what this person might feel or think, and whether or not the consideration is even relevant.

The modern relationship between artist and public, a mutual longing and loathing, emerged around the same time as Hegel’s proposal about art’s spiritual exhaustion. After the French Revolution, artists were freed from the old power structures and patrons of church and court, for the first time entering the free market, where one must invent an audience. This *potential* spectator inspires in the artist both the wish for a greater public and an aversion to it, since this public is, in the end, beyond the artist’s reach. Of course, this deep-rooted insecurity and alienation is also based on a justified wariness about public

taste, which the artist knows is historically quite limited and will last only one or two generations. In the end, it is a small coterie of art specialists who will pass judgment on whether or not particular works will be admitted to the cultural archive of the museum, major collections, books, and catalogues, and, consequently, if works will or won’t be passed on to future generations to be remembered and discussed, and thus to remain relevant.

Those in the art world today could be considered as Nietzsche’s “philosophers of beauty,” with little personal experience of a broader audience. For the public, on the other hand, art may have come to signify the frustrating impossibility of transcendence, while simultaneously and paradoxically inviting a lingering sense that behind the masquerade lurks a spirituality or hidden truth with the power to elevate our lives toward higher values.

“One has to use the means with which one can change something...” —Joseph Beuys

The question of how to create a relationship with the public that would go beyond a shared definition of beauty was a central aspect of Joseph Beuys’ project of “social sculpture.” One of his unique achievements was to invent his public, understand it, and use it, a strategy for which he developed the remarkable role of charlatan-artist. He directly engaged the suspicion that artists might be fakers, that art is mere

pretense and illusion, responding to public ambivalence by *performing* his art as a convention and deception, and exploring all that is negative, untrustworthy, and suspect.

Brimming over with the terminology of religion, science, and socialism, Beuys' statements in various media seem rather strategic, a deliberate pose, as with his calculated appearance, his hat, vest, and stick, his iconic use of certain materials like felt and fat, his stock of catchphrases: "Everybody is an artist"; "Pour changer l'art il faut changer l'homme"; "The Office for Direct Democracy." It all amounts to an armor, and one that carried his work through the decades. At the same time, there's something slightly off with this masquerade, something cheap and not entirely successful. Shades of the charlatan, as if Beuys were playing an itinerant salesman, or making a travesty of the hero or cult figure, possibly even the Führer. But this oscillation, which cycles between an internal debate that occurs within the cultural archive and engages with a history of artists' self-presentation, and an external debate about the artist as a constructed superiority and meta-position who expresses art as imperfect illusion, is intentional and employed in a carefully dialectical manner. This was in fact how he managed to recognize and reach his unusually broad public.

More than any other artist, Beuys engaged directly with the public, through numerous lec-

tures and activities, and it may be that his complex and ambivalent relationship to the notion of audience is as important to his persona as anything else. He offers the example of an artist who over the years develops an ambiguous position somewhere between sincerity and falsity, between the sacred and the profane, and for whom such uncertainty springs from within as much as from without.

A dialogue with the public held at New York's Cooper Union provides insight into his strategies:

Audience: The many uses of the term artist, implications of art, artwork, artist, have been exploited by you in the recent years of your career. Is your speaking about art, your definition of art, not sensational?

Beuys: It is not only sensational, but it *has* to be sensational, because otherwise it would be of no interest.... A lot of artists don't open a dialogue; they just put their pieces down and then leave.... How to make politics into art, to bring up a humanitarian project.... Everybody is guilty as long as the institutional system exists, but one has to use the tools given to change.... You cannot wait for an unguilty tool without blood on it, because life is short; one has to use the tool with blood on it to clean it.

Beuys claims dialogue as politics. An artist is not a one-way producer. An artist must use all

tools available, and this includes one's own persona, a tool ignored by most. This precarious position is double-edged. On the one hand it admits that the artist is a calculated showman, which is a confirmation of the public's worst suspicions. At the same time, Beuys' moment of self-deconstruction addresses every artist's challenge: how to play the role? With his complex masquerade and doubled identity he takes a leap of faith, a leap that may or may not result in public doubt, but surely manifests an inner doubt. It is an overcoming of the self, even as it combats both the weight of tradition and the harsh reception that greets the new. It stands for a need for encouragement and approval, the confidence-trick and the lie, defeat and triumph. Ultimately it must be seen as a form of care of the self as much as it is a benefit to all art.

In 1964 Beuys called on the state to augment the height of the Berlin Wall by five centimeters, an absurdist demand, but one that employed the common sign for German national trauma in a theatrical gesture designed to appeal to those in both the East and the West. His letter to the ministry of the interior opens by declaring of the wall: "This is an image and it should be seen as an image." Ignoring the presumably normal way the wall was perceived, Beuys shifts the issue to apparently pure aesthetics: "The view of the Berlin

Wall from an angle that solely considers the proportion of the built structure... immediately defuses the wall." The irony of this is that it directs us from the physical wall to the figurative wall and the possibility of overcoming it. Beuys goes on to figure the ideal height for the wall as a function of its length: proportionality, a classic, art historical, formalist assessment, which in fact approaches a definition of beauty. The letter remains in a limbo between aesthetic play and political declaration, as is usually the case with him.

Even while challenging artistic definitions and pushing at the limits of the discourse, an artist must speak from the terrain of art in order to expand the discourse of art. Beuys taught at the respected Düsseldorf art academy, he exhibited in prominent museums, and his work found its way into major collections. The factors that made him controversial and unusual stem largely from his persona and reputation, from a drive to find processes and procedures that don't really qualify as art and that might set his oeuvre apart. At the same time, through these highly public endeavors, he was able to reach an audience far beyond the art world.

"I would like to consciously maintain this, as long as it is possible: to play again and again this role and to be everything that is said about me." —Joseph Beuys, *Männer Vogue*, February 1988

How might artists relate to their modern status as models, portrayed and celebrated in lifestyle magazines, seen at art fairs, admired at parties? In "The Papers of the Aesthete: The Diary of a Seducer," the first volume of *Either – Or*, Kierkegaard (who called the public a "horrendous nothing") meditated on how to claim or use this sort of ambivalence about one's cultural context. The book was conceived in an era when the profound, the mystical, and the obscure were being transformed into the transparent, the enlightened, and the banal; industrialization brought a life that could seem shallow and mass-produced. The existential leap, a central figure in Kierkegaard's philosophy, is possibly the only way through what he diagnosed as a new doubt or ambivalence about this life. He applied his radical skepticism to an observation of the trivial (more precisely, the trivialized), and to counter this limitless banality produced a limitless suspicion that behind this surface lay something profound. It is this aestheticizing attitude that estranges both observer and observed, inviting countless vantage points.

The existential leap, then, is a decisive act that emerges from doubt, in which the aim is to manifest this doubt, not end it. It is a strategy that is self-affirming rather than, as in Hegel, self-annulling. For Beuys, this leap is achieved through masquerade. The hat and vest offer him

reassurance as well as a negation of the self through the uniform. It is a double self-revelation, poised between charlatantry and shamanism. The performance of art as simultaneous convention and deception encourages a reading in which, as in Kierkegaard, the extraordinary may be inferred to lie behind, or in, the banal. The public might then accept both the real *and* the mystical, the planting of trees as political action *and* the rituals of alchemy, with an implicit assumption that one was always included in the other.

Though perhaps most prominent in this respect, Beuys was not the only artist to develop such a position. Alighiero Boetti also cultivated the assumption that contemporary art is dependant on a dialectic of revealing and concealing, and one that folds in somewhat mystical properties. *Shaman–Showman* is the title of a 1968 photomontage in which he inserted his own face into an image from Eliphas Lévi's *History of Magic* in which the body of primeval man emerges from the divine waters of Creation fully entwined with his own reflection, on to which he is gently blowing. Around the same time, he mailed fifty postcards to friends and acquaintances, showing two Boettis hand in hand, like twin brothers, defining and simultaneously nullifying a fictitious symmetry, an opposition that is not negated but transformed (*Gemelli*, or "twins," 1968). The

e (“and”), which Boetti in 1972 placed between his Christian name and given name (henceforth he was known as Alighiero e Boetti), indicated the multiplicity within the self, and was a symbol of the distinction and difference between his two personas as well as their reciprocity, conjunction and interdependence, marking a plus-one as well as a division: a paradox at his very heart.

Such strategies were perhaps a response to an increasingly mediatized society. The artist needs new tools in order to be heard. Beuys and Warhol are in this respect outstanding in post-War Western art. Like Warhol, whom Beuys called “brother,” Beuys operated under the assumption that the most affirmative artist enjoys the greatest success with the broadest audience because he affirms the public’s latent suspicions of art as well as their hopes for it, thus meeting all expectations, which he may then use to his own ends. A crucial difference separates them, however, and perhaps leaves Beuys as the last of a line: he made demands, while Warhol did not. In this sense, as an artist who both garners widespread influence and uses that influence to make concrete demands, was his the last urgent artistic position? Certainly one can point to other art with a sense of political urgency, for example, Act-Up, the Guerilla Girls, and other positions associated with the “identity

politics” of the 1980s and 1990s. That era, however, is different, in that it put an end to mystical naïveté, sincere or otherwise. The worldness of their political activism was no longer countered by any mystical dimension, which might bring it back into the realm of art or imagination. Urgent art had become – or had to become – pragmatic, and such strategies, in hindsight, may fail to capture the public’s imagination.

**“I prefer being attacked to being ignored.”
—Maurizio Cattelan**

Maurizio Cattelan counts as one of the more successful recent examples of the charlatan or trickster artist. He might play with mystical clichés, but he makes no demands. Over the last several years he has managed to create work that embodies a tension between lasting culture and mass marketing. His personal debt to Beuys appears in *La rivoluzione siamo Noi* (*We Are the Revolution*), 2000, in which the spacious exhibition hall of Zurich’s Migros Museum was left virtually empty and only in the last corner did the viewer encounter a puppet representing the artist, clothed in a felt suit, suspended from a hanger on a clothing rack, flaunting a mischievous smile yet ultimately lonely and helpless in the merciless and demanding space of art.

Cattelan’s most successful work to date might be the felled Pope of *La Nona Ora* (*The Ninth*

Hour), 1999, a work that directly addresses the meaning behind the image. Tellingly, the life-size replica of Pope John Paul II was modeled after a Hiroshi Sugimoto photograph of a wax-work figure of the Pope, that is, a representation of a representation of the spiritual leader. This absurd scenario, in which a meteorite had apparently hurtled through the Kunsthalle’s skylight and struck down this puppet Pope, caused such a sensation that it later led to the dismissal of a museum director who refused to remove the work after protests by parliamentary members of the Catholic national party. *La Nona Ora* wrenched Cattelan’s oeuvre to another level within the art world: the market confirmed, or instigated, his success when one of the two Pope editions was in 2001 auctioned for a record amount of \$886,000, which three years later was tripled.

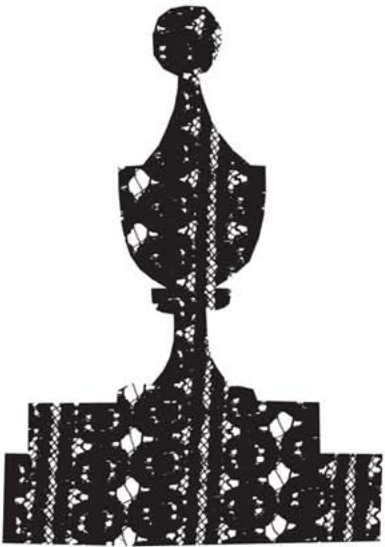
In the heated atmosphere around contemporary art, within the context of a culture that ultimately does not take artists seriously at all, it seems harder than ever for an artist to pose important questions or demands while also somehow making use of the unprecedented level of widespread yet disengaged and trivial attention that is paid to the artist persona.

How to create a sense of urgency today?

Excerpted from an unpublished manuscript
(May 2004)



- ONE SEVENTEEN A.M. YOU EXCUSE YOURSELF FROM THE TABLE AT A RESTAURANT YOU CAN NOT AFFORD •
- SAFE IN THE STALL • YOU REACH BACK AND FLIP THE LATCH • ALREADY ANXIOUS ABOUT LEAVING •
- YOUR EXPOSED BACK STICKS AGAINST THE GRAY METAL DIVIDER • YOUR HEELS REST ON NOTHING SOLID •
- YOUR NEW SHOES ARE NO CONSOLATION • THE DAY'S MANICURE REFLECTS YOUR BLACK HOLE EYES ON YOUR BLUE NECK •
- BREATH IN • YOU CAN'T FEEL ANY AIR • BREATH IN • IS YOUR HEART EVEN WORKING • YOUR PULSE ERRATIC AND FAST •
- WHEN THEY SAID "THAT JOKE ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE," WERE THEY REFERRING TO YOU •
- YOU SHOULD DRINK MORE WATER • NEVER LEARN • NEVER AGAIN • YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED HOME •
- TRY TO SIT BUT THERE IS NO BENEFIT • YOUR HANDS TOUCH THE COLD WET PORCELAIN • DROP YOUR NECK FORWARD •
- FEEL YOUR HEART SKIP • YOUR HAIR MAKES A CANOPY •



- WALL TO WALL MIRRORS IN A PRIVATE BATHROOM AT A PARTY YOU NEED TO LEAVE •
- PALM TREES BRUSH THE WINDOW • OUTSIDE THE SOUND OF INSECTS • THE CREDIT CARD DOESN'T HAVE YOUR NAME ON IT •
- SLIDE THE MIRROR RIGHT • SCAN THE PRESCRIPTIONS • SLIDE THE MIRROR LEFT • NOTE THE MOUTHWASH & BAND AIDS •
- AN ASHED CIGARETTE INSIDE A FORTY FIVE DOLLAR SCENTED CANDLE • BLACK SOAP IN THE SHAPE OF A DOG • PERFUME & POWDER BOTTLES •
- LOOK AT YOUR GRAY FACE • RUN YOUR HANDS UNDER COLD WATER • RUN YOUR TOUNGE OVER YOUR TEETH • TASTE BLOOD •
- BREATHE IN AND FLINCH • YOUR COCK NOW HALF ITS SIZE • SWALLOW BITTER PLEGHM • FIGHT THE PANIC • FIGHT THE NAUSEA •
- THIS ISN'T PART OF YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION • THIS ISN'T THE WAY IT ENDS • THIS IS THE AWFUL LAST OF IT •
- HOLD THE SINK ON YOUR WAY TO THE FLOOR • LAY YOUR HEAD IN THE PISS SOAKED RUG • TRY TO FOCUS • WAVES OF HEAT & PRESSURE •
- SOMEONE IS KNOCKING • EVERYONE IS LAUGHING • WISH THAT CANDLE WAS OUT •

The Public Sphere of Children

Alexander Kluge & Oskar Negt

One of the most effective ways of exposing the true nature of any public sphere is when it is interrupted, in a kind of alienation effect, by children. Whether one imagines that troops of them storm the foyer of a luxury hotel, occupy public squares and buildings with a view to getting on with their specific activities, whether they shape the profile of public political assemblies, whether owing to a security lapse they enter a television studio in large numbers during a live broadcast¹ —in every case the reified character of each context, its rigidity, and the fact that the public sphere is always that of adults, immediately become apparent.

Conversely, it is an index of every cultural-revolutionary moment that children's public spheres come into being.

The first year after the October Revolution saw not only the founding of Vera Schmidt's children's laboratory in the Soviet Union, but also the establishment of free associations of children, children's republics. The political orientation continued in children's movements, which were an experiment in the self-regulation and self-organization of children in their own specific forms, with posters, children's houses, assembly halls, play areas, and so on. In the initial phase, this was by no means merely a continuation of adult structures in the children's sphere, as are children's and young people's organizations, kindergartens, or preschools.²

Every authentically proletarian-revolutionary movement embraces all sectors of life, not merely that part of the population defined by capitalism as productive. The protest movements of recent years held fast to this principle. The fact that they did not straightaway focus on the working population derives not only from the difficulty of establishing a link between the intelligentsia and the working class but is also an expression of the structure of such movements. The alterna-

¹ A television show planned to include this alienation effect in its program, as children were instructed to spatter emcee Dietman Schönherr's suit with paint. Such a directed action does not constitute, however, a public sphere for children; its effect is one of shock and not of derealization. Rather, the confrontation between the public sphere of children and that of adults presupposes that children are able to pursue their own important affairs and interests, that they can regulate themselves.

² Cf. the significance of the children's movement in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Here and there —primarily in feudal and semifeudal social structures —children's movements become apparent. It is necessary to distinguish between them and those children's organizations that derive from the ideas of adults, like the Spanish Children's Circus, which recently toured the Federal Republic of Germany and from whose income a children's village (albeit one consisting only of young boys and in which coeducation is strictly avoided) was financed. A similar role, determined by adults, is played by the conspicuous participation of children in the many Carnival clubs, where the children actively participate with their performances. They speak and act here as precocious adults, dance and dress like stars; they do not act as they do when concerned with their own affairs.

tive playgroup movement, the turn toward social work, the interest in the mentally ill (patients’ collectives), the campaign of apprentices and the inmates of children’s homes, school students’ movements—all this is a protest against the reduction of human beings to their productive functions within the capitalist labor process. It corresponds to the axiom—which can, admittedly, only be brought to fruition in alliance with the most productive force in society, the working class—that there is no sense in being concerned only with those people who carry out socially useful work. That this approach is in no way unrealistic is shown by the significance of the education of young children for the training of labor power—something that is being scientifically acknowledged today and that leads to demands for societal control of preschool education. It is not the attitude of the student movement that is unrealistic but the economic restriction of interests to the production process in the narrower sense.³

If they are to realize their specific form of sensuality, to “fulfill” themselves, children require a public sphere that is more spatially conceived than do adults. They require more room in which to move, places that represent as flexibly as possible a field of action, where things are not fixed once and for all, defined, furnished with names, laden with prohibitions. They also need quite different time scales from adults in order to grow. As it expands, such a public sphere does not come up against substantial material interests. For the activity of children represents, once it begins to develop, a threat to adults’ interests in their own lives. Private property has occupied every spot capable of economic exploitation. What a children’s public sphere is capable of becoming even in purely spatial form is reduced to children’s ghettos. These faithfully mirror the bourgeois public sphere, where everything is strictly defined, the most important things are bracketed out, and everything has its place. For this reason the enclaves within which middle-class children, together with other children, can experience a liberal childhood do not add up to a children’s public sphere. The latter, like every proletarian public sphere, has the tendency to incorporate the whole of society; it cannot be organized in small groups. It cannot be the intention of children, if they attempt self-regulation, to pay for this space they have created for themselves with a massive withdrawal from reality and from the adult world, which comprises above all the relations of parents to one another and to their children. This is why a children’s public sphere cannot be created without a material public sphere that unites parents, and without children’s public spheres in all layers and classes of society that can establish links with one another. This is precisely

³ Cf. the important study by Gunnar Heinsohn, *Vorschulerziehung heute?* (Frankfurt am Main: 1971), esp. 69ff., 99ff., 169ff.

what governed the children’s republics after 1917 mentioned earlier: that in them children develop outwardly directed activities, take on tasks, and so on. This is not the same as the regimentation of children, the directing of their interests toward the imitation of adult politics, handing over bouquets, keeping children in a constant state of waiting, which is typical of the youth policy of bureaucracies.

The self-organization and self-regulation of children are contested by every type of ruling interest just as vehemently as is the self-organization of the proletariat. Anyone who regards a children’s public sphere as a grotesque idea will find it difficult to gain an accurate notion of a proletarian public sphere.

What happens when no autonomous public sphere comes into being? In that case a surrogate is organized from outside, and not indeed in the interests of children but by utilizing their interests and needs for the purpose of control. This occurs, for instance, with children’s television. Children sit intently in front of the television screen, and this takes the pressure off adults at certain hours of the day. However, the children remain passive for the duration of the program. They cannot change the program; all they can do is watch it in such a selective way that they can construct their own program. Children, then, to some extent see a completely different program from the one objectively appearing on the screen. This program, which they have put together, holds their interest; but it is not their own.

What concept of reality is, for instance, conveyed in the Pippi Longstocking films? These do not portray human dealings with things; instead, reality is an object of domination: arbitrary, rapid change of scene, arbitrary change of plot, corresponding to the “volatile interests and attention levels of children.” This results in wholly unreal accumulations of adventures, concentrations of experience, which the children cannot reproduce in their own activity. Whereas identification with the main character is possible, the pirates, Pippi’s enemies and friends, the events and people are like things that drift past and with which the imagination cannot come to grips. Because of the narrative thread, there arises a hierarchy of attention. The guiding idea behind the series is evidently that the desire for omnipotence, which is important for a specific phase of childhood, is satisfied by identification with the powerful figure of Pippi. But omnipotence is the problem of one stage of development, not of all stages. Whereas it would be the goal of a children’s public sphere that was active and based on autonomous activity to develop common ego ideals in children, the Pippi Longstocking series feeds children with reinforcements of the superego. The most important mechanism underlying Pippi’s aggressiveness and her rapid “victo-

ries”—ships, towers, traps, prisons, are generally blown up without further ado—is the identification with the aggressor, that is, the imitation of the behavior of in any case superior adults. This may serve as a psychological safety valve, but it cultivates the behavior patterns in the nuclear family. It is not possible to find a clearer illustration than this series provides of the situation described by Herbert Marcuse and Reimut Reiche as repressive desublimation.

What has been said here about Pippi Longstocking doubtless does not apply to all children’s series. The basic scheme—that the series reproduce merely the abstract reverse of total reification—applies to all of them, including “Sesame Street.” The passivity of children in front of the television screen therefore selects those qualities that anyway, as reality principle, restrict the autonomy and self-regulation of children. In this context it makes little difference that a series of children’s programs with progressive interest tries to inculcate tolerant behavior, understanding toward minorities, and so on. These attempts at indoctrination presuppose that consciousness can be acquired in the same way as professional expertise, although this is not a proven fact. On the contrary, the former entails the development of behavior patterns in children that can be acquired only by involvement with real objects, with a reality that is actively grasped. This is why it is doubtful whether precisely the moral selectiveness in children’s series is fulfilling its purpose. In these series children only rarely do any real harm (save to enemies, spies, criminals); they tell lies only in situations where the lie subsequently proves to be morally justified. They help the police and counterintelligence, they perform remarkable feats in the very fields that in reality only adults master (for instance, driving cars in Africa, combating industrial espionage in the desert in the series “Plan Z”). Children do none of these things, not even in their imagination. What they would do if allowed to get on with things is not shown. The series that manage to attract children to the television screen subject them to a specific loss of object. This has negative consequences, irrespective of whether the opportunity is taken to learn understanding toward black youths, underdogs, cooperative behavior toward parents, and so on. Such norms are learned by rote. They can be translated into action only when they combine with the components of the child’s personality out of which collective ego ideals are constituted. In contrast, a mere inclusion in the catalogue of rigid superego rules has fundamentally nonprogressive consequences, for in the latter, socially useful but stereotypical norms can, in changed circumstances, have wholly repressive effects.⁴

Just as there are specific constellations of needs for a children’s public sphere, there are also interests and needs on the part of adolescents for a public sphere that belongs to them.⁵ Puberty differs in class terms. Whereas a child from a bourgeois or lower-income home has a psychological moratorium, which, including high school and college, amounts to more than ten years, the working-class child already enters into the disciplined environment of the factory during adolescence. Peter Brückner has rightly pointed out that the working-class child thereby receives a shock that is decisive for its whole subsequent life situation. This means that the working-class child is unable to develop the adolescent phase of reflection, criticism, separation from parents, antiauthoritarian behavior, desire for organization with peers, communication, powerful desire for expression. The destruction of the necessary incubation time for situations in which the pubertal phase could regulate itself also affects, independent of social strata, a large number of isolated individuals. Divorce of a child’s parents during puberty, leaving school, even moving to another town can have the same effect. As far as the overwhelming majority of the population is concerned, the lack of an autonomous public sphere for this important stage of the organization of drives and character leads to the formation of rigid and puritanical impulses. These also affect the few groups who are in a position to express their sexuality, their imagination, and their capacity for criticism more freely.⁶

The object of an adolescent public sphere is above all the formation of ego ideals that embrace the whole of society. Society’s dismal attitude toward the “unproductive” period of puberty with its biological time scales, corresponding as it were to convalescence after illness, is shown by the less than adequate offerings of the mass media. These can in any case only be a surrogate for an autonomous public sphere for young people. But in this respect too they are limited to a few series that portray contrived cases of reintegration into society, as well as to the identification models of Western heroes, police officers. It is typical that the major problem of puberty, sexuality, plays no role whatsoever in precisely these programs and films “geared to” young people.⁷

Without an investigation of the real possibilities for specific public spheres of children and young people—as models for public spheres in each and every sector of life—the central question of the public sphere of the factor cannot be correctly posed.

FROM OSKAR NEGΤ AND ALEXANDER KLUGE, PUBLIC SPHERE AND EXPERIENCE: TOWARD AN ANALYSIS OF THE BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIAN PUBLIC SPHERE, TRANS. PETER LABANY ET AL (MINNEAPOLIS: MINNESOTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1993; GERMAN 1972).

⁴As in the case of every form of public sphere, the point is that it must be possible, in the organization of personal experience, to distinguish between merely fixating repetitions of compulsive situations (the element of control) and the capacity for unmediated experience (the element of autonomy).

⁵The impression should not arise from this selection of examples that this principle of a singular, specific public sphere could simply be transferred to all other objects. Rather, the principle object of the category of the proletarian public sphere is to distinguish elementary, organizable interests, which, first of all, pertain to a proper public sphere from those in which nonelementary, globalized contexts of repression (which cannot be excised in the concrete situation) manifest themselves. A public sphere for women, for example, would only repeat the context of repression to which women are subject. Being a woman is not an elementary stage in human or social development; rather, the repression of women, of their specific specialization, is a false construction in that development. The global character of this context of repression must first be dissolved in its single components—and this would not simply be an issue for women.

In contrast, specific situations in the life of women, situations that are subject to social repression, demand a public solution. For example: pregnancy and the most important moments of the mother-child relationship are, in fact, excluded from the public sphere of adults. These situations and phases of life insist upon their own communications network, upon exchange and public sphere.

The singular public spheres of children and youth, the public spheres of women at certain stages of their lives would be components of an encompassing proletarian public sphere, one that would arise out of such concrete single public spheres. It would later, however, be

able to absorb these into itself so that none of these public spheres would have the tendency to remain as single; as soon as they arise, they would yield from themselves the connections to all other public spheres and to the totality of society. The proletarian public sphere as the category of the social whole cannot, however, position itself in advance as a political public sphere above the single public spheres that have not yet developed. Above all, it cannot give rise to the public spheres specific to singular life interests from out of its abstract “wholeness.” For this reason the catchall tactic in which questions of youth and women—in a manner similar to those of athletes or the faithful—would simply be attached to a cadre organization is wrong. The interests specified here in a proper context of living for each specific stage of life are not something isolated; instead, they bear in themselves an element of the universal.

⁶It would have to be examined whether the direct derivation of the puritanical movements from the worldly asceticism of the early bourgeoisie is a sufficient explanation. It is equally plausible that this impulse, deriving from the upper class, found its raw material in the deterioration of the means for building personalities, especially during puberty. This is a different motivation from that which was effective for the asceticism of the bourgeois.

⁷This state of affairs is especially clear in the film industry, where the totality of offerings—consisting of porn movies, action films, mysteries, and art films—stands in an unbearable relationship to the true needs of a youth that is demanding its own public sphere. The strength of the *impulse* toward a public sphere among youth is evidenced by the fact that they represent the only growing part of the movie going public. The motivation for this remains almost exclusively the wish to somehow escape from the parental household.

I am in P. I live in an attic. On the fifth floor. It's already spring, the window is open. The traffic is awful. Yesterday, I was watching people dance and I really wanted to be home and not here.

It's true, you're right, the streets are interesting when there is traffic, and at night when they are lit up. As for the advertising, I was very disappointed. I expected something much better, it is so mediocre that there really isn't anything to say about it. The neon signs are not bad, not really because of what they promote but because there are so many of them and they're well fabricated. I couldn't find the poster you told me about though. In general, from an artistic point of view P. is very provincial. On the other hand, the bridges and the escalators are very beautiful. For some time there has been a growing demand for everything new, and now they've started selling the kind of novelty fabrics we love to imitate at home, but there are also a lot of geometric patterns. All the rooms are covered with this style of wallpaper. I'd like to send you catalogues but I haven't had time to find those stores yet, there are so many streets I don't know.

Yesterday night I walked down the streets on my own, I saw a lot of circuses and movie theaters, but I didn't dare to go anywhere, there are so many places where you must pay to go in and it's hard when you don't speak the language. I observe everything. What imbeciles and idiots people are: they have so much and they don't do anything, they "make love," as they say so delicately. The woman as object fabricated by the capitalist West will be its downfall. Everything about them is fabricated: the hands, the postures, the bodies. There are dozens of theatres where naked women spend the entire night walking about the stage silently, wearing huge expensive feathers, in front of an expensive decor, and nothing happens, they walk by and that's all, everybody's happy. Every single one is different. And what's the point? They parade naked and that's all. They don't speak, they don't dance, they don't move.

They just walk on by, one after the other...In groups of three, five, or twenty... and that's it. And even now, I couldn't possibly tell whether it is exactly "nothing," or whether they are "objects."

In truth there is very little to see in this exhibition. They've built an enormous number of pavilions, from afar they are all ugly and from up close it's even worse. Everything is cluttered.

What this signifies is that we must work, and work, and work. The new light does not only represent the liberation of the worker, it also signifies a new attitude towards men, towards women, towards objects. Even objects, in our hands, must be our equals, real comrades, and not the sad and grey slaves they are here. They'll become our friends and comrades, and we will learn to laugh, have fun and talk with them. Look how many objects there are here, coldly ornamented and coldly ornamenting the city from outside, while from inside they are doing their hard work, like slaves plotting a disaster to avenge themselves from their oppressors. To live here you either have to be against everything or to become a thief. That's what makes me love the way we see things. Now I understand the capitalist who has too little, the opium of life really is objects. They are absolutely unable to tell the difference between an object and an ersatz. We will never be able to build a new model for life if our relationships are like the ones of those Western bohemians. That's the real problem. First there is our way of life. Then we must come together, stay united, and trust each other. Now I understand that we must never imitate anything, but to create what is new following our own taste.

The club is ready now, I'm sending you the photographs. It is really so simple, clean, and light that one never wants to make it dirty. A lot of enamel, a lot of white, a lot of black and a lot of grey.

Left Behind

A SYMPOSIUM BY CONTINUOUS PROJECT

Guest Speaker: Joshua Dubler, Princeton University

Host: Pacemaker, Paris

Our evening commences at Pacemaker's ground floor apartment in the 3rd arrondissement. Gathered around the kitchen table over copious amounts of food and drink are representatives of Bernadette Corporation, Claire Fontaine, and three fourths of Continuous Project. The guest speaker is Mr. Joshua Dubler, lately of the Department of Religion at Princeton University. On the periphery, music plays loud enough to listen to but not too loud so as to distract. Periodically Luba, an exuberant terrier, races through yipping.

PRINCETON University: So, Continuous Project has asked me to say something about the phenomenon or family of phenomena known as *Left Behind*, a phenomenon that sits at the intersection of art and politics, but not one that we often frequent. Secondly, I don't know if this is an experiment in form or in content. I guess we'll find out. I do what I'm about to do with some measure of hesitation, for lots of reasons that needn't be articulated but for one that does need to be articulated, which is the problem of how to critique the other, in this case, an other that I see as paranoid, Manichean, and dangerous. How to critique the other without falling prey to those same sensibilities in one's own group?

So, in talking about this stuff, here's some of the stages that we might go through, and I don't know how it's possible to go beyond these stages: first, we're going to marvel at the freak show and then, second, if we want to endow it with a level of gravity, we'll speak in grave tones about the specter of what this phenomenon represents. It's going to be hard to get beyond this, because I think, one: they are freaks, and two: they are scary. This is where Bettina's objection earlier—I was so on board with it; I always want to entertain the notion that just because they over there are freaks and they're scary, that doesn't mean that we are not also freaks and scary. I don't have the actual *Left Behind* books because I didn't want to purchase them because I didn't want to support it. I think that's interesting that I don't have the books, and call attention to that. But, I do have these books *about* the books that you can look at so you know that I'm not making this all up. CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You really didn't buy *Left Behind* for the same reason that one might not go to that Mel Gibson movie? PRINCETON: Yeah, for a variety of reasons, but for the reason that one wouldn't go to the Mel Gibson movie also. I actually bought *Left Behind* once before, to give to an Australian friend who didn't believe me. I felt like buying one book and adding to their numbers, in this age where you vote with your pocketbook and you get counted in that way. I didn't want to be counted twice. I could have bought it used, but I'm also quite lazy.

So, anyway, *Left Behind* is a series of currently twelve books, though there are more sequels and prequels in the works that are written by two guys. One is called Tim LaHaye; he's a minister in his eighties, he's written other books, like a sex manual with his wife he wrote for a Christian audience. The other guy is named Jerry Jenkins, who has written over one hundred and fifty books, not high-brow. In addition these have been made into movies that have been released, not very successfully, but the movies star—as a punch line—Kirk Cameron. Remember him? He was a TV child-

star in the eighties. And, actually, Louis Gossett Jr. They did this strategy, actually, when they released the first movie in 2002; they sent out videocassettes or DVDs first so as to raise buzz. It was an experiment that failed; only like 2.6 million people went to see it in the theater. However, in terms of these books, of which there are twelve, there have been sixty million sold since the books started coming out in the mid-nineties. So, how many is that? It's well fewer than *Harry Potter*, which has sold over a quarter of a billion books, but is the same number of books, roughly—a little more—than John Grisham sold in the nineties, and it's more than one and a half times what Stephen King sold in the nineties. So it's a significant number of books. I assume that to most of you—maybe not Wade, because of where he's from—this stuff will be rather... No, from mass culture you'll know about it, and we'll zero back in to explain some of the details, though I'm not interested in—I can explain more of the details if you're curious. But the series takes place between the Rapture and Jesus' return, so you have the Rapture and then the seven years of Tribulation, culminating with the defeat of the Antichrist, and then Jesus comes back. So, briefly... I've culled Amazon, I can give you in two and a half minutes an entire synopsis of the entire series, and then we'll move on from there, okay? It grows sparser as we move down the series.

One: Piloting his 747, Rayford Steel is musing about his wife's Irene's irritating religiosity and contemplating the charms of his, quote, drop dead gorgeous flight attendant Hattie. First Irene was into Amway, then Tupperware, and now it's the Rapture of the saints, the scary last story in the Bible in which Christians are swept to heaven and unbelievers are left behind to endure the Antichrist's Tribulation. Steel believes he'll put the plane on autopilot and go visit Hattie, but Hattie's in a panic. Some of the passengers have disappeared. The Rapture has happened. Abruptly, driverless cars are crashing all over, and the slick sinister Romanian Nicolai Carpathia plans to use the UN to establish One World Government and religion. This is all verbatim from Amazon. Resembling a quote, young Robert Redford, and silver-tongued in nine languages, Carpathia is named People's Sexiest Man Alive. Meanwhile, Steel teams up with Buck Williams—that's Kirk Cameron's character—a buck-the-system newshound, to form the Tribulation Force, an underground of left behind penitents battling the Antichrist. Now, these terms—we'll discuss these terms later, but just go with it, for the time being.

Two: So, these left behind penitents form Tribulation Force, and they study the Bible and determine that, in fact, what's happened is that the righteous have been Raptured and that we're in the seven-year-period before Christ returns, and they set about to spread

the word of the truth. I have down “spread the word of the truth of the Word,” with the second “word” being capitalized. Nicolai Carpathia, the Romanian who calls to mind Robert Redford, not incidentally, takes over the United Nations, signs a peace treaty with Israel, and begins to lure the nations of Earth together to form one global village. Nicolai Carpathia becomes the focus as he continues to consolidate his power, unifying political states into the global community, unifying media into Global Community Network and *Global Weekly*, and unifying religions into this One World faith under himself as supreme pontiff.

Three, and again, we'll go faster: Our heroes, pilot Rayford Steel and the journalist Buck Williams, along with the Tribulation Force, continue their struggle to survive and protect their families in the midst of global war and destruction. They have come to recognize Nicolai Carpathia to be the Antichrist prophesied in the bible.

Four: It becomes apparent that the chaos and turmoil created by Nicolai are the fulfillment of John's prophesy of the Seven Seals, as recorded in the book of Revelation. And it becomes also apparent they are now facing the sixth seal, a great earthquake, which is sometimes called the Wrath of the Lamb.

Five: Having survived the Wrath of the Lamb, a global earthquake in the twenty-first month of the Tribulation, pilot Rayford Steel and reporter Buck Williams now embark on a journey of absorbing adventure and Christian triumph. This is some bait for you people—no, this is bait for me, sorry: believers are increasingly relying on the Internet for underground communication, and most of them are becoming more and more tempted by violence as a way of battling the forces of evil overtaking the world. But demon locusts are shortly dispatched as a divine plague to attack those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Meanwhile, book six: Carpathia has been busy rebuilding roads, airports, and a cellular solar satellite phone system, all designed to help him become supreme ruler of the world, and even claim himself to be God. We also find ace reporter Buck Williams anonymously preaching to the masses of believers and converts through his cyberspace magazine, *The Truth*. For his part, and this is book seven, Carpathia is assassinated, but only to in book eight rise from the dead, as the world responds in awe, statues of the potentate and god are erected in every major city, and a new religion, Carpathianism, dominates.

Nine: twenty-nine days into the Great Tribulation, and a newly resurrected Carpathia evinces an increasing fondness for gruesome killing.

Ten: a million strong, the faithful gather in Petra to await Christ's return, only to be bombed by the forces of the one-world-community.

Meanwhile, Chicago is also destroyed. Eleven is the battle of Armageddon and the martyrdom of Buck Williams. Twelve: Jesus returns at last, vanquishing his foes and ushering in a new Millennium of peace and righteousness. Of the entire Tribulation Force, only Ray Steel is still alive to experience it.

So, what to make of all this? And this is really where I'm serving as a translator to people who I presumed

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Sounds exactly like this novel by Jack London called *The Iron Heel*, a Communist novel. You could replace all the religious things with Communism and you would have the exact same kind of format in his book, called *The Iron Heel*. Chicago was also destroyed in that book.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Maybe it's based on it.

PRINCETON: H—E—E—L?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: *The Iron Heel*, by Jack London.

PRINCETON: I'll check it out.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, you should check it out.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT:

Somewhere between that and Tolkien.

PRINCETON: Hey, you guys are stealing my thunder! Context one is very recognizable; this is American Hollywood Manichean schlock in general. This is good versus evil. This is *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings*, Reagan's Evil Empire, Bush's Axis of Evil... And Jack London's *The Iron Heel*.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: And Marx and Hegel.

PRINCETON: And Marx and Hegel. Context two is this specific American, but increasingly global, religious context. So, I don't know if you know the category of Evangelicals. But we're talking about denominations like Baptist, Methodist, some Presbyterians, some Pentecostals, and some Mormons. I personally don't believe in treating religion as principally a matter of belief, but most people do, and Evangelicals do. So, according to the scholars and the Evangelicals, here's what defines an Evangelical. There are four characteristics. One is emphasis on the conversion experience, also called "being saved," or a "new birth," or "born again," after the gospel of John, third chapter, third verse. Second, the Protestant canon of the Bible is the primary, or perhaps *only*, source of religious authority. So, emerging at the end of the nineteenth century, in opposition to high-brow biblical criticism, people on the left, liberal Christians beginning to take the Bible apart and seeing how it was written, and inspired by Darwinism, these people dug their heels in and professed to be biblical literalists. So the word of the Bible is all you need.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: That's heresy from the beginning of

Christianity, also. Already there were certain sects saying, "we don't follow the word of Rome, we do what we want." That was the source of the major heretical movement. You're talking about John of Leyden, or Nicholas Allen, et cetera, all these peasant revolts, which come from the Jewish tradition. The notion of the Antichrist and the kingdom of Heaven on Earth was already a kind of political factor. It's like: we're oppressed; we'll see a day when our oppressors are dumbed down. There's a long heritage here, with that. The interesting thing for me, though, is that now you don't have the control factor. You don't have the control factor of the church. The Catholic Church? Rome? Compared to the Evangelicals, it does not exist. So, where do they exist? In what space do they exist? In what space do they create their notions of the world, or their notions of being saved, or apocalypse, et cetera? That was always the major thing, the notion of the heretical thing, even for the Protestant. If I can imagine Americans today—Evangelicals, Baptists, whatever, I lack the words for it—they have no opposition, they're free from that! So, what do they refer to? They refer to media, to a discussion of certain problems. It's a question. Hearing all these twelve chapters, which sound so *old* to me, they sound like from thousands of years ago, it's not so shocking.

PRINCETON: Some of it's old, and some of it's new. I think we can return to the question of whether the Evangelicals... *They* would certainly see themselves as being free from the institution of the church, and certainly their own understanding is a very populist understanding, but, I don't know—thinking about an individual who would come of age within that tradition, I don't know if that *individual* is any more free.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, but the Church is weak, that's the whole thing. The Church is not there to really give it to them, if they falter. They're not going to pay with their lives for this. They can do this rather freely. And then it becomes a question of greater political manipulation... Not manipulation, communication.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: And along with that, it's that they're in some sense given strength, or even sheltered, by the fact that the President of the United States is one of them.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Who can pass a few words to them, as you say, secretly, as he does...

PRINCETON: Should we return to this and get this over with?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, yeah, please.

PRINCETON: So, that was the first two characteristics. I'm giving you a thumbnail sketch. The first is, you have this radical Rapture conversion experience—this comes out of the Anabaptists—that it's not just enough to be born a Christian, you have to—something has to *happen* to you. Then, the Bible is the primary source of authority. The third characteristic is the encouragement of Evangelism, meaning to witness to other people one's walk in Christ. The fourth is a focus on Christ's redeeming work on the cross. So, unlike the liberal tradition that began to think of Christianity as one way to salvation among many, they emphasize that without the particular forgiveness for your sins that Christ gives you, there's no salvation. Depending on how the question is framed, somewhere between 25 and 45 percent of Americans report themselves as either born again or Evangelicals.

PACEMAKER: (sudden intake of breath).

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: This is also true of one of the artists Dia showed in the last few years.

PRINCETON: So, religiously, politically, ethnically, in every way, there's tremendous variety. But as a general trend, of the 50 percent that vote, they vote Republican at a ratio of three to one. So, to respond to the question of how *new* this phenomenon is... On the one hand, this idea that we're in the final days is something that has been part of Christianity since before it was Christianity. I mean, John the Baptist, and Paul: to these characters... Christianity was born in a moment where many people thought that the world was not going to be around much longer. Where this particular phenomenon is new, it's enabled by the Protestant reformation, in that, after the Protestant reformation, and then especially in America, putting religious authority in the Bible is taking it out of the hands of a centralized church institution. So, individuals on the ground have much more power to develop orthodoxies.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What's an orthodoxy in that sense? A system of belief?

PRINCETON: I mean in the sense that...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: A temporary autonomous power.

PRINCETON: The notion of the Tribulation comes from one very poetic chapter in the book of Revelations. The notion of the Rapture comes from one sentence. But for people who are reading these books, even though they recognize them to be fiction, they see

themselves as literalists who are going only by the Bible. Yet they have an entire infrastructure of meaning that is not in the Bible.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They take it on faith that all that stuff is actually in that one sentence.

PRINCETON: Yes. And the justification is—there's a circularity. In book 14 of the gospel of John, when Christ leaves, he says that he's leaving the Holy Ghost with you to comfort you. And the way this is read through Luther, into American Evangelicalism, is that the text is written to be understood, and the meaning is plain. Okay? So, you know that your reading of the text is correct by *how it feels*. So when you're brought up in a certain way of reading the text, and then you read the text *again*, the initial meanings that were inscribed into the text "feel" correct. According to them, it's the individual Christian who's been given this ability to see, by Christ, that makes the text readable and understandable. Does that make sense?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Mm-hmm.

PRINCETON: So, they would not say—did I use the word orthodoxy, or doctrine, or something?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You said orthodoxy.

PRINCETON: They would not use that word at all. So from the outside it looks less like the American Evangelical is more free to read the text how he wants to, and more that he has an ideology of being free. But the meaning is bounded just as it would be bounded if you were reading it in the Catholic context. *They do* read the thing.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Where's your wine?

PRINCETON: I'm drinking coffee now. So, this particular way... Give me two more minutes. This particular way of reading these books... The key books for these groups, in thinking about the end of time, are books like Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah, which are Old Testament books from a couple of hundred, three hundred, four hundred years before Jesus, which are difficult, opaque. To our eyes they would look like they were trading in metaphor.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm sorry, this is really naive and stupid, but the Old Testament has parts that came before the birth of Jesus Christ?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: All of it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: *All* of it's before! (laughter)

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Really?

Sorry. Note to self: "shut up."

PRINCETON: Even calling it "Old Testament" is subscribing to a Christian supersessionism because—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

Mary's *cunt* is Old Testament.

PRINCETON: The key book for these people is the book of Revelation, which—the author,

according to the text, is John of Patmos; for believers, that is the same John as John who wrote the gospel of John. There are four gospels that tell the story—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: For scholars, it's not the same John.

PRINCETON: For scholars—well, I don't even know if they think there *was* a John. But for scholars, the book was written in around the year 95.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When was the gospel of John?

PRINCETON: I think it was around the same time. John is the last gospel. The others come from around the year 60 or so, and that one, I think, is around the same time. Anyway, over time, the book of Revelation has been read in a number of different ways. Some have read it as prophecy describing stuff that actually happened in the first century. Some read it as prophecy that is describing events from the first century until the second coming of Christ. And some—and that's this group, the Left Behind people—see it as describing some future time, shortly before the Second Coming. Okay? So it's *that* context that allows someone like Pat Robertson to say that the Antichrist is probably alive today and he's probably a Jewish male. The folks who are reading *Left Behind*... there's a whole alphabet soup of different possibilities. These key events are, just quickly: the Millennium, Tribulation, Rapture, and these "dispensations." So, in turn: "Millennium" is the thousand years. The text actually says that: there will be a thousand years.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: "The text" being the Bible?

PRINCETON: The text in that case is the book of Revelation, in chapter twenty.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So we're zooming in now on the book of Revelation.

PRINCETON: That's where all this stuff is happening. These are, like, four books among fifty, and they are... Very small parts of it are taken out of context. So, the Millennium is... The way it's going to work is this. There's going to be—most Christians have these sorts of categories—there's a Millennium, which is a thousand years of peace while Christ will reign on Earth, before the end of time. That one is fairly common. Traditionally, you have postmillennialists and premillennialists. Nineteenth-century America was dominated by post-millennialism. Postmillennialism means that Christ will come at the end of the Millennium. Which means that we might be living in the Millennium now. Which means that our good deeds could be part of bringing about the end of the world. In a good way. The abolitionists who ended slavery were like that, the Quakers, who began the modern prison. Social reformers have long been, on the liberal side, associated with postmillennialism.

Premillennialism, it's said, is a far more pessimistic idea, because it means that Christ doesn't come until the beginning of the Millennium, and there's nothing we can do to have any impact on—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So it's like, "why do good deeds"?

PRINCETON: Exactly. So it leads traditionally to a certain kind of withdrawing from the world. So, the nineteenth century. You had a few premillennial groups in the nineteenth century, groups like the Millerites, who prophesied that the world was going to end in 1844, and then it didn't, and that was called "The Great Disappointment." And they became the Seventh Day Adventists, who maybe you've heard of. Postmillennialism was really prominent, even among these Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians. There's this guy John Nelson Darby, who's in the 1820s, in England, and he first theorizes what's called "premillennial dispensationalism." The point of it is this—and this is the idea that becomes really popular at the end of the twentieth century, and is the framework in which all these people are acting—Dispensationalism is something that answers the following problem for a Christian: in the Old Testament you have one law, and then in the New Testament you have a different law.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You mean a contradictory law?

PRINCETON: Yeah, that's the premise of the New Testament, that the law of Moses was just—this is according to Paul, the first great evangelist of Christianity—that the law of Moses was just there to be our custodian until Christ came. And now that Christ has come—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So, it was a provisional law?

PRINCETON: Yeah. Now that Christ has come, we've moved from living by the law to living by grace. Rather than just following rules, we now are the recipients of Christ's forgiveness. That's the message of the New Testament. It's a message of love, over and against the Old Testament, in which you have to toe the line, it's a vengeful God, et cetera. So anyway, this guy Darby, he invents this theology of Dispensation, of which there are seven dispensations. Like, Adam is thrown out of the garden, the patriarch, et cetera, et cetera... We're in the sixth dispensation, and the seventh dispensation will be this period at the end. (pause) I haven't heard this song in so long. So, the Tribulation is going to be this period that occurs before the Millennium. Again, you have this wide variety of opinion. You have people who think that the Tribulation—that Christ will come at the beginning of the Tribulation, that Christ will come in the middle of the Tribulation. The tribulation is based on two passages somewhere in the Book of Revelation, in which they talk about forty-two months here, and

they talk about 1260 days here. I mean, it's *very* obscure. None of this would lend itself to anything that would be...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Quantifiably correct.

PRINCETON: Or beyond dispute. Thank you. For those like this guy Darby, and like most Americans, this 25 to 45 percent of Americans at this time—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Do you have reason to believe that it's closer to one end of that spectrum than the other?

PRINCETON: No.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It really *is* unclear?

PRINCETON: Yeah. I have no idea about quantifying anything. Anyway, for them, the Tribulation is going to occur... Excuse me. The Tribulation is to be kicked off by the Rapture. The Rapture, which is first named in the Latin Vulgate in 405 AD, is based on one sentence in Thessalonians, in which "to rapture" means you're going to be carried away. It's from the same root as "rape." According to this end-times schema, which was developed in the nineteenth century, first you're going to have the Rapture, in which the righteous are going to be taken right up. And it's those who are *not* saved that are going to have to live through the seven years of Tribulation. Then, at the end of this Tribulation, you will have Jesus coming and instituting the Millennium. Does that all make sense?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, it sounds like Bolshevism for Stalin.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm getting a little bit lost in the details.

PRINCETON: That's okay. We're done with the details.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But what characterizes the Tribulation other than the time frame, and being... Is there a quality to that period?

PRINCETON: Yeah, it's a terrible time.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's the moment of taking of power, basically. The people who came up with this concept—which is well before the Christians, Jews already had it too, because they were fucking occupied before Jesus Christ ever made his face shown on the Earth—they had this hope, and this thing, like, "okay, at some point, God will come down and make everything correct," and Tribulation means revolution, basically. Things will happen, things have turned over, we take over. Et cetera.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's a long, bloody period, with a good outcome.

PRINCETON: Basically. That was the kind of hope for it.

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What is new about this movement? You can trace a lot of things that are not new about it...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But this movement—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What's new—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: This movement—sorry to interrupt you—what's new is that it's not dependent on something else, it exists on it's own, in a kind of, like, imaginary image realm, or whatever—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, but it's deeply dependant on media, and—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: What it boils down to is, these people aren't thinking about—they're just thinking about, "okay, yeah, seventies, sixties, black people with guns in the street... Okay, we want to live quietly and peacefully."

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I disagree. I think there are probably people across the political spectrum who think like that. But my impression was that what's new about this is a dependence on media. And also the idea that there is going to be acceptance from the dominant political structures, and that they can rely on that. Including media structures.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But you're talking about the people who like *Left Behind*... Because I would equate—obviously, we could all equate—any whatsoever right-wing American Christian, and any whatsoever radical Islam thing, as all the same...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But I'm just wondering, what's *not* the same? What makes it *not* something that's recurring in the Christian landscape, and something that's *not* the same as Islamic fundamentalism?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I would say it's a question of wishing to have power, but not wanting to take responsibility for it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: And that's new?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's like, "there should be someone *better* taking over." Which is really, in my opinion, fascist. "There should be someone else controlling things in a better way than we could do. And we don't want to do it. We don't give a fuck about"—I'm talking "we"

in a basic Islamic fundamentalist, or fundamentalist Christian American sense—“we don’t want to think about these things.”

PRINCETON: In fact, it’s quite the opposite.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: They have social systems, these Christians?

PRINCETON: What it’s about, just as a general point, I think we could agree—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Islam has social systems; they’re very clear about that.

PRINCETON: I lean also towards saying everything is the same, but each singularity is a singularity. Each thing that occurs in historical time—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Right, each repetition is a singularity.

PRINCETON: Yeah, there are things that are unique about it, but the idea is that God can come at any time, so you have to be ready. And the way that you’re ready is by living your life righteously.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

Okay, but how does living your life righteously relate to others?

PRINCETON: It means having your relationship with Jesus in place, and it means doing the best you can to facilitate that relationship for others.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Is that a relationship with yourself?

PRINCETON: It’s not an abdication of social responsibility.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, it’s very much social responsibility.

PRINCETON: It’s an utter embracing of social responsibility.

(banging, clatter, as small table is knocked over)

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Oh my God, I like artists who—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Sorry.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

That’s why Islam is so much better than Christianity, they took social responsibility to another level. They really implicated it. They were really fucking serious. Everywhere they went, it was like a conscious effort to create things, systems, let people live—we feed people in this way, the economy is regulated this way...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Nothing’s broken.

PRINCETON: Let me finish up, and then we’ll bring it back to exactly where we were before this digression. Skipping to the chase: so, about these books, you see that people—there’s a *Left Behind* manual that’s also sold, that people are told to buy and leave in their house, such that, if and when they’re Raptured, those who are left behind will understand what to do.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Have you

looked at that?

PRINCETON: I haven’t seen that yet.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When people are left behind, what are they supposed to do?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Or are they even *supposed* to do anything? They’re supposed to die in their own vomit.

PRINCETON: Over the course of the seven-year Tribulation, if you can get right with God, you’re still going to have to suffer tremendously, but then, at the end of time, when everyone’s resurrected, you’ll be in Heaven.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So there is potential for redemption.

PRINCETON: There is potential for redemption, but not without tremendous suffering.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It sounds like a video game.

PRINCETON: But this is, of course... One of the key things is that the state of Israel is really important to these people and Jews are these special allies. But Jews will either have to convert or be destroyed. But just to get all the way to the end—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Are you ready?

PRINCETON: Huh?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: To convert or be destroyed?

PRINCETON: Okay, before I get to the end, I want to highlight Antek’s sense that what’s motivating all of this is fear. I think that’s worth discussing. That’s something that is often thrown at religion, and I’m wondering if we wouldn’t want to throw it other places, too. But the last thing is this, and it gets back to the Rancière. We talked about emancipation at the end, and it gets back to this question of Utopia, wrapping back around to the Fascists. From our perspective, I assume that this phenomenon that we’ve just been describing, it seems sort of dangerous. To me it seems dangerous because it promises a time where the ends will justify the means in a really radical way. Although, to their credit, it doesn’t seem like the Tribulation, for these characters, is an excuse to go kill heathens, the way that you would kill... Orcs.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Or Jews.

PRINCETON: It doesn’t seem to be what they’re about. I was pleasantly surprised, or disappointedly surprised, to find that. So, when Rancière talks about emancipation, on page thirteen of that essay—

Pacemaker: Which essay?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: “The Emancipation of the Spectator.” Or, “The Emancipated Spectator.”

PRINCETON: He says that the blurring of the opposition between they who look and they who act, they who are individuals and they who are members of a collective body, so

that’s emancipation, which he seems to be advocating. So, again, this blurring of the

opposition between those who merely look classically, the spectator, the person who’s at the theater watching the play, and those

who act. Okay? So, this scholarship that I was reading, about this, it’s not apologetic scholarship. These people are not Evangelicals trying to present a rosy picture. But it *does* seem as if you have, in this particular form of media, or art, a radical sense of moving from one who just looks, or one who buys, into being one who acts, one who takes responsibility.

So, the question I was going to raise, and it takes us right back to where we started, is, though this I assume strikes us as being sort of frightening, is it possible that in the model—in this sort of model, in the use of art for political ends—is there something that potentially could be learned and adopted? Or, conversely, if we see in this series only the specter of fascism, then what allows us to absolve our own political ambitions of the same original sin, even if we are most assuredly less tacky than they are?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Well, that’s a more interesting question.

PRINCETON: Which is exactly where we were before we went on this digression. Here I see this mass movement using *art*, principally, to achieve a political end, to change people’s lives, in the everyday—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: “Art”: that is, you mean, like, uh, pulp fiction?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You’re talking about *Left Behind*?

PRINCETON: Yeah.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: That’s not art.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Literature, whatever.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It’s a mass cultural—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It’s a form alien to the normal religious practices—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, let’s just agree to call it something like art.

Let’s just agree to call it art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Let’s call it media.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It’s a use of mass media, I mean, it might be sophisticated, but it’s a certain means—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But, okay, Tolkien was a Christian, and blah blah blah, and he wrote his books, and hoped that they would sell, and injected his own Christian worldview... And that’s art, right?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Injecting a worldview into something is different from having an agenda for which you

then write, drawing from this mass

myth to make this propaganda, sci-fi pulp best-seller novel. It’s different.

PRINCETON: What if nobody read it, could it be art then?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, if you would hope that in 500 years someone would dig it out and comment on it in an interesting way, it might potentially become an artifact of it’s time.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: That’s an interesting question: would you think that Tim LaHaye and Jerry whatever-his-name-is are interested in this work surviving for the ages, their particular work? Is it a stepping-stone to Jesus, or for their own bank accounts?

PRINCETON: I think that they don’t think the archive is going to be around for very long.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Do you think they’re not completely cynical? They think they’re doing good works?

PRINCETON: I study religion, so it’s more interesting to me if I presuppose that people mean what they say. But, that’s a faith claim. There’s no reason to actually believe it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When did those books actually start?

PRINCETON: They started in the mid- to late-nineties.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Even like ’95, or ’96.

PRINCETON: They really spit them out.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When the whole new Christian economy seemed to get going.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You mean like Christian rap groups and Christian shoes and all that stuff?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, everything. That was in the nineties.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, it was all a big run up to the Millennium. It was like, get them while you can.

PRINCETON: Back to Bettina. I don’t know how you could defend the line that you’re drawing. Or rather, let’s say that... It sounds like, from what you said, that self-consciously political art cannot be art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don’t think it’s art because... It’s applied craft.

And applied craft, without reflecting the history of its genre, someone to recognize what this is doing, that this is now our contemporary form, understanding that this form has a history and trying to push it further, so hopefully it will be kept—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But they *are* pushing the form further. This is like, setting a record. This is amazing for the idea of the novel, and blah blah blah.

Pacemaker: Is it written like a

novel? It’s like literature?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It’s written like a novel, but Seth, who tried to read it—and he reads quite a lot of books, really fast, I can witness—he didn’t manage to read even half of it. It was so unreadable.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It was awful.

Pacemaker: Like, awful in what way?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I just couldn’t... Did you ever try to read *The Celestine Prophecy*? Anybody?

PRINCETON: Yeah, I tried to read that.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: *Crazy*, right?

PRINCETON: It’s the same thing. How bad it is.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Like it’s written by somebody on—

PRINCETON: But *The Da Vinci Code* is the same way.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, I was going to buy that.

PRINCETON: *Really* bad.

Pacemaker: Is it like bad writing, or just the story?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It’s almost interesting. *The Celestine Prophecy* really reads like the ramblings of a lunatic.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You were trying so hard to make it interesting for yourself, and to do something with it in your work, but you didn’t—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I know, I tried *really* hard.

PRINCETON: I’m out of my league, obviously, but I don’t understand why you don’t end up with a definition of art that “art is that which I think is beautiful.”

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What?

PRINCETON: I see that as the only justification of excluding—I mean, this might be a point we could agree on... I mean, we could agree to call it “media,” and let it go.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Wow!

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Most culturally successful products will probably not create a historic line that will be kept. It’s economic, it’s popular, as many people as you can in as short of a time as possible to have—and it’s also an economic interest.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They also don’t think they have much time.

PRINCETON: Exactly.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There’s not much time. So there’s totally different parameters than that of a specific historical cultural discourse that you

refer to, which is also millennia old.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They must be postmillennialists.

PRINCETON: They’re pre-.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Which means Jesus came already, or he’s coming?

PRINCETON: Jesus is coming back in the beginning of the Millennium.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It sounds like they’re trying to do a lot of good works.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: To me, it sounds like a kind of form of propaganda, and as long as the form doesn’t reflect propaganda but *is* propaganda, there’s no reason for it to become high art, really.

PRINCETON: Well, not “high” art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They’re not interested in calling it art, probably, certainly not high art in the way that you’re talking about.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don’t think this is the interesting question of *Left Behind*, is it art or not. It’s really not what it’s about. But that would be my answer for why I would think it’s not art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But it’s interesting *for* art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, it’s an interesting mass cultural product that uses the contemporary means of spreading of myths, for a certain means. But as long as nobody reflects on it, as a form or as a concept in its time, I wouldn’t ever define it as art.

PRINCETON: So to use—this would be, then, a hard-line answer—which is to say—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I’m a hard-liner.

PRINCETON: —that to use media in this way, in this self-conscious political way, is *always* propaganda, and if *we* did it, it would be propaganda as well, even if we were doing it for the side of justice.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: The Whitney Biennial.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: If you want to argue what it means for the beginning or the end of the world, and the division of the people in good and bad, and going to heaven, and burning in hell, yes, I would say that would most likely be propaganda.

PRINCETON: What if we became socialist realists or something, and we wanted to produce art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There is no God.

PRINCETON: So, if there is no God, then it can be art?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But why

does it have to be thought of as art anyway?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don’t know if this is an interesting question at this point.

PRINCETON: What’s the interesting question?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: For the history of art now, which includes the political discourse and which position you take, interesting is how certain artists survived Stalin, and with which strategies, who was not purely complicit but who wanted to continue to live. It’s different from people who were purely taking advantage of being some kind of craft person who knows how to use a brush... That’s different.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Exactly. Space of art, space of communication, space of media.

That still exists today, more or less, in a degraded way. You think right away: these Left Behind people are literally doing a political thing. Like, we take control of the radio station, which the Bolsheviks did also; we control this fortress here, or there, and control the communication coming out of it. That’s generally a space of experimentation, in a sense.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Resistance to dominant structures, most often. It’s very hard to imagine to go with something like that...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It’s permissive. That’s the paradox. Art is... like... oh, fucking hell...

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Art is the permissive paradoxical structure of transgression that then gets absorbed.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Although, this is stupid to play devil’s advocate, but I would say that Tim and Jerry probably think that they *are* resisting the dominant structure.

PRINCETON: They are, to a certain extent.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, but they’re resisting in a much different way. They’re resisting in kind of a direct political way of taking control of power.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Charlie Chaplin would be a more interesting example than Tom and Jerry.

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Ben and Jerry.

(laughter)

PRINCETON: Separate the question of the mass versus not mass. If it seems like part of a utopian project, even on a small scale,

to emancipate the spectator, to have the consumption of media not merely be a passive action but to have it be constitutive of a way of being in the world in an active way that is in pursuit of some virtue, whether it be aesthetic, ethical, or social, or whatever. It wasn’t

important to me that they were doing art, but it seems like they’re doing *that*. And I heard from Antek before we started that, a hunger for that— well, I didn’t hear an endorsement of that specific activity, but I would have thought that you would have, and many of us would, have signed on to the use of art for precisely that purpose, to wake people up, for example.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: If we talk about spaces of ritual, liminal space, like the adolescent graduating from the tribe, et cetera, they enter into a space where suddenly you experience, no matter what class you come from, you’re all equal, you experience something else, and that’s a kind of like reorganization into a new social sphere, like you’re in a new place in society. Victor Turner, I guess he was a sociologist or whatever, like, an Englishman in the sixties, he tried to make terms with American pop culture and would say art was always this kind of space that was bound to be recuperated. Of course! That was its function.

But maybe at certain points, it could grow larger, in a way, it could really reevaluate things, in a sense... (long pause)... I lost my track...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But with the Rancière, you shouldn’t forget who he’s talking to with this essay. He wrote this for a summer academy of theater students. He’s not writing to the producers of a Hollywood play.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But it’s also knowing that any space you create in art, of course it’ll be taken over, because that’s its purpose. But then it can get rampant. That is also the space of change. That was like the funny thing that Turner would say. He’d say it’s predictable, it’s like holidays, festivals, inversion festivals, Carnival in Kreuzberg in Berlin on May 1st, et cetera, but then there could be a space that actually affects things and actually changes things in a certain way. But those people, I don’t think they’re thinking about that. They’re hardcore political. They’re not thinking about aesthetics... There’s no notion of experimentation with them...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT, returning to room, laughs.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

What?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, sorry, I just came back into the conversation... It's great to think about the idea of experimentation as a criterion for *anybody*, for any population of the American culture at large, of any religion. But I think it does exist.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It does exist. Of course. That's also kind of the back story, because as much as we want to... You talk about my fascist tendencies or inherent fascist.... But our reaction is always to say “eliminate every fucking backwater Christian, because they're all fucked up.”

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It seems to be that parts of American culture, religious people, feel alienated from capitalist culture. As it is more broadly experienced by the rest of us. They feel like they're capitalists, and they want to be consumers and participate in America, and yet they feel alienated from the products. To me, it seems like the whole Christian economy is trying to assert the same kind of rights or sets of freedoms economically, yet producing products that—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They're the same, but they have a cross on them, or whatever.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Right. PRINCETON: I assume that you knew about this stuff, the fear of the One World Government. Right? But there's also the fear of the consolidation of media. They want more local control. I hear that anxiety.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, all those churches, too—I won't generalize it, but where I'm from, all of these Christian churches, they're all incredibly locally run. There is no—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There's no Clear Channel.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They're really based on different personalities. Like, where I live, within the two or three towns in that area, there are probably sixty, seventy Baptist churches, Church of Christ, Church of God, and they're all—maybe some are twenty people, some are ten people, some are a hundred people, and it all revolves around particular personalities. They all interpret things differently. Clearly, in religion, a lot of Christian religion, I don't want to speak for other religions, but there seems

to be—that sense of freedom comes out of there being a structure, and as long as there is a larger structure that you can somewhat depend on, then you have freedom within it. You even have that within art. There's always this idea of structure being liberating, or structure allowing freedom.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When you mentioned that, I had this weird thought that that's the kind of test case of the entire religious idea.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Which is like the most fucking bullshit idea that ever happened.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, no, no—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Okay, “structure makes me free...”

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Let's say you're within an impossible life—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No, the structure does *not* make me free. Because even if I'm without structure, because I've always existed with no structure... The question of unemployment, the question of going to criminality, being outside of structure, before you end up in prison, it's a question of structure all the same—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Right, of course. Not that religion wasn't meant for prison, religion was invented to take a structure that has a certain dimension and make you feel like—

Bernadette Corporation: Yeah, and with the fucking system of prison, if prison makes you suddenly come back and embrace structure, well okay, *that sucks!*

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: For me, my experience of rioting is that it's not about a larger cause, it's really about a simple thing of, like, breaking the law. It's just about breaking the law.

PRINCETON: And that's about pleasure? Rather than about repairing—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Pleasure, and also transgressing the law, and just, like, okay, can I face the police now? Or do I run home and stay under the bed, like I should do? You understand? Because when they show up with their fucking military uniforms, et cetera... And probably, like, the only valuable thing of France—the March, April thing—was to see the courageousness of sixteen year-old kids, seventeen year-old kids. Where do they come

from? They're like fighting the police under these conditions today, these post 9/11, super locked-down conditions, and there's 3000 people in jail right now from those riots. Where does that come from? I'm not saying that it's pleasure; I'm saying it's a serious line that you cross. It's not about crossing over to an idea, because crossing over to an idea can be as simple as voting, for God's sake.

PRINCETON: Where do you think it comes from?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: What? The desire to break the law? PRINCETON: So it comes from desire.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No. CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What, those sixteen year-olds?

PRINCETON: Yeah, what enables them to do that? Regardless of whether we think that it's a good thing or a bad thing.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Obviously in France what enables them to do that was the kind of pathetic-ness of a few years ago when the right wing almost got voted into government, and they had to vote for this guy Jacques Chirac going into the government, and the humiliation of that.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, but these sixteen year-olds were not humiliated by Jacques Chirac coming in.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Some of them are! I've been reading some tracts where there is a certain kind of social consciousness here, still existing in this country, which people are saying that we should go further...

PRINCETON: I'm sure there may be many motivations, but if I had to reduce it down to one thing, it wouldn't be that.

Pacemaker: What would it be? PRINCETON: It would be something more like the desire to get laid. Or something like that.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No. PRINCETON: Which is to say—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You mean, “akin to”? Or...

PRINCETON: Akin to. Just picturing that... I mean, I think the human animal *imitates*.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, but the culture of getting laid... In the sixties there was already this kind of shock, of rock music, et cetera, which already was affecting youth culture for a good fucking fifteen years, before anything happened. The culture of getting laid? Today? It's clear: if you want to get laid, you can do it. It's totally possible. You

don't have to protest politically to do it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I thought you said it wasn't possible in Berlin, though.

(laughter) **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: To get laid?**

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, weren't you saying that?

(laughter) **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Whatever.... I'm just saying, like...**

(laughter) **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No, man... Forget about... social possibilities in Berlin, et cetera...**

(laughter) **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I'm saying, in a youth culture/sixties thing, when you have a general culture, which was more or less unified... You have to understand, bourgeois kids and proletarian kids were hearing the Rolling Stones at the same time. They were affected by rock and roll. A phenomenon like the mods, or whatever, was happening across the board. It was a time of a certain kind of cultural exuberance, if you will, on a capitalistic level. But these days everything is fucking set. I don't care where you are. You know how to find your libidinal satisfactions. From whatever class you come from. From whatever orientation you come from, sexually. It's very strict, it's very clear.**

PRINCETON: But I think for you... I might be presupposing too much, but I thought initially the stake—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: These are the worst Dunhills I ever smoked.

PRINCETON: —that the stake was how to interrupt this hideous injustice. It sounds like the argument you're making now is more about how to have more fun than we're currently having, which—there's nothing wrong with fun, but is it about... having a better time?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: They're a bit connected, I think. The things that prevent us from having a good time are exactly the same things that cause this fucking horror on this Earth, in a sense. The fact that we can drug ourselves, immunize ourselves by certain bypasses or whatever, into believing we have a certain life, is the most tragic thing I could imagine. Actually, I would never make a separation between the two. If I could have a good time, and rectify these

things, that would be the best thing possible. Yeah! (Pause) Is that an answer? These cigarettes suck... the new Dunhills are bullshit... Yeah! The division between the two... Pacemaker: Do you want coffee? BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I myself *particularly*... Number one: international, trendy, degraded, aging whatever—you know, I could do that in the first degree, fake to have a life, and at the same time... You talk about questions of social justice, of consciousness, of a certain abstract question of solidarity. Why don't you say the word “solidarity”? Because solidarity is such an old lefty term, which is also kind of bankrupt. Isn't America's trying to make democracy in the Middle East “solidarity”? That kind of bullshit. It's a very abstract notion.

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

PRINCETON: So, this kind of transcendence that you imagine, which seems to drive you, right?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Absolutely. PRINCETON: Would that be about *moments* of transcendence, or is it about building the conditions for permanent transcendence? I tend to think like Bettina, that there's no outside. You climb out of one illusion, you're climbing into another one.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, okay, fine, but what are the qualities, from one illusion to another, exactly? For me it's as simple as that. It's exactly like passing through that experience, of going from one illusion to another... You don't think about the outside.... (long pause) As I said, “passing from one illusion to another!”

PRINCETON: So, is it the iconoclastic moment? Is that the shift? The moment where you destroy the previous thing and build a new one?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's more the satisfaction of experiencing the destruction of the previous thing. It's really like... That's the funny thing. At that moment, throwing a brick, a Molotov cocktail at somebody—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: At *somebody*?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: At the police. CONTINUOUS PROJECT: This whole conversation, when you've been mentioning that moment of throwing that brick, or whatever, I'm totally in agreement that there is something that has to be salvaged or talked

about from that moment, but it often gets clouded over or lost in the discussion because it immediately falls back into discussing the material realities of that social situation where you're throwing a brick in the riot. But in fact that muddies the waters, because we're really talking about something else that exists at the same time. So it's not good, it's not bad, it's just there is something else that we're talking about.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I don't want to isolate it, like some kind of libidinal— CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, I don't want to isolate it. I want to say that there's—you keep on adding. There's *another* thing we're talking about, and it's not against the other thing. There's a lot of things going on.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's also beautiful when that act is supported. When others say, oh yeah, that's necessary, actually. That displays our articulation of force in relation to power.

PRINCETON: But as a principle—let's propose it and see if people agree that these sorts of moments—that, one: for what you just described, you need both an ideal and your comrades, to have these moments.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Remember, you need a myth, otherwise you can't convince your comrades.

PRINCETON: But let's not take it apart. CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There's also one part in addition to that, that's purely individualistic, maybe narcissistic, I don't know—

PRINCETON: But I'm with you, in trying to say, “let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater,” let's try to figure out what it is—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I just don't want to say, “well, that's a slippery slope to Nazism.”

PRINCETON: Exactly, I agree with you, but I think there is something that's worth identifying, so let's build it from the ground up. I was promoting that as a principle. It doesn't have to be that principle. At the very least, you said you wanted it to be more than this libidinal charge.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, of course.

PRINCETON: But at the very least, it is *that*, right?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It might be that. It might be a thing and its opposite.

other pressures and forces come down to extinguish that feeling, like the unions, the political parties, et cetera. I'm establishing a very traditional anarchist pose.

PRINCETON: But it has to lead to something.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, because at that moment it's not about... It's precisely about discharging from the idea that it's going to lead to anything. Because if you start thinking that it's going to lead to something, you're like, “this is going to get me in trouble,” or “this is going to make me look cool.” It's about getting beyond that.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Like Japanese performance art, or The Living Theatre: you go out and have an orgy with them on stage, and go home and be your normal—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, but maybe there's something that can be redeemed from those moments, from that history?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No, I'm not saying about the history, I'm just saying that they themselves recognized a certain problem, like Chris and Cossey and Genesis, when they're doing Coum Transmissions they said, “we were cutting ourselves up, and people come there like it's their fucking holiday, and dismiss it,” in a sense. You want the experience to last, you want it to go on. That immediate experience and that immediate libidinal discharge. You want it to last. You want this interruption of daily life to last.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm not sure. I think it's actually maybe premised on the opposite. It has to be just a brief moment.

PRINCETON: Have you ever experienced anything like this, what you're describing?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Maybe... I don't know. Not really. I was very resistant to it, actually, because I have so many repressions in general.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I remember throwing a brick through a window in my high school. I still remember that. It was like, “let's literalize it.” We got drunk, ran up to the science building, threw a brick through the window, and ran away.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: That's not the same thing. When I'm drunk, I've done so many stupid things. I'm amazed I'm not arrested for it yet. It's not the same thing as facing the people, facing the police.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: In that moment I was facing the police. In my mind.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Not in your mind, in your *paranoiac* mind. CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, it's the same thing.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's not the same thing as seeing a line of them with their armored trucks and their shields, in front of you.

PRINCETON: And you're on the side of good, and there's only a few of you, and everyone else is on the side of evil.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's more like they're on the side of extinguishment of anything... Is it so hard to hate cops?

(laughter) CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don't hate cops.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I do. CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's the natural state to hate cops.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I certainly have an instinctive—I see a police a car coming, and I feel like—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Like they're such assholes! CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, but I wouldn't say, “I hate cops.” Who was it—was I talking to somebody in this room recently?—who said: “I hate,” and I stopped them... Who was it? Somebody recently, in the last couple of days, said, “I hate,” and I stopped: God! That's so rare to say you actually *hate*.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: God!

(laughter) **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Please, God... I hate the fucking police. It's very simple, the police, all you have to deal with—**

(laughter) **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's very simple—**

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Can we stop this? Who's going to transcribe the whole thing?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: The intern. The Continuous Project intern.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: The unpaid intern.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: All you have to deal with— CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You don't hate the police. I know you don't.

CLAIRE FONTAINE: Of course we hate the police! *(laughter)* CONTINUOUS PROJECT: That's the first thing you've said all evening!

ROSTERS

Chuck Muncie Dexter Bussey Ed Budde Boobie Clark Bubba Smith	Running Back Running Back Guard Running Back Defensive End	New Orleans Saints Detroit Lions Kansas City Chiefs Cincinnati Bengals Baltimore Colts
William J. Broad Peter T. Kilborn Kenneth N. Gilpin James C. McKinley, Jr.	National Correspondent National Correspondent National Correspondent National Correspondent	<i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i>
MacArthur Lane Jack Ham Dan Pastorini Dick Butkus Jack Snow Bert Jones Coy Bacon	Running Back Linebacker Quarter Back Middle Linebacker Wide Receiver Quarter Back Defensive End	Kansas City Chiefs Pittsburgh Steelers Pittsburgh Steelers Chicago Bears Los Angeles Rams Baltimore Colts San Diego Chargers
James F. Clarity Joseph B. Treaster Richard W. Stevenson Christopher S. Wren		<i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i>
Kenny “The Snake” Stabler Eddie “Too Tall” Jones “Mean” Joe Greene Billy “White Shoes” Johnson	Quarter Back Linebacker Linebacker Kick Returner	Oakland Raiders Dallas Cowboys Pittsburgh Steelers Houston Oilers
John Noble Wilford Donald G. McNeill, Jr. Richard W. Stevenson Alessandra Stanley Paul Burnham Finney Clyde H. Farnsworth Barnaby J. Feder	“Gamma Rays Unraveled” “The Zimbabwe Question” “Legislation and the Burden of Proof” Russian Political Correspondent Travel Section “Immigration Laws” Washington Correspondent	<i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>New York Times</i>
Rocky Bleier Dirk Johnson	Running Back “Chicago’s Scandal Resume”	Pittsburgh Steelers <i>New York Times</i>
R.W. Apple, Jr. Jim Zorn	Washington Correspondent Quarter Back	<i>New York Times</i> Seattle Seahawks
George Blanda Grace Glueck	Running Back Arts Section	Oakland Raiders <i>New York Times</i>
Holland Cotter Larry Csonka	Arts Section Running Back	<i>New York Times</i> Miami Dolphins
Mike Lucci Jacques Steinberg	Middle Linebacker Political Correspondent	Detroit Lions <i>New York Times</i>
Garo Yepremian Francis X. Climes	Kicker “The Capitol Sketchbook”	Miami Dolphins <i>New York Times</i>
Christopher Hedges Jerry Sherk	City Section Defensive Tackle	<i>New York Times</i> Cleveland Browns
Lawrie Mifflin Ray Guy	Week in Review Punter	<i>New York Times</i> Oakland Raiders
David E. Rosenbaum Bob Griese	Washington Correspondent Quarter Back	<i>New York Times</i> Miami Dolphins
Arthur Ochs Sulzberger	Publisher	<i>New York Times</i>

—TIM GRIFFIN, 1998/2006

Charles Fourier: His Life and Theories

“With the eighth epoch, with harmony, comes the aurora of good fortune. The corona of the North Pole (couronne boréale) is born, which then, like the sun, spreads not only light but also warmth, and thus initiates a series of new creations. Under the influence of the Northern corona, Petersburg and Ochotsk will get a climate like that of Cadiz and Constantinople, that the climate of the Siberian glacial coasts will equal that of Marseille and the Gulf of Genoa, and that the fertility of these Northern parts of the earth will start to compete with that of the tropics. At the same time, under the influence of the Northern corona’s fluidum and the shifts in climate, the sea will reconstitute itself, taking on a lemonade-like taste. The current sea monsters, which are vicious and inimical to humans, like the shark, etc., will die out, replaced by new creations such as the anti-shark, the anti-whale, animals friendly to humans, who will lend their strength in the service of tugging ships, etc. Similarly, a metamorphosis of the land will occur. All wild animals (lion, tiger, leopard, wolf, etc.) and all venomous reptiles and disgusting insects, as well as poisonous and harmful plants, will vanish, to be replaced by new creations that are useful to humans. This is, for example, how the anti-lion will emerge, who is tame, and who of his own volition offers himself to humans as a riding animal.” AUGUST BEBEL, *CHARLES FOURIER, SEIN LEBEN UND SEINE THEORIEN*, LEIPZIG: RECLAM, 1978, p. 40. (TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN BY BETTINA FUNCKE)

“Avec la huitième période — la période de l’harmonie — commence l’aurore du bonheur. La couronne boréale est née qui, comme le soleil, répand non seulement la lumière mais aussi la chaleur et donne naissance à une série de nouvelles créations. Grâce à l’apparition de la couronne boréale, Saint-Pétersbourg et Ochotsk auront le climat de Cadix et Constantinople, le climat des côtes glacées de Sibérie ressemblera à celui de Marseille et du Golfe de Gênes et la fertilité de ces contrées nordiques commencera à rivaliser avec la fertilité des tropiques. En même temps, la mer se déformera sous la double influence du fluide émanant de la couronne boréale et du changement de climat et aura désormais un goût à limonade. Les monstres marins hostiles et pernicioeux pour l’homme comme le requin, etc. vont mourir et seront remplacés par de nouvelles créations comme l’anti-requin, l’anti-baleine, c’est-à-dire par des animaux gentils envers l’homme qui lui proposeront leurs services pour tirer les bateaux etc. De la même façon aura lieu la reconfiguration sur terre. Tous les animaux sauvages (lion, tigre, léopard, loup, etc.) et tous les reptiles vénéneux ou insectes abjects, ainsi que les plantes vénéneuses et nocives, disparaîtront et seront remplacés par de nouvelles créations utiles à l’homme. De cette manière se forme l’anti-lion qui est docile et se propose volontairement à l’homme comme animal de monture.” AUGUST BEBEL, *CHARLES FOURIER, SEIN LEBEN UND SEINE THEORIEN*, RECLAM, LEIPZIG, 1978, S. 40.

„Mit der achten Periode, der Harmonie, beginnt die Aurora des Glücks. Es wird die Nordpolkrone (couronne boréale) geboren, die dann, gleich der Sonne, nicht bloß Licht, sondern auch Wärme verbreitet und damit eine Reihe neuer Schöpfungen einleitet. Die Wirkung der Nordpolkrone wird sein, dass Petersburg und Ochotsk ein ähnliches Klima bekommen wie Cadix und Konstantinopel, dass das Klima der sibirischen Eisküsten dem von Marseille und dem Golf von Genua gleicht und dass eine Fruchtbarkeit dieser nördlichen Erdteile beginnt, die mit jener der tropischen Länder wetteifert. Gleichzeitig wird durch die Einwirkung des Fluidums der Nordpolkrone und durch die Veränderung des Klimas das Meer sich umbilden und einen limonadeartigen Geschmack annehmen. Die jetzigen, den Menschen feindlichen und schädlichen Meerungeheuer, wie der Hai usw., werden zugrunde gehen und durch neue Schöpfungen, wie Anti-Hai, Anti-Walfisch, ersetzt werden, Tiere, die dem Menschen freundlich sind und ihm ihre Dienste zum Ziehen der Schiffe usw. leihen werden. Ganz ähnlich vollzieht sich die Umgestaltung auf dem Lande. Alle wilden Tiere (Löwe, Tiger, Leopard, Wolf usw.) und alle giftigen Reptile oder widerlichen Insekten, ebenso die giftigen und schädlichen Pflanzen verschwinden und werden durch für den Menschen nützliche Neuschöpfungen ersetzt. So entsteht zum Beispiel der Anti-Löwe, der zahm ist und sich freiwillig dem Menschen als Reittier anbietet.“ AUGUST BEBEL, *CHARLES FOURIER, SEIN LEBEN UND SEINE THEORIEN*, RECLAM, LEIPZIG, 1978, p. 40 (TRADUIT DE L’ALLEMAND PAR MARIA MUHLE)

Equality and Public Realm according to Hannah Arendt

Maria Muhle

The notion of the public realm developed by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*¹ is based on Aristotle’s political thought, and reworks the main characteristics of Greek public space. I want to reveal the aporias inherent to this notion of the public realm, aporias generated by its exclusion of those who do not belong. To this end, I will analyze the public realm from an outside perspective, and not that of the included.

The public realm is a space of liberty and action. It is a realm of appearance, in which agents of public life can show themselves, be seen and heard, and thus enter a network of human relationships. Politics is not an affair of individuals; it presupposes the plurality of men and their inter homines esse. It’s in the small spaces, those created between men, that we find politics to be at stake, in the moment that reunites men even as it separates them, and which creates a public realm, a realm of equality, at the same time as it maintains differences between acting subjects. “The revelation of the ‘who’ by speech, and the posing of a beginning by action, always takes place within an already existent network in which their immediate consequences can unfold.”²

The essence of this space is not the question here, rather, how it is created, what relation it maintains to the concept of equality, and, in a wider sense, how this idea of the public realm is linked to Arendt’s earlier reflections on the status of the citizen.

PUBLIC SPACE AND PRIVATE SPACE

Arendt’s thought sees the public realm as radically opposed to private space in a relation of mutual exclusion at the same time as it enters into an antagonistic relationship with what she calls “the social.” The latter is a concept unknown to the Greeks; it emerged with the Roman city and the city’s political transformations, thereafter establishing itself and coming to dominate the political scene up to the present day. “Society, when it first entered the public realm, assumed the disguise of an organization of property-owners who, instead of claiming access to the public realm because of their wealth, demanded protection from it for the accumulation of more wealth.”³

This citation introduces the fundamental concepts of the construction of a public realm in a defensive mode: the public domain must be protected against the invasion of the social, an invasion that proceeds via the constitution of private property as a public or political affair. For Arendt, private property must on the contrary function by giving the proprietor a place in the world, affording him access to the domain of politics. This place in the world is a necessary condition of access to the public realm, and thus to a world of liberty in which all are equal.

Arendt distinguishes the realm of the family and the realm of the *polis*, the first being based on necessity and the second on liberty. This notion of liberty must be examined closely, since it is defined in relation to a concept of equality and diverges in many ways from the modern concept of liberty.

¹ The German version of this book, which was originally published in English as *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), has as its title *Vita Activa oder vom tätigen Leben*.

² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 184.

³ Ibid., p. 68.

Humans – finite beings finding themselves in an infinite world – are confronted with two phenomena: the freedom of their actions and the necessity of biological cycles. This constant tension generates the specific position in which modern man still finds himself, poised thus between private life, the domain of the family and biological survival, and the public sphere of political life. Arendt bases this analysis on the tripartite distinction she makes within the *vita activa*, in which she assigns a specific condition each to labor, work, and action. Thus the condition of labor represents life in its purely biological aspect, a survival as the survival of man and of the species, the condition of work is a belonging-to-the-world, and that of action is the factum of plurality, which constitutes the foundation of political space: political life’s *conditio sine qua non* as well as the *conditio per quam*.⁴

In this analysis, then, political life and action are conceptually linked: action is possible because humans are neither gods nor beasts, but necessarily placed at the intersection of finitude and eternity. “Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.”⁵

What then is this unequal equality, inscribed in the plurality of political life and based on an institutionalized exchange between private and public realms, which define one another by mutual exclusion, each incapable of existing without the other? Or, in other words, how can this equality define the status of political man, the question of who is political and who is not? Within which parameters is this action, which is based on plurality, possible? Who is capable of realizing it, and what are the political and vital consequences of not having access to it?

According to Arendt, a mode such as this, one of free life, political life (a *bios* such as this) cannot be constituted by labor or by work. The former is assigned to securing the survival of the species, providing for humans’ physical needs, and guaranteeing the process of reproduction: “Laboring always moves in the same circle, which is prescribed by the biological process of the living organism and the end of its ‘toil and trouble’ comes only with the death of this organism.”⁶ The life of labor is thus the experience of the absence-of-world: man concentrates on corporeal life and so is radically expelled from the world. “The activity of work, in which the human body, despite its activity, is also confined to itself, focuses on the fact of its existence and remains prisoner of its metabolism with nature without ever transcending it.”⁷ The other activity that cannot offer access to a genuinely free and political life is that of making a “work.” This work represents the non-naturalness of human existence, it creates a certain permanence in the world, attempting to surpass the condition of finitude that defines human life on earth, and the fleeting nature of human time. The work is the objectivity of this world made by man, and it also allows a confrontation between this world and the subjectivity of men. The work gives rise to what is called the Promethean revolt of the man who values the creativity of *homo faber*, who is conceived in the image of God, all-powerful creator.

The man of action, the free man, is thus expelled from a world ruled by *homo faber*: an objectified world that increasingly resembles an interplay of forces within which any space of speech and action – any free public sphere – necessarily disappears. However, the man of action needs *homo faber* in order to render eternal his actions and words, in order that *homo faber* gives a form and substance to the complete futility of an action carried out, to the inconsistency of speech, the meaning of which dissipates immediately. “If the *animal laborans* needs the help of *homo faber* to ease his labor and relieve his pain, and if mortals need his help to erect a home on earth, acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of for artist, of poets, and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them, the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all.”⁸ Just as the public realm cannot exist without the private, free action requires preliminary activities that render the space of action materially possible, the activities of labor and work.

4 Ibid., p. 8.

5 Ibid., p. 8.

6 Ibid., p. 98.

7 Ibid., p. 115.

8 Ibid., p. 173.

EXCLUSION-INCLUSION IN THE PUBLIC REALM

The public realm, then, is defined and shaped through the three concepts of *vita activa*, labor, work, and action, which together allow a differentiation from a private realm. At the same time, it’s clear that action, and the man of action alone, will be admitted to the public sphere, once constituted. It is precisely here that the fundamental problem arises, that of inclusion in, or exclusion from this public realm, a space of free men, who democratically discuss the city’s laws as active members. In order to better examine the possibilities of inclusion within this political space, we need to return to the concept of equality, and consequently that of liberty, both of which shape the public realm, and which are completely absent from private life. Everything in the latter is submitted to the will of the *pater familias*, who reigns over his family like a tyrant over his subjects, as well as to the necessity of biological cycles that determine the private realm’s rhythms.

The sole extant liberty of the private space is that belonging to the father, the chief and sovereign, who may leave this realm and enter the polis and a public realm in which all are equal. Equality thus becomes the very essence of liberty, while presupposing the inherent existence of inequality: the existence of those who remain at home, those eternally confined to the private sphere, condemned to work, in order to assure survival and maintain the natural cycles of the species. Equality affords a right to liberty while non-equality, inevitable in such a political project, leads to necessity and submission. Considered from within, Arendt’s public realm is profoundly egalitarian and free, even as it is shot through with inequality and flagrant non-freedoms when it’s considered from the perspective of its external limits. The equality instituted in the public realm is based on the inequality of all those who are not admitted, on the exclusion of those who unfortunately must face the onerous tasks of working and of crafting objects for this world, which is only partially their world.

The fissure that seems to open here is not unique in Arendt’s thought. It joins the brilliant analyses of her book on the origins of totalitarianism, with the famous distinction she made between man and citizen, in order to reveal the dysfunctionality of any concept of human rights in which man is disarticulated from the rights of the citizen: when man is no longer a citizen, but reduced to simply being a man. “The concept of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human.”⁹

Arendt pursues her examination of the concept of equality, deploring the fact that, in the modern world, the apparent equality of all boils down to a judicial and political recognition of society’s colonization of the political domain. The public realm – in which each citizen might excel, in which each demonstrated that he was irreplaceable while knowing that he was the equal of others in rights and duties – has been abolished. Modern equality is characterized by a profound “conformism inherent in society and possible only because behavior has replaced action as the foremost mode of human relationship.”¹⁰

9 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1948, p. 299.

10 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 41.

For Arendt, this increasing equality would be equivalent to the introduction of criteria of sociological homogenization within the political domain, the irremediable demise of which would result.

It is here that Arendt comes up against her unresolved aporia, one which she does not attempt to resolve as it a fundamental element of her political construction: inequality between individuals is the necessary condition for the formation of public space. She seems unaware of the negative political consequences that such inequality might have for those who, in her construction, are reduced by exclusion from public life. If equality is the very base of liberty, the latter is reserved exclusively for a small number of men, those who, notably, are not only men but citizens first and foremost.

Arendt sets this problem aside by arguing that any inclusion of these excluded and yet fundamental elements within the public sphere would be tantamount to destroying it. This argument is founded on the separation between living and living well: in the private realm, private property assures man’s existence, while in the public realm, free action allows the attainment of excellence. It is nevertheless existence that is the necessary condition for excellence, or, to put it another way, it’s private property that affords active membership in the public sphere. “To own property meant here (in the case of having slaves who through their labor satisfy biological needs) to be master over one’s own life necessities and therefore to be potentially a free person, free to transcend his own life and to enter into the world that all share.”¹¹

And, contrarily: “To live an entirely private life means above all *to be deprived of* things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality of ... an ‘objective’ relation to others that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself.”¹² The desire for immortality is taken from man in private life, and it is this desire that Arendt defines as fundamental to the unfolding of the human as a human being. Nevertheless, a private life, which in this context is reduced to private property, is crucial to approaching the desire for immortality, and to living a truly human life.

In Arendt’s work the concept of politics is caught up in a causal chain linking it to concepts of liberty and the public: whosoever is free and unreliant on any material necessity may enter the public sphere, permitting participation in active life and the politics of the community. Liberty is represented by financial independence, the availability of time and space, and the possibility of expressing oneself, and thus it allows access to that public realm defined by limits, which defines itself by exclusion, the exclusion of the *other*.

Let’s look briefly at the incarnation of this other in Arendt’s book on totalitarianism, and more precisely in chapter nine: “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man.” There she defines the figure of the other (counterpart to that eminently political man which she will later define in *The Human Condition*): the stateless person, the refugee, the excluded *par excellence*, he who has lost *the right to have rights*. Her analysis of this figure of radical exclusion is striking in its clarity, and forms the starting point for numerous analyses of modern politics, of which one of the most interesting is

¹¹ Ibid., p. 65.

¹² Ibid., p. 58. (the emphasis is mine)

that set forth by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, his attempt to join the Arendtian concept of exclusion to the Foucauldian thought around the figure of the excluded or the “anormal” in its various definitions.¹³

Exactly how to relate these two practical and theoretical political figures, that, which appears in Arendt’s early analysis of totalitarianism and that, which later appears in her study of the development of political space within democracy? I propose to unite these two notions by way of the figure of the excluded in its most radical form, the stateless person; but also through less radical forms more present within the democratic arena. The importance of thinking the political domain from this vantage lies in first seeing from where and on what basis it’s defined, in order to then consider how it might be possible to occupy or re-occupy that space with the speech of those who have no part, the part of the without-parts.

We must focus on this problem or discontinuity in Arendt’s thought and try to understand how she can conceptualize the figure of the radically excluded without connecting it to the idea of a completely immanent public realm. This is, I think, an important moment, for the fact of thinking the radically excluded here allows us to avoid thematizing inclusive exclusion thereby reducing the phenomenon of the social to an invasion of public space by mechanisms of biological life, instead of seeing the presence of the other within the heart of political space as the moment when politics emerges.

The crucial moment is not that of the creation or definition of a public realm, but that moment when this space succeeds or fails in opening to that, which is beyond it. The following question must be posed: Is a public realm really in danger when threatened by its outside, or is this the very moment of politics, the moment when the outside integrates with the inside, when the excluded introduces himself to the public space of speech, thus creating, as Jacques Rancière has argued, a political event?¹⁴

¹³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ See Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

THE OCCURRENCE OF THE SOCIAL

This will become clear in examining the concept of the social, which for Arendt belongs to neither the private nor the public sphere, which appears with Modernity, finding its political form in the nation-state, there imitating the model of the family, which it amplifies to a level of political significance. “The collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family is what we call ‘society,’ and its political form of organization is called ‘nation.’”¹⁵ It is clear that for Arendt this definition does not correspond to the definition of a political space, because the structure of the family – that structure under the total authority of the *pater familias*, master of the very life and death of his sons, under which no change or revolt is possible – belongs entirely to the realm of necessity and leaves no room for action. In the figure of the *pater familias* we have an incarnation of “sovereign exception” of which Agamben writes. The space of this sovereign exception may be linked to the “political” space existing under the *Ancien Régime*, in which the will of the king represented the law.¹⁶

However, Arendt vehemently rejects the notion of the social, which she considers to be the fundamental obstacle to the constitution of political space.¹⁷ With the emergence of the social and the social sciences in the nineteenth century, “behavior” replaced action, and the particular laws of those sciences – sociology, statistics, economics – became valid for large populations and extended periods. Singular actions were consequently reduced to the status of deviations, fluctuations without importance in the long-term trend. Such sciences reduce man to an animal

¹⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 29. Arendt sees in the political form of the nation-state the germ of the emergence of totalitarianism, and it is not astonishing that the collapse of that political form during the twentieth century lead to the disappearance of any political space, to the catastrophe of the two wars, and accomplished itself in the horror of the camps which became possible through the basically a-political position maintained by the citizens of the European nation-states. That is, the construction of extermination camps as the a-political space par excellence was made possible by the complete loss of the political domain that preceded the catastrophe.

¹⁶ We shall see later how this conception of a space of absolute domination, submitted to the king’s law or to divine law will serve as the starting point for the Arendt’s analysis of the origin of the egalitarian juridical space, which we assume we live in today; at the same time it allows here to re-accentuate her critique of the social by condemning the French Revolution as a purely social revolution, thus not a political revolution.

¹⁷ In this context she reproaches Marx for having prevented the constitution of a political space due to the introduction of the notion of social man. One could also note Arendt’s rejection of the notion of political economy, which she considers as a contradiction in terms, the economy being a totally apolitical domain, which belongs to the private.

conditioned toward predictable behaviors, incapable of spontaneous action, whose life knows no event; the fundamental elements of public space, like action, and of history, such as the event, disappear from public space.

Arendt says; “Society is the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance and where the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public.”¹⁸ This transformation of the public realm implies nothing less than a new mode of politics, a mode positioned outside traditional means of political action, a parallel politics that might escape being reduced to the social, and, more importantly, which would allow the bypassing of Arendt’s radically exclusionary space. This parallel mode, which sidesteps the reduction of everything to biopolitics, would then become confused with the Arendtian liberty to act and escape the condition of necessity that work represents for humanity. It is important to mention that Arendt’s critique is not directed against the absolutist character inherent to a hierarchical family model, but, on the contrary, against the constitution of survival as a public matter.

Why doesn’t Arendt connect her notion of the excluded to the political construction of a public realm? It is possible to identify parallel elements in these two lines of thought by suggesting that private property is to the man of action what nationality and citizenship is to the man of rights. But the comparison is problematic: the stateless person, the figure of the radically excluded, does not necessarily rejoin that of the laborer in modern society, nor that of the slave in antiquity, whose work was necessary. Rather, he is always found between political and private life, excluded from politics by his status as laborer or slave, but included because of the necessity of his work. “Yet ... even slaves still belonged to some sort of human community; their labor was needed, used, and exploited, and this kept them within the pale of humanity. To be a slave was, after all, to have a distinctive character, a place in society – more than the abstract nakedness of being human and nothing but human.”¹⁹ As such, stateless people couldn’t be equated with slaves, nor with the dispossessed middle classes deprived of social status, “they had lost these rights which had been thought of and even defined as inalienable, namely the Rights of Man.”²⁰

According to Arendt it is thus possible to distinguish between the radical exclusion of the stateless and another form of exclusion, which we might call, after Agamben, inclusive exclusion. In any case, this distinction in no way alters the Arendtian conception of a public realm as exclusive, a conception that distances not only the figure of the radically other, but also that of the other who is relatively accepted within a public realm because of his labor or productive force. The problem of exclusion is no longer posed in terms of property, at least not apparently, but in terms of national, ethnic, or racial belonging, factors usually tied to concrete social criteria. The material criteria have ceded to social and racial criteria, without, for all that, vanishing behind these criteria.

In order to reconsider the Arendtian conception of a public realm one must therefore resolve the aporia of its exclusivity, render it more transparent and accessible. That would mean confronting

the inherent dynamic of exclusion. Instead of pushing away the problematic moments of political life, one must incorporate them without assimilating them; one must attempt to produce an encounter between the dissonant elements of this exclusionary vision and the limits guaranteeing that exclusivity, in order to provoke a process of opening. This would allow the universal application of those noble Arendtian political criteria, which outline such a beautiful public space, a space of freedom, uniting the concept of freedom to that of equality in its entirety rather than in its reductive dimension.

In that case one would have to assert that politics itself is reactivated around those conflicts that break with democratic homogeneity in order to pose anew the question of the political subject and the potential subjectivization of those who are not subjects. We must examine – with Rancière, and against Arendt – *the social as a polemical subjectivization apparatus, one that might be constituted by subjects who contest the ‘naturalness’ of its places and functions by valuing the part of the without-part.*²¹ It is impossible to reactivate politics, as Arendt proposes, from inside the space demarcated by politics itself, which radically excludes any social element. One must exit political space in order to allow the entry of that, which may appear to be non political but which is ultimately the political element *par excellence*. The social question, target of all Arendt’s critique, does not by entering political space destroy it, but, on the contrary, reanimates politics itself.

November 2002, Translated by Olivier Feltham and Continuous Project

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 46. Agamben bases his arguments on these Arendtian claims in order to develop his concept of bare life, of private, and particular life exposed to the light of the public, just as he joins this idea to the Foucauldian idea of biopolitics, which includes all those mechanisms consecrated to the security of citizens, their physical needs, their needs for convenience and for work. In this manner the state, the public service, education, and everything that is in theory at the citizen’s service is transformed into police who watch over the running and the general flourishing of the society termed disciplinary. Politics is therein reduced to a small domain, which would be a step-aside, a step beyond the regular functions that each must fulfill.

¹⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 297.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 268

²¹ See “Entretien avec Jacques Rancière,” *Multitudes*, no. 1, March 2000.

IMAGE OF THE PEOPLE, VOICES OF THE PEOPLE

PABLO LAFUENTE

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION WAS THE BEAUTIFUL REVOLUTION...
THE JUNE REVOLUTION IS THE UGLY REVOLUTION, THE REPULSIVE REVOLUTION,
BECAUSE DEEDS HAVE TAKEN THE PLACE OF PHRASES...¹

ON 22 FEBRUARY 1848, a protest against the banning of a “Reform” banquet in Paris initiated a chain of events that lead in three days to the downfall of Louis-Philippe’s monarchy and the birth of the Second Republic.² Those involved in the revolution were small urban bourgeois, artisans, craftsmen, and skilled industrial workers (including the first factory workers), who were determined to deal with something 1830 had not: *la question sociale*. From a bourgeois perspective, this attempt was deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, they supported the revolution of the People, which is to say the honest and respectable mass, the Third Estate to which belonged everyone but the king, the clergy, and the aristocracy. But they feared what the People also implied: not the Third Class to which they also belonged and which they represented, but a mass of poor, uncultivated, unpredictable barbarians, coming from outside of the body politic, and therefore the exact opposite of what the bourgeoisie represented.

¹ Karl Marx, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 29 June 1848, quoted in T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), p. 9.
² This account follows closely T. J. Clark’s in *The Absolute Bourgeois*, pp. 9-16 and 187-88.

1

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You discuss Marx’s use of the aesthetic terms “beautiful” and “ugly” to refer to revolutionary class situations: “beauty” for the February Revolution, in which a unified class was able to fight as one against oppression, and “ugly” for the June Revolution, in which some of the exploited fought on the side of the oppressive bourgeois against the working class. So, beauty in unified class struggle, ugliness in false consciousness. You suggest this is a false division, one that artistic practice would do well to ignore, and you critique Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Bataille Monument* for “[defining] a working class voice, identifying it as a genuine identity, and stabilizing it.” Do you think a work such as that is “speaking for,” or representing through images? Or is there a difference?

PABLO LAFUENTE: The question of visibility is at the same time a question of voices. Not having a voice (not being authorized to speak) is the same as not being a part. In

Athens, the women and the slaves were there, but the fact that they weren't recognized with a voice meant that they didn't really count. The same happens today with the *sans papiers*: they are there, but they are not recognized as legitimate interlocutors. (As the French riots mentioned in the text show, neither their sons and daughters, now full-right citizens by law, are listened to, even when they decide to burn cars.) In that sense, performative speech is the basis of political representation.

That said, politics emerges not when someone decides to give someone else a voice or speak on their behalf (with good intentions or not), but when those who are not recognized as a voice decide to make themselves heard. Hirschhorn's piece in Kassel was the opposite of this. The artist is invited to participate in Documenta, and he decides to build an installation off-site, in the Turkish neighborhood, inviting the locals to collaborate in the construction and use the installation during the exhibition. The core intention seems to be to create, through the displacement of the audience from the exhibition space to a "real life" area, a friction that results in a moment political awareness.

But what does the *Bataille Monument* actually do? As a social space for locals, if it ever worked as such, it is frustratingly lo-fi and short-lived. As a place for interaction between visitors and locals, it is completely flawed, because of the length of the average visit and the lack of interest from both sides. At the end, those visiting the site (mainly international art professionals) are never forced out of the art environment; they are simply "art slumming." They are made to witness something they already knew was there: the Turkish community that can be found in any German town, Kebab store included. This community is invited to participate, but only according to the rules that Documenta and Hirschhorn establish. In *Bataille Monument*, their voice, their image, is the one that Hirschhorn imposes on them.

The first weeks of March 1848 were a time of celebration and communion, until the original alliance started to break up in the face of two issues: universal suffrage and the social question. Both Left and Right realized that the mass of hungry and illiterate peasants could be an effective instrument in sabotaging the revolution. The Right, with the help of priests and the gentry, began to work in that direction, while the Left, through the creation of National Workshops for the unemployed, the ten-hour work day, and the nationalization of the railways, sought to "feed" and "educate" the mass. On June 22nd, a day after the Workshops were dissolved, barricades were erected that cut Paris in two, Eastern working-class against the Republic. Once again, however, the factions were composed of a peculiar mix: in the case of the workers, both old and new working classes, without common leaders or slogans; in the case of the Republic, it was the bourgeoisie and the liberal and intellectual professions, but also Paris's criminal class, recruited into the Garde Mobile, as well as rural landlords and peasants. By the 26th of June the revolution was dead. The repression of press and clubs began, the workers from Paris were silenced, and the political fight transferred from the capital to the countryside, where the social question had already started to spark the attention of the peasantry, a fire that would be suffocated only some years later, in December 1852, when Louis-Napoleon established the Second Empire.

FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW...

Karl Marx's use of the words "ugly" and beautiful" in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, referring to political events, implies an evaluation of those events on the basis of their presentation or material manifestation. The fact that he ascribes these terms to the revolutions of 1848 would seem to transfer these evaluations to the coherence and integrity of the events themselves. If the February revolution was "beautiful," he seems to suggest, it is because the Third Estate, as a unified class, fought against the oppressors; in contrast, June was "ugly" because some of the exploited (the peasants and the *déclassé*) fought on the side of their oppressors (the landlords and bourgeois) against others equally exploited (the working classes). This confused situation, which Marx relates to a predominance of deeds and a lack of "phrases" (and therefore rational discourse and knowledge), offers a possible explanation for the failure of the revolution: the exploited peasants didn't know what side they were really on; had they known, they would have joined the workers, whose fight was in fact their own.

The notion that the exploited are unaware of their real situation is one of the cornerstones of Louis Althusser's reading of Marx. He links this notion to two analyses: first, that it is part of the nature

2

CP: Suppose it is art's role to shed light on the fissures and cracks in a social moment, but to stop short of proposing solutions. In this formulation, maybe Hirschhorn's creation of a problematic and flawed structure is interesting.

PL: The notion of role is problematic when talking about art. If we think that it is necessary to expose and analyze the fissures and cracks in a social moment, there are other, better, more effective, clear and articulate ways than art to do so. Art doesn't need a function to justify it, it is a productive practice that hopefully results in different ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling in general.

of the mechanism of exploitation to hide itself;³ and second, that ideology – "an imaginary relation to real relations"⁴ – is profoundly unconscious. The way to guarantee progress in science and politics, then, is through the Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism, which supposedly opposes ideology by neutralizing its effects.⁵ Because of its "quite particular and specific relationship with ideology,"⁶ art can function as a weapon in this regard.

Althusser dedicated two short texts to art, one on Italian painter Leonardo Cremonini⁷ and another on the theater of Carlo Bertolazzi and Bertolt Brecht.⁸ In his 1966 "Letter on Arzt in Reply to André Daspre," Althusser divides art production into two types, art that is merely ideology reproduced, and genuine art. The former includes realist art, which is based on the naïve notion that reality lies waiting to be represented, and, inasmuch as it is merely ideology, requires neither explanation nor interpretation. Genuine art also starts with ideology, only to define itself in opposition. "What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing,' 'perceiving' and 'feeling' (which is not the form of *knowing*), is the *ideology* from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and which it *alludes*."⁹ Unlike science, which provides us with knowledge, real art can help us perceive, with a distance-effect located in the inside, the ideology that is its basis. Cremonini's paintings of faceless men and mirrors show the relations between things and men, and, through their radical anti-humanism, refute any subjective notion of production. Brecht's *Galileo* and Bertolazzi's *El Nost Milan* expose the spontaneous ideology of a society, defined as "that society's ... consciousness of itself,"¹⁰ by displacing consciousness, making it impossible for the spectator to recognize herself in the play, thus shattering her ideas of autonomy or self-consciousness. The result is the production of a new consciousness, "of a new spectator, an actor who starts where the performance ends, who only starts so as to complete it, but in life."¹¹



Two consequences can be deduced from Althusser's texts. First, if art can liberate its spectators from ideology, it is because ideology is illusion and, as such, it is essentially on the side of ideas, not matter.

3

CP: "The eyes belong to the people, the voice belongs to the government" – an epigram that Jean-Luc Godard mentioned once. What is the place of images in this formula. ... Might one not instead say, the eyes belong to the people, the image belongs to the government? Or: the eyes belong to the people, the image belongs to the people, and the relationship between them belongs to the government?

PL: It'd be useful to know in what context Godard introduces that sentence. It reads like a very concise summary of *Alphaville*: the government controls the voice (with the dictionary/bibles), while Lemmy, the private-eye, the director's alter-ego, fights it, in order to bring the image back to the people. Godard is aware of the importance of language and discourse, but his focus is on the image: how to construct non-pedagogical, non-dogmatic visual material; how to free the cinematographic image from the power of text and plot. There is a stress on the viewer's agency in that formula: "the eyes belong to the people" means they are able to construct images themselves, by simply looking.

³ See Jacques Rancière, "Le concept de critique et la critique de l'économie politique des 'Manuscripts de 1844' au 'Capital'," in Louis Althusser *et al.*, *Lire Le Capital* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996). ⁴ Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), p. 113. ⁵ Initially, dialectical materialism is presented by Althusser as a theory of theoretical knowledge or a science of science. (See Althusser *et al.*, *Lire Le Capital*; or Althusser, *For Marx* [New York: Verso, 2004].) Later, in texts like "Lenin and Philosophy" (in *Lenin and Philosophy*), Althusser will maintain that philosophy can't be a science because it doesn't have an object or history. Rather, philosophy is politics in the field of theory. ⁶ Althusser, "A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre," in *Lenin and Philosophy*; p. 151. ⁷ Althusser, "Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract," in *Lenin and Philosophy*. ⁸ Althusser, "The 'Piccolo Teatro': Bertolozzi and Brecht," in *For Marx*. ⁹ Althusser, "A Letter....," *ibid.* ¹⁰ Althusser "The 'Piccolo Teatro'....," p. 144. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

4

CP: Could you talk about the position of Michelet in relation to Rancière? What makes him a particularly French thinker, and could one apply his ideas to non-French contexts, too?

PL: Rancière’s *The Names of History* identifies Michelet as the father of modern French historiography. He was responsible for a revolution in the poetic structures of knowledge, through his invention of a republican-romantic paradigm of history. This new paradigm proposed a new subject of history (the people who died mute, unnoticed), new events (the poor, women, the Revolution, France, or the native land) and a new writing that collapses the distinction between scientific and literary language. But, while he acknowledged the masses that the 1789 revolution had announced as the new subject of history, he showed the way their voice could be appropriated and, therefore, put under control. In that sense, Michelet is not a specifically French phenomenon.

Second, liberation from ideology is always characterized as directed from the outside: the theorist is the one who enlightens the working class as to its exploited status.¹² Political revolution is therefore dependent on a revolution of consciousness only possible within a hierarchical division of labor between worker and intellectual, the latter serving as the voice of the former. In the case of art, this is complicated by the fact that, as Pierre Macherey shows in *A Theory of Literary Production*,¹³ agency is not on the side of the artist but of the work itself, such that *Robinson Crusoe* and *Sons of the Soil* reveal their ideological foundations regardless of the intentions of Daniel Defoe or Honoré de Balzac.

BUT THEY DO KNOW

The relation between theory and practice is an unresolved question in Althusser. Any new consciousness effected by philosophy or art doesn’t imply a renewed political engagement, or at least not the kind that the theorist or artist often demands. To account for the mysterious eclipse of the mechanism of exploitation, Althusser proposes an even more mysterious relation between knowledge and action. The first step in solving this problem is to dismiss his original assumption, asserting instead that the exploited do know they are exploited and that the reason that they don’t try to change things is simply a lack of belief in their ability to do so.

Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*¹⁴ (1961) makes this point in relation to colonization in Africa. A few years later, in May ’68, Jean-Paul Sartre (“We want the *actors* of an event to be those whom we consult, we want them to be the ones to speak”), Michel Foucault (with his “chronicle of workers’ memory”), and *Libération* (“Information comes from the people and returns to the people”) agreed:¹⁵ the voice of the people is not ideology, it tells its own truth, it demands to be heard. Whether in 1848, May ’68, or today, the question is: what is the nature of that voice?

THE UNIFIED VOICE

When in 1848 Jules Michelet said to his students at the Collège de France “Feed the People off the People,”¹⁶ he didn’t ask them to give the People a theater that awakened their ideological

¹² The former despite Althusser’s insistence on the material aspect of the Ideological State Apparatuses. For criticism of both aspects of Althusser’s philosophy, see Jacques Rancière, *La Leçon d’Althusser* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974). ¹³ See Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). ¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, Paris: La Découverte, 2001. ¹⁵ All quoted in Kristin Ross, *May ’68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), p. 115. ¹⁶ “Nourrissez le peuple du peuple,” quoted in Jacques Rancière, “Le théâtre du peuple: une histoire interminable,” in *Les Scènes du peuple. Les Révoltes logiques 1975/1985* (Lyon: Horlieu editions, 2003), p. 172.

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CP: You point out that the recent Italian elections suggest a people divided, as if it should be a whole... The American media, or let’s say the entire political system, seems to be dependent on the idea of a divided public – i. e., blue and red states, etc., which is of course partly a function of the “two-party system.” Is the USA simply too big? Can a capitalist democracy survive at this scale, in other words? And is it a problem of representation – perhaps it is impossible to give an image to such a state.

PL: But, like in Italy, that division appears to be based on the assumption that this shouldn’t be the case, that the American people should have one voice – a voice expressed through a common culture and certain political channels. The distinction between red and blue, which is effective internally, from the outside doesn’t seem so clear: there’s not much distance between both in terms of basic economic values, and the typically American narrative of the land of individualism, freedom, and opportunity is essential to both. What the increasing polarization between the two parties does is block other voices, which sometimes nevertheless break through, as in the recent immigration marches and strike.

As to whether capitalist democracy can survive at that scale, the answer is probably yes, if democracy here means a certain type of political regime, and not, as in Rancière, politics as such.

consciousness, but a theater in which the People performed their own greatness for themselves, a music to which they resonated in unison. In order for this to happen, the essential condition is that the People are already a great People, undivided by class, language, or interests. Once this is established, it is possible to construct a republican history like the one Michelet offered in his *History of the French Revolution* (1847-53) under the paradigm of “generalized synonymy.”¹⁷ As Jacques Rancière shows in *The Names of History*, traces of Michelet’s notion of the People can be found throughout modern historiography, in the work of the Annales school, and in every attempt to render history scientific. But its influence is also present in completely different discourses: in Fanon, who writes that the “national culture is the ensemble of the efforts made by a People in the realm of thought to describe, justify and sing to the action through which the People is constituted and maintained,”¹⁸ or, more recently, in Italian politics after the general elections, where the first analyses perceived a country split in two (whereas it should be just one).

Michelet’s generalized synonymy has two implications: the necessary localization of the unified voice, and the elimination of any possibility of dissonance. The unified voice is localized because it is always the voice of a well-defined group, one attached to a territory (the French) or an identity (the working class). By virtue of this localization, not only is the voice structured around inclusion/exclusion, but, more importantly, what it says is always predetermined, always written. Because of this, there is no room for dissonance: if the greatness of the People is expressed through a single voice, the only legitimate speech is what this voice expresses. Anything else is heresy, and those who dissent are therefore not part of the People, rather they are “a deforming element”¹⁹ that needs to be rejected, “scum”²⁰ that should be silenced, because their voice is not human but animal.

If, as Rancière writes, “the revolutionary event, that which we must not dissolve in the supposed effect of its causes, is precisely the opening of a new political space, characterized by an excess of spoken words,”²¹ then Michelet’s formulation (like the Left’s project of republican education in the wake of 1848, or Friedrich Schiller’s proposed aesthetic community as a response to the failure of the 1789 revolution) is a remedy for that excess, and constitutes an attempt to control the revolution and deny its revolutionary character by silencing its words, explaining its causes, and defining its limits.

¹⁷ Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 47. ¹⁸ Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, p. 222. ¹⁹ Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, p. 45. ²⁰ “*Racaille*” was the word the French interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy used to denominate the rioters in the *banlieues* of Paris and the rest of France in the winter of 2005. As a reaction to the riots, the French government called for a state of exception that brought back laws dating from the Algerian independence war in the 1950s. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4441246.stm>, accessed on 10 April 2006. ²¹ Rancière, *The Names of History*, p. 37.

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CP: Granting the fact that Courbet simply shows with his paintings what is there, rather than teaching something that is not there, we can say that this aesthetic truth did not ever reach its audience in an immediate way, and that it still doesn’t. The image of the people appears to be subjected instead to the material language of painting and its conventions. Thus the strategy of Courbet to simply show what is there can not be separated from the discourse of painting and the break with this discourse that Courbet initiated, that is, an aesthetic break, which is not visible in an immediate and universal way, but which is tied to a specialized knowledge of painting and its rules. The aesthetic truth of Courbet’s images can therefore not be separated from the truth-effect of its material production, which is based on an exclusive knowledge of the bourgeois practice of art.

PL: But Courbet’s truth reached his audience too well! That, according to T. J. Clark, is the reason why Parisian critics rejected his *Burial at Ornans*: they saw in it something they didn’t want to see.

The question of technique in Rancière is a complicated one.

In principle, technique is irrelevant within the aesthetic regime of the arts—it’s a term that denominates a dominant way of producing art and its discourse, since romanticism.

What constitutes a revolution in Flaubert, as in Courbet, is the fact that the subject of the artwork doesn’t determine its style, which makes their language democratic. Another characteristic of this regime, related to this indifference of style in relation to the subject represented, is the opposition to a classification into genres, as well as into different arts.

The distinction between painting, sculpture, music and literature is not essential to artistic production. There are different languages, and different combination of those languages, but the rule is basically “anything goes.”

At the same time, as you say, the way things are said in art matters: the way the pictures present something and the way these pictures are themselves presented. The aesthetic effect will depend on these two factors, which means that this effect is not stable or fixed. But it doesn’t mean that expertise is a necessary condition for this effect (what expertise can do is articulate a poetics that explains how the aesthetic effect works). Basically, as with the issue of who knows and who doesn’t know, it’s a matter of political principle: the starting point is not that you need to have a certain knowledge in order to understand what a particular artwork does; the starting point is that, in principle, anyone can understand it.

INDIVIDUAL VOICES

As T. J. Clark says, “not many men – writers or politicians or painters – gave faces to the People in the nineteenth century. They were the mass, the invisible class; they all looked alike, in their jungle.”²² As with George Sand’s novels, Jean-François Millet’s paintings, with their generic figures in a generic landscape, offered a picture of the peasantry that repeated the commonplace imagery of the pastoral. The peasants of *The Sower* (1850) or *Men and Women Trussing Hay* (c. 1849-50) were acceptable to spectators because they were distinctly other, and didn’t threaten to become part of the life and politics of the city. Those of Gustave Courbet were different, but at the same time, *too* familiar and, because of that, threatening. His *Burial at Ornans* (1849-50) or *The Meeting* (1954) fully reflected the contradictions of the countryside, the struggle between local bourgeoisie and peasantry, landowners, and farmers. Courbet presented this struggle to an urban audience, exposing “the fact that there was more than one middle class, and more than one class struggle.”²³ His urban audience was as complicated as the peasantry he painted: “not any one group in Paris: not an industrial proletariat, since no such thing existed as yet; not a Parisian ‘peasantry’, since there were peasants everywhere, losing or gaining a multitude of identities; not the older generation of the city’s working class, hopelessly enfeebled by half a century of disease and political failure; not even the old race of artisans, losing its outlines in the general disarray. Courbet’s public was exactly this labyrinth, this confusion, this lack of firm outlines and allegiances. It was industrial society still in the making, still composed of raw and explosive human materials.”²⁴

The fragmented image of the People offered by Courbet didn’t teach its audience something they didn’t know, i. e., a reality that hid itself; it simply showed them something that was there and which they didn’t want to see. In that sense, if compared to contemporary work, it is closer to Eyal Sivan and Michel Khleifi’s *Route 181, Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel* (2004), or Sharon Hayes’s *After Before* (2005) than to Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane’s *Folk Archive* (1999-ongoing) or Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Bataille Monument* (2002). Kane and Deller’s collection of visual material produced by the British and Irish folk (or People) defines a certain working class voice, identifies it as a genuine identity, and stabilizes it. Hirschhorn’s installation in a Turkish neighborhood in Kassel displaces the spectator to a normally invisible environment, only to offer, again, a simplified image of this environment, one that doesn’t allow those who live there to be seen or heard. In contrast,

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CP: Could you talk about Stephen Willats’s social artworks of the 1970s, which you mention in your text?

PL: The work I was thinking of is *West London Social Resource Project* (1972) and others similar, like the *Edinburgh Social Model Construction Project* (1973). For the *West London Project*, Willats chose four “well-defined” social groups whom he invited to participate. The objective of the piece was to show the participants the role of behavior conventions in defining a structure of codes, and how those codes affected people’s attitudes and perception of their environment. In order to do that, he asked them to reflect on their relation to decoration and design items (from objects in their living-room to street furniture) by filling in questions in a booklet, then making the results public and submitting them to a vote. In Willats’s own words, in the *West London Project* the artwork is “a social resource operating outside institutions dedicated to art, as an integral part of its audience’s daily routines” [Stephen Willats, *Art and Social Function* (London: Ellipsis, 2000), p. 26]. The basic structure here is one of sociological objectivation, directed from the outside by the artist/sociologist.

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CP: The claim that it is not the philosopher who knows the truth, but rather the people, appears in Fanon, Sartre, Foucault, and Rancière, naturally in the form of an argument within philosophical discourse, an argument that one may accede to or contest. The truth as a matter of pure materiality is thus still subjected to a regime of ideas and its mediators, even if this regime argues in denial of its own rules.

If one argues, against Althusser, that the “voice of the people is not ideology” but truth itself, is there any need for a philosopher or artist to act as the messenger of truth? Might any interference of the artist or philosopher in order to try to represent this truth become not only unnecessary but also problematic?

Even if we state that the “voice of the people” is the truth, we still don’t know what the voice of the people is, and where or when we might actually hear it, and what its characteristics are. Is a more specific knowledge of the nature of this voice needed?

PL: Sorry if it seemed like it, but I never meant to imply that there is the truth of the philosopher as opposed to the truth of the people. In your formulation, you seem to be talking about a Truth with capital T, a monolithic truth that can’t be disputed, that doesn’t accept disagreement. The point was not that the voice of the people is the voice of truth (which would be the case in Michelet’s unified voice), but that there is truth within the disorder that constitutes the mass, and that attempts to put an order to that mass just silence it. What Rancière is arguing in his early

Sharon Hayes’s half-fictional, half-documentary research project executed in the streets of New York two months before the 2004 presidential election, or Sivan and Khleifi’s four-hour film located along the virtual border of the 1947 United Nations resolution offer pictures in which disorder is not tidied up and noise is not silenced. In both of these cases it is still the artist who gives the cue for speech to begin (an element that complicates their political status), but only in service of an image that allows for disagreement.

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In France in 1967, left activists developed an investigative practice aimed at presenting the working class without approaching it as a unified, undifferentiated block. The *enquête*, as it was called, was conducted with workers and farmers, door to door, in markets, by metro entrances, in villages. Against a sociology of the workers, in which the sociologist transforms the worker into an object of study (a strategy that recalls, for example, Stephen Willats’s social artworks from the 1970s), the *enquête* “places the project under the direction and control of the workers, who discuss and elaborate an initial text sentence by sentence. The *enquête* thus serves the political role of *regrouping* workers around a project.”²⁵ It intends to avoid the usual discursive representation of workers practiced not only by sociologists but also by trade-union delegates, political theorists, or journalists, the activities of which were often at the time described using the verb “*parachuter*.”²⁶ For contemporary art production that deals with issues of representation, the Maoist *enquête* could perhaps serve as an operational model, or at least point to the problems one is bound to encounter. Only an artistic practice that is aware of those problems and is not concerned with the “beauty” or “ugliness” of the material manifestation will be able to offer an image of the people with the potential for political activation.

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confrontation with Althusser is a matter of political principle: does the artist or theorist reveal mystic truths yet unknown to the people? Is there a hierarchy between the theorist or political leader and the worker? Ultimately, is there a hierarchy?

If we believe there is not, the role of the theorist can be one of research and the articulation of discourses that are not audible. What Foucault and others do in *I, Pierre Rivière...*, what Rancière does with his collection of texts by Louis Gabriel Cauny (*Le Philosophe plébéen*, Paris: La découverte-Maspero/PUV, 1983) what is at the back of the journal *Les Révoltes Logiques*, is an attempt to articulate those different discourses.

In contemporary art, Catherine David’s *Contemporary Arab Representations* is exemplary. There, you can find a series of different voices (artistic, theoretical, political...) that don’t claim to offer a unified truth, but a complex articulation of a situation, including disagreements, displacements, and contradictions. Another example could perhaps be IRWIN’s East Art Map (www.eastartmap.org), a polysemic reconstruction of the history of art in Eastern Europe.

²² T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 29. ²³ Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), p. 142. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 148–49. ²⁵ Ross, *May ’68 and its Afterlives*, p. 112. ²⁶ *Ibid.*

THE EMANCIPATED

OR

Letters Not about Art

*

MELANIE GILLIGAN

“...SOME KIND OF ELEMENTAL PROCESS IS TAKING
PLACE WHERE THE LIVING FABRIC OF LIFE IS
BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE THEATRICAL.”

—VIKTOR SHKLOVSKY

* * *

The artist dreams that he is at an average mid-week art opening. Growing tired of the person he’s speaking to, he makes an initial move to get away but finds the physical effort he made was too great. He has propelled himself through the air, shooting backwards through the sky, away from the earth, through a tunnel of clouds rising higher and higher, passing through thresholds of conscious thought into a plane of unconscious experience. When he finally slows down, the tunnel closes and darkness sets in. After a few moments it lifts. He is in a hall that leads to a living room partitioned by stylish dividers and lined with red upholstered benches that remind him of the 1930s. A young man is sitting at a table at one end of the room. He beckons the artist to approach.

* * *

The artist had only been keeping a dream diary for a few days when it occurred to him that it would provide good raw material for a new piece of work. He decided to continue to write down his dreams each day but would need to effect a formal change. He would write the dreams as a series of letters, much like an epistolary novel, and the recipient of the letters would be the gallery that represents him.

The following is an excerpt from his notes on the piece, which were later included as an appendix to the work’s first printed edition:

“I anticipate that our correspondence will be somewhat one-sided, with my letters rarely receiving a response. Thus the exchange may take on the flavor of unrequited love. But the project’s purpose is a critical one: by handing over my dreams—fantasies, imaginings, my most personal experiences—to the gallery I will explicitly perform the alienated economic and social condition of the artist who prostitutes his creativity on the market.... I might even suggest that the gallery assistants make drawings based on the dreams so that the conversion of the raw material of my intuitions into commodities will be complete.”

* * *

“Dear _____,

In my dream, the gallery has planned another show at the same time as mine and I’ve effectively been strong-armed out of my position. The other artist, a woman I know, has made a wooden thatched house and she’s going to be doing something with it. “Why don’t you do hers another time?” I ask the gallerist. “Don’t worry about it,” they say, “You guys should hang out, go for coffee together.”

I’m in the bathroom later and, as I use the toilet paper, I realize that a deeper layer in the roll is concealing a wad of shit. As the layers unfold I get closer and closer to the shit concealed there, and then finally the toilet paper becomes unusable. It’s revolting.

Like some Mafia threat, the shit is a way of telling me to get out while the going is good. I hear from over in the next stall, “Is there shit in your roll of toilet paper too?” A colleague steps out and says that he’s being punished as well and of course, he gets it much worse because he’s old.

Best,

The artist consults with the gallery first to make sure that they’re willing to support the piece and then sends the letter. A response arrives two days later.

Dear _____,

Thanks for your letter. We’re not that sure how you would like us to write in response, but we hope that the project turns out well.

Best wishes,

* * *

Dear _____,

In my dream last night, I open my emails and a spot that I click on the screen erodes away. Behind it is an image of the street outside my house and then, as if in a film, the next scene starts with me in the street. I’m with a few friends and we are walking. A dark blue truck with the word JUGGERNAUT printed on it drives along beside us. As it turns a corner, I point out to my friends that it’s expanding and that we should move back. Its back end is unfolding so that it grows higher and wider, then it gets longer, coming uncomfortably close to us. The truck is no longer turning away but begins to drive in our direction. We very narrowly manage to get out of its way. It threatens to crush us again when it folds out a broad and dangerous contraption that looks like a peacock’s tail. It unfurls rapidly, nearly trapping me under it.

Once we’re at a safe distance from the truck, we’re curious about who is in it so we speed as if disembodied to catch up and be in line with its cab. Inside are four art collectors, drinking and enjoying themselves and we realize that they’re celebrating some auction or deal that went well.

The next scene cuts to a whorehouse filled with impoverished Latino women – one woman stands apart with all the others grouped around her. The same collectors have arrived to celebrate. When they approach, the women all begin dancing, rocking their pelvises back and forth to the music. Their lower bodies move in a series of rapid poses as though the film had just sped up. The men stand around watching as the main woman makes coy and provocative faces.

Then I hear a banging from inside the container of the truck. It is a group of illegal laborers being transported to their jobs somewhere in the hinterlands outside the city. I worry for them stuck inside that container.

If you’re wondering what this has to do with anything, perhaps you should leave it to your assistants to interpret the dream in whatever medium they see fit.

Yours,

* * *

After several more of these communications, the artist comes to a grave realization, but he is not very clear about what it means.

Dear _____,

I am in a very wealthy, newly corporate-sponsored Kunstverein (with a Kunsthalle atmosphere) where my work will be exhibited in several months, looking at the show they have on. The work is a full-sized representation of an actual city street somewhere else in Europe. At one end stands a beautiful art-deco building whose charm had provided the original stimulus for recreating the street. The artist wanted to remake not just the building but also its context, including all the people who live in the area or frequent that street, down to the minutest detail. As an afterthought, the artist began to consider the politics of the situation. The people, if they were really to be like the people that exist around the building, would have to live their lives freely. The artist had read that all politics are a performance of sorts and she had misunderstood this to mean that she could literally stage politics.

So a group of people were paid enough to spend all their time immersed in literature about their social condition and then have interactions based on what they learnt about themselves. In fact the artist, inspired by the splendor of her art-deco building, thought that this would be the perfect setting for a real utopian politics to come to fruition. “We have no needs here, everything is provided for us, you just have to demand it!” she told them. The Kunstverein almost became a life-sized version of the computer game “Sim City” with every detail taken into account. But nothing particularly unpredictable came about, despite the artist’s continuous attempts to stir-up political tensions or compel the participants to some decisive act where they would try to improve their condition. And what did she expect? The people needed their salaries too badly to step outside the prescribed limits of their character.

Best wishes,

* * *

The artist reflected and wondered whether he’s not like the artist in his last dream. It occurred to him that his project was replaying a familiar epistemological binary: critical faculties putting the passive material of experience to work, a subjugation of his dreams by his rational thought. In trying to draw attention to the instrumentalization of the artist’s creative and intuitive capacities he had set up a relation of supremacy whereby his own critical meta-discourse would reveal a higher truth about a supposedly lower form of discourse: his dreams. He now understood that he has simply repeated the age-old dilemma of intellectuals and vanguardists who try to educate the people in order to help them improve their lot. He is reproducing an order that presupposes them uninformed or inferior. He thought of Brecht, who for better or for worse, had wanted to educate his audience. But then he wondered, “aren’t my dreams starting to educate me?”

From then on, the artist, having learned his lesson possibly too well, tried to devise a new performative action that would go beyond the enactment of art commodity exchange in his previous attempt. He worked fervently on this next line of attack, unsure what it would be, but now using his dreams as a guide instead of manoeuvring them for his own ends. Reading over his letters, he began to see the dreams as another kind of criticality that would challenge the presumptions he’d been imposing on the world. He would redress the inequality in his original project by acknowledging, through his work, that these two types of thought – the rational and the intuitive – were radically different but neither better than the other.

* * *

Dear _____,

I dreamt that a recently bought house was being renovated and that the new occupants wanted to leave traces of the previous décor intact to remind them that the house had prior owners. In one of those quick conversions of dream logic, this became a new trend in the art galleries: for a few seasons now all the shows in Chelsea included elements from previous exhibitions — a bit of the last wall color here, the traces of a built wall there — so that an accretion of details from previous shows would inform the viewer of the gallery’s recent history. When the erasure of what went before is ever more imperative in order to continue the drive into the future, it becomes essential to fetishize the signs of having had a past. So what ostensibly presents itself as a materialist treatment of history is actually a revamping strategy blinkered to the fact that it’s far too late.

Best,

* * *

Dear _____,

In my dream I saw a map that charted all the art practices in the world as well as the relations between them. The map was morphing as I watched it and I noticed that many of the artists were consolidating into groups. When I asked someone next to me why this was, she responded: “The art world continually proliferates and diversifies new practices. In an ever-expanding field of production one strategy that artists have adopted is to form super-identities in the form of collectives. The political connotations and social commitments that had inhered in such a strategy have, for the most part, evaporated, leaving behind a few residual signs. Many factors play into this surge for consolidation. One in particular is that combining one’s resources as artists, much like the collectivization of labor or the intensification of accumulation effected by capitalist concentration of production, gives logistical and strategic advantage.”

While the woman was speaking, the map became a series of photo stills from performances by art collectives. One was a large group of artists performing a mass choreography of sorts reminiscent of Soviet rallies. The next showed a collective re-enacting an anti-capitalist demonstration of the year before. Many people from outside the collective joined in and it eventually resulted in a stand-off with the police. As the images went on, it became clear that the rally, either with or without the art collective knowing it, was being used as a war game for the police to practice urban protest-control. The mock-demonstration proved so easy to contain that the police began to covertly support their future staging since these demonstrations conceived of as theatrics tended to delimit themselves and pre-empt more unruly forms of public dissent.

Best,

* * *

The artist tried to reformulate the project in numerous ways, but ultimately, each failed for the same reason. The equality (in difference) that he sought between dreams and rational thought was ineffable and elusive, and simply expressing the alterity of dreams seemed always to lead him to mystify or romanticize them.

Meanwhile, his dreams had become better critics of the art establishment than himself. They were continually generating new critiques at precisely the moment when he wanted to believe in their sovereign difference from critical thought. The artist presumed that he was alienating the inner life of his dreams by turning it into creative raw material for the gallery system. Instead he finds that the art world has in fact become the raw material for his dreams and that his inner life is relentlessly focused outside.

He started to think that maybe there was good reason why no artist would touch the topic of dreams with a ten-foot pole.

At this point, after many weeks of not hearing anything, the artist receives a response:

Dear _____,

We've been reading all the letters and notes you've sent us, paying close attention to the concerns that you've expressed about the project. Regarding one of your remarks, we think that the best way to prevent the formation of a hierarchy in this work is to not make any objects like texts or drawings, but to turn the same ideas into events or performances instead. That's why we've decided that instead of executing your dream diaries as drawings we would like to have them staged by actors (or non-actors). How would you feel about this?

Best,

Confused and dismayed, the artist hopes for a dream that will bring an answer, but all he is given are nightmares:

Dear _____,

For several nights in a row I've been haunted by dreams of a constant revolution that is international but not fought on class lines. It is announced publicly that, since politics have always operated through a set of theatrical and artificial roles and scenarios, all politics are now to be considered aesthetics and theater. And if politics are aesthetics then revolution will amount to a battle of spectacles and styles. Aesthetics has its own ways and means of conducting politics and they will be transposed over what's left of the post-political public sphere.

All across the art world, barricades are erected from the meaningless rubble of weekend events. A new model was already developed here: one-off, context-specific performances, exhibitions lasting for only a few hours, fostered by an art economy of spontaneous and improvisational production and strategizing. The revolution incessantly produces heroes and I find that I am one of them as my practice has always performed a theatrics of revolt. The art economy is propelled ever forward into increasingly rapid and fervent productivity where the new has always already been replaced, where nothing ever settles or is fully given form.

The revolution isn't just riddled with profit opportunities, it is one since a glut of as-of-yet undervalued as artworks are available at any given moment. In addition, it is assured that at a multitude of unpredictable turns each work's value can appreciate immensely. The revolution doesn't dissolve the art world for good but rather over-inflates it until it is finally instated as the meta-economy, overshadowing the temperamental market for stocks and derivatives.

Nothing, no consensus, ever solidifies and adheres into a fixed order. No paradigm shift is possible in society at large. Instead we have a paradigm of shifts that keeps everything in check, maintaining and refining the current economic order; advanced capitalism at its most pure.

* * *

Remarks on Installation
Simon Baier

The term *installation* figures as a formal description for an increasing part of contemporary artistic production. As the name for a genre, however, it refers neither to the specific material a work consists of nor to a particular technical support, condensing, rather, to the very cipher for obsolescence of a discourse on art that has been centered on the function of such a term.¹ Its elusiveness is by no means due to any exclusionary complexity, but to its sheer capacity to include: it takes in not simply all materials but also any artistic genre. As a specific form it constantly refers to that which lies outside the boundaries of form, as such, that is, any particular form of production. This is a situation Donald Judd sketched in 1965 as follows: “Obviously, anything in three dimensions can be any shape, regular or irregular, and can have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms or exterior or non at all. Any material can be used, as is or painted.”²

The question of what an installation looks like and, subsequently, its classification according to apparent categorical characteristics—illustrations of a text or slides of a lecture—, hence shows itself as at least insignificant, if not altogether misleading. The method of analysis that begins by showing what an installation *is* and, in consequence, hopefully seeing or experiencing it, in fact begins at its own blind spot. Its theoretical analysis as a specific form

actually starts out with the structural impossibility of *seeing it*. To attempt to describe the viewer’s experience within an installation or to make such experience the very character, misses therefore from the outset the crux that is its very production.³ Upon confronting this problem of *theoria* it seems necessary to return to Marx’s insight that the site of consumption and the site of production appear to be separated by a gap that renders them incommensurable from a singular vantage point. To be more precise, it is this *impossibility as symptom* that must serve as one’s point of departure.⁴

Defying any external similarities that might be conceived on the part of the viewer, installation

1 Rosalind E. Krauss describes this situation as an implosion of *the arts* into the all including one of exchange-value. See Rosalind E. Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea”: *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999).
2 Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” *Arts Yearbook*, no. 8 (1965), reprinted in *Complete Writings 1959-1975*. (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 184.
3 I would like to refer to two major works in this field of research that make the experience of installations their sole focus: Claire Bishop, *Installation Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005); Juliane Rebentisch, *Die Aesthetik der Installation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).
4 It is Paul Valéry who included Marx’s analysis in his aesthetic theory. See Paul Valéry, “Reflections on Art,” in Valéry, *Aesthetics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon, 1964), pp. 142-43.

figures as the actualization of an art that may only be grasped in the form of a deictic sum: each work of art standing for itself and, in particular, a material accumulation of “*objects, in fact*” [*En fait, des objets*]⁵ that can be classified and counted: a sum of endless and dubious lists of materials, always failing to grasp what it tries to qualify. Thus, it appears by no means accidental that the term installation, its history and definitions, appears as a symptom of contestation, if not of art’s decadence. The following remarks are intended not to outline a tendency in art, nor to enumerate a list of works and their contexts, but rather to outline the implications of what it means when *to install* becomes the generic description for what an artist does.

Universal Exhibition

If one examines installation as a specific artistic practice, it becomes clear that is has not been invented, in the strict sense of the term. Its emergence might instead be described in terms of appropriation. If its first explicit appearances within art can be traced back to the late 1960s, it is as a technical term, one by no means new to the institutions of art, rather appearing the *sine qua non* of those institutions. On the level of language as well as on the level of practice, the emergence of “Installation Art” must therefore be seen as a doubling of a pre-existing form of administration of the art object.

This doubling occurs at a historical juncture that sees both the crisis of the museum as a bourgeois institution, specifically around its archival claims, and, at the same time, a moment of unprecedented expansion in the international contemporary art market. A critique that proclaims the exclusive narrative of Western modernism to be a limited perspective on art’s modernities, and the critique of the museum’s claims to represent this past, is paralleled by a neutralizing force of equivalence that subjects a museum collection to constant reorganization, a consequence of the links between the institution, its assets, and the constant flux of capital.⁶ However, this concurrence of crisis and expansion appears to be structured around a fundamental paradox that catches the two in a destructive double bind: if the contemporary art market, with its accelerated production of value, asserts an autonomous existence according to its own rules, that, the regulation of contemporary art’s exchange value is nothing but a *credit* against art’s future,

7 For an analysis of the capitalist form of exchange in the context of Soeren Kierkegaard’s terminology of faith: Koiijn Karatani, *Transcritique: Kant and Marx*, trans. Sabu Kosho (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), p. 189.

5 I’m referring here to Marcel Broodthaers’ description of his own work on the invitation card of his first gallery show in 1964.

6 See in particular: Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October*, no. 54 (Fall 1990), pp. 3–17.

i. e., its eventual place in the museum canon. The essential supplement to market is its own outside, the illusory stability of the museum as archive, a guarantee in which it must continue to believe.

The implicit and paradoxical reason for selling art is a gamble that it will eventually be un-sellable, withdrawn from circulation within the museum’s walls: a negation of exchange-value as its highest expression. In the age of mechanical and digital reproduction, it is this negation that serves as the very definition and last remnant of what is meant by the term *unique*, that is, *not for sale*. The inclusion of the museum in the sphere of circulation marks nothing but the destruction of the market’s own credit, the *leap of faith* on which its rules of exchange are based.⁷ One might say that in this respect the acceleration of the art market is still pious as it erodes the foundations of its own belief.

If the history of modern art is read as the story of art’s quest for material support, or a medium beyond the museum (i. e. “life,” the conceptual, the political, mass production, the market), the function of the museum in fact remains unsurpassed, if not irreducible, for allowing art’s very possibility under the condition of modernity. Within this narrative, in which art’s constant transgression of the museum walls is matched by its continued inclusion within those walls, either in fact or in documentation, the strategy of installation situates itself on neither of these sides but in the form of a repetition. It repeats because it presses into service the museum’s own function, that of *display*, a function, which increasingly dominates museum as an institution and which superimposes its own contradictory uses. The phantasma of a site of pure conservation as the museum’s own utopia, a site that is always beyond its own capacities, is from this perspective a genuine contemporary symptom whose impossibility comes into sight at the moment it is left behind. It is Marcel Broodthaers’ *Musée d’art moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968–72) that can be situated around this axiom as a museum whose only site of conservation is the exhibition catalogue.

The function of display realizes itself in the form of a double movement. The installation that supposedly frees the object from the bonds of use, simultaneously uses the object for its own purpose: it both isolates and narrates, it exposes and

8 Boris Groys describes this double function as a paradoxical function of both sacralization and profanization. See Boris Groys, *Über das Neue. Versuch einer Kulturökonomie*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer), pp. 119–22.

9 See Giorgio Agamben, *Lob der Profanierung*, in Giorgio Agamben, *Profanierungen*, trans. Marianne Schneider (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp). pp. 70–91.

10 Agamben’s project to step outside the fatal project of modernity should thus be read as opposed to Adorno’s *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Regarding Adorno’s analysis of the antinomies of the museum, see also: Theodor W. Adorno, “Valéry. Proust. Museum,” in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 10, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 181–94.

11 It is interesting to note that the Communist party from the start reacted negatively to Lukács’ theory of *reification*, a concept that still dominates large areas of discourse in the humanities, particularly in the U.S.

relates.⁸ Giorgio Agamben suggests in his recent essay “In Praise of Profanation” that we conceive of modern art solely as a form of sacralization (and thus a destruction of use-value), a process that must be unraveled, dissolved, and abolished. He apparently leaves aside that the emergence of the museum and of modern art cannot be described as a mere extension of the religious sphere but, to the contrary, as an Enlightenment project it first of all marks a radical break with this sphere,⁹ a break, however, that nonetheless had its own religious undercurrents, as Theodor W. Adorno noted.¹⁰ The function of the museum can thus neither be described in terms of sacralization, nor in terms of profanation but has to be characterized as a particular intersection of the two. And one could add: the history of the museum can only be told as a history of particular configurations of this intersection.

The dialectics of the installed object can be summed up as follows. The art institution’s dissolution of use-value must be seen as the function of another use, a use that invests its material with an excrescence of meaning. This meaning cannot be deduced from either the installation’s own materiality or the viewer’s reading. Its predominant effect—the function of display—can be located neither within the material construction of the object itself, nor on the side of the viewer who agrees to take this scenario as an occasion for aesthetic contemplation. It manifests rather a third term, a *form of use* that cannot be seen from either of the two sides.

As an antinomic production of visibility and its reflection, the spread of installation as technique may not only be situated at a moment of crisis in the function of the art institution but also at a moment when cultural discourse in general seems to have focused increasingly on modes of display, ranging from the model of the universal exhibition to the notion of the spectacle. The description of modern society as an apparatus of totalizing display and enforced contemplation—a mass instantiation of the philosophical world view, as well as its depreciation—can be found in the work of Georg Simmel and his *Philosophy of Money*, and particularly in early Georg Lukács, whose theory of *reification* was subsequently taken up by Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, then to find its radical conclusion in Guy Debord’s analyses, which are echoed, amplified, and superimposed in the writings of contemporary authors like Jean Baudrillard and Agamben. This picture of society as universal display with the bourgeois citizen as viewer is now common sensical, indifferent to any political divisions. This represents a paradigmatic shift, a *replacement* of the discourse of production with discourses of visibility and spectatorship, a replacement that clearly marks the universalization of one particular side of Marx’s thought, a universalization that became all the more decisive in the de facto disappearance of the Left.¹¹

12 Allan Kaprow, “Pop Art: Past, Present and Future,” *Malahat Review*, no. 3 (July 1967), quoted in Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), p. 26.

13 See in particular: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October*, no. 55 (Winter 1990), pp. 105–43.

14 See Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in: Greenberg, *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995, p. xxx. An investigation of Greenberg’s military defense vocabulary is still due. Within this context, his project of rigorous purification actually appears as it’s own opposite: a *defense* against an event that has already taken place.

Universal Production

Today, the question of what an artist *does* seems to be utterly obsolete. Already in 1967 Allan Kaprow could state: “Young artists today need no longer say, ‘I am a painter,’ or ‘a poet’ or a ‘dancer.’ They are simply artists.”¹² What it means to be an artist is once and for all separate from any specific ways of doing and making. Art as an activity within the bourgeois state thus amounts to one more legally defined and controlled activity, the distinction of which is drawn up by a signature on a certificate of authenticity. In this respect the appearance of the ready-made signifies nothing but the profane epiphany about the reality of art: that which realizes itself through force of law alone, obliterating any substantial distinction between itself and other objects, obliterating any distinction upon which it could draw to manifest itself.¹³

As prescribed by the modernist strategy of *entrenchment*—each medium as particularity, and each for itself—the purification of artistic

production resulted in art’s exposure to an indifferent equalizing force that rendered artistic production indistinguishable from any other kind of production.¹⁴ The search for what is specific to each way of doing and making pointed to that which is common to all modes of production. Rather than signaling modernism’s collapse, it marks instead the dialectical turn of its own consequences. It seems worthwhile then to trace once more these dialectics and to follow them to their extremes. The investment of material with an immaterial surplus, understood as the concept of “composition”—a technique of which *montage* constitutes only the last remainder in which any internal relations are already externalized—is shattered by an indifference towards modes that must continuously refer to some internal meaning, which realizes its difference as critical effect. These are the banal realities of the market that enshrine this indifference once and for all when it abolishes the superstition *critique doesn’t sell*. This is the silent premise of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, in which the negating force of progressive art asserts itself through a failure to sell, thus binding it to the market as its mirror of the real. The shiver of aesthetic experience finds its double in the truth of exchange that the bourgeois subject attempts to decipher.

The urge to explicate that which has been implicit, to expose that which has been hidden, has thus been radicalized to such a

degree that the art object itself is no longer seen to contain what it is still considered to be. Mass production introduced to art the idea of the interchangeable, thereby establishing a rule of equality, which, as it equalizes art and production, simultaneously dislocates both terms. The artist is becoming a figure who *does* nothing in particular but *work*: a production process entirely removed from not simply specific materials, but any particular discursive field.

It is within this scenario that during the heyday of Conceptualism it became plausible to conceive art as such as unbound from the reality of the singular object, and that a notion of *art as idea* could be introduced. This is a notion that transcends each of its own material realizations, leaving the object behind in a state of absolute split. The argument for what has been termed the *dematerialization* of art¹⁵—its turn to the realm of analysis and critique, to the time of the project, to distribution, to the administrative or managerial—can not ignore art’s incessant re-materialization through display, including sheets of paper, ink and writing, photographs, books, magazines, a variety of machines, exhibition utensils, documentary leavings. The act of inscription becomes itself something to be *looked at*. The downside of the conceptual, its irreducible aesthetization in the instance of its appearance, should therefore not be conceived of as a secondary effect, an instance of *reification post factum*, but as that which always already precedes it. Failure is its precondition. Every discourse on *art’s dematerialization* is first and foremost an *after-effect*, a figure of speech that follows a primal encounter, the production of which always evades its analysis.

The Production of Aesthetics

Modernity in art can thus be characterized as a regime of the constant purging and return of the aesthetical. The aesthetical, however, is not to be found in a certain look or style, but in the establishment of a distance. It finds itself in something to be *looked at*, implementing a void between art and its own appearance, between the object and its display.¹⁶ Aesthetics and production are thus bound in an aporia of mutual negation in which each vantage cancels out the other, an aporia, which comes to a head in the contemporary field of artistic production that might be defined by the reduction to the following function: to *install*.

The current global distribution of art, a quantitative proliferation without precedent, is accompanied by the ongoing disappearance of artistic production as such. This paradox might be seen as a structural characteristic of what Jacques Rancière calls the *aesthetic regime of art*, a regime whose emergence he situates at the verge of Romantic Idealism and the European Enlightenment, an *episteme* on which

the production of art, according to Rancière, still depends: “The aesthetic regime of the arts is the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it ... from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres. ... [It] asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion of isolating this singularity.”¹⁷ Art’s singularity, and one might also say its autonomy, depends on an absolute identification with the common, a material heteronomy inscribed in its own process, which singles out art as it identifies with that which lies outside itself. But what Rancière calls a *pragmatic criterion*, a criterion that can distinguish artistic ways of doing and making from other forms of production, would itself seem to be nothing but an *aesthetic criterion*. It is a criterion that is only visible from the vantage of the spectator, a perspective from which the dialectic of what Rancière calls the *aesthetic regime* has certainly reached its final eclipse.

This eclipse of the discourse of art served as the starting point for these remarks on installation, a phenomenon that is its own blind spot, a symptom that can be neither seen nor analyzed, fragmented into infinite multiplicities of materials and media of which nothing may be called its own.¹⁸ Yet, as that which situates itself beyond material and medium, it marks art’s residue of its own materiality, which may be neither transgressed nor reduced.¹⁹ The eclipse of the *aesthetic regime*, which marks the point of its own disappearance, is haunted by its own production of which it constantly loses sight. The practice of installation as production of the aesthetical itself—a process that puts things on view but cannot be seen—marks the aesthetic regime’s antinomic subtleties and constant oscillation between the aesthetics of production and the production of aesthetics: an extremism in reflection that appears as the most opaque.

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15 See Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Rpt., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). The summing up of specific and highly contradictory positions under the rubric *Conceptual Art* here implies not a sufficient accounting but a strategic change of perspective.
16 This makes explicit the point that what transfigures a construction of wood and paint into a painting is not its composition but the fact that it is mounted on the wall.

17 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2004), p. 23.
18 See Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea”, p. 9–20.
19 The morphology of installation, which appears without any distinctive features, can be compared to a similar though distant event to whose limits writing of contemporary prose is still exposed: the emergence of the novel during the 18th century, which divided the literary world into two adversary camps. See in particular: Diderot, Denis, “*In Praise of Richardson*” (1762), in Diderot, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1994); Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

美術と国際性 — 緒論 —
ドナルド・ジャッド

新しい美術、伝統とは無縁の美術、制度化されていない美術は、国際的で世界的な広がりを持つという仮定は、気が付かれないが、工学、科学、産業が目に見えて発展するとともに始まったものである。この仮定は多くの美術についての仮定と同じく、議論の核心にまでは成長していない。唯一の真の美術はもっと小さな事柄だと発言することによって、それとなくこの仮定を攻撃する人々がいる。美術が国際的であるかどうかは、現時点での美術の特質を説明する問題である。むしろ軍隊を批判することが社会の特質を説明するのと同じである。だからそれは大きな問題である。国際的であることの長所あるいは短所は、たいへん曖昧である。すなわち、一方の極には、社会のあらゆる側面を中傷することを必要とし、他方の極には、そんなことには無関心といった具合に、それは多様である。美術が国際的になったのは、ヨーロッパで最初起こった科学と産業の発展とともにあって、美術が衣食と同じくヨーロッパだけのものなのか、あるいは科学とおなじく国際的なものなのかどうかを問題にすることは、もっともなことである。ヨーロッパの食物は日本や韓国そしてヨーロッパ以外の場所とは関係がない。科学は必ずヨーロッパのものではない。私は美術は国際的な活動だと思う。

しかし産業社会と同時に発生した国際美術が — 美術がその社会の美術かどうかはもうひとつ別の問題である — ヨーロッパで始まったのははっきりしている。ヨーロッパではもうひとつ別の路線として、ヨーロッパのアイデンティティーの揺動を引き起こしているが、それは確かに国際的であった。伝統からいっても、ヨーロッパの美術は常に本来的国際的であった。とはいっても、その程度は完全に産業化された世界とくらべると、低かった。ヨーロッパ内部の国際化が、科学と同じく、世界の国際化となったのだろうか、あるいはそれはヨーロッパの国際性に止まっているが、それ以外の世界に押しつけられたものなのだろうか。現在まで続いているより古い文明が他にあるように、より古い国際的な文明が他にある。つまり、中国や韓国、日本、それからあらゆる方面に向かっている。つまりインド、東南アジア、そして外に向かって、イスラム圏、東アフリカ、西アフリカ、そしてほとんど破壊された南アメリカと北アメリカなどである。各文明は現在の国際的美術の起源であったかもしれない。あらゆる歴史が同等になるにつれて、これらはすべて今よりも大きな影響を国際的美術に対して持つだろう。ヨーロッパの国際的な伝統美術は、世界的な広がりをもって国際的になったわけではない。植民地の美術は植民地的な美術に、2 級品の美術に、劣った美術になり、ヨーロッパの美術と建築を薄めたものになった。薄められたのは、植民地の美術よりほとんど常に優越していたその国固有の美術によってではなくて、植民地開拓者の無知によってである。いかなる国際的な考えも制度も植民地化と非常に似てい

ART AND INTERNATIONALISM Prolegomena
Donald Judd

An assumption that began unnoticed, but alongside the obvious expansion of technology, science and industry, was that new art, untraditional art, non institutional art, was international, worldwide. This assumption, like most assumptions about art, hasn't grown to the point of discussion. Occasionally someone attacks the assumption by implication by stating that the only true art is something smaller. Whether art is international or not is a question which unravels the present nature of art, just as criticizing the military unravels the nature of society, and so is a large question. The virtue or not of being international is very ambiguous; it varies from necessary, to indifferent, to malign with every aspect of the society. Since art became international occupying the expansion of science and industry that were first European, it is reasonable to question whether that art is merely European, like clothing and food, or only international, like science. European food is not relevant to Japan and Korea and the rest of the world; science is no longer European. I think that art is an international activity.

But it's evident that the international art which occurs at the same time as the industrial society — it's a further question as to whether art is the art of that society — began in Europe, where, as another complication, it was certainly international, which raises the complication of the identity of Europe. Even traditionally, art in Europe was always primarily international, although less than now throughout the industrialized world. Has the internationalization within Europe become, like science, the internationalization of the world? Or has it remained the internationalism of Europe but imposed on the rest of the world? As there are other earlier civilizations, which continue now, there are other earlier international civilizations: China, Korea, Japan and outward in all directions; India, Southeast Asia and outward, the Islamic latitude, East Africa, West Africa and, nearly destroyed, South America and North America. Each might have been the origin of the present international art. All will have a greater effect upon it than now, as all histories become equal. The international traditional art of Europe did not become international worldwide. Art in the colonies became colonial art, secondary art, inferior art, diluted European art and architecture, diluted not at all by the indigenous art of the country which was almost always superior to the colonial art, but by the ignorance of the colonists. The similarity of colonization to any international idea or institution is so great that all should be questioned. The European

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るので、すべてのものは国際化すべきである。19世紀の後半に国際的に流行ったゴシック・ロココ美術はそれ自体、社会の辺縁にあった。そして今世紀にあつてはさらにそうである。だからこの変化はバロックの教堂がメキシコの丘状神殿に取って代わったのとはほとんど同じではない。しかし結局のところ、美術はヨーロッパで、そして至る所で、植民地化の間に制作された。今、美術館の地下室には、より程度の高い作品がある。ついでにいうと、これらには地下室に置かれたものが多くある。またどんな国にも、そこそこ知られていないアーティストがいる。セザンヌほど良くはないにしても、彼らが余所で無名なのは、美術史の質い単純化の所為であつて、彼らの作品が本来的に地域的であつたり、国内的であつたりして、議論の対象として不適当であるという理由からではない。それどころか彼らの作品は国際的である。おそらくあまりにそうであり、自意識的に「国際」なのである。作品に独創性がなく、創造者としての知性と決断に欠ける。それは第二言語であり、第一言語ではない。この国際性は不十分であり、押し付けの外観、疑いを生ずる。これは植民地化の暴力によってなされたわけではない。しかし普通権力とお金はどこかほかにある。これらは特に優越性の態度である。それは常に劣等性の態度を要求し、それが何であるかという疑問と提起する。この派生美術は思想の普遍に見られる普遍的態度であり、権力の中心から距離は関係ない。現代美術の本質はたいてい権力とお金の外にある。実際これらと対峙する。その結果、派生美術はとにかく起こる。そしてフランスとドイツの地下室にも貯えられる。一度良いと言われたすべての物は、何回も悪いと言われるに決まっているから。3 種の必要である。考えも用ひも思ひもが簡単で、今や必要だと思われている。美術と建築の最良は、必ずしもこれと言えないが、それらを豊裕させるだろう。それは財力とお金によって引き起こされる。しかし権力とお金はもう良質の美術も建築も創造できない。植民地主義は暴力によって、鉄砲によって達成されるが、しかし鉄砲の魔法の方が、そしてその結果する態度の方が、はるかに重要である。というのは魔法は宗教であり、社会の構造であり、世界の本質であるからだ。キリスト教の魔法があなたの方よりも優越しており、服従が強化結論する必要がある。時がたてば社会は変化し、その様相は別れるが、それは一時にではない。社会は一時に服従する。そして時がたてば回復することがある。すべての産業国家における突然の朝につく変化は、古い態度においてよりも、恐ろしい外観においてより善い。すべては力によってあつた。人間に服従することができ。朝が旧か、暮か暮かの両方の選択、旧か新か、善か善かの選択には、時間がかから、おそらく数世紀の。南北アメリカの住民は、偶然殺されたかたは別にして、ほとんど殺された。なかでも北アメリカのノースウェスト・コーストの住民は、鉄砲とキリスト教、そしてわずかの増殖部品によって、彼らは自分たちの宗教、社会、自

art which was becoming international in the last half of the last century even more so, so that this change is hardly the same as the baroque church replacing the *teocalli*, but after all the art was made in Europe and everywhere, as during colonialization, there are lesser versions, now in the basements of museums. These incidentally, often don't deserve the basement. Also, every country has artists who are only known there, not as good as Cezanne, who are only unknown elsewhere because of the impoverished simplification of the history of art, not because their work is inherently regional and national and therefore in one argument, irrelevant. Their work on the contrary, is international, perhaps too much so, self-consciously so. The work is derivative, short of the intelligence and resolution of the inventor; it's a second language, not the first. This internationalism isn't sufficient and produces an appearance, a suspicion, of imposition. This isn't done with the violence of colonization, but usually the power and the money are elsewhere and especially the attitude of superiority, which always requires an attitude of inferiority, which raises the question of what that is. This derivation is the usual quick decline of ideas, and is not due to distance from centers of-power. Most of the nature of present art is outside of power and money, in fact those are inimical to it, so that the derivation occurs anyway, and is stored as well in the basements of France and Germany. A third category in storage is because everything that is said well once has to be said badly many times. It's easier, supposedly necessary now, to repeat than to think. The sales of art and architecture may degrade them, not necessarily, which is caused by power and money, but power and money now cannot create good art and architecture. Colonialism is achieved by force, by the gun, but the magic of the gun is even more important, the consequent attitude, because magic is religion, the structure of the society and the nature of the world. It's necessary to conclude that the magic of Christianity is superior to your own, and submission follows. Societies change, divide their aspects over time, but not at once. They submit at once and sometimes recover over time. The abrupt change conspicuous in all industrial countries is more in awful appearance than in old attitudes. The whole can be broken quickly by force; the selection of new and old, good and bad aspects, old and new, bad and good, takes time, now probably centuries. Most people in South and North America were killed but some by chance were not, among them those of the Northwest Coast of North

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然界は関連していたと獲得させられた。取書は複製については説明していないけれども、彼らの複製を伝える絵画も彫刻も喪れ、粗悪になり、制作すべきでないと思われた。しかしそれに代わるキリスト教美術はなかった。かつての姿をした彼ら自身の写真だけしかない。しかし彼ら、ナバホ族、ホビー族、プエブロといった多くのグループは、思いの外耐久力があるし、回復している。しかしかつての彼らではない。劣等性は今や明らかではない。ノースウェストには良い美術がたくさんある。ナバホ族とすべてのプエブロは、北アメリカで狩りに使うさまざまな宝石、織物、陶器を生産する。品が多っているのだろうか。アメリカの優越性の究極の証明は第二次世界大戦の勝利であつた。その魔法の敷地がなければ、コカコーラの魔法はなかっただろう。しかしその後、象徴としてのコカコーラは誰をも自分たちのお茶は不味く劣っていると確信させた。そしてその後、その人々が持つことのできたわずかな産業社会の印は、昔から紫光あるアメリカ合衆国 — 今では悪くても紫光でもぜんぜんない — と関係するようになる。鉄砲の次に、ブルドーザーの後で、冷蔵庫が世界を征服する。テレビよりはるかに大きく征服する。テレビは実用的であり、家や小屋に鎮座し、そこにいる人々を妨害して何もできなくさせる。これは現代美術の経験的な作るべき姿とは違う。しかし人々にとっては、それをこのように扱う方が簡単である。フランスとドイツ、中でもニューヨークで最新のものを作っていると思ひ、だからローカルなところで制作され、考えられたことよりも、自分たちの方が優越していると考えたアーティストも含めて、そうである。ローカルなものは合衆国のようなヨーロッパの植民地では多くないだろう。余所で起こった最新のひねくれた例は1974年に、オーストラリアのある美術批評家によってなされた不平である。彼はニューヨーク近代美術館企画のあるグループ展について次のように言ったのだ。オーストラリアには、出品しているアーティストと同じような作家がそれぞれいるのだから、ここにこのような展覧会をもつてくる必要はない、と。

「*Internality*」という言葉は、「ポストモダン」の建築家たちによって、それ以前の建築に対して冷笑的に使われているが、彼らの方こそ最も悪い意味において国際的であり、単にコカコーラにすぎない。この言葉は多くの意味で使われる。かつてのキリスト教のように、それは進歩として使われ、優越性として使われている。宗教はすべて己の優越性をまだに信じているが、ほとんどの宗教は、進歩的であるだけ主張しない。「国際的」と「進歩的」はソビエト社会主義共和国連邦の旗印であつた。合衆国でいかにまだにそうである。言葉の多くの意味を区別し、何が進歩的で有用なのか、何が反動的で有害なのかを見極めることは重要である。美術にとって最悪の状況は、それが商業的であると同時に軍事的な反動

America. The gun, Christianity and a few other mechanical appliances convinced them that their religion, their society, their natural world was wrong, even though the Bible doesn't explain the Raven. Their fabulous painting and sculpture became obsolete, inferior, and not to be done, even though there was no Christian art to replace it, only photographs of themselves as they were. However, they, the Navahos, the Hopis, the pueblos, many groups, are more durable than expected and recover, but not as they were. The inferiority isn't clear now. In the Northwest there is a lot of good art. The Navahos and all of the pueblos produce all of the jewelry, textiles and pottery that is worth having in North America. Who is inferior? The ultimate proof of American superiority was winning World War II. Without that magic gun, Coca-Cola wouldn't be magic. But after that Coca-Cola as a symbol convinces everyone that their tea is prosaic and inferior. And after that the few tokens of the industrial society that its people can afford become associated with the rich and glorious United States, now not rich and never glorious. Next to the gun, after bulldozers, refrigerators conquer the world, even more than television sets, being practical, sitting in houses and huts denying much about the people in them. This isn't the way contemporary art should be international, but it's easy for people to treat it this way, including artists who think that they are doing the latest in France and Germany, or of all places, New York City, and so think they are superior to what is being done and thought locally, which in European colonies like the United States may not be much. A perverse example of the latest elsewhere is a complaint in 1974 by an Australian art critic about a group exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York saying that it was unnecessary to send it because in Australia there was one of each like the artists shown.

The word "international" is used scornfully for the architecture prior to theirs by the "post-modern" architects, who are international in one of the worst senses, merely Coca-Cola. It is used in many senses. Like Christianity once was, it is used as progress, used as superiority. All religions still believe in their superiority, but most don't claim to be progressive. "International" and "progressive" were catchwords of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. They are still of the United States. It's important to distinguish between the many senses of the word and to identify what is progressive and beneficial and what is reactionary and harm-



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ない、このディレンマには解決がない。大事なことは、伝統を無効にした
コカコーラや、今世紀初頭フィリピン人を抑圧した合衆国、あるいはホピ
ー族の伝統を破壊しようとしたキリスト教会などを撤回しては行けない、と
いうことだ。つまりある価値に取って代わった別の価値とか、小さな権力
に取って代わった大きな権力などといったものと直向すべきでない、とい
うことだ。ホピー族の伝統的信仰は、たとえば、科学者やその他の人にと
っては信じることはできないが、その矛盾はどうすることもできない。知識は
存在する。それは、圧力であれば、政治的になる。ホピー族の間でも、誰
にとっても、矛盾は存在する。ホピー族は合衆国と戦ったことはなかった。
かつて一度だけスペインに抵抗したが彼らの子供たちは遠く離れたア
メリカの学校に連れて行かれ、キリスト教を教えられた。ただと地域の学
校もおそらく依然アメリカ的である。これは侵害であり、あってはならぬこ
とだ。それはどこまで侵襲ある意味では、すべての宗教の初期の科
学は間違っているか、それはない。しかし、組織化されたモノの害害は、間違
っているかもしれない、あるいはそうでないかもしれない。その程度を、また
科学的に正しいかもしれないという態度を、従って完全に矛盾している
わけではなく、結局は有用であるという態度をとる。十分なものがある
れてきたので、おれおれには分らない。私はキリスト教については、暴力
によるもの、その破壊を勧告するまで知っている。しかし他の宗教につ
いてはほとんど知らない。それは昔の歴史である。地球上はどこでもブ
ルドーザーでならされつつある。冷蔵庫にはそのまわり十分な空間が
必要なのだ。そして人類の歴史も同様なのだ。つまり生き方や宗教、
社会の伝統や芸術は、しかも短期間のうちにまた莫大な人口によって
ならされつつある。何が進行しているかについての私のイメージは、何太
な図画である。それは小さな、無害で恒常的な、道具である。広々する
な図画は現在の人口である。細い線はそれ以前の人口である。おくら
くは同等なところで、歴史のすべては今世紀のそれと同等である。質
ではなく、少なくとも量においては同じである。これは恐るべき成長である
し、態度とは別に、現在の諸問題を説明する。今世紀の小さな軸を、広
大な、平たい面紙の下部の下に置いたことは簡単なことではない。成
長は大きな広がりを持ち、急である。それで人間は無知で、無関心、夢見
なして攻撃的である。第二次世界大戦後の合衆国の外観における変
化だけをとっても、陸地である。1947年に私は1年間、韓国にいた。そこ
には20世紀ヨーロッパに由来するものほとんど何れもなかった。1991年から
92年にかけて私は韓国にいた。あらゆるものがあふれることで、1947
年の普通の外観が、韓国に伝統と社会のほとんどすべてが、もうソウル
にある民族博物館のガラスの向こうに納まり、その民族村に隔離されて
いた。もちろんそれは重要であるし、美しかったが、これは45年の間に起
こった完全な変遷である。それは、動物が檻の外から、中にいる人間を

ing. This is an inevitable contradiction, not an imposition. There is no resolution to this dilemma. The main thing is that it not be confused with Coca-Cola overriding tradition, or the United States suppressing the Filipinos at the beginning of this century or at the same time the United States and Christianity trying to destroy the traditions of the Hopis, one superstition supplanting another, a larger power a lesser. The traditional beliefs of the Hopis, for example, cannot be believed by scientists and some others but the contradiction cannot be touched. Knowledge exists. It becomes political if it is pressure. The contradictions will continue among the Hopis, among everyone. The Hopis never fought the United States, only the Spanish once, but their children were taken away to distant American schools and taught Christianity. The schools in the area though are probably still American. This is aggression and shouldn't happen. It happens everywhere. The earlier science in a sense of all religions may be wrong, but the religions as organizing structures have attitudes which may or may not be wrong, may even be right scientifically, and therefore not completely contradictory and useful eventually. We don't know : enough has been destroyed. I know enough about Christianity to recommend its demise, not by force, but I know very little about other religions. They are everyone's history. The earth everywhere is being bulldozed under itself - the refrigerator needs lots of room around it - and similarly so is the history of humanity, the ways of living, the religions, the traditions of the societies, the art and in a very short time and by a very large population. My image of what is happening is a great big thumbtack, which small is a harmless international device. The wide, flat head is the population now and the thin stem is the earlier population, perhaps about equal. Or, all of history is equal to that of this century, at least in quantity, not in quality. This is a horrifying growth and explains other than attitudes, the problems of the present. The little stem of all history is not going to be easy to find under the vast, flat head of the tack. The growth is vast and quick and so the people are ignorant and indifferent and mindlessly aggressive. The change in the appearance alone of the United States since World War II is extreme. In 1947 I was in Korea for a year. There was almost nothing from the European twentieth century. In 1991 and '92 I was in Korea. Everything, everywhere, the normal appearance in 1947, almost the whole of the Korean tradition and society, is now behind glass in the folk museum in Seoul and isolated in the folk villages, of course important

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観しているという冗談のようである。これはすべて違ひ。そしてもちろん他方
で、回りを見れば解るように、韓国でもどこでも、中途半端な善は非常に
破壊的である。異なる（伝統の）グループを憎むように、たいへん強力
な伝統があれば、破壊の上には、たいへん強い伝統もある。どこでも破壊
は都市計画でも、高層ビルや何もないソウルで東京にありの破壊では、
日本建築や韓国建築の本質はほとんどない。何の新しい周辺地区に
は、何の長所は何もない。ガラスの新しい鳥島げたセンターには、ガラス
のわずかなところさえない。過去から来んでいることは何もないんか
いである。

世界はますます統合されていき、ますます国際的になっていく。すでに世
界社会、世界の相似性がある。数世紀先を遡っている。何が進行すべ
きか、何が守らるべきかは重要な問題であるが、考慮されていない。国
際的であるならば何を何か。そうあってはならないのは何か、そん
なことは議論されている。多くのことがそうである。「それがあつたまま
にり方なのだ」。冷戦、ドイツと朝鮮の分断、東ヨーロッパ諸国の隷属状
態、ソヴィエト社会主義共和国連邦、それらは不可避なもので不変のも
のであった。それらは突然変化した。かいた議論もなく、流行の上に。
そして新しい状況が突然出現してあつたままの在り方になった。ほとんどすべ
なことも、言うべきことも何もないものになったのである。結果と同意し、何も
守らなければならない、いかなる教訓も手はれていない。アメリカ人は年間
の軍事予算3千億ドルを正当化するために、冷戦に代わるものを求めて
いる。1年間はイラクが役に立った。誰も軍隊を疑問視しない。ここスイス
でも空軍演習をともなうようにどうにか機が飛行した。大騒ぎが起きた。
そして日の出とともにスイスのジェット機もまた飛去る。ソヴィエト社会主
義共和国連邦は、機能しない巨大中央政府であるが、だからこれは中
央政府の失敗を意味するとか、貴ったものは誰もなかった。合衆国もまた
そうかはなれていない一例である。その無能力とその軍隊の下に沈み
つつある。巨大な軍事予算は50年を経た制度である。軍事費を1ナガ
らてきたをただちに、思い切って削減することに、そしてそうすれば可能
な教育や他の必要なことを改善することに失敗すれば、今後50年は迷
惑と故く大不況を呼ぶことだろう。遅れは非常に危険である。軍隊の崩
壊というめったにならぬ変事によって、東ヨーロッパ以前のソヴィエト帝国
が変革したために、道徳は今も、喜びと復活の時となる。アメリカの巨大
な軍隊が、パレナに軍備削減と疑問視を、ドイツと日本を50年後に再
武装に追い込む、イラク戦の時のように、彼らを破壊状態にすることは漸
進的計略に違ひない。

ヨーロッパは帝政のどちらの役番からも学んでいない。ヨーロッパは、皆

and beautiful. This is a complete reversal in forty-five years, like the joke about the animals being outside the cages looking at the people inside. This is very fast and of course while partly good is very destructive, as can be seen by looking around, in Korea or anywhere. Some traditions, say hating the variant group, are very strong and some, such as architecture, are very weak. Nowhere have architects and city planners learned from the past : there is little of the real nature of Japanese and Korean architecture in Seoul and Tokyo, there is none of the virtues of Paris in its new surroundings, there is nothing of the small virtues of Dallas in its new preposterous center. It seems that no beneficial lesson is learned from the past.

The world is going to become more and more unified, more international. There is already a world society, a world similarity. There are centuries ahead. What should go and what should be kept is crucial and is not being considered. What should be international and what should not isn't discussed. Nor much of anything. "That's the way it is." The Cold War, the divisions of Germany and Korea, the subjection of the eastern European countries, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were inevitable and unchangeable. Suddenly they changed, without much discussion, like a fashion, and suddenly the new situation is the way it is, little to be done or said. Nothing to be learned, as in architecture, no lessons learned. The Americans are looking for a substitute to the Cold War to justify three hundred billion a year for the military, Iraq was only good for one year. No one questions the military which here in Switzerland just flew over with a sonic boom. The sun came out and when it does so do the Swiss jets. No one has said that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a large, central government which didn't work and that implies the failure of central government. The United States is an example not far behind, sinking under its incompetence and its military. The huge military business is a fifty year old institution. The failure to soon drastically reduce military expenditure and thus the deficit and thus make it possible to improve education and other necessities, will produce a great depression that symmetrically may last fifty years. The delay is very dangerous. The threat of the collapse of the military makes this time one of collapse when, because of the changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet empire, it should be a time of pleasure and resurgence. The enormous American military makes Russia question disarmament and presses Germany and

過拡大の要請とされる態を待たず、危険な経済的競争や侵略や革命の内的脅威も持たないのにも、ヨーロッパの統合は進歩と考えられている。ひとつの制度を必要以上に拡大することは、権威と支配、そして全体主義を招く過剰物を作り出すことである。過剰はより小さな制度を破壊し、結局は過剰を作った人々を破壊する。統一は、お金や工場を自由に動かすことのできる巨大企業を創ることになる。合衆国政府による自由企業において、それらの巨大企業は自由であろう。自動車会社がアメリカに対して何でも自由になれるように、それはヨーロッパに対して何でもできる。「小」市民はもっと支配されるだろう。ホテル界の巨人、レオナ・ヘルムスレーが言ったように、「税金を支払うのは小市民だけだ」。「特別待遇を受ける人物」(特権階級や支配階級)の組織のなかで、事ここへ来て、見失われるような人々の組織のものは、説明のつかない失敗で、彼女は先日、脱税で捕まった。小さな国に対して、現在、状況の進展がある。それは基本的に良いことだ。なぜヨーロッパからこれらの小国を除外するのか。統一は戦勝国である合衆国に由来する。古い、廃れた進歩観である。主としてユーゴスラヴィア侵略に基づいて、小国は国際的であるという議論が、小国に対してなされる。まるで、合衆国やソビエト社会主義共和国連邦がそうでないのと同じように、またまるで、この二国が、中央政府の二つの固定された属性である。客観的で寛容であるのと同じ。これに関して美術の大事な点は、ローカルなのは政治であり地域的關心事であるということだ。それが中央政府が破壊したものである。真の關心事と活動とは、早にとどこも教会に行くことではない。ローカルなのは美術ではない。美術はこれらの偏狭的な關心事を反映することではない。あらゆる政治の美徳の上に、それはそれらの關心事を意味に還元される。美術は過去においては、解決するものとしてではなく、正当化するものとして使われた。現政府の恐ろしい行為を正当化するのには良いことではあるが。美術がモービル石油を正当化したり、ワシントンを裝飾したりするとは信じられない。長い間、美術家はどこであれ、制度のために仕事をしてきた。もっとも新しい最上のキリスト教美術は17世紀である。国際的社會の断片を表現し、正当化するために使用されることは、美術にとって、つまらないことである。また別の衝撃波の爆音がする。

(黒岩善介 訳)

Japan to rearm, after fifty years, as in the war against Iraq. It must be an auxiliary plot to reduce them also to insolvency.

Europe doesn't learn from the fall of either empire. The unification of Europe is considered progressive even though Europe has no enemies, the usual reason for enlargement, no dangerous economic competitors and no internal threats of aggression or revolution. To make an institution larger than necessary is creating a redundancy that invites exploitation and control, totalitarianism. The redundancy destroys smaller institutions and finally the people who made it. The unification will benefit large corporations who will be able to freely move money and factories. They will be free in the present United States Government's version of free enterprise, which is to do to Europe what the automobile companies were free to do to Detroit. The "little" people will be more controlled. As Leona Helmsley, a big hotel person, said: "only the little people pay taxes". In an unaccountable failure of the "good old boy" system she went to jail the other day for tax evasion. There is a present development toward small countries, which is basically good. Why get rid of them in Europe? The unification is an old and obsolete idea of progress derived from the idea of the United States, which won the war. The main argument made against small countries, based primarily on the aggression in Yugoslavia, is that they are nationalistic, as if the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are not, as if they are objective and tolerant, two supposed attributes of central governments. The main point for art is that it is politics, community concerns which are local, those which the central governments destroy, real concerns and activities not just going to church now and then. It is not art which is local. Art cannot even reflect those particular concern and, as with every decoration of politics, it would only obscure them. Art was used in the past as a justifier, not a solver. It can't be used to justify the mostly awful behavior of the present governments. It's not credible that I justify Mobil Oil or decorate Washington, D.C. It's been long time since artists worked for institutions anywhere the last first-rate Christian art is in the seventeenth century. It's petty for art to be used to represent and justify segments of an international society. Another sonic explosion.

She says she has come here precisely to break with what she was before. She wants to destroy everything she used to be before. She obsesses over fake relations, fake exchanges, the kind of barter that she says cost you nothing but actually eat your soul away. She is a lifestyle totalitarian, like other people are love totalitarians. The way we survive. I think what bothers her is that we actually do survive. Before, when we were still living on Beatrix's trust fund, she found nothing to complain about, and she was the most agreeable of companions. The fact that the money we were living on was earned dishonestly, a fat check sitting in a bank accruing interest on some previously doctored deal didn't bother her at all. Everybody has a point where they stop being able to identify compromise, a kind of ethical horizon line beyond which they believe that things are no longer under their control and should therefore be ignored. But her horizon encircles everything she makes. One day I told her that wage slavery was nothing but another form of prostitution and she then pushed this idea to another level, for her parting with anything she made became tantamount to selling her own body. I ask her if she thinks we'd be better off starving. She refuses to reply, and simply tells me that every question carries the mold of the answer the one who phrases it desires to receive. She has nothing but contempt for our potential customers. She imagines corrupt yet additive-free cigarette smoking pseudo-liberals strolling along the aisles of the market place, desultorily eying our wares, holding them in their hands, maybe trying them on and comparing them to the other designer items they have amassed in their closets back home. I think she is so protective of the bond we've formed, of the freedom we've built for ourselves that she wants to deny everybody else the possibility of ever coming close to it. Her thinking regarding objects approaches the pre-modern. The only way I can explain it to myself is as a kind of voodoo. She profoundly resents providing others with a vicarious way of easing their discomfort with the alienated life they lead. Among us, she is the destructive character. Needless to say, we would never want to see her go away.



Impure Ideas: On the Use of Badiou and Deleuze for Contemporary Film Theory Nico Baumbach

If there was a single dogma of 1960s and 1970s film theory, it can be summarized in a sentence by Christian Metz: The role of film theory is “to disengage the cinema-object from the imaginary and win it for the symbolic.” This is where semiotics, Althusserian Marxism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis all seemed to find a point of convergence in the fruitful moment that began in continental Europe in the 1960s, especially France, and spread throughout the anglo-American academic world in the 1970s. By imposing questions of representation and subjectivity into a phenomenological experience that effaced those questions, theory was a political intervention into cinema’s machine of the imaginary. As Pier Paolo Pasolini claimed, the work of theory was to add something to our knowledge of its object and hence to separate itself from “the obscure ontological background” that arises from “explaining cinema with cinema.” As the example of Pasolini should remind us, this period was not anti-cinema, but was firmly committed to a cinema of the symbolic, whether in the *camera-stylo* of Nicholas Ray or John Ford in which the mise-en-scene functions as écriture to reveal the contradictions of the film’s official narrative or in the more overtly oppositional cinema of a Godard or Pasolini in which the cinematic-imaginary is perpetually under erasure. According to Godard, the concern was not the representation of reality, but the reality of representation; that is, not with the imaginary, but with the symbolic. Today nobody believes this dogma anymore, but the problem is now everyone believes the exact opposite. Today, the dominant assumption of writing on the moving image is that the goal is to wrest it from the symbolic and restore it to its immanence as a heterogeneous bodily experience. The rapidly proliferating English-language books on Gilles Deleuze and cinema as well as the recent returns to phenomenology in both film theory and New Media, privilege what is no longer called the imaginary, but is now referred to as affect or sensation. These writings would likely wish to separate themselves from what film scholars David Bordwell and Noël Carroll have termed “Post-Theory”: a movement against grand narratives oriented toward local, empirical investigations and using terminology derived from cognitive science. If Bordwell’s interest in “biological propensities” and “cognitive universals” would strike the Deleuzian as too normative and not properly nomadic, let’s identify what they have in common: a refusal to see media in terms of either the subject or representation and an unqualified dismissal of the utility of concepts such as identification, ideology, or any terminology derived from psychoanalysis or Saussurian linguistics. In short, they share an

attempt to shield the cinematic experience from the knowledge-effect of theory.

The use of Jacques Lacan is kept alive in a new eclectic Lacanian cultural criticism associated primarily with Slavoj Žižek. Here, too, is a shift away from the symbolic, but it is toward the failure of symbolization—not a materialism of the body, but the way that films and generally filmic narratives reach an impasse in the traumatic void of the Real. Žižek explicitly attacks the Post-Theory turn for renouncing the promise of film theory. He seizes upon Bordwell and Carroll's claim that psychoanalysis is *the* fundamental problem with film theory as a discipline, but those of us still faithful to psychoanalysis might notice here a displacement. More significantly absent from the Post-Theory project are Marxism and radical feminism. Psychoanalysis is a convenient scapegoat for a rejection of 70s film theory, because the assumption is that it is a dated hermeneutic without any necessary political valence. Ignored is that its use in 70s film theory was explicitly part of a feminist project as well as firmly within the tradition of Marxist ideology critique.

But the problem with the newer Lacanian writing on film is neither the absence of Marxism nor the turn to the Real, but that too often the relation between film and theory is viewed as just that: a relation, and not a non-relation in the Lacanian sense. In regard to his use of Krzysztof Kieslowski, Žižek says that his aim is “not to talk about his work, but to refer to his work in order to accomplish the work of Theory. In its very ruthless use of its artistic pretext, such a procedure is much more faithful to the interpreted work than any superficial respect for the work's unfathomable autonomy.” In Žižek, the tendency is for film to have only an instrumental function in the illustration of Lacanian concepts. These are not then cinema's concepts but mere repetitions of the same. Žižek is right that theory should not lie prostrate before the work of art as autonomous entity, but this should not mean relegating it to a pretext for theory. Indeed, for Žižek, the effect of the work of art is finally imaginary.

Let's instead propose with Alain Badiou that there are such things as cinema ideas, and philosophy submits itself to the effect of these ideas.

Badiou identifies two ordinary ways of talking about film. The first is our immediate stupid reaction, which he calls the “indistinct judgment.” “I liked it,” “I was bored,” and so on. This is how it made me feel. Opinions. The norm of judgment is obscured.

The second way of talking about film attempts to preserve something that gets lost in the immediacy of the indistinct judgment, to rescue our pleasure from the lazy habits of consumption. Here, we propose a norm, and a system of evaluation. Filmmakers are emphasized rather than actors, plot, or isolated effects—the name of the auteur provides an emblem of the effect of a certain style. Badiou calls this the diacritical judgment, and by it he means to include not only the more sophisticated film

criticism but also much traditional academic writing on film.

Badiou proposes a third way that is indifferent to judgment and is not normative. He calls it “axiomatic.” This position “asks what are the effects for thought of such and such a film.” This is a way of conceiving of film as a mode of thought, which is not to say that it demonstrates already existing theoretical concepts, but that it produces own new concepts.

If there is a work that could be used as a model for an axiomatics of cinema, it is none other than Deleuze's two-volume *Cinema* (1983/85). The importance of Deleuze's *Cinema* books for contemporary theory is not the rejection of psychoanalytic and linguistic models, but the attempt to submit philosophy or theory to the conditions of cinema. Deleuze proposes a reversal of the traditional relation between film and theory. The attempt is not to think a theory of film but instead to think of film as theory—to think of how film itself is creative.

If the name Deleuze is thought to authorize a rejection of 70s film theory, still disingenuously labeled as dominant, in favor of a bodily materialism, this is directly connected to what is ignored in Deleuze—his auteurism. Auteurism is thought to be the elitist and conservative practice of cinephiles since it amounts to a list of great names and separates cinema from its more immanent pleasures, which are connected to what makes it popular. But if cinema is an art in Deleuze's sense, then it must stand up on its own, which means there must be names attached to the signs it produces. His use of auteurs is not diacritical, in that they are signifiers for singular modes of conceptual production. The break with auteurism, according to Deleuze, is an attempt “to level the difference between commercial and creative work.” It is a falsely democratic move that places all authority in the hands of the theorist. The tendency in current American academic theory might be said to be an attempt to debunk the diacritical judgment, in favor of the indistinct judgment now recuperated for the discourse of the university.

Let's suggest instead that the project of 70s film theory is not saturated, but where it fails (which is where Žižek fails as well) is when film and filmmakers are substitutable pretexts to illustrate theory's concepts.

Deleuze and Badiou both see art as a locus for production that gives rise to concepts. The concepts are neither art's nor philosophy's. Art cannot create concepts and philosophy when thinking about art, cannot apply its concepts to art. Philosophy, when thinking about what art thinks about, creates the concept that it derives from art's sensual production. For Badiou, philosophy seizes hold of or submits itself to the conditions of art's truths. For Deleuze, philosophy's creative practice lends the consistency

of the concept to art's logic of sensation. This is not respect for the work's unfathomable autonomy, but a non-relation, because artworks are the Real and not an effect or performance of the Real.

But we should note that for Badiou cinema's relation to art is a precarious one. The autonomy of cinema is inextricable from its heteronomy. As Badiou claims, the singularity of the cinematographic procedure is tied to its essential impurity; what is intrinsic to cinema is that it bears the traces of non-art as well as all the other arts. It is, as he says, not the seventh art, but the plus-one of the arts. Like Theodor W. Adorno, Badiou's skepticism about cinema as an art comes from identifying in it a social function that cannot be evacuated from its aesthetic dimension. As Adorno claimed: no aesthetic of cinema without a sociology of cinema. For Badiou this means a cinematic truth procedure, unlike Mallarmés's book, cannot exist in itself, but must perform its operation as an intervention into dominant tendencies in the circulation of moving images. This impurity is double, in relation both to non-art and to the other arts. Cinema cannot completely purify itself of its history as mode of communication and as a recording device that can function in the absence of an author. At the same time it subsumes all the other arts. We need only think of Dziga Vertov's attempt at creating a *sui generis* language of images: the subtraction of any leaning on the literary, theatrical, or painterly is only possible through the creation of a rhythmic montage that ultimately finds recourse to music as an analogue for cinematic language. Indeed, Vertov did create new cinematic ideas but only by revealing the explosive power of cinema's impurity.

So we should not pass lightly over this peculiar role Badiou assigns to cinema. He wishes to preserve its status as art, as capable of immanent singularities, but immanent singularities are for Badiou, as they are for Deleuze, dependant on the claim that there is something proper to art and to each art, whereas what is proper to cinema is precisely its impropriety. As Badiou is aware, this is something Deleuze struggles with as well. He must keep reminding us and himself that what Mallarmé does is not the same as what Nietzsche does—a sensation of the concept is distinguishable from the concept of a sensation.

I propose that Badiou's thesis that cinema is the plus-one of the arts should not be isolated from Walter Benjamin's recognition in the 1930s that all arts are now under the condition of cinema; that is, cinema is symptomatic of a particular moment in the decline of art's autonomy. Cinema's impurity must be seen in the context of the intrinsic impurity of all the arts in what Jacques Rancière has called "the aesthetic regime of art." As with Adorno, Badiou's tendency to find the truth of all art in a subtractive poetics evacuated of rhythm and image, comes from the refusal to fully accept the truth

content of cinema. On the other side, for Deleuze, as Jean-Luc Nancy has suggested, philosophy itself becomes cinematic. What's left of this project in much Deleuzian writing on film is—through a disavowal of the symbolic—a return to that obscure ontological background that Pasolini thought theory must cut through.

According to Badiou, the saturation of the great modernist cinemas and the absence of the signs of any new event in cinematic production, point us toward the prescription of neo-classicism. Let me propose instead that this is the moment of the cinema essay. Taking what it wishes from the political or "counter-cinema" that was co-extensive with 70s film theory, cinema must anticipate relations to the moving image possible today, which are heterogeneous to the newly calcifying, dominant tendencies without trying to resurrect a declining mode of spectatorship premised on the notion that there is something proper to cinema. This means an experimental cinema in which the conventions of genre, the distinction between fiction and documentary, and the temporality of the feature film are subtracted from the raw material. Nothing is gained by resting on nostalgia for the good old days from Chaplin to Hitchcock when cinema may have seemed to provide evidence for the consistency of the term "mass art."

At the same time, there is no reason to pretend this moment is still with us. The cinema essay should be oriented toward operations that teach us to see images. As Serge Daney has suggested, the cliché of "the power of images" is proven false every day. More and more images have no power in themselves. The power of images is derived from the time and space they occupy and the number of people watching. The trend in art cinema toward shocking imagery of cruelty, violence, and explicit sexuality is an attempt to posthumously resuscitate the power of images. What needs to be performed instead is a turn to a subtractive pedagogy of the image that disrupts the way we are trained to *not* see images. As Deleuze has proposed, images today are no longer window or frame, but now information table. We should look for works that allow us to see what does not count as information or as the visible or the audible. This does not necessarily mean the production of new images, but can focus on the production of new forms of montage on images and sounds already in circulation. What is needed are new forms of linking and delinking, neither personal nor journalistic, and not oriented toward endless conjunction or the deconstructive gestures of re-edited footage, but that seek to arrest heterogeneous sensible experiences excluded from what counts as perceptual and affective forms of life.

Where today are the new cinema-ideas?

February 2006

IN
STUBBORN
PRAISE
OF
INFORMATION
SERGE DANÉY

In 1989, and then in 1990, news television achieved two Pyrrhic victories. In their haste to cover an impoverished Romania newly open to the media, news crews and editors, having mistaken a morgue for a mass grave and the smoke of a coup for the fires of revolution, found themselves forced to re-examine their basic assumptions.¹ Now that “Television and Romania” is a punch line and a conference topic, many of the humiliated have secretly sworn that in the future they'll *look* at their images. It was about time, too.

However, hardly had Romania and its deceptions returned to Purgatory then the Gulf crisis presented a new challenge. This was no longer some small stage for the news; it was another theater entirely, that of “operations”: martial and dispersed, too disparate to *get a picture*. And yet it was here that news TV—CNN, really—had its crowning moment and exposed its limits. All it took was for George Bush and Saddam Hussein, the lords of the realm, to press the news system into service as if it were nothing but a giant Minitel.² This is why we didn't get to see the Bushite message to the Iraqi people, broadcast directly to them, some kind of TV capable of bypassing us, its normal audience. As if, having finally broken free from direct political oversight, TV now had to cede back some of its technical facilities to politics. For who can't see that in war, control of the small screen is a logistical necessity for each side.

In both of these cases, the outcome was a call to order. At precisely the moment it was becoming more “competitive” than ever before, TV media, with its news³ and magazine programs, its overemphasized servitude and overpaid stars, rediscovered an oft-forgotten truth: *you can't always film whatever you want, however you want*. At the edges of the real, something resists homogenization. Furiously. The formal *droit de cuissage*⁴ that TV asserts over *all* subjects, the pathetic reheated zoom shots that reveal nothing and the running commentaries that say nothing, the blackmail of abruptly running out of time and switching back to the studio, the growing number of stylistic tics borrowed from clips and ads, the realization of the stalest fantasies in the guise of “emotion,” in short, the homogenization of the world, via an electronic surveillance which before our very eyes is threatened with the loss of all credibility.⁵

Let's take the recent example of a segment of the TV news “magazine” *Audit*, reporting on the French army's deployment to the Persian Gulf. A noble and fool-proof subject, or so the

Article originally published in *Libération* (1990).
Footnotes as indicated were added by Daney in 1993, all other footnotes the translator's.

¹ Originally “se retrouverent grosses jeannes comme devant”.

² Minitel: French precursor to the internet, started in 1982; a small computer terminal wired through phone lines to provide access to online information.

³ In English in the original.

⁴ *Droit de cuissage*: allegedly a right possessed by medieval lords, allowing them to spend the wedding night with all newlywed wives.

⁵ The truth is more bitter. At the end of the Gulf War, what does one notice? That the limits of television were tested by virtually everyone. But also that one mustn't begrudge TV the fact it had to knuckle under so, for the good reason that the “law of the strongest” became, once again, the law *tout court*. (Daney)

producers must be thinking as we find them standing in the heat of the Yambu⁶ night, mikes in hand, pulling grave faces. Here’s how the plan goes: in Paris, SIRPA⁷ and General Germanos’⁸ jolly mug, in Yambu, some soldiers and a few superiors. Both locations share a single talking-point: we’ve got everything under control. The grunts basically seem to have as much of a clue about this “war” as they might have about the Boxer Rebellion. The officers, hands on hips, claim to know what’s going on. SIRPA says it knows they know.

When the report’s over, it takes only a bit of effort to bring oneself to face the awful truth: *it contained zero information*. What we saw, carefully framed according to the requirements of the “image” (that of the military, that of TV), was a slice of “current events,” letting us know that it’s a live feed, broadcasting from an Arabia that’s one hundred percent Saudi, to which an actual news crew really, truly made the trip. The sole bit of information, then, is that TV went there (and we didn’t). We’ve entered an era in which news is confused with sheer topicality.⁹

This example (among countless others) is all the more exemplary for the fact that *Audit* is a fine program, even a good one. It illustrates a law that is, alas, set in stone: television has no future, due to the fact that *it’s not a real work-place*. To fend off the cathode-ray squawking I can already hear rising in protest, I’ll clarify what I mean by “work.” Not the agitation, the stress, the abducted babies, the fear of ratings and trademark infringement. Nor the serious and heroic deployment of reporters to all ends of the earth. When I say “work,” I mean the prerequisite exercise of a minimum of forethought. Such a minimum that it would be better to simply call it “common sense.”

So what would common sense say about a report like this one? It would say that there’s no reason why, in 1990, the army would cease being what it is at heart, which is a total mute.¹⁰ Common sense would go on to say that it’s fine to devote a report to the French army, as long as you somehow hit on a way of making it talk to you. All that this “work” would require is maybe five minutes of discussion over a cup of coffee, but it’s precisely those five minutes and that coffee that are missing.

Television reminds me of a boorish young upstart to whom it would be difficult to explain that, while he’s certainly proved his power (a *technical* power, better suited to amplifying things than actually creating them), he has yet to turn to serious matters. Well, serious matters are upon us. Did the *Audit* journalists think it was enough to just touch down in the desert for the generals to bare their souls? Did F.-H. de Virieu¹¹ think that the presence of cameras in the Rabat palace would alleviate the fawning atmosphere, which, to the contrary, stifled the broadcast? Did those who “covered” Romania have any inkling that this pre-media population might pull a fast one? And did d’Arvor, in interviewing Mobutu, hope that, faced with “Patrick,” he would suddenly tire of lying and burst into tears?¹² There are as many mistakes as there are lessons, and each is unique.

If it weren’t in all likelihood already too late, you could say that this new order of things is a dream opportunity for televised news to make a fresh start. For, apart from all the non-work, there’s a certain naïveté to those who are used to adjusting other people’s realities to their own Procrustian audio-visual bed. It’s a naïveté we know all too well, resigned as we are to the melancholy and masochistic idea that this slick spectacle polluting our screens is the unhappy result of a treatment (in the medical sense) that we’ve imposed on all that lies outside of ourselves.

Documentary, Godard once said, is what happens to others; fiction is what happens to me. Is this always true? Certainly our cultures have scrawled across the surface of their values, like some house special, “the other.” The other as an object to be reduced, but also as an enigma worthy of respect. Meanwhile, feeling the first stirrings of the dangerous sorts of Nationalisms that wracked the South, the North wants to know what’s happening to it. But in order to do this, it entrusts itself less to fiction than to fantasy pure and simple.

Thanks to market research surveys and the group narcissism created by market research surveys, we’re on the verge of embracing the notion that *fantasy* deserves the same status as “news information.” *L’Evenement du jeudi*¹³ is one licentious expression of this profitable exchange, in which the “other,” if Liberian, can be summed up solely in relation to Kouchner and righteous charity,¹⁴ while, if he’s an Arab, he stands in for the empty spectacle of fantasy. No longer is there any need to analyze, inform, or witness for yourself: for a society entranced by its own constituent fantasy-opinions, anti-journalism will do fine.

This isn’t about decrying fantasy (the “us”), which would be pointless; rather, recall that fiction (“me”) and documentary (“they”) are together the twin supports of the audiovisual, which, short of collapsing under its own blunders, could hardly make it on one leg alone. Quick to notice this fact, TV’s higher echelons benefit by devoting more screen-time than ever to the philistine theme of “what’s happening to us?”

If we are at a turning point in the history of information, and of information as the very condition of history, it’s not because artists and moralists from Baudrillard to Godard have finally made their voices heard. For them, the “other” remains a luxury, or already a memory. Rather, it’s thanks to the new issue of *war* that television, child of the North (and perfected under the Nazis) and peace (a peace born of Yalta), increasingly finds itself confronted with the apparent *bad faith* and cunning of the other, who seems increasingly inclined to let us know he hates us. For if the notion of East/West described two rival visions, that of North/South knows only an envy (more mutual than it seems) between two states, rich and poor. Which is to say, any Saddam Hussein knows how to use *the news apparatus of the North*,¹⁵ but for no Saddam Hussein does news information itself have any inherent “value.” These are the rules of the game today. To ignore them would be folly.

Which is why, if we don’t want the management of fantasy to usurp the news game, we must demand of our television journalists—who call the shots, in advance of print journalism, which generally follows their lead—that they seek out those subjects who have increasing reason to resist them. If they don’t do this, they’ll be reduced to filming small-town high school hazing rituals, as in the provincial “Perdu de vue,”¹⁶ where they barge into some poor person’s kitchen to document—a shameful “extra,” to the benefit of no one—the tears of the guilty mother, the mumblings of the long-lost big brother. Soon television will have to make a choice between opening up to the world at any cost, or retreating into its cathode-ray community.

Today, it’s the most decommunitarian society in the world, the Soviet Union, which restores some dignity to the idea of “news,” indeed, to the documentary form of old. Given the impossibility of maintaining our illusions about this defrosted monstrosity, *all* TV reports on the USSR are good. Because all of them, in their modest way, inform. Because our deficit of Russian images is practically endless. It was within the strictures of “Audit” that we were recently able to see the morning opening of Gum, with its empty shelves, its pale cashiers, its queues now speaking volumes.¹⁷ “*Stop filming*,” protested the housewives, “*it’s humiliating enough as it is!*” By sudden virtue of the image. By virtue of sound. And if the Soviets had been filmed earlier on, if they’d seen themselves reflected in the camera-eye of the other, wouldn’t that humiliation have caused them to rise up against the image of a bondage too readily endured?

Utopia? But it’s this alone that’s worth it. For information is not only what I pry from the other by force, it’s what he learns about himself in having his portrait “drawn” (even withdrawn). It’s true that news gives way, then, to something of which one must speak only with great delicacy: communication. But that’s another story.

31 October 1990

Translated by Seth Price, with permission, from Serge Daney, *Devant la recrudescence des vols de sacs à mains: cinéma, télévision, information, Aléas Editeur, Lyon, 1993.*

⁶ aka Yanbu, a Saudia Arabian port city.
⁷ SIRPA: the French military office of information.
⁸ General Raymond Germanos: spokesperson for the French Ministry of Defense during the Gulf War.
⁹ Jean-Luc Pouthier does not make this mistake. (Daney)
¹⁰ La Grande : popular name for the French military muette (“The Big Mute”), perhaps in reference to its prohibition from interfering in political life.
¹¹ François-Henri de Virieu: celebrated French TV journalist (1931–97).
¹² Patrick Poivre d’Arvor: widely known French TV journalist, news anchor and writer.

¹³ L’Evenement du jeudi: French news magazine.
¹⁴ Bernard Kouchner: French humanitarian, cofounder of Médecins sans Frontières.
¹⁵ An over-estimation of the aforementioned Saddam. Hence a question: is the North/South divide now deep enough that a leader from the South, even a dangerous and suicidal one, can no longer correctly interpret the (porous and gloomy) logic of the North? (Daney)
¹⁶ Translates as “Lost from Sight”; a French TV program with the aim of finding missing persons and reuniting them with their families.
¹⁷ Gum: a department store near Red Square.

|| ‘Of Things Near at Hand,’ or
Sherrie Levine: Plumbing Cézanne’s Navel
JOHANNA BURTON

(IS NOT TO BE MODERN TO KNOW CLEARLY WHAT CANNOT BE STARTED OVER AGAIN?)
—ROLAND BARTHES

This essay on Cézanne will begin with a discussion of another artist, one whose work is rooted firmly in the 1980s (rather than the 1890s), and one whose methods of artistic production couldn’t, at a glance, be further removed from Cézanne’s. Yet her work lets me explore a narrative that takes “postmodern” tactics as a starting point and wind backward toward modernity, allowing for an examination of the metaphors, if not the histories that, by turns, further complicate and negate notions of “origin.”

In 1993 Sherrie Levine produced a series of gelatin silver prints, entitled *After Cézanne: I-9*. For anyone even remotely familiar with Levine’s work, there was little mystery as to what sort of imagery this series would contain. The nine images in it were black and white photographs depicting reproductions of canonical paintings by Cézanne—which is to say that Levine’s photographs were twice removed from the originals, photographed as they were out of textbooks or from posters. Since the late 1970s, Levine has been known for her blatant usurpations and redeployments of works by male artists ranging from Degas to Duchamp, Walker Evans to Brancusi, El Lissitzky to Edward Weston.¹ Not only stealing works away via the *mise en abyme* of photography, Levine resorted to multi-media methods, often recasting sculpture or repainting canvases. Understood by some as doing away with authorship and notions of the original and by others as recuperating authorship by way of a feminist-infused Benjaminian mode of mechanical reproduction, Levine’s art history was, by all accounts, one that disrupted a comfortable modernist canon.² Still, her practice shares affinities with generations of artists before her. While hers is, indubitably, a more ludic version, can it not be read alongside previous artists who have used artistic quotation of past masters to posit themselves in a future lineage? And what might it mean, in 1993, to have a contemporary photographic series, titled *After Cézanne*, enter the world as a *new* work of art—to spontaneously update Cézanne by a century through a de- and re-contextualization? Further, how does this act of re-presenting Cézanne as both more immediate *and* twice removed re-figure him into the canon of art history while simultaneously initiating Levine into it? And how does Levine’s artistic correspondence with Cézanne’s work allow us to reexamine those works and their influence on contemporary art and thinking? While these questions are not, ultimately, the focus of this paper, they do help point to the ways in which art history and production is always already a kind of filial genealogy—one whose umbilical links are formed by quotations and appropriation.

The most important detail to fall away from an “original” work when it is appropriated by Levine isn’t, as one might expect, richness of color or preciseness of stroke (while this happens, we’ve learned to disregard or self-correct those effects of

¹ I’ve come across some fascinating adjectives used to describe Sherrie Levine’s persona: “confiscator,” and work: “audacious,” “scandalous,” “notorious,” and “bold assertion,” in introductory art history survey texts, leading me to wonder where the line gets drawn between homage and theft, and how that distinction might relate to the gender of the appropriator.

² In her “The Originality of the Avant-Garde,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1985), Rosalind Krauss, on page 168 of that text, points to Sherrie Levine as an artist whose practice most radically questions “the concept of origin and with it the notion of originality.” Krauss’s overriding argument in the essay is that today’s production of artwork might operate by way of a discourse of “reproductions without originals.” Indeed, she points out, as does Walter Benjamin before her, that the notion of an “original” only came into being after “reproductions” became possible.

reproduction for as long as we’ve been reading survey texts). What disappears from the scene entirely, and effects the greatest change, is Levine’s title-whitewash: that is, in Levine’s version of Cézanne, the images have lost the names originally given to them and have assumed the status of items in a serial line-up. *After Cézanne 1-9* stands for so many masterpieces (Levine photographed nine of Cézanne’s most well-known paintings and then assigned them each a number, ranging from one to nine)—reducing them to a kind of illustrative “modernity’s greatest hits.” Levine suggests that the original titles aren’t integral to our understanding of Cézanne’s *oeuvre* and that perhaps we know the works so well that the titles have been culturally disseminated, absorbed, even forgotten, becoming part of our collective aesthetic memory. It’s hard to tell exactly why Levine picks the particular paintings she does, or why she limits herself here to only nine;³ these are choices we’d like to start attributing to a kind of authorship on Levine’s part, but her hand is so hidden that it’s hard to assign any definite meaning. Perhaps such opaque aribtrariness itself comes to mark an unexpected mode of production.

Having dispensed with the paintings’ titles, Levine adds her own umbrella appellation, one that serves to simultaneously distinguish and homogenize, by naming the artist but blurring the edges between autonomous works. Her titles are structured as a gathering of “always already missed encounters,” a pile of “afters”: *After Léger*, *After Alexander Rodchenko*, *After Egon Schiele*.⁴ How are we to understand this *after*? As an adverb denoting Levine’s temporal placement as later than the artists she borrows from? As an adjective pointing to a spatial or genealogical distinction, where *after* is always secondary (maybe even as a nod to gender, as in Eve’s creation *after* Adam)? As a conjugation linking past and future, a kind of liminal or linguistic placeholder, the likes of which J. L. Austin describes as almost material in its ability to both defer and anticipate meaning?⁵

The term “*after*” derives from the Old English, *from behind*. Levine comes afterwards (in history and in prominence) but also comes *up behind* the artists she names, quotes, and usurps from. *To come up behind* is necessarily a sneaky act, a maybe-sexual act, most certainly the act of a thief. Looked at this way, Levine doesn’t simply *appropriate*—there is no clean fit, not even a particularly clear purpose or use, as the term would suggest. Additionally, Levine has been seen as anything but *appropriate* as a practitioner. Instead, perhaps she *propriates* (to borrow a term from Derrida’s 1978 *Spurs*—meaning: to make something one’s own—appropriately enough, an essay on women and style.)⁶ Levine, as *proprietor*, is vacillating between appropriation, expropriation, taking, taking possession, gift and barter, mastery and servitude.⁷ Levine calls this back-and-forth process less “critique” than “analysis,” and, appropriating Roland Barthes’ 1968 “The Death of the Author” to suit her purposes, once stated that “the birth of the viewer must be at the cost of the painter.”⁸

It is to “birth” that I’d like to turn now, or at least to the metaphor of birth that has hovered as a specter throughout my preliminary discussion of Cézanne by way of Sherrie Levine. It is Levine’s *After Cézanne*, #9 that grabbed my attention most recently. A black and white gelatin silver print at 8 x 10 inches, the reproduction of a reproduction shrinks Cézanne’s original to less than half of its size and drains it of all its luscious color. #9 is an appropriation of Cézanne’s 1895 *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (to re-anoint it with its name), a painting that resides at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and which I have never seen myself except through myriad reproductions: large and small, grayscale and color. Oddly enough, it was while examining Levine’s *After Cézanne*, considering origins and originality, the birthing of viewers and the death of painters, that I first noticed the central-most element of this image I’d looked at so many times before. Displaying a quite literal Barthesian *punctum*, the cupid’s round belly is graced with a deep dimple, its plaster molding mimicking and exaggerating the sensuous turning in of the body on itself at its duly marked point of simultaneous origin and alienation. Gathered around the cupid’s feet like so many adoring admirers are animated, anthropomorphic apples, whose spherical bodies are turned to proudly display their own navels. Here, Cézanne infuses the seemingly non-narrative genre of still life with the primordial corporeality of the navel, multiplied to echo again and again across the canvas in the bodies of its many non-human models.

³ Levine’s series aren’t made up by a standard number of images. While *After Cézanne* is composed of nine images, *After Degas* (1994) contains only seven.

⁴ The idea of the “always already missed encounter” is central to Lacan’s formation of the initial trauma experienced during birth and applies more generally to the way trauma is experienced at any time in one’s life. In his “Tuché and Automaton” in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (1973), Lacan discusses at length the way in which any encounter with the real is a missed encounter, and that it is this inevitable “missing” that provokes our repetitive attempts to “return” (unsuccessfully) to the (figurative) site of that encounter. This resonates in interesting psychic ways with the notion that there is never an original, only copies.

⁵ As a conjugation, *after* might be considered in line with J. L. Austin’s notion of the “accompanying utterance” (usually a hmmm or an uhhhhh or a stutter), a vocal utterance, which might be seen as adding meaning to a performative or constative utterance. For Austin, and for Levine, this “accompaniment” might well serve to make the commonplace strange, if for a moment. This works well with Levine, who relies absolutely on the canonical nature of the images she picks, and who uses canonical (and constative) assumptions as primary (moldable) material for her own works.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Spurs; Nietzsche’s Styles/Éperons; Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979 [1978]).

⁷ Appropriation, as a mode of artmaking, can be interestingly linked, though I don’t have time to do so in more than passing here, to Freud’s distinction between anaclitic and narcissistic object-choice in love. An anaclitic object-choice is one modeled on dependency, as with a child’s on her parents (anacalis means to rest, prop, or lean upon) as opposed to a narcissistic object-choice modeled on one’s own image. Interestingly, then, appropriation might be considered a kind of aesthetic and genealogical anaclitic object choice, one as internally complicated and as naturally ambivalent as is the impulse to choose a love-object based on a parental figure. Of course, appropriation takes up the ambivalence of artistic genealogies with a self-consciousness that enables the reflexivity and criticality that appropriation is best known for, marking it as a quite different anaclitic instance.

⁸ Levine, “Five Comments,” in Brian Wallis, ed., *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 92–93; quoted in Howard Singerman, “Sherrie Levine’s Art History,” *October*, no. 101 (Summer 2002), p. 98.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Basic Books, 1988 [1900]), p. 143n.

¹⁰ In Linda Nochlin’s “The Origin without an Original,” which deals with the loss of Courbet’s *L’Origine du Monde* and the reliance by scholars on reproductions of it, she discusses the way it moved between high art and pornography. In fact, and notable for my uses here, reproductions of the image appeared in “pseudoscientific, soft-porn” publications well into the 1960s. Nochlin, “The Original without an Original,” *October*, no. 37 (Summer 1986), pp. 76–86.

¹¹ It is particularly interesting to note that in 1866, when Cézanne was sure to have heard of Courbet’s *L’Origine du Monde* (though, as it was in a private collection, he very well might never have seen it), he himself painted *Uncle Dominic as a Monk*, perhaps a projection of his own desire to master his conflicted impulses toward women and sex.

¹² Roger Fry, *Cézanne A Study of his Development* (New York: Noonday Press, 1968 [1927]), p. 11.

In a footnote for his *The Interpretation of Dreams*, written in 1900, Freud writes that, “There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable—a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown.”⁹ It is of particular interest to me that Freud, in describing the stubborn tangles of dream-work, would fall back on such a bodily metaphor. The navel is, arguably, one of the most intimate parts of the body, signifying both dependence and mortality. The navel is an unsexed, generally de-sexualized orifice, shared by both genders and the literal center of the body that, at once, marks our connection to the maternal body and our traumatic expulsion from it. Quite literally proof of an “after,” the navel marks the point where and the moment when the most critical union is severed. And, as the epitome of all the “afters” that will come, the site of the navel, at once a knot and a hole, is indicative of the formation of autonomous, singular subjectivity. While proof of sexuality, the navel somehow does not carry the whiff of sex (or, for that matter, aid in clear-cut demarcations of gender). But, given Freud’s own lessons on condensation and displacement, one might guess that the navel, at once phallic and vaginal in form, can be made to assume some connection to the genitals that exist just inches below it on either the female or male body (though it mustn’t be forgotten that the one’s own “bellybutton” is proof of prior connection to the *maternal* body only). The navel, then, is as Freud aptly notices, unplumbable by virtue of its being a kind of mute proof of one’s own birth, in addition to being proof of sexuality, though truly once removed. Given its literal and figural centrality to human subjectivity, it’s little wonder Freud would choose the navel as apt bodily metaphor to illustrate the most inaccessible part of what he relied on to be otherwise decipherable, rebus-like dreams.

In 1866, Gustave Courbet painted *L’Origine du monde* (*The Origin of the World*), a composition that conflated allegory and reality in a way that evoked admiration and shock from the public who saw it. A woman’s body—naked, not merely nude—fills almost the entire canvas. Courbet crops the woman to just a torso, which lushly fills the frame, leaving no room for extremities; thus, the top of the canvas begins with a white sheet, under which one rather truncated breast peaks out, in much the way one of Cézanne’s later apples will inhabit draperies. The woman’s legs are spread and her pubis is thrust toward the viewer; her meaty thighs are cut off by the edges of the canvas, so we are left with what—with different treatment—would look like an anatomical rendering of a human trunk for medical study. But where the viewer’s eye lands, time and again, is just above dead center, on the figure’s navel. There, the soft belly yields as to the pressure of an invisible finger, and it looks as though the point of entry to the woman could just as well be her navel as her genitals, which are both framed and veiled by a foliage of pubic hair.

Courbet’s composition, it seems to me, is *both* a life-study *and* a still life, if it’s possible to do them simultaneously. The woman’s trunk is both animate and inanimate, a human subject and *not quite* a human subject. The roundness, angles, colors and shapes give the composition a feel that is strikingly similar to fruit found in still-life compositions of the time. Here, Courbet works elements of the sacred and the secular into the same canvas, (if only by titling an otherwise scandalous image *L’Origine du monde* and thus forcing his viewers to contemplate the allegorical value of a nearly pornographic rendering of the female body.¹⁰ However, the title might be (however unintentionally) knotty for another reason: we are looking, in this painting, at *two* possible referents for the signifier “origin.” It’s possible to read Courbet’s origin as the one that is, after all, central to the painting—the navel. Etymologically and anatomically, the navel is linked with the umbilicus, and both derive from concepts of embedded centrality: the core or heart of a physical body. Further, while there is little doubt that woman—here pictured as both omnipotent, fecund mother earth and passive, penetrable vessel—could be allegorized as the origin of the world, her navel is a striking reminder that she, too, has an origin. How can one both *be* and *have* an origin?

The same year Courbet’s infamous canvas was completed, Cézanne was busy painting his fantasy and passion images: images that could be said to come from internal sources

rather than external ones.¹¹ These appear to us now perfect fodder for Freudian analysis resembling, as they do, darkly disturbing dreams—dreams, as it were, with unplumbable navels: bleak, violent, passionate, sexual, they have been dealt with in much critical literature as “Baroque contortions and involutions.”¹² (If our contemporary eyes don’t find these compositions so immediately disturbing, it is only because rape and murder scenes have become wholly normalized—yet, in my estimation, Cézanne’s handling of paint still registers as unnervingly sadistic.) Descriptions by Roger Fry concerning the early work of Cézanne are particularly telling, as they draw a distinct line between inner and outer inspiration, something Meyer Schapiro also relies on in his writings on Cézanne.¹³ It seems fairly common consensus that the unruly, even mad, passions that held Cézanne in their grasp were best utilized when projected onto less clearly charged material forms, harnessed by way of a kind of aesthetic displacement, whereby sexual or violent urges were subverted into more seemingly neutral forms like landscape and still life.¹⁴

Cézanne’s 1895 *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* remains one of his most celebrated works (and it became Levine’s *After Cézanne, No. 9*). The composition includes items that seemingly wouldn’t be found in one place: cobbled together are elements from the artist’s studio, along with vibrant organic still life elements, unleashed throughout the picture, as if to bestow life on the less easily metaphoric participants. At the rear-most left part of the painting is a jumbled stack of canvases, at competing angles, and with their backs turned toward us. These signifiers for the site of painting are rendered as three-dimensional as two dimensions allow: the canvases are thick and angular, very much objects rather than screens on which to project illusions of reality. The corner of the canvas that is closest to us intersects sharply with several objects. It makes contact with a blue drapery, which holds two very ripe apples; the fruit is rosy and firm within its folds, perfectly shaped orbs that, paired, suggest the symmetry of a body.

The table, a dappled caramel color that appears to take on the highlights of the fruit it carries, is covered with objects. The round body of an onion is nestled against the base of a plaster cupid, a small replica of Puget’s *Cupid*, a cast that we know Cézanne owned and drew over and over again, in the round, in his sketchbooks.¹⁵ Here, the body of the cupid is a series of curved strokes—its plump corporeality neatly rendered as the human variation of the apples. The imp of love has, indeed, the crystalline sheen that indicates he is cast of plaster, but the material blushes with pinks and blues that make its sculpted skin more animated than many of the purportedly live figures in other works by Cézanne. There are no angles in the body of the cupid—only curving, rounded lines, and there is a fullness to the object that shows how carefully it has been studied in the round.

Some apples and a second onion are loose on the front-most side of the table, surrounding the cupid, as though paying it a kind of homage. One apple is propped under the delicate toe of the cast, while two others huddle in the foreground. To the right, where space opens up on the table, an apple and onion are paired, the apple large and heavy, its thick shadow marking it as at the peak of ripeness. The onion, like its counterpart on the left hand of the canvas, displays an enormous green stem, which hangs over the edge of the table, having pulled its owner sideways.

In the upper right hand corner is a second plaster cast, complicated by the fact that it is not the representation simply of a cast, but a representation of a painting of a painting of a cast (making it a painting within a painting). This, Cézanne’s next step in his compositional *mise en abyme*, is a (partial) representation of another Baroque sculpture, this one not of a pre-pubescent figure but of a fully mature man. The rendering is a drawing of a cast of *The Flayed Man*, here flayed again by Cézanne’s partial painterly treatment.¹⁶ Cutting the man off just above the waist, Cézanne depicts only the lower half of his body, legs bent at the knees, limbs fusing to the cast plaster base. In this awkward pose, the body is in a permanent state of tension, unlike the cupid posing nonchalantly nearby. The genitals of this figure, which we would expect to be displayed prominently (a sculptural, male equivalent of Courbet’s *L’Origin du monde?*), given its odd cropping, have instead been occluded. Indeed, there are no genitals to speak of, but rather a dense patch of paint where they might have been. The schematic rendering of the man leaves him less flayed than simply de- or un-sexed. The apple at the figure’s feet

looks drained of color and heavily shadowed, as neutered and disembodied as the apples at the feet of the cupid are infused and sensual. The “flayed man” is left faceless, and, interestingly, might be thrust back into a kind of pre-gendered physicality, his genitals gonad-like and imprecise, his bodily features not rigorously “male.” Most important for me is that fact that he has been given no navel, his flat plane of a belly truncated by Cézanne’s angular composition at just the site where it should exist.

Yet, I am drawn back toward the central element of the painting, to the place where the eye is drawn again and again, to the deep recession pressed into the belly of the cupid—its navel. The navel endows the cast figure with an uncanny human quality that is materialized in the fleshiness surrounding the navel’s presence as absence. Immediately below the navel, the genitals are a single, ambiguous stroke, highlighting and obscuring the space of sex, reminding us that the cupid, itself allegorical figure for love, is simultaneously embodiment of pre-pubescence. A baby’s body occupies a liminal sexual space, its genitals not yet fully developed. Here, in Cézanne’s composition, it’s hard to tell whether the cast indeed has genitals or whether they have simply been blurred where the rest of the body has taken on rigorous definition. Indeed, the emphatic treatment of the bellybutton can be seen as doing something very odd here—it is possible to see the genitals of the male cupid as having been “feminized” and displaced onto the site of the bellybutton, just inches above. Given the emphatic repetition of the form in the navels of six of the apples in the composition, and most notably in the pallid apple that has rolled to the feet of the not-so-flayed, navel-less man, it is not much of a leap to assert the significance of that part of the body here. In Cézanne’s rendering, the navel is, indeed, the most intimate body part portrayed, and its obvious depths allude to the female sex both in form and in correspondence with the fruit below. It’s hard not to look at the distended onion stems as inverting the apples’ navels, phallic growths among vaginal shapes. The figure of the cupid, as presumably but not convincingly male, is able to take on feminine attributes with ease, leaving the flayed man in the corner equally un- or, rather ambiguously- sexed.

Still Life with Cupid, then, is both a multiplication and deferral of sexuality—while both its human figures occupy only the most provisional “animated” status (clearly at several removes from real human figures), the apples and onions are infused with an uncanny human vivacity. And while hints of sexuality are everywhere in the painting—both in metaphor and in form—there is not a single overt instance of its presence. Indeed, Cézanne’s still-life presents a kind of tableau of suggestion that always works in two ways at once. At its most basic, it is a merging of studio and domestic sphere, Aix and Paris, inside and *sur le motif*. Yet it operates, too, as a tableau of sensual form and continued anxiety about the figure—here, apples take on the lushness and tautness of skin, while plaster figures serve to reify and remind of sexuality’s inherently unstable construct.

I am hardly the first to note Cézanne’s odd affinity for apples. In his brilliant essay, “The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still Life,” Meyer Schapiro makes a case for not only Cézanne’s continued displacement of repressed desire into the rendering of his apples, but traces a trajectory of the gradual migration of overt desire displayed in his fantasy images into a more implicit sensuality infused into everyday objects—apples, cupids, teapots, those items Schapiro terms “things near at hand.”¹⁷ Yet, while Schapiro would have us understand Cézanne’s love for apples as one based in myth and cultural significance, I want to take things just one step further.¹⁸ Apples are, of course, and as Schapiro points out, perhaps the most sensual fruit by standards of consensus—linked intimately with allegories and myths of love, discussed in terms of its “fleshiness,” and metonymically associated with female breasts. In a sense, though the still life has been argued by many to be the genre of painting most able to leave content behind, it might be said to rely the most heavily on cultural citation and projection. Certainly, as Schapiro makes clear, there is more to a still life than depicting a grouping of formally pleasing or artistically challenging objects to be painted. He writes that,

the represented objects, in their relationship to us, acquire meanings from the desires they satisfy as well as from their analogies and relations to the human body. The still life with

¹³ See, for instance, Meyer Schapiro, “The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still Life,” (1968), reproduced in *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries, Selected Papers* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1978).

¹⁴ For writers like Schapiro and Fry, Cézanne’s eventual move from the more overt imagery to the more subdued is written about as one successful narrative of Freudian sublimation, for more on which see, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,” written by Freud in 1910 and reproduced in the Standard Edition IX, 252. Leonardo’s case study is of interest here as it might serve as the first “psycho-biography,” where an artist’s life is connected to and seen as enmeshed with, their work. Of course, this aspect of psychoanalytic theory is highly debated, and I’m not suggesting biography singularly explains Cézanne’s work, though I would agree with Schapiro that biography offers clues to be taken up, if not literalized.

¹⁵ More recently the cupid cast has been attributed to Duquesnoy or Veyrier. See Robert Ratcliffe in *Watercolor and Pencil Drawings by Cézanne* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1973).

¹⁶ Again, while initially attributed to Puget, this cast has been contested and *The Flayed Man* is now generally considered to be by Michelangelo. See John Rewald, “The Last Motifs at Aix,” in *Cézanne: The Late Work*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

¹⁷ Schapiro, “The Apples of Cézanne,” p. 26.

¹⁸ Schapiro begins his essay with a re-reading of one of Cézanne’s paintings (1883–85) that had been understood to be *The Judgment of Paris*, but that Schapiro believed was a depiction of *The Amorous Shepherd*. Schapiro bases his correction in this respect on two things: Cézanne’s obsessive translations of Virgil and the number of apples given by Paris (one) versus the number offered by the shepherd (ten).

musical instruments refers to the musician; the table with fruit and wine recalls the dinner or banquet; the books and papers are the still life of the writer, the student or scholar and may find their place in his portrait. The small objects in old portraits, reducing the austerity of an empty space, humanize the milieu and stamp it as the domain of the portrayed individual.... They are a symbol or heraldry of a way of life.¹⁹

Schapiro’s description of the still life and its charged contents is reminiscent of Freud’s description of his “decoding method” of dream-analysis (which is stumped, of course, only when it reaches the navel.) Freud insists that “we must take as the object of our attention not the dream as a whole but as the separate portions of its contents...[The decoding process] employs interpretation *en détail* and not *en masse*; like the latter it regards dreams from the very first as being of a composite character, as being conglomerates of psychical formations.”²⁰

Given Schapiro’s and Freud’s insistence on the importance of the object as bearer of meaning in both still life and dream, I can only reassert the importance of “Cézanne’s apples.” More than other fruit, it bears affinity to the human body, and not simply by virtue of its coloring and texture but by way of the constant cultural citation its form has accumulated over the years. Indeed, *la pomme d’Adam*, is perhaps the most famous fruit of all, bound up as it is in stories of origin, sin, sex, and the fickle nature of women. The conditions of Cézanne’s apples may, then, be seen both *en détail* (by way of Freud) and *en masse* (by way of larger cultural associations). Let’s begin *en détail*.

In his exposition on the affinity between the still life and the portrait, Schapiro recalls a scene from *Madame Bovary*, when Léon creates a fantasy tableau for his future life in Paris, replete with all the accoutrements that best designate a young bohemian: a guitar, a beret, and a fireplace, among other things. In his essay, “The Reality Effect,” Roland Barthes, too, relies on Flaubert for a discussion of the *détail* we are after. Barthes begins his essay by reminding us of Mme Aubain’s room, where “an old piano supported, under a barometer, a pyramidal heap of boxes and cartons.”²¹ It’s not a coincidence that the quintessentially modern Flaubert is the author of choice when discussing “details,” as it were. As Barthes points out so acutely, “the *reality effect* is...the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity.”²² For Barthes, details are hardly decorative padding for narrative (or, for our purposes, touches that enhance but do not further a painting). Instead, the details signify, claims Barthes, momentary interfaces with signifiers that connote the “real” (but that are always proof that any such encounter is always already missed). Without getting too far into the *mise en abyme* of significations and their infinite regress, suffice it to say that Barthes’ notion of the “reality effect” emphasizes that any signifier of an object (say, a painted apple) is perhaps a notation of absence (of any singular apple) while simultaneously a kind of material quotation of what we take to be reality. Thus, we might see the genre of still life as so many of these mute quotations—where an apple is, of course, only a fruit, but it is already so many other things.

Quotation, however, leads directly to what Freud has termed *en masse*, as it is cultural quotation (the more naturalized and assimilated the better) that imbues any composition (painting or otherwise) with the illusion of unity.²³ Cézanne’s *Still Life with Plaster Cast* includes a number of citations, some overt, others implicit. The apple, as I’ve already stated, might serve as one of the most familiar and multivalent of cultural quotations with various sexual connotations. Moreover, the apple is presented as at once timeless (a placeholder in mythology, forever presented by Paris to Venus or by the shepherd to his beloved) and a reminder of mortality—as in the seventeenth-century Dutch still-life, where the apple blushes with a fleeting radiance that we understand will fade and eventually decay.

Of course, there are more literal citations in Cézanne’s: the amorous cupid and the flayed man, both of whom maintain their sturdy plaster bases to remind us just how deeply embedded in art-historical citation they remain. Yet, while citing Baroque statues such as these, Cézanne is able to give into his old leanings toward abject violence and conflicted passion (if only through a kind of calcification of canonical

Baroque signifiers) while simultaneously rendering them less immediately readable as such. *Still Life with Cupid* is not the first painting in which Cézanne overtly cites other artists—as Theodore Reff points out, Cézanne made borrowing his business.²⁴ He took thematic and compositional elements from contemporaries like Manet (in that case, to simultaneously pay homage, poke fun, and manifest his own anxieties) as well as making copies of and using to many ends elements from all manner of previous masters—from Giorgione to Delacroix to Chardin (in these cases to both claim and kill the fathers).

While it would do me little good to claim that these literal quotations on the part of Cézanne make him an “appropriation artist” of Levine’s ilk, what I *do* want to posit is that appropriations or, here, quotations, of this kind are oriented to operate as kinds of navels in themselves; that is, they offer ambiguous, multiplicitous points of entry that are at once recognizable and unplumbable (if “to plumb” is to “reach the bottom of things,” the unplumbable never—and this should be understood in all its connotations—*gives itself up*.) To return to Barthes a final time: in his “Lesson in Writing,” he describes what he calls “the reign of the quotation.”²⁵ Operating in the midst of objects that already carry social connotation, one is able to own, as it were, a quotation, to make it one’s own, by understanding quotation as simultaneously spontaneous and already determined. In this way, we can understand Cézanne’s apples as both the manifestation of his own repressed desires *while also* as objects with an accretion of historical signification *while also* simply as apples, or shapes. Similarly, the cupid and flayed man become art objects twice and three times removed, while they also stand for frozen desire (Cézanne’s) and as important canonical references to cite and outdo). Of course, they also stand as objects of genealogy, serving to root Cézanne as the next in line of a filial chain (or continuous male umbilicus) linking each great artist of the past to a contemporary successor. One only need look at Maurice Denis’ famous *Homage to Cézanne* (1900) to see the ways this tradition operates. In addition to an homage, Denis’ composition is a strong posting of lineage, and while Cézanne himself figures into the image, more important is the central element: a copy of Cézanne’s 1879-82 *Still Life with Compotier*, painted, of course, by Denis, apples and all.

In 1988 Sherrie Levine claimed:

The pictures I make are really ghosts of ghosts; their relationship to the original images is tertiary, i.e., three or four times removed. By the time a picture becomes a bookplate it’s already been re-photographed several times. When I started doing this work, I wanted to make a picture which contradicted itself. I wanted to put a picture on top of a picture so that there are times when both pictures disappear and other times when they’re both manifest; that vibration is basically what the work’s about for me—that space in the middle where there’s no picture.²⁶

Cézanne’s mode of quotation (like Levine’s, though to different ends) moves nimbly between those elements of a composition that are *en détail* and those that exist *en masse*. Indeed, the navels of his apples, alongside those of his figures are so many vibrations between the decipherable and the unplumbable.

It’s not, I think, off subject to close by mentioning Sherrie Levine’s perhaps most famous appropriation: Edward Weston’s series of photographs depicting his young son, Neil, posing naked. Levine simply re-shot the images from a poster and called them her own (*After Edward Weston*), causing a huge scandal, a law suit, and a hurried re-assessment of copyright law. Yet, Weston himself had, in the series, appropriated the most classic of male poses, indeed those foundational to our understanding of aesthetics: he had Neil pose in the stances of the Greek kouroi.²⁷ (Why Weston’s were considered “originals” and Levine’s “one-offs” has everything to do with the way each artist manifests ideas and repercussions of *reproduction*.) This meant, of course, that those images—first Weston’s, then Levine’s—are so many repeated croppings of a truncated child’s torso, looking for all the world like a plaster cupid, displaying—dead-center—a deep, unplumbable navel.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 136.

²¹ Flaubert as quoted in Roland Barthes’s “The Reality Effect” (1968) in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 141.

²² Ibid., p. 148.

²³ What I mean by this might be clarified by way of the example of gender, an infinitely fragmented and fragmenting conception, and one that is constructed to maintain social order and gendered hierarchies. For an argument detailing the ways in which gender (and sexuality) are socially constituted and applied to the material of the body (even before birth) see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter; On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 1993). By taking apples as his erotic subjects, Cézanne is able to defer the question of gender somewhat, allowing his own desire to remain as ambiguous as his ungendered subjects.

²⁴ See Reff’s “Painting and Theory in the Final Decade,” in William Rubins, ed., *The Late Cézanne*, especially page 32. Reff points to many examples in Cézanne’s *oeuvre* where works of art by other artists, both painted and sculpted, show up as objects of homage—and conflict—in his compositions.

²⁵ Here, Barthes is discussing Brecht’s methodology of relying on shared cultural texts and stereotypes as the foundation for a more revolutionary kind of theater. “Lesson in Writing” was written in 1968 and appears in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

²⁶ From an interview with Jeanne Siegel, entitled “After Sherrie Levine,” in *Art Talk: The early 80’s*, ed. Jeanne Siegel (New York: DeCapo Press, 1988), p. 247.

²⁷ Rosalind Krauss (in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*), Douglas Crimp (in “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism,” *October*, no. 15 [Winter 1980]), and others have noted Weston’s appropriated pose before me.

The *Ars* of *Imperium*

WARREN NIESLUCHOWSKI

IN ALLEN DIESEN BEZIEHUNGEN IST UND BLEIBT DIE KUNST NACH DER SEITE IHRER HÖCHSTEN BESTIMMUNG FÜR UNS EIN VERGANGENES. DAMIT HAT SIE FÜR UNS AUCH DIE ÄCHTE WAHRHEIT UND LEBENDIGKEIT VERLOREN, UND IST MEHR IN UNSERE *VORSTELLUNG* VERLEGT, ALS DASS SIE IN DER WIRKLICHKEIT IHRE FRÜHERE NOTHWENDIGKEIT BEHAUPTET, UND IHREN HÖHEREN PLATZ EINNÄHME.

Art, in all these relations, and from the side of its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. It has thereby also lost, for us, genuine truth and life, and has been shifted more into our imagination, rather than maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place.

G. W. F. HEGEL, *ÆSTHETIK*

‘Ο βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρά
ars longa, vita brevis
HIPPOCRATES, *APHORISMOI*

Art comes up as a bad dream, as something to avoid.
VITO HANNIBAL ACCONCI

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Aristotle’s pupil Alexander ushered in, some two-and-a-half millennia ago, an *ækumenē* that was the first global culture of our Western tradition. As we have recently, with great pomp, celebrated another year with many zeros, one that closed a blood-dimmed but still pregnant decade and century, a ‘retro-perspective’ view of the *ars* of our moment through the speculum of time evokes striking similarities to the situation of our own modernity. After a series of conquests lasting barely a decade, a cosmopolitan Greek-speaking imperial culture came to stretch from the Pillars of Atlas, at the edge of the Atlantid, to present-day Afghanistan. Alexander was, of course, no Greek, and he took advantage of the Greeks’ endless political antagonisms towards each other to subsume the *polis* into his new world order, whilst preserving the supreme though now lapsed fiction of the free Greek city-state. Under the ideological banner of *koinōnia* (‘community, commonness’), the élites of the Hellenized Oriental successor realms united the most diverse and contradictory historical, linguistic, religious, and cultural strands into a seamless syncretic web whose growth was fed by the fabulous accumulated wealth of the East, now released into circulation in the Mediterranean with the same inflationary effect the extracted riches of the New World were to have on a modernizing Europe nearly two millennia later. By the Year Zero, Hellenism had collided with the *imperium Romanum* (and thereby with a small and slowly but relentlessly expanding circle of Christianized Jews writing and preaching in *koinē*

, the ‘common,’ demotic Greek now sufficiently devolved to serve as a universal language). Its political power superseded, and with it the theoretical *raison d’être* for the doctrines of the post-Aristotelian Academy, Hellenism’s *technē*—the Greek term Latin required two words, *ars* and *scientia*, to translate—paradoxically became all the more free to do its work. Its legitimacy, never questioned even by the captivated Romans, was then preserved, through the constancy of monastic clerics during the long ‘Middle Age’ after the ultimate demise of antiquity, by new nomadic cultures brought, with the *Völkerwanderungen*, those great periodic migrations we so casually call ‘barbarian’—though they are us—into a fold now Roman and Catholic (a process not unlike the consolidation of Greek *poleis* amongst *barbaroi* during the Greek ‘Dark Age’ a millennium-and-a-half earlier). Our own modern age is traditionally dated from yet another supposed renaissance and reformation of that Greco-Roman culture. But what became the ‘West,’ nothing if not a master-work of endless forming and reforming, had and has never ceased working every encounter, new and old, familiar and alien, to effect; this capacity for anabolizing the Other may indeed be *the* operating principle of our Occident, one that has allowed it to prevail upon and over its often more advanced concurrents, as Greece and Rome overtook Egypt, Persia and China, and Europe Islam. Apart from the antiquarian or critical interest of such monumental history, it can shed a raking light on much of the work of our contemporary artists, permeated as it is by the problematics of

art and life in a new *ordo seclorum*. New artists, like the ancients, function in a world-system that is a cyclonic confluence of many streams. The *Gründerzeit*, the founding, or rather ‘grounding,’ time, is again past, and, like our Hellenic forebears, our capacity to directly recast the shape of future history is drastically limited both by the power of that past and the ever-growing complexities and contradictions of present necessity, increasingly governed as it seems to be, by that quintessentially Hellenistic goddess Tychē, Fortuna or Chance. But as a world-system entails the severe curtailment of our freedom to govern others (though we may still try to rule), it cedes to a supplementary ethics and æsthetics of governing oneself. A new emphasis on the personal and the individual, made possible by the concentrations and circulation of wealth, was manifested in the arts of that era in contradictory fashion. In Alexandria, the great city near the mouth of the Nile founded by Alexander himself, his successors the Ptolemies (of which line Cleopatra and her son by Julius Cæsar Ptolemæus xiv were the last) founded and maintained a great Library and Museum. There scholars began the great task of canonizing the classics of an artistic tradition now no longer productive. A vast body of epic, lyric, drama, and monument, rooted in the social life of the *polis* and generated and regenerated on an ongoing basis for many decades, was reduced to a small number of works that became the basis of a *Kopienkritik*. But the lack of invention gave rise to a greater inventiveness. The idea of art as an exemplary collection of works designed to

be comprehensive and complete (along with the dynastic portrait gallery) were first conceived in the late-classical era. On the other hand, new art, stripped of its aura and aspirations, was allowed a greater, almost proto-Romantic, fancy, and indulged a thirst for the extreme and the unusual, the gigantic and the miniature. Among art forms original to Hellenistic modernism are ones having to do specifically with the written word. Scholarship as we know it today, based in libraries and on encyclopedic compendia of information, first came into being in this period. Obsession with things and facts gave rise to an endless fascination with lists. Simultaneously, a rhetorical and æsthetic criticism, based on the exegetical more than the dialogical, and, as the French structuralists understood, many of whose categories once again impose themselves as strikingly contemporary, detached itself as a separate activity from philosophy, characterized, as now, by learned artifice. Late antiquity in its heart remained suspended between the great Stoic and Epicurean philosophies, seeking a truth oscillating between duty and desire. Their teachings promoted dialectically opposed resolutions of the tension between a shrunken civic sphere and rapidly developing economic, social, and personal ones. Not merely ‘philosophies of self-consciousness,’ as famously described by Karl Marx, they preached practices and ideals for that needy time. Stoic happiness results from concurring the human condition to the mastery of nature, the world as it is given to us; service (ideally as counselors) in subjection to a state and unto death was one of its noble ideals. Epicurus, on the other hand, sought self-mastery in a withdrawal from that world into his ‘Garden,’ the basis for a network of alternative and egalitarian communities of equals. This counter-*polis* was one of the most advanced social formations of the ancient world, the only one to fully admit slaves and women, including courtesans, as equals, on the basis not of *erōs*, but of *philia*, ‘friendship,’ lit. ‘[standing] by-ness,’ a more enfolded form of love. In his last project Michel Foucault examined the implications of this late-Classical *technē* of life. Its moral pendants, *usage des plaisirs* and *souci de soi*, ‘care [= Latin *cura*] of the self’ closely entwine in the strategic play of philosophy and *potentia* in what Foucault termed the *spiritualité politique* of the period, and constitute the main axis for his inquiry into the historical ‘genealogy of the (hu)man of desire’ and the *régimes* it creates. *Biē* and *vis*, ‘force’ are inherent in any theory or practice of *bios* and *vita*. In our modern age, when a contested *demokrateia* is still the *agōn* it was for antiquity, *en-krateia*, ‘power of, over, and in’ the self, remains the principal locus of our struggle. The tension between *askēsis* and *aisthēsis* in our relations to the pleasure and pain,

passio and *pathos*, implicit in our conception of the world, co-opted and ‘curated,’ as it were, by a Church Militant following the teachings of a Jewish-Roman cosmopolite *Antichrist* who took the name Paul, was to determine its (and our) cultural contours for the next two millennia.

ΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Basel, that most Hellenic of free city-states in Europe, was, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the site of an encounter fateful for another implication of classicism into modernity. In 1869 Jakob Christoph Burckhardt, the famed author of *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, welcomed into his life the young Friedrich Nietzsche, recently named Professor Extraordinarius of Classical Philology at the age of twenty-four, not yet having earned a doctorate (eventually awarded, as was the academic nomination itself, on the basis of his written contributions to the journal *Rheinisches Museum*). Burckhardt, whose names and patrician lineage are in themselves an epitome of the procession of civilizations in Europe, shared with Nietzsche an iconoclastic conviction of the importance of the *agōn* in antiquity, and both despised and mocked the prevailing Prussian and Anglo-Saxon national-imperial idealizations of the ‘classical’ legitimated by Hegel. Their radical revisioning of Hellenism was vilified by the Prussian Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, the leading academic classicist of the time. Though Burckhardt was no radical (he led a life of Stoic interiority worthy of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*) and twice Nietzsche’s age, the two pastors’s sons shared a profound respect for Arthur Schopenhauer, that most unrecognized of philosophers, and his emphasis on a philosophy of illusion and imagination linked to a pessimistic pathos of Will; for them, even when their own work left him far behind, he always remained ‘*unser Philosoph*.’ In their effort to encompass, and for Nietzsche to surpass, modern man and his emergent life-forms, they were among the few who attain ‘an Archimedean point outside events, and are able to “overcome in the spirit” ’ (in Nietzsche’s case, perhaps under duress). (Archimedes, the greatest mathematician of antiquity, who died defending his Greek city on the island of Sicily, the ancient equivalent of Switzerland, against the Romans, also insisted on apartness, composing his scientific works in a long obsolete Doric dialect, the *Schwyzler-Dütsch* of his time.)

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Gnōthi seauton, ‘Know yourself,’ the inscription above the Apollonian temple at Delphi on the slopes of Mount Parnassus, remained for centuries

our supreme *archē*, Latin *principium*, a beginning and founding principle for all humankind, not just those coming to consult the Oracle. *Anagnōthi seauton—Anerkenne Dich selbst!*—‘Re-cognize yourself!’, Nietzsche seems to have decided, in his *Selbstbeobachtungen*, a series of ‘self-observations’ composed in 1868, shortly before he left Germany. This ‘*an[a]—archia*’ of Nietzsche’s was no mere gloss or glorification, but became his *kanōn*, his rule, for the twenty years of creative life left to him. In his remarkable corpus he created a series of startling figures that still stand as radically unassimilable moments in a project for recasting the relations between life and art, indeed for making a life into a work of art.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Dionysos, for Nietzsche, is one such figure, the masked Stranger and suffering god from the East bringing drama, trance, and excess into the stately lyric of ritualized chorus in orchestral space. ‘From the spirit of music,’ as Nietzsche subtitled his *Birth of Tragedy*, emerged a speaking actor—an ‘impersonator’—into the *theatron*, the ‘*Schauplatz*’ which, along with the *agora*, defined cultic and civic life for the Greek *polis*. As a symbol of the fusion of wild and cultured, *barbaros* and Greek, Dionysos incarnated and enacted the ecstatic body so long consigned to oblivion, and was the starting point for the ‘philology of the future’ Nietzsche strove towards. For the paradox-addicted Greeks the cult of Dionysos was closely associated to that of Apollo, Dionysos’s Other, as at Delphi, the shrine of the oracle they shared until long after Christianity became the dominant religion of late antiquity. In addition to the considerable oracular powers he brings to whatever art he adopts as his own, it is Vito Hannibal Acconci—bearing the name of Rome’s most gifted and ingenious adversary—who has strikingly embodied Nietzsche’s hybrid æsthetic for our time. After a turn from a poetics of the word (which itself seems to have followed an abandonment of personal piety), Acconci undertook his own project of radical self-observation in a series of now famous and infamous actions and performances. Ever his own agonist, Acconci tended toward something like the mythic power of Apollo’s cruel and untypically Dionysian—though in Greek the verbal form *appolōn* signifies ‘destroying’—flaying of his artist-antagonist Marsyas with his own knife for his transgressive (and failed) challenge to the god. The dark ambiguities in Acconci’s self-presentation, where decorum and destruction continually fuse and confuse, seem echoes of that eternal cult. (There are more trivial and less distant sculptural echoes of the god, as in his multiple returns to Rome: one a

statue of Dionysos presented to Hitler by Mussolini [also an unworthy adversary, executed in the same degraded position as Marsyas—hung by the heels], then installed in the lobby of the Nietzsche-Museum Hitler so loved to visit in Weimar; and another, purloined from the Villa Torlonia, a residence of Mussolini’s built above Jewish catacombs in Rome, recently rescued from Christie’s through the diligence of the New York police.)

[*I mean, I see most art as detestable. No, I just hate the idea of art. And I think a lot of it has to do with that notion of observer. Because an art context is a context of observers. In every other field of life, when you come upon something for the first time, you know, just out of normal circumstance, you pick it up, you touch it, you possibly smell it, you taste it. But in art the tradition is you stand aside and look. And there’s probably an economic reason for that. If you stand aside and look, then you’re always in the position of desire, you can never have. So you’re always in the position of being lower than the art.*]

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Epicurus, advocating harmony rather than excess, though a historical figure, may also be something of a mythical one, for not only did he choose to celebrate his birthday on that of Apollo, but it remains unclear whether Epicurus was his given name or later (self-?)conferred, from *epi-kouros*, ‘helper to, ally, protector.’ This is the moral agency of *epimeleteai*, the constant ‘attending-to, intent-ness’ every societal function requires. Acconci has spoken of one ideal of the artist as the ‘agent which attends to it, the world, out there.’ In its various avatars, *curator*, ‘caretaker,’ the Latin term for the Greek office of *epimeletēs*, became the prototype for an proliferating set of ‘caring professions’ that have survived and cumulated to the present day. The contemporary art-world has now expanded the range of this function beyond office and institution to an independent career, and the Anglo-Saxon ‘curator’ is increasingly imposing itself in other languages on more limited Continental, military-bureaucratic, terms like *commissaire* or *kustosz*, or technical one *conservateur*. But it is important to recognize *artist* as one of those emerging caring professions of the future, increasingly summoned to take on wider functions (without always being given the training, not to speak of having either the temperament or the talents, to fully assume them). And everywhere the private is again being called on to assume functions once borne by the public sphere, as occurred in late-classical times (for example, both the philosophical schools in Athens and the *Mouseion* at Alexandria were private associations).

Proselytizing was problematic for the Epicureans, given their belief in withdrawal, especially without the charisma of the philosopher after his death early in the third century b. c. Yet these communities flourished, successfully attracting a stream of converts to the contemplative life. Bernard Frischer has convincingly argued that it was the statues of Epicurus, in what he calls a ‘sculpted word,’ that were the effective agent for this recruiting activity, representationally transmitting the esoteric qualities (philosopher, *megalopsychos*, father, savior, culture-hero, and god) of the founder to the uninitiated via a commonly accessible iconography, a unique and particularly subtle example of a social use for art.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Nietzsche’s Zarathustra was another such heathen Stranger from the East. *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a visionary fiction, a chant, with the preternatural beauty and horror the Apocalypse of John must have had for early Christians. *Zarathustra* both prefigures and transcends Christ in its efforts to be the advocate, Heidegger’s *Für-sprecher*, a teacher, speaking to and for us, of self-transcendence and suffering (but often dissolving into laughter), but of a natural, ‘animal’ religion for *Diesseits*, here below, whose new (old?) commandment is: ‘Be hard!’

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Hēdonē, ‘pleasure,’ the *kanōn* of the Epicurean, is implicated in the struggle and conflict with the suffering of *Yes!—No!—Yes-and-No!* that mark Acconci’s early performative work as he passed from literature to (his own) life. They constitute something like a series of exercises (Greek *askēsis*) in living more, a multi-media *enchiridion*, the ‘hand-book, manual’ of *mores* that became so popular in later Greco-Roman times. Sensuality is always framed in sense, and many of Acconci’s ‘command’ performances, written in a brutal *koinē* of power-play, sound that decidedly Nietzschean imperative mood. Pagan or post-, every being or becoming requires a guide. Acconci’s work has conveyed alarmingly well how now, more than ever, the technical reproducibility of society depends on the constant resolution of the conflict between cultivating desire and administering (also in the sense that medicine is administered) or enforcing it (the word *askēsis* was often used in the sense of ‘military exercises’). Max Weber, a close reader of Nietzsche and trained thinker of the hard, was the greatest student of the ethic and æsthetic tension inherent in *Herrschaft*, ‘domination,’ both in the religions of antiquity and in the rise of modernity. Weber ends *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of*

Capitalism, his analysis of the dialectic between asceticism and modernity, with a warning, an Old Testament diatribe sited along the line between Amos and Zechariah to ‘*die letzten Menschen*,’ the last of our line: ‘Specialists without spirit and hedonists (*Genußmenschen*) without heart: this nullity (*Nichts*) imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.’ *Genuß*, both ‘pleasure’ and ‘consuming’ or ‘enjoying’ (in the archaic legal sense, as in ‘usufruct’) was for our forebears an elective ethical calling; for us moderns, as Weber never ceases to remind us, it has become a duty. And when like Nietzsche, he had to seek refuge from the rigors of his life, academic and spiritual, in a milder clime, he challenged the revolutionary students of *fin-de-guerre* Germany who invited him to address them (twice) on *technē* as a calling, to consider the responsibilities their convictions entail. His points ranged over politics and poetics, calling and charisma, concept and coercion, vocation and avocation, popularity and professionalism, plutocracy and prospects, patrimonialism and personality, and mania and mediocrity, ending in a lyrical aside on art, aesthetics, and the diabolical, a veritable prolegomenon to a manual of applied Nietzsche for any user of *studium* or *studia*. Weber, personally resistant to prophecy as a profession, and convinced the coming time (we are now in the years 1917–18) would be a ‘polar night of icy darkness and hardness,’ could offer them little consolation for the future of their quest. But he did offer a “‘religiously” musical’ aside on the myth, as transposed from Ovid by Shakespeare in Sonnet 102, of the violated, vivisected, then avenged Philomel, ‘Music-Lover,’ transformed for her pains into the Nightingale, who (only?) early, ‘in summers front doth singe,’ silent ‘in the growth of riper days.’ Weber could only end these time-based reflections by sending us back along Isaiah’s watchtower, where to the question, ‘Watchman (Vulgate *custos*), what of the night?,’ comes only the vexed and gnomic answer, ‘The morning comes but [it is] also night: if you query, then query; turn back and come again.’

[*For me, Minimal Art was almost a kind of ‘father art’. This was the art that probably meant most to me in the mid-sixties, towards the end of the sixties. Because probably until Minimal Art I had been taught or I had taught myself, when I looked at art, to look at what was within the frame and to ignore what was outside. In the presence of Minimal Art that became no longer possible. Suddenly, in the presence of Minimal Art, I had to recognize the room, I had to recognize people in the room. So, for me, Minimal Art was a big kind of breakthrough: that was the art that was most important for me. At the same time — probably*

in order to do something myself—I had to try almost desperately to find something wrong with Minimal Art. Because if there was nothing wrong with it there would be no reason for me to do anything. In other words, if Minimal Art was the ‘father art’ for me I had to find some way to kill the father. . . . OK, whatever I did then, I wanted to make its source clear. So, probably for me, Minimal Art made me start to develop a way of thinking that whatever I did, the doer, the agent was going to be apparent.]

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Theōria, ‘contemplation,’ might be glossed *Anschaung*, ‘the art of (slow) looking-at,’ just as philosophy has been famously called ‘the art of slow reading.’ This visual connection to professional philosophy was reinforced when Immanuel Kant adopted the term for his concept of ‘intuition,’ and Hegel, in his historicizing edifice, defined art, the first emanation of Absolute Spirit, as ‘sensual’ *Anschaung*, to be progressively superseded by religion and philosophy. Jacob Burckhardt had already accepted its call as a young history student in Berlin. In a letter from there when he was the same age as Nietzsche in Basel, he confessed, ‘My surrogate is *Anschaung*, contemplation daily sharpened and directed more and more at the essential.’ With his student Heinrich Wölfflin, he elevated ‘just looking’ into the basis for a visual art- and culture-history which, with its use of photographic and projected reproduction, went far beyond the technological (and sensual) capacities of a Hegel.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Historia, ‘inquiry,’ Latin (*inter*)rogatio, was for Burckhardt, as he wrote in that same letter, ‘*Dichtung* [= *poiēsis*, ‘poetry, fiction’] on the largest scale.’ From 1868 to 1871, while Nietzsche was lecturing on Homer and composing *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, Burckhardt was preparing a course he modestly called a *Studium* of history, later published as *Welthistorische Betrachtungen* (*World-Historical Reflections*), an orotund Hegelian notion Burckhardt, like Schopenhauer interested in the ‘recurrent, constant and typical,’ could only have smiled at. By the time Burckhardt began his course of lectures, Nietzsche was working on his own *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, the *Untimely Meditations*, a Schopenhauerian commentary on the role of aesthetic creation in ‘recovering the lost, re-forming the broken forms out of themselves’—a call for sense- and sensual *facta* more than *facta*. (Latin *fictio*, the sib of *pictio*, originally meant ‘sculpting’—the work of the finger, so to speak—before it came to primarily denote writing. [‘*Language is still the base of my work; for better*

or worse, verbal thinking is probably the only kind of thinking I understand—using language is the only way I can prove to myself that I can think.]

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Klasma, ‘breaking,’ is, oddly enough, preserved in only one lexeme in our post-classical languages, *iconoclasm*. Creative destruction is a force in human affairs whose human price we have trained for years, for millennia, to ignore. The two great iconoclasms, Byzantine and Protestant, represent significant minima and maxima in the historical arcs of image-based art as we know it, as Hans Belting has magisterially demonstrated in *Bild und Kult*, his work on image and worship. The iconoclasts of our own artistic generations intervened just as that arc was setting, yet again, for an undetermined time below our horizon, the aesthetic program of its *technē* largely complete, though as Hegel pointed out, from the moral perspective of religion (which may be glossed ‘that upon which we rely’) it has long been ‘passed.’ These new artists succeeded—this was far from obvious at the time—in transforming the values according to which art itself is now produced and judged. Whether ‘private-image art’ will return to the majesty in which the past bore it remains to be seen; it may simply be that in the dusky *Dämmerung* the long shroud of art will simply rewind (though in this regard Nietzsche, too, calls for a Hegelian *Überwindung*, ‘getting over’ it), and that a new public image, one no longer based on *Kult*, is in the process of birth. This is what all ‘clasts’ dream of.

[‘*You know, probably, I’ve always had this nostalgia for wanting to believe that the artist works as a kind of guerrilla fighter. You go to a certain terrain, you examine that terrain, you learn where to plant the bomb in that terrain, then you go to another terrain. But you always need a terrain. A bomb doesn’t make sense without a terrain to put the bomb in. But, lately, I know there has been some wondering on my part if there is some other way of working.]*

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Labē, ‘hold, hand(le)’ is something art-objects have for a long time had only metaphorically. But in Acconci’s performative work, he succeeded in generating a captivation, an attachment to and through his person, that is the sign of a *charisma*, ‘grace,’ usually reserved for the performer in music, dance, or theater. Like some late-medieval sacral object of great beauty from the era of the last iconoclasm but one, and now preserved and presented in an electronic tabernacle (*skēnē*), he emanates a message that binds this worldly pleasure

and suffering to a teaching that melds sense with a transforming (and disturbing) sensuality. In the section *On Reading and Writing*, Zarathustra had declared, ‘I only love That which One writes with his or her Blood. Write with Blood: and you will experience that Blood is Spirit.’ Do we dare drink of that sacred mix? And how do we make the cut?

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Mythos and its ritual sibling *mystēria*, like the mystery-cults associated with Dionysos, and Nietzsche’s primary poetic medium in the ‘recovering and re-forming’ of the broken forms of religious self-knowledge, have always been the sacred threshold to truth. For the ancient Greeks, the root *mu-* concealed and conveyed the opposing senses of ‘secret(e),’ from *mutus*, ‘(eyes and) mouth shut,’ to—after initiation—*mystēs*, ‘initiate, eyes and mouth open,’ esoteric to a new world and truth, exoteric to the old. In his essay, from the same period, on lying ‘in an extra-moral sense,’ Nietzsche described truth as only ‘a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short a *summa* of human relations . . . poetically and rhetorically heightened,’ (a striking anticipation of the work of our millennial, ‘post-modern’ human arts and sciences, and paticularly applicable to emergent ‘relational’ contemporary-art forms). But in *Zarathustra*, teaching Dionysos and the *Übermensch*, he seeks to bring himself to and through Becoming, to be his own hierophant, sacralized rather than sacrificed. This is a living *Mystik* (of the deed) Freud, in his last published lines of his *Nachlaß*, was to call ‘th[at] dark self-perception of the realm outside the Ego, of the Id.’

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Naus, ‘vessel,’ seems a suitable trope for movement-based teachers like Epicurus and Nietzsche. In his inquiry into nomadic thought, Gilles Deleuze, a true ironic Nietzschean for our time, has recommended ‘embarkation’ with Nietzsche as the only possible experience of texts that can never be fixed, but only flow. (He brilliantly suggests a vessel like the raft of the *Medusa*, quite fitting given the unholy sacrifice and consumption of human flesh that still haunts our world.) Of course, traveling with an Odysseus-like wanderer like Nietzsche (though we now do so mostly in aeronautic comfort) we may be just as likely to need the remedies against *nausea* (and nostalgia, too) he consumed in such prodigious quantity (although Doctor Fridericus was a *médecin malgré lui* if there ever was one!). Just as Epicurus conceived his doctrine as a *tetra-pharmakon*, the antidote here, too, comes in vessels. But we must definitively leave behind the plane of the narrative and diegetic for the dietetic.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Xenos, ‘the stranger,’ once admitted into the cultural sphere of the Greeks, as in the case of the mythical Dionysos from barbaric Thrace, far beyond even Alexander’s Macedon, played an important catalytic role. This occurred surprisingly often, and despite (or because of?) their harsh judgments of outsiders and the vanquished—truly modern attitudes, it must be admitted. In the Greco-Roman world, where cosmopolitan origins were prized but no guarantee of freedom, nomadic artists and teachers, including many slaves, were not only significant bearers of that culture, but its generators. *Æsop*, for example, a freed slave also from Thrace, was a fabulist whose opus accrued over the centuries to comprise perhaps the most widely disseminated collection of tales in literary history.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Orpheus, like Dionysos another Thracian, was the (possibly historical) founder of an archaic mystery religion that also lasted until Christian times, when depictions of him were still being painted on catacomb walls. Orphism owed its success to the fusion of ancient folk beliefs with the doctrine of metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls that later became the basis for more sophisticated salvation religions promising happiness in the after-life. By legend the son of a Muse, Orpheus was a singer whose lyric was able to move nature, not merely mime it, and thus remained for classical culture a central model of the artist. In his attempt to retrieve Eurydice from the Underworld, he even nearly succeeded in overcoming death, and Nietzsche’s rival in love Rainer Maria Rilke, much obsessed with grace in grays, paid homage to this figure who ‘has already lifted the veil | also amongst the shades.’

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Paideia, literally ‘child-ing,’ i. e., the deadly serious ‘teaching, training, learning,’ and thus ‘(higher) culture’ has yet to be superseded as a medium of transmitting knowledge in the symbolic world. Even Orphics like Nietzsche and Rilke had to recognize its physical and symbolic force. (Nietzsche’s idol Goethe opens his autobiography *Poetry and Truth* with a line from the New Comedian Menander, ‘The unflayed (or -flogged) child does not learn (*ou paideuetai*).’ Orphism made much of this play between *sōma*, ‘body,’ and *sēma*, ‘sign.’ (Indeed, Orpheus himself was often represented as a free-floating oracular head, at times dictating to a scribe). But Orpheus returned from Hades with only a dead body, or more precisely, the memory of one. We, too, love our sculpted gods, but mortuary-

white, scraped of any color or skin. In his poem *Leichen-Wäsche* (*Corpse-Washing*), Rilke glosses our ambivalent feelings to many such a dead and whitewashed figure. ‘And one without a name | lay cleanly bare and gave commands.’ In the third of his *Untimely Meditations*, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche utters an *Ur-archē* for an age once again grounded in an Epicurean physics of the free-fluxing *atomon* (scil. *sōma*), that insecable, indivisible body, the *individuum* : ‘Be yourself ! You are not all you now do, think, or yearn for.’ Yet the creative role of new Academies in contemporary art (the trace of which will be preserved in codices long after the many artworks we shall choose not to conserve will be no more) cannot change the fact that the flow of learning runs mostly in only one direction; art-making and art made today has yet but a marginal role in our *encyclos paideia*, that elusory ‘well-rounded education.’

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Rhētorikē technē, Aristotle’s *Ars Rhetorica*, is an ‘art of,’ in quotation marks, that is, a written treatise on the power and effects of the spoken word, the art (no quotes) of verbal persuasion. By the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the dialogical, philosophically informed use of *logos* in the affairs of the *polis* had devolved into an oratory practiced mostly in administrative contexts. As in his *Politics* and *Poetics*, Aristotle was concerned with preserving the potential of no longer fully productive forms like tragedy which, like life, stage the work and works of *frères* and *sœurs ennemi(e)s* like Eros and Eris (‘Strife’), means of suasion to control *stasis*, ‘conflict.’ One marvels at the salience of Burckhardt’s inspired trope in his *Kultur der Renaissance*, ‘The State as a Work of Art.’) *Technē* is work, public work, opposing *Tuchē*, ‘chance,’ the contingencies of the goddess Fortune. New art is called to go beyond the mimetic to the performative, as was tragic drama, and here the *technē* that most clearly reveals how much is at stake is the clinical. But Aristotle and those who follow him are concerned with *ethical* medicine: how to bring beauty and good to *character*, the moral equivalent of the body, by linking it to *pathos*, ‘passion, suffering.’

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Sunistasthai tous mythous—“‘Synthesize” the *mythoi*’: such was Aristotle’s prescription in the *Poetics*, to ‘put together, compose’ the forms of ‘word of mouth or eye,’ the ‘marked’ language that is the basis for all art. In recounting the historical innovations in tragedy after the mythical irruption

of Dionysos, Aristotle ironically grants the authority to override the unitary strictures defended in his name for centuries. From Lascaux on, with its witty blown-pigment outlines of the fingers of the artist’s hand (the first digital art?), ‘composite art’ has always been the art of the future. This term was first used by Jean Hagstrum with respect to William Blake, the great Dissenter who first took the measure of modern revolution in the light of a most radical reading of the poetics, divine and human, of the past. He broke with contemporary traditions of the fine-artist, and invented a new and ‘infernal’ ‘method of printing that combines the Painter and the Poet.’ Returning to both the ideals of the ancient *poiētēs*, the [pre-]Homeric bard recomposing-in-performance and of the Renaissance *artefici del disegno* like his beloved Michelangelo—the only ideal on which he might agree with his neo-classical adversary Reynolds—he was, as professed in his signatures on the plates, variously author, printer, sculptor, inventor, engraver, and publisher. (Perhaps the nearest emanation of this aspiring Blakean light-and-shade in contemporary art is in Bruce Nauman’s series of neon works from 1966–67, *The True Artist is an Amazing Luminous Fountain* and *The True Artist Helps the World By Revealing Mystic Truths*.) Since the advent of high Romanticism, and what Blake was the first to see as its concomitant artistic nemesis, Industrialism, modernity has imposed new arts and sciences for creating our world. As humans rarely seem to enjoy life in that ‘iron cage’ (or more properly ‘steel’: *stahlhartes Gehäuse*), in Max Weber’s famous phrase, built for us, we are compelled to continually dissemble and assemble it, and our selves, its denizens. As Nauman convincingly put it, confirming Blake *après la lettre*, it is artists who now authorize, voice permission, materially and spiritually, to do so. Similarly, Acconci’s art (from which some cage is rarely absent), has taken heed of that principle of re-composing cosmic order as evoked in the lines Rilke’s great *Sonette* to Orpheus: ‘Know the image. *Only in the double realm | do the voices become | eternal and mild.*’ In his later sculptural and design work, Acconci has strived to create another, post-industrial and secular, composite form for disseminating that anti-heroic message, ‘sublimating’, that is, passing more directly from the private to a public sphere of re-collection.

[‘*A lot of us, at that time, thought that the work we were doing—because it didn’t involve something that was saleable, and since an art gallery and an art system is dependent on sales—that our work was going to change the art system. We didn’t do that, we did exactly the opposite. I think we made the art system more powerful than it ever was before.]*

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
The *Timeus* is the only work from classical antiquity continuously preserved until the present, and thus gave the mythographer Plato, otherwise subordinate to Aristotle in professional *technē*, an inordinate place in the classical, medieval, and Renaissance collective consciousness. Much of it is devoted to the creation-work of yet another maker, the *Dēmiourgos*, ‘worker’ for the *dēmos*, ‘the (local) *populus*.’ This mythical Artificer of the World-Soul, imposing order on Chaos, became the prototype of the historical, socially mobile, *poiētēs* throughout pan-Hellenic culture. It contains an even more memorable and celebrated myth, introduced there and continued in the *Critias*, one, however, a disavowing Plato claims originated in Egypt, in a place uncannily close to the site of the future Alexandria. Far beyond the Pillars of Atlas, there existed an island inhabited by a powerful race. Atlantis had designs on Europe and Asia, and was stopped from enslaving them only through the efforts of the ancestors of the Athenians, some 10,000 years earlier. It possessed unprecedented wealth, might, and splendor, but when this ‘meet, measured’ race became ‘out of control’ (*a-kratores*), it was cataclysmically destroyed by the gods for its *hybris*.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Hyper-man is a much fairer translation of the much abused *Übermensch* Zarathustra taught. As we are fated to excel, and thus to destroy, *dixit* Nietzsche, in an Atlantid age of exceeding, mastery of measure is once again become a worthy life-project, ethically and aesthetically. For the arts and sciences ever-changing *technē*, not a problem the ancients had much to contend with, has relentlessly driven *aisthēsis* from *sensus* toward *sensatio*, and morals from sense to sensibility, a faculty much more difficult to effectively train. Burckhardt singled out ‘the *Raffinement* of sensuality’ as the great characteristic of the Hellenistic Age. Though never before have there been so many so well[?]-trained in *sensus* as today, the hyper-æsthetic of our sublime (*hypsos*) can easily render anesthetic. (One intellectual and ideological challenge for contemporary art is to counter this pressure via something like the homeopathic [and homeostatic] remedy discovered by philosophers of science and best defended by Paul Feyerabend in his analysis of random Brownian motion of particles dispersed in a liquid or gaseous medium: the anarchic proliferation, within a rigorously protected enclave, of mutually exclusive theories, which have the paradoxical power of not only transforming but *increasing* available data—the theoretic and æsthetic equivalent of a perpetual-motion machine.)

But if Nietzsche, the greatest self-knower of the modern age, could not endure the ‘stronger *Dasein*’ of that hyper-*Ordnung* of man, what chance have we?

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Phōnē, ‘voice,’ that quintessentially human capacity, is one such determinant of our chances. The primal medium of both *paideia* and *logos*, and for our generations of that most modern of caring professions, the *thērap*s, another attending ‘voice eternal and mild,’ it is *votum*, the means, much abused or underused, through which we exercise our world-citizenship. Artificers use voice in assembling, as in dissembling; this is the material correlative of Greek *eirōneia*, ‘saying (but less than you know),’ one tactic for surviving the word of the stronger. Our first J. B. was also the ‘voice of one crying in the wilderness,’ in the name of One to come, like his predecessor Jonah refusing a *vocatio*, a call to authority or authorship, of his own: ‘*He* must increase (*auxein*), I must decrease.’ For the latest, Joseph Beuys, speaking of his own drawings, ‘every mark on a piece of paper is an acoustic signal.’ (It is not clear whether the latter, in his invocation of a Nietzsche-like prophetic anti-authority, seeks or could truly assume the role of Baptist or Evangelist, two opposing conceptions of Johannine authorship; in this gap, the *auctor*’s great task of reforming art in a new *lingua vulgata* for those in the wasteland who do not read scripture still proceeds.)

[*I used to think art was not about therapy, I mean I learned to believe art was not about therapy. But now I think that it is.*]

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Charaktēr, ‘(im)press, brand’ is the embodiment of *ēthos*, its stamp, as on a coin or die, or the type and letters themselves, and the object of study of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. One way to make us stronger, to make any material stronger, is to press or compress. Condensing also the conceit underlying German term *Dichtung*, ‘poetry,’ lit. ‘thickening.’ After Acconci abandoned literary poetry for life, his first approach to what Joseph Beuys was to propose as the doctrine of *soziale Plastik* assumed another form of Nietzschean density: ‘Be hard.’ In *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, his self-presentation, Nietzsche recounts what was to become his perhaps most lasting heroic epithet, ‘the hardness of the hammer, the *joy even in destroying*.’ In his *Joyous Science*, he proposes an additional instrument, a sharp one: ‘One thing is needed.—To give one’s character style—a great and rare art.’ He then adds, echoing Burckhardt (and in advance of

Acconci’s insistence), ‘with long practice (*Übung*) and daily work.’ The principal advantage of a stylus is that, working *per via di levare*, it allows for graving lines of exquisite fineness in the *disegno* (and the pain is more specific, often requiring only local anesthesia). In the realm of form, from the codex to the Kodak, from schema to cyanotype, whether we work with dark matter or light itself, we must almost always work in the negative. The great achievement of modern psychologists like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud, part poet, part scientist, who in turn built on the ruined *acropoleis* of Plato and Augustine in the prehistory of that impossible *technē*, was to accord full recognition of the dark but vital powers of its negative, the Void (*vacuum*).

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
Psychē, which also requires multiple translation, ‘*spiritus*, *mens*, *anima*’ or ‘*Geist*, *Seele*,’ is, like voice, a function defined by the movement of breath, captured as it expires from the body at the moment of death. From being in Homer just one of many similarly conceived states of consciousness (‘heart,’ ‘nerve,’ ‘spleen,’ ‘guts,’ and the like), it achieved an early primacy it still enjoys today. The most far-reaching quality of Epicurus for his followers was that of *megalopsychos*. Other artists may be accorded such a status by generations that follow them. To begin at the beginning of an artists’ alphabet, Acconci, Alighiero e Boetti, and Cage come easily to mind. (That nomadic encyclopedist of order and disorder Boetti [incidentally born the same year as Acconci], in particular, fits well in our pan-Atlantid context, with his self-proliferation, *mappamundi*, works executed as carpets by native craftswomen in his adoptive Afghanistan, and after the Soviet invasion in refugee camps in Pakistan, use of every-day *styli* like ball-point pens, and interest in an eighteenth-century clerical ancestor’s military career in Asia and subsequent initiation into a Sufi brotherhood.)

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ
O mega, ‘the big O,’ the end—but not 0, the zero of oblivion and self-oblivion, of Zarathustra, for whom ‘the wasteland is growing’ with our dominion over the world. Not nothing, but the open [?] circle the glyph itself promises. The paradoxically potential openness of that ‘circle of art’ of which Bourdieu spoke some twenty-five years ago in his address *Qui a créé les créateurs?* to the École des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, whose opening and closing curve we, *gens* and *agents de l’art* all, creators, critics, collectors, and curators, compose. The Indo-European root *ar-* refers first of all to the ‘fitting’ of the artisan wheelwright and joiner. (It also generates *harmony*,

rhyme and *rhythm*, *order* and *ornament*—but also *armament*). Not nothing, but a positive value for transvalued *nihil*, the highest value. And also the initial of Gauguin’s third question, formulated in 1897, the year of Burckhardt’s death, on returning from his own Else-where on the globe, far beyond even Atlantis: *Où allons-nous?* The O of an answer: *Outopia*, not just ‘No-where,’ but ‘Now-here’—even though, as if still fighting Nietzsche’s ultimate revision, in yet another of his endlessly appended *autocritiques*, of the subtitle of his early book on tragedy to *Hellenism and Pessimism*, we seek to wash that O away, to create a Utopia where none can exist. And although the Christians nearly forgot to invent one (it took a monk with the misnomer of Dionysius and a millennium!), and the French Revolution implicitly did so with the instauration of a Year One, for artists, *auteurs*, it is always the Year Zero, that blank moment when everything is quest, in question. Whenever we persist, with or against new *auctores*, authorities, even authoritarianisms (for we still allow that corpse or corps or corpus to give us laws), we are still back to the beginning of that circle, still with Rilke, seeing, hearing—ourselves?—in the fragment of an (an-?)arch[a]lic Apollo: *You must change your life. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.*

My deep thanks go to Bettina Funcke, the pretext, not only for the gift of *scholē*, the leisure of contemplating and exploring a body of work free of constraint, even as in this case, when that body prematurely expired and passed into limbo, only to be resurrected Lazarus-like from the confines of its Swiss vales (closer in their medieval form to the ideals of classical democracy than perhaps any form that has supplanted it since), to the more oceanic spaces the Atlanticist Continuous Project has offered it. This ‘*dürftige Skizze*’ will not be much of a map for navigating that deep, but may at least console the travelers on a *Medusa* seeking provisional refuge, be it ultimately an undeserved desert isle. As Burckhardt, who warned us against ‘*terribles simplificateurs*,’ confided to Wölfflin with typically Swiss and Socratic *eirōnía*, ‘A teacher cannot hope to give much’ except ‘keep alive belief in the value of spiritual [*geistige*] things.’ But it is the teacher, even and especially a ghostly one, who learns the most.

[*These sound rooms are silent, and dark; now and then, they’re ‘turned on.’... I come back each night with a different name, I pun myself out of existence. Each program fades off into wistful music... The sound room to the left is dark, crowded, vertical, and*

fast. From opposite corners, slides are projected, multiplied, through vertical rows of transparent screens: my body in negative, bending and stretching and exercising—my face and body in color, pasted over with political posters. Sound escapes from the black room: the click of teletype machines; my voice is too fast, voice over voice at different levels, I’m talking the language of revolutionaries, guerrilla fighters—I’m practicing, rehearsing. Sound escapes from the white room: the chirping of birds; my voice is a whisper, voice upon voice—I’m throwing my voice, I’m narrating love and mysticism. In the recording studio, my voice squeezes in under the music; my voice is changed, it comes from out of the past or from a far-distant future; the voice is slow, raspy, machinelike; it resists the seductions from either side.]
From *Other Voices for a Second Sight*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1974; *Into the Light: the Projected Image in American Art 1964–1977*, Whitney Museum, 2001.

This little *Historie (une histoire?)* of mine arose somehow already bracketed between a *vita* (or two) and Vito. A new *abecedarium*, Roman this time, for the adolescent age of new-art-making under the gloriously conflicted and contested *Pax Atlantica* will doubtless cyclically supplement, in mirror-reflect or -flux, the span Zarathustra-to-Acconci. It may have fewer letters, as befits an hyper-imag(in)ed world (whirl’d?) of the multiple-choice answer. Its decline will generate, in equal measure, *Traum* and *Trauma* that require *cura* more than curating. On one hand, we now have many Alexandrias of our own, with far more powerful critical apparatuses. And, again, techniques of mass destruction: witness the treatment of the first forty years of cinema. Will the first forty years of contemporary art suffer the same silence, of the wilderness? It may be this fact, or fear, that fosters our art of the archive, where wit triumphs over craft, where knowing (or *gnōsis*) is increasingly set in display type, where anomie, not alienation or *accedie* is the *maladie professionnelle*, a régime of universal and e[ga?]litarian copyright—and where *auctor* meets *auctio* (and not just in the lexicon), for clients of clerics united by reference (and deference) to a golden mediocracy. On the other, as both Nietzsche and his own *frère ennemi* Wagner presciently postulated (implicitly *contra* Hegel, who saw art as ‘born of the Spirit, and born again,’), the art-work of the future seems bound to and for the operatic, where new synthetic, composite, production authorizes artists a range over poetry, performance, painting, sculpture, and architecture once reserved to the [s]elect. Their contemporary Pater, in his own *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, may ultimately be

correct in his gnomic conclusion, ‘All art constantly aspires to the condition of music.’ But our trained élites may at least be expected to have mastered the 3 R’s, and good art-pedagogues ensure that these include rite, radicality, and renewal. Acconci, as good an imperial head for that art as any, though never tempted by predecessors’s delusions of divinity (even in classical times we see, over time, a diminution in the size of the classical head in proportion to the statuary, and perhaps historical, body, from 1:7 to 1:9), adds, ‘And *rhetoric*—.’ Vito ceased his groundbreaking performance work almost exactly a hundred years after the publication of the second of Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations*, on the [ab]use of history for life, like Acconci’s, an attempt to dissect a historical patient (and practice) he deemed chronic, if not terminal into its instrumental (and detrimental) parts, toward the beginning of that halcyon decade between the births of his two illustrious musical guest-friends from the East, Dionysos and Zarathustra. Acconci’s commanding presence and voice (and it requires *hearing* Acconci to receive the full force of his philosophizing with a stammer), echo the relevance of Nietzsche’s observation on his creature in *Ecce Homo*: ‘Perhaps the whole of Zarathustra may be reckoned as music;—certainly a rebirth of the art of *hearing* was among its preconditions.’ (We can only wonder what a performance of *Zarathustra* by Nietzsche the Musician might have been like.) Though *Mousikē*, ‘the work of the Muses,’ like *Cinēma*, ‘movement,’ (and movements?) will ever turn and return, they may dwell less in museums than in new hospices the emerging moves from *critique* to *clinique*, from *colore* to *disegno*, from *opus* and *œuvre* to opera, to perpetual project and process, engender. Acconci, like many a significant historical figure, the object of a certain cult (though he has never seen himself as of that athletic or mystical or heroic kind: for a touchingly pathetic example, see a diary he kept, at www.slate.com/35143/entry/35146), has himself moved to being a devoted Designer, a latter-day Demiurge, but still and always the Poet: his most recent presentation (with Sarina Basta, a colleague from his Studio) was a reading with musical accompaniment of a text entitled *No-Time in No-Land*, a quasi-Zarathustrean prose-poem originated in an artists’ project in Antarctica, against a projection of white-on-black architectural drawings that re(as)sembled nothing less than the world conceived abstractly as an orchestral score. But when the geniuses have moved on, the ingenious get moving; no matter how ardently we invoke the great M. D. himself, the future may lie less with just any *Herr* or *Frau Doktor*, perhaps already too much scene and herd, than with genial, if not always joyous *ingénieurs*, the searchers and researchers who seek moving art for folk on the move.

Jacques Rancière
THE EMANCIPATED SPECTATOR
Originally prepared for a 2004 lecture given at the Frankfurt summer theater academy, this text attempts to articulate the possibilities of emancipation as a political challenge which Rancière specifically situates between knowing and doing, using the analogy of a theatrical spectator. Rancière advocates emancipation as the blurring of oppositions between they who look and they who act, they who are individuals and they who are members of a collective body.

Bettina Funcke
URGENCY
Bettina Funcke proposes a new understanding of the relationship between artist and audience, using Joseph Beuys' strategic and ironic mythology of the artist as persona as an example. Activating schools of suspicion from below and above, she draws on Kierkegaard's terminology of faith and doubt to counter the modern alienation between art and its public. How much should an artist rely on strategies of persona and image, and how is this a part of their work? Funcke suggests that the nature of what is often called "the political" in art is dependent on this relationship and these questions.

Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt
THE PUBLIC SPHERE OF CHILDREN
Bruce Robbins of Rutgers University wrote, of the 1993 English edition: "A bold geography of counter public spheres, Negt and Kluge's passionate response to Habermas uncovers a world of redemptive public-ness hidden away in the everyday routines of work and family, in a lifeworld that has not been colonized."

Joshua Dubler
LEFT BEHIND. A SYMPOSIUM
Writes Dubler: "What follows is a partial record of an evening-long symposium, generated by interest in the collection of American Christian Evangelical potboilers, known collectively as the *Left Behind* series. After a cursory synopsis and contextualization, the discussants use the phenomenon as a test-case to explore the role of artistic and mass media production as a mode of political action, most pointedly, the uses and abuses of such technologies in service of our own utopian ambitions."

Maria Muhle
EQUALITY AND PUBLIC REALM
ACCORDING TO HANNAH ARENDT
Muhle writes: "Ce texte pose la question de la notion d'égalité et d'espace public dans la pensée d'Hannah Arendt. À partir d'une critique de l'exclusion de la question sociale de la part d'Arendt dans ses écrits sur la Révolution notamment, il essaie d'interroger l'exclusivité de l'espace politique dit public. Il propose de reconsidérer cette question en s'appuyant sur la pensée politique de Jacques Rancière qui voit dans l'entrée du social dans l'espace public – dans la réclamation de leur part de la part des sans-parts – le véritable moment du politique."

Pablo Lafuente
IMAGE OF THE PEOPLE, VOICES OF THE PEOPLE
Writes Lafuente: "The image of the People – how the People is presented, or how the People presents itself – is an integral part of political practice. But this aesthetics of politics, paraphrasing Jacques Rancière, is intimately related to the politics of aesthetics: the image of the People (as a subject or as a spectator) produced or endorsed by artists and art theorists reveals a certain way of understanding political subjectivation. In opposition to Althusser's unknowing mass or Michelet's unified People, the multiplicity of voices that is at the basis of Rancière's understanding of the political opens the door for an analysis and questioning of the politics behind contemporary artistic practice."

Simon Baier
REMARKS ON INSTALLATION
Writes Baier: "Defying any external similarities that might be conceived on the part of the viewer, installation figures as the actualization of an art that may only be grasped in the form of a deictic sum: each work of art standing for itself and, in particular, a material accumulation of objects that can be classified and counted. Yet as that, which situates itself beyond material and medium, it marks at the same time art's residue of its own materiality, which may be neither transgressed nor reduced. The following remarks are intended not to outline a tendency in art, nor to enumerate a list of works and their contexts, but rather to outline the implications of what it means when to install becomes the generic description for what an artist does."

Nico Baumbach
IMPURE IDEAS: ON THE USE OF BADIOU AND DELEUZE FOR CONTEMPORARY FILM THEORY
Baumbach writes: "In a short polemical essay, [Baumbach] attempts to think the current moment in cinema theory and cinema production. He proposes that the legacies of 60s and 70s film theory have not, as the current dogma would have it, been exhausted, but that they need to be rethought in light of recent transformations in the modes of production and circulation of moving images. Inspired by Gilles Deleuze and the inaesthetics of Alain Badiou, [he] asks what it would mean to, instead of theorizing about cinema, submit theory to the conditions of cinema. This means thinking through cinema's "impurity" as an art form and leads to the prescription of new experiments in the cinematic-essay."

Serge Daney
IN STUBBORN PRAISE OF INFORMATION
Published for the first time in English, this essay by Serge Daney should need no introduction to French speakers. Daney's incisive thinking is here turned to the question of televised news in wartime, and, more broadly, the role of news media.

Johanna Burton
'OF THINGS NEAR AT HAND,' OR PLUMBING CÉZANNE'S NAVEL
Burton writes: "This essay gets to the heart of a work shared between Paul Cézanne and Sherrie Levine. Or, more precisely, this essay gets to that work's navel. Looking closely at the modernist master's 1895 "Still Life with Plaster Cupid" and the postmodernist maestro's 1993 photographic reprisal of it (as "After Cézanne" No. 9), questions are raised regarding concepts of origin and influence, reproduction and birth. Considering a proliferation of bellybuttons (painted, sculpted, and photographed) and a variety of bodies (apples, onions, babies, and women), the text suggests navel-gazing as an alternate mode of writing genealogies."

Warren Niesluchowski
THE ARS OF IMPERIUM
Niesluchowski writes: "Art again is shifting shape, after one of those millennial turns where a modernist moment has become a quick classicism. On one hand, as in ancient Alexandria, a great critical apparatus has been called into being to illustrate and defend (and consume?) an æsthetic canon and its archive. On the other, a newer generation of art-making has been moving from *critique* to *clinique*, seeking (again) to engage *techn* and its evolving practices in the cause of the life-forms (and death-?) to be found in a newly emergent world struggling against the confines of its (and their) contradictory histories, bringing sense to sensation. Drawing some poetic consequences for the artistic professions, whether critic, curator, collector, or creator, the present *histoire* looks through the 'retro-perspective' lens of Nietzsche's Dionysian *Historie*: back to Alexander the Great, the avatar of the first imperial globalism, and to Vito Acconci, the body of whose work, as a finder and founder of contemporary art as we know it, has vindicated (and 'revindicated'), *pace* Nietzsche and his early interlocutor Burckhardt, one possible radical 'philology of the future.'"

Jacques Rancière
LE SPECTATEUR ÉMANCIPÉ
Préparé à l'origine pour une conférence donnée en 2004 à l'académie de théâtre d'été de Francfort, ce texte tente d'articuler les différentes possibilités de l'émancipation comme défi politique que Rancière situe tout particulièrement entre le savoir et le faire, en utilisant l'analogie avec un spectateur de théâtre. Rancière prône une émancipation qui estompe les oppositions entre ceux qui regardent et ceux qui jouent, ceux qui sont des individus et ceux qui sont membres d'un corps collectif.

Bettina Funcke
TENDANCE
Bettina Funcke propose une nouvelle compréhension de la relation entre artiste et public, se servant comme exemple de la mythologie stratégique et ironique de l'artiste comme personnage inventée par Joseph Beuys. Elle provoque l'éveil du soupçon aussi bien d'en haut que d'en bas, et emploie la terminologie kierkegaardienne de la foi et du doute pour contrer l'aliénation moderne entre l'art et son public. Dans quelle mesure un artiste doit-il s'appuyer sur les stratégies de personnage et d'image, et en quoi cela constitue-t-il une partie intégrante de leur travail ? Funcke montre que ce que l'on appelle souvent le « politique » en art est déterminé par cette relation et ces questions.

Alexander Kluge et Oskar Negt
L'ESPACE PUBLIC DES ENFANTS
Dans l'édition anglaise de 1993, Bruce Robbins écrit : « Géographie audacieuse des contre-espaces publics, la réponse passionnée de Negt et Kluge à Habermas découvre un monde de public-ité rédemptrice dissimulée dans la routine quotidienne du travail et de la vie de famille, dans un monde de la vie qui n'a pas été colonisé. »

Joshua Dubler
LEFT BEHIND. RECUEIL
Dubler écrit : « Ce qui suit est le compte-rendu partiel d'une conférence de plusieurs heures, née de l'intérêt pour la saga des romans chrétiens évangéliques américains connue sous le nom de *Left Behind*. Après un rapide résumé et une remise en contexte, les participants utilisent le phénomène comme cas d'étude pour examiner le rôle de la production artistique et médiatique de grande échelle comme mode d'action politique, et, surtout, la façon dont nous usons et abusons de ces technologies pour servir nos ambitions utopiques. »

Maria Muhle
EGALITÉ ET ESPACE PUBLIC
SELON HANNAH ARENDT
Muhle écrit : « Ce texte pose la question de la notion d'égalité et d'espace public dans la pensée d'Hannah Arendt. À partir d'une critique de l'exclusion de la question sociale de la part d'Arendt dans ses écrits sur la Révolution notamment, il essaie d'interroger l'exclusivité de l'espace politique dit public. Il propose de reconsidérer cette question en s'appuyant sur la pensée politique de Jacques Rancière qui voit dans l'entrée du social dans l'espace public – dans la réclamation de leur part de la part des sans-parts – le véritable moment du politique. »

Pablo Lafuente
IMAGES DU PEUPLE, VOIX DU PEUPLE
Lafuente écrit : « L'image du peuple – comment le peuple est représenté, et se représente lui-même – fait partie intégrante des pratiques politiques. Mais cette esthétique de la politique, pour paraphraser Jacques Rancière, est intimement reliée à la politique de l'esthétique : l'image du Peuple (qu'il soit sujet ou spectateur) produite ou reprise par les artistes et les théoriciens de l'art révèle une certaine façon de comprendre la subjectivation politique. En contraste avec la masse ignorante d'Althusser ou le peuple unifié de Michelet, la multiplicité des voix au fondement de l'interprétation que donne Rancière du politique ouvre la porte à une analyse et une remise en question de la politique qui sous-tend les pratiques artistiques contemporaines. »

Simon Baier
REMARQUES SUR L'INSTALLATION
Baier écrit : « Défiant toute similarité extérieure que le spectateur pourrait concevoir, l'installation figure comme l'actualisation d'un art qui ne peut être saisi que sous la forme d'une somme déictique, chaque œuvre d'art y ayant sa place propre et, en particulier, une accumulation matérielle d'objets que l'on peut classifier et dénombrer. Cependant, en tant que telle, l'installation, qui se situe au-delà du matériau et du médium, est la marque de ce qui reste de la matérialité de l'art, qui ne peut être ni transgressée ni restreinte. Les remarques qui suivent n'ont pas pour intention de mettre en évidence une tendance dans l'art, ou de dresser une liste d'œuvres et de leurs contextes, mais plutôt se souligner les implications de ce que l'on veut dire quand le mot « installer » devient le terme générique employé pour décrire les activités d'un artiste. »

Nico Baumbach
IDÉES IMPURES: DE L'USAGE DE BADIOU ET DELEUZE DANS LA THÉORIE CONTEMPORAINE DU CINÉMA
Baumbach écrit : « Dans un court essai polémique, Baumbach tente de penser l'état présent de la théorie du cinéma et de la production cinématographique. Il avance que l'héritage de la théorie du cinéma des années 1960 et 1970 n'a pas été, comme le voudrait le dogme actuel, épuisé, mais qu'il doit être repensé à la lumière des récentes transformations dans les modes de production et de diffusion de l'image en mouvement. S'inspirant de Gilles Deleuze et de l'inesthétique d'Alain Badiou, il pose la question de ce que cela signifierait, au lieu de théoriser sur le cinéma, de soumettre la théorie aux conditions du cinéma. Ce qui implique de penser entièrement l'« impureté » du cinéma en tant que forme d'art, et amène à la prescription de nouvelles expériences dans l'essai cinématographique. »

Serge Daney
ÉLOGE TÊTU DE L'INFORMATION
Publié pour la première fois en anglais, cet essai de Serge Daney n'a pas besoin d'être présenté aux francophones. La pensée incisive de Daney se tourne ici vers la question des informations télévisées en temps de guerre, et, plus généralement, du rôle des médias d'information.

Johanna Burton
SOUS LA MAIN, OU L'EXPLORATION DU NOMBRIL DE CÉZANNE
Burton écrit : « Cet essai plonge au cœur d'une œuvre commune à Paul Cézanne et Sherrie Levine. Ou, plus précisément, il touche au nombril de cette œuvre. L'examen attentif de la « Nature Morte au Cupidon de Plâtre » (1895) du maître moderniste et de sa reprise photographique par le maître postmoderne (sous le titre « D'Après Cézanne » No. 9, 1993) soulève de nombreuses questions autour des concepts d'origine et d'influence, de reproduction et de naissance. Le texte, qui envisage une prolifération de nombrils (peints, sculptés, et photographiés) et un ensemble de corps (pommes, oignons, bébés, femmes), prône le nombrilisme comme nouveau mode d'écriture généalogique. »

Warren Niesluchowski
L'ARS DE L'IMPERIUM
Niesuchowski écrit: L'art change à nouveau de forme, à l'un de ces tournants historiques où une époque moderniste devient un bref classicisme. D'une part, comme dans l'antique Alexandrie, un grand appareil critique, Musée et Bibliothèque, a été créé pour illustrer et défendre (et consommer ?) un canon esthétique et ses archives. D'autre part, une nouvelle génération d'artistes est passée de la *critique* à la *clinique*, cherchant (encore une fois) à rallier la *techn* et ses pratiques en pleine évolution à la cause des formes de vie (et de mort ?) d'un nouveau monde à peine émergeant, luttant contre les contraintes de ses (et de leurs) histoires contradictoires, amenant la raison à la perception (ou serait-ce l'inverse ?). En en tirant les conséquences poétiques pour les professions artistiques, que ce soit pour les critiques, les conservateurs, les collectionneurs ou les créateurs, la présente histoire « encyclopédique », adopte l'optique « rétrospective » de l'*Historie* dionysiaque de Nietzsche : d'Alexandre le Grand, avatar de notre première mondialisation impérialiste à Acconci, un des découvreurs et fondateurs de l'art contemporain tel que nous le connaissons, dont l'œuvre entier a réhabilité (et endossé), n'en déplaise à Nietzsche et à son interlocuteur Burckhardt, la possibilité d'une « philologie de l'avenir » radicale, digne d'un Zarathoustra. »

Translated from English by Hélène Valance.

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