## **GROUP-WORK READER**

compiled by Chiara Galimberti, Lilly Hern-Fondation, Ramón Miranda-Beltrán, and Winslow Smith

with Ionit Behar and grupa o.k.

SAIC MFA Show, 2012

### GROUP-WORK READER

Dorothea von Hantelmann, "On the Socio-Economic Role of the Art Exhibition," in Juan Gaitán, Nicolaus Schafhausen, and Monika Szewczyk, eds., *Cornerstones*. Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and Sternberg Press, 2011: 266-277.

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# CORNER-STONES

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# On the Socio-Economic Role of the Art Exhibition

Dorothea von Hantelmann

Fig. 90 Robert Morris, *Bodyspacemotionthings*, 1971/2009.



On the occasion of his participation in documenta V (directed by Harald Szeemann) in 1972, the artist Daniel Buren wrote a statement for the exhibition catalogue in which he claimed that "More and more the subject of an exhibition tends not to be the display of artworks, but the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art."1 Buren was reacting against what he saw as a tendency among curators to assume an authorial role in the presentation of artworks—a tendency arguably spearheaded by Szeemann himself—recognizing that this would eventually reverse the relationship between the artwork and the exhibition, where the latter would have to be acknowledged as the actual work of art. Consequently, Buren proposed a work that put the focus on precisely this situation: instead of simply adding another piece to the exhibition, he chose an already existing curated room with paintings by artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Ryman, and Brice Marden, and covered the walls beneath the paintings with striped wallpaper. Under the title Exhibition of an Exhibition, Buren presented a work that not only dissolved the hierarchy between the artwork and its environmental support, thereby producing a certain bafflement in the viewer as to the actual location of the work of art the paintings, the wall, or the entire situation—he also pointed out the extent to which this entire situation determines or co-determines the experience and the meaning of any artwork.

Since then much has been said about the growing prominence of curators and the question of their status as organizers or authors of exhibitions. Similar attention has been drawn towards the increasing number of museum buildings constructed in the last fifteen years and the financial and architectural efforts that go into their realization. There have been many discussions around phenomena such as Britain's Tate Modern and the enthusiasm shown by the public, critics, and tourists alike at attempts to present high art to a mass audience of four million visitors a year, including the question of what to make of this remarkable popularity—a popularity, however, which is not limited to this kind of signature building. Today, art institutions which a few decades ago attracted only a handful of visitors on opening nights, receive hundreds of people, not to mention the crowds that flock to see blockbuster exhibitions and shows like documenta. The art world has not only expanded globally—as demonstrated by the numerous new biennials, art fairs, and museums that have been founded all over the world—it has also expanded socially. A London journalist recently called art "the social lubricant of our great city,"2

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Daniel Buren, "Ausstellung einer Ausstellung," in *Daniel Buren, Achtung! Texte 1967–1991*, eds. Gerti Fietzek and Gudrun Inboden [Dresden and Basel: Verlag der Kunst, 1995], 181.

Nick Foulkes, "Why Art is the Social Lubricant of our Great City," London Evening Standard, July 10, 2009.

and probably no other profession has received such a dramatic boost in status as the artist (who perfectly embodies today's prevailing idea of a creative, self-determined subject). What happened? How could visual art propel itself so far into the center of society? How could a relatively dry and, at least in its inception, also rather scholarly event like the exhibition, grow into one of the most successful formats in contemporary culture—so successful that it is even imported by other cultures?

The recent success of the visual arts is certainly linked to a rather new notion of art, nurtured in part by the accomplishments of Conceptual art. It is partly due to the latter's instantiation of a freedom of means, that is to say, its self-deliverance from the mandatory bond of art with painting and sculpture. It is also due to Conceptual art's consequent achievement in broadening art's frame of reference, to include, paraphrasing Dan Graham, the entire social context. The contestation of an aesthetic definition of art in favor of an alliance with fields of cultural, social, and political experimentation has substantially changed what Thierry de Duve calls the "social contract" of art, meaning the conventions, rules, and expectations that structure art's relation to a public. The contemporary art exhibition has become a sort of meeting place for different kinds of specialized discourses. As such, it is specialized in the sense that it produces a specific meaning or knowledge, yet at the same time it is (or at least it claims to be) expected to be accessible to a general public—unlike the university, for instance, which is not required to open its discourse to a broader public. Attaining this combination of specificity and openness might be the biggest challenge for producers and mediators of art today.

However, above and beyond the individual artwork, I would like to contend that it is the format of the exhibition itself that is one of the key factors in the recent success of the visual arts. Indeed, as I see it, this recent popularity is the continuation of a success story that already spans two centuries: the increasing dominance of a fairly modern ritual that is specific to democratic market societies, the exhibition. From their inception, at the turn of the nineteenth century, both the museum and the exhibition have become distinguishing features of the modern bourgeois state. They served as an emblem for the emergence of an important set of relations through which a democratic citizenry has not only been rhetorically incorporated into the processes of the state but could also performatively practice or enact a set of values that were and still are fundamental to Western democratic societies, namely (a) the instantiation of a linear notion of time, (b) the increased valorization of the individual, (c) the importance of the production of material objects, and (d) the latter's subsequent circulation through commerce.

Firstly, the museum—and the exhibition in its canonical nineteenthcentury formation—can be seen as providing a reinforcement mechanism in relation to new institutions of social training governed by what Tony Bennett (borrowing from Michel Foucault) calls "evolutive time."<sup>3</sup> By collecting artifacts from the past, the museum gives shape and presence to history, inventing it, in effect, by defining the space of a ritual encounter with the past. It marks time in a series of stages that comprises a linear path of evolution; it organizes these stages into an itinerary that the visitor's route retraces; it projects the future as a course of limitless development. It is in all these ways that the museum echoes and resonates with those new institutions of discipline and training through which—via the construction of a series of stages to be passed through by means of the successful acquisition of appropriate skills—individuals were encouraged to relate to an evolutive notion of linear time, and in so doing, come to regard themselves as beings in constant need of progressive development.<sup>4</sup> Thus, exhibitions and museums not only play an important part in the construction of a certain notion of history (history as a remote, enclosed past from which the modern can set itself apart), but also link this notion of history to an idea of development and progress (which includes the continuous and progressive self-formation of the individual).

Even more important, in terms of its present social significance at least, is the exhibition's ability to create and cultivate a specific nexus between the individual and the material object. The notion of the individual is central to the museum and is cultivated by the latter on two levels: first, by displaying works that are informed by and therefore to a certain extent also mirror the subjectivity of an individual, the artist; and second, because the museum constitutes the first public ritual that explicitly addresses and singles out the individual citizen (as the experience of the visual art work is conceived of as being a one-on-one experience, unlike, for example, theater, which addresses the individual as part of a collective audience). The museum marks a tipping point in the history of individualization in the sense that it specifically addresses an individual who understands himself first and foremost as an individual. By offering a context through which the working classes were exposed to the refining (mental) influence of middle class culture, by organizing space and vision not only to enable a clearer inspection of the objects exhibited but also to allow visitors to be objects of each other's inspection, museums

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See Tony Bennett, Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism (London and New York: Routledge, 2004). 4

See Tony Bennett, The Birth of the Museum (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Particularly, "Part III: Technologies of Progress."

were conceived as instruments of reform, as embodiers of a "civilizing ritual"5 in which new forms of conduct and behavior could be shaped and practiced. As Henry Cole, the great exhibitor and innovator of education in nineteenth-century Britain phrased it, "It would teach the young child to respect property and behave gently"6; or as Tony Bennett put it, "Going to a museum, then as now, is not merely a matter of looking and learning; it is also an exercise in civics." Certainly the stately, sacrosanct presentation of artworks in modern museums leaves basically no choice but that of submission to authority (of history, of the state, of knowledge). The standardization of museum behavior which began in the late nineteenth century silence, unhampered mobility, absence of chatting, eating, prolonged stopping, and so on—suggests a notion of individuality and of individual behavior that is highly sublimated and idealized and includes the tacit acceptance of doing away with any demonstration of individualism. Yet the fact that the notion of the individual in the museum is ideologically manufactured does not diminish its significance as a place that addresses the individual, that is built around the individual, and which cultivates the value of the individual. It is this focus on the visitor as an individual that characterizes the exhibition as an essentially modern ritual. The exhibition advanced to become something like a ritual of aesthetic refinement for the masses—a ritual that can host a mass of people that nevertheless are not addressed as a mass, but as a collective of individuals—a combination whose accomplishment might be the exhibition's biggest cultural achievement.

If the museum thus marks a decisive point in the history of individualization, it does so, however, by highlighting the main or hegemonic way in which individual subjectivity is shaped in Western market societies, namely through and via material objects. As one of the major sites where material objects are valued and even quasiworshipped, the exhibition actively constructs a relationship between the production of subjectivity and the production of material objects. Once again, this is particularly valid for the art exhibition: no other artifact is so thoroughly the product of an externalized subjectivity and also manifests the primacy of objective form of concrete materiality. On the one hand the artwork, as a material object, relates to the realm of material production that in modern societies becomes the dominant source of prosperity (or, in a larger sense, even the focus of

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See Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

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Quoted in Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 102.

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an idea of a good or successful life). On the other hand, however, it can also designate the material object as a source of cultural significance and aesthetic refinement. By bringing these two dimensions together—the object that is produced and the object that is consumed, or, in other words, actively and intentionally related to—the exhibition participates in the hegemonic way in which individual subjectivity is shaped in Western market societies, namely through the production and consumption of material objects.

Finally, the very notion of "product" is itself mirrored and at the same time ennobled by the conception of the artwork. In the eighteenth century Adam Smith had already recognized the value of exhibitions as a place where the practices of comparing that were essential for the educated consumer were inculcated and cultivated. Correspondingly, there were many reciprocal influences between museums and department stores in the nineteenth century wherein certain techniques of object display and arrangement arose simultaneously.8 Just as market societies derive their wealth from the production of material objects and their circulation through commerce, the visual art field is engaged in exactly the same process. Visual art not only reiterates these basic components of Western societies but also, through the museum, constructs an entire ritual designed to dignify them by removing their objects from a sphere of practice and use, elevating them to a seemingly higher realm in which meaning and subjectivity are produced.

According to this line of thought, the art exhibition is *the* place where these basic values and parameters are cultivated and performed in their respective relation—as they have to be constantly enacted and reenacted, performed and re-performed in order to become and to remain effective. The way in which this takes place, however—how the exhibition ritual and, with it, the specific subject-object relation at its core, is shaped—is subject to historical changes. Without being able to cover this in the frame of an essay, I will sketch this historical perspective by pointing to two significant moments in the history of exhibitions: first, the historical emergence of exhibitions in rising bourgeois industrial societies, and second, their profound transformation along with socioeconomic changes in the second half of the twentieth century. In both cases, I believe that there are striking correspondences between a societal and economical order on the one hand and its respective exhibition format on the other.

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See Gudrun König, Konsumkultur (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009).

It is commonly known that the birth of the museum, and with it the advent of the exhibition as a new public cultural format, is intrinsically linked to the transition from feudal to modern bourgeois societies. The exhibition, as I have mentioned, evolved to become the public ritual for modern democratic societies because it addresses the individual as an individual. But its significance also lies in the particular way it situates this individual in a relationship with the material object, as it is this very relationship that lies at the heart of bourgeois culture. We might think of a nineteenth-century culture of collecting, of department stores and warehouses, or of the nineteenth-century bourgeois bibelotized interior. Just as the bourgeois individual inhabits his world by possessing and owning material objects, so he constructs and recognizes himself vis-à-vis the object.9 Museums and exhibitions have always served as restorers of this process by elevating the object to the status of protagonist in the field of symbolic meaning production. Being itself intrinsically linked to a nineteenth-century cult and the general proliferation of objects, the exhibition is the machine that not only pulls the object away from praxis, but also creates a whole ritual designed for bringing it to center stage. One could even say that it has come to be the privileged place where the object appears as a meaningful and valuable entity, in relation to which an individual reflects on himself, where this core concept of Western bourgeois culture is epitomized.

In previous cultures of the court and aristocracy, objects played a role too, as signs of taste, wealth, and status. But ultimately they formed part of an aesthetics of manner and style; they accessorized a subject that aimed to transform itself into another, more refined personage. The aristocracy, however, was only able to place such a high premium on pursuits like conversation and sociability because it was exonerated from labor. And, as Thorstein Veblen has shown, it even needed to cultivate these practices in order to demonstrate that it had plenty of free time, which clearly distinguished it from a productive lower class that served to cover its basic requirements.<sup>10</sup> The bourgeoisie, in contrast, saw itself as an integrative organism, whose progressive, one could even say revolutionary, achievement was to create a social order in which the realms of material production and aesthetic refinement no longer excluded one another—in which people worked and had access to culture. In this new social order, cultural refinement and production entered a kind of dialectical relationship. With the disappearance of feudal bindings, wealth and status were no longer obtained by birthright,

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See Didier Maleuvre, Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Mentor Books, 1953).

but earned through labor and production. And just as material production became the source of wealth for potentially everyone, everyone should have had access to the realm of cultural refinement, at least in theory. The rise of material production as the dominant source of wealth came along with the new ambition to democratize the realm of culture, bringing the fields of culture and production closer together. And the art object became the key element in which the realms of economic production and cultural refinement coalesced. As a material object the artwork has a relation to the realm of material production, yet it can also designate this object as a source of cultural significance and aesthetic refinement. It is therefore no coincidence that a new society that no longer measures itself against what it owns qua an inherited status but against what it produces a "productivist society" as Felix Guattari calls it11—should ascribe such high value to a ritual that is equally centered on the (produced, material) object. For the exhibition and in particular the art exhibition could do what no domestic household or department store could (or can) do: to cultivate not only the object's primacy for the production of subjectivity but also simultaneously reinforce this relation with authority. Similarly, the artwork not only embodies but also transcends the nexus of subjectivity and materiality. No other artifact is so thoroughly the product of an externalized subjectivity and manifests the primacy of objective form, of concrete, actual materiality. In this sense the (art) exhibition becomes the privileged site where the new relation between subjectivity and materiality that marks the core of bourgeois self-understanding is displayed, enacted, and authorized.

How does this change in contemporary culture? In 1971 Robert Morris opened a "retrospective" at London's Tate Gallery—an exhibition that apparently was so ahead of its time that it had to be closed after five days. <sup>12</sup> Morris, whose artworks and writings most explicitly question the traditional notion of both art object and viewer in favor of a situational and phenomenological "lived bodily perspective," had transformed his geometrical shapes into an overall plywood construction, a sculptural environment though which the visitor had to navigate, sometimes under physically quite demanding conditions. It was a constructed landscape of sloping ramps and planes, a kind of aesthetic gymnasium for the exercise of bodily and spatial awareness. Dismissing a reflective spectator-object relation where meaning

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See Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, an Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm (Bloomington and Indiana-polis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 20.

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For a detailed account see Jon Bird, "Minding the Body: Robert Morris's 1971 Tate Gallery Retrospective," in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. Michael Newman (London: Reaktion Books, 1999).

is determined by the optical exchange across the visual field, Morris induced an experience of corporeality, a haptic or tactile phenomenology of the body as it encounters the physical world. It appears that this setting provoked some frantic bursts of energetic participation, and already at the opening the situation got out of control. "By the end of the private viewing," critic Reyner Banham recalls, "the place was a bedlam in which all rules of decorum had been abandoned as liberated esthetes leaped and teetered and heaved and clambered and shouted and joined hands with total strangers." After five days much of the show was wrecked, some injuries had been reported, and the institution decided to substitute the show with a conventional retrospective. "Fortunately, no one got killed," Banham continues, in this "most resoundingly successful disaster I have ever attended," but, he admits, "a lot of people got frightened (including the gallery)." <sup>114</sup>

In one of his essays on the governmental function of the museum, Tony Bennett speaks about "ruptural accounts" in which museum objects are disconnected from the prevailing mode of display and inscribed into a new configuration that is driven by entirely different governmental, epistemological, and aesthetic principles. 15 Robert Morris's show, I think, marks such a "rupture." Not that it was symptomatic; quite the contrary, it was a veritably avant-garde event. But as such it showed the first cracks in the stability of an order that would slowly erode—up to the point where, in the early twenty-first century, hundreds of thousands would slide down Carsten Höller's giant slides in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. And as such, I contend, Morris's project in both its radical redefinition of notions of subject and object and in its emphatic reformulation of aesthetic experience not only indicates significant postmodern changes in aesthetics but also—at a remarkably early point in history—resonates with the fundamental economic and cultural transformations of the bourgeois/ industrial society outlined above. I am referring to the rise of the affluent society in the North America and Western Europe of the 1960s. For the first time in the history of Western civilization, individuals' basic needs were more or less covered. The British economist John Maynard Keynes had predicted this novelty in 1930, and the American economist and Kennedy-advisor John Kenneth Galbraith affirmed it in the mid-1950s. The transformation of Western societies from societies of lack to societies of affluence fundamentally eroded the need to ground society's wealth in material production and eventually

Reyner Banham, "It was SRO—And a Disaster," New York Times, May 23, 1971, D28.

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Tony Bennett, "Civic Laboratories: Museums, Cultural Objecthood, and the Governance of the Social," *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5 (2005): 521\_/17

heralded the shift to the service society. Whereas the economic and ecological consequences of this shift have meanwhile entered public awareness, the cultural consequence is perhaps less obvious—at least as being connected to this process. As sociologists Ulrich Beck and Gerhard Schulze have shown, the transformation from a society of lack to a society of affluence has produced a change in the way individuals relate to themselves. 16 With the increase of both income and leisure time, more and more people can (and need to) shape their lives according to their own tendencies and preferences. People may and must learn to refer to their living context in a mode of selection—and their criteria for selecting are no longer primarily purpose-oriented but also, and increasingly, aesthetic. The so-called aestheticization of everyday life has become a sign for this epochal shift: the fact that people in the developed and richer countries of the West refer to their everyday life in an aesthetic mode is considered a decisive feature of our time. The emerging affluent society might still celebrate its new wealth. As they say, more is more. But for the individual in the advanced affluent society, aesthetic criteria—such as quality and intensity of experience—become a main point of orientation.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to these societal developments, Robert Morris's exhibition at the Tate Gallery, as I see it, is a very early manifestation of that shift to an "experience society," which, according to Gerhard Schulze, is characteristic of postindustrial and post-bourgeois societies. In this altered societal order, the very connection between the production of subjectivity and the material object (that we introduced as the core aspect of bourgeois culture) is not insignificant. Yet its relevance to the consumerist society as it has existed in the West roughly since the 1950s is different. Unlike in bourgeois culture, the material object no longer has to ritually celebrate material production. It does not need to prove its own material and symbolical value. It does not even necessarily claim to be the center of meaning production anymore. Its status shifts to the position of a prop or a tool, which triggers a self-perception or self-confrontation of the subject, rather than an absorption into the object. Morris's show exemplifies this transformation from an aesthetic of the object to an aesthetic of subjective and intersubjective experience in an exemplary way: one's experience of oneself and others becomes the actual "object" of the exhibition. Morris creates an environment that does not focus on the material object, or on one's own relation to that object, but on one's

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See Ulrich Beck, Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity (London: Sage, 1992); Gerhard Schulze, Die Erlebnisgesellschaft:

Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1997). 17

For a detailed account see Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft*.

relation to oneself. A shift that Morris articulated in quite precise terms: "The progression is from the manipulation of objects to constructions which adjust to the body's presence, to situations where the body itself is manipulated. I want to provide a situation where people can become more aware of themselves and their own experience rather than more aware of some version of my experience." Within a context where traditionally our most sophisticated ways of relating to objects and their symbolical meanings are displayed, Morris introduces a moment that is all about one's relation to oneself and to others. The objects are merely tools, devices to produce these moments. Using them, one does not communicate with the sensitivity or the specific subjectivity of the artist—as we might do when we contemplate other artworks such as a drawing—but with oneself, and with others that enter into the same experience.

The subject, therefore, is clearly no longer the sublimated and idealized "recipient" of the canonical nineteenth-century museum. In contrast to bourgeois governmental aesthetics, Morris proposes an aesthetic of existence that conceives the relationship with oneself not as one that is completely determined by mediated norms and knowledge or ultimately reduced to morals or self-awareness. but as one that is grounded in a fundamental potential for shaping and transforming subjectivity. Thus against the museum as a machine for control and rationalization, Morris proposed a refinement of physical and haptic awareness and sensitivity, thereby-intentionally or unintentionally—embracing precisely what the museum traditionally excludes: a loss of reflection and individual self-control. In the process of shaping the modern individual, the museum cultivates notions of composure, sensitivity, and refinement, and rejects everything that is compulsive and dissipated. Morris, however, wittingly or not, brings back all these aspects that were supposedly eliminated from the individual character, as something equally formed and formative, refined and refining of one's personality. And he does this at a time when it is artistically possible to imagine this different conception of subjectivity in the exhibition context but given the exhibition's history, seemingly not yet possible to realize.

I argued that the recent success of the visual arts cannot be explained solely by a booming market or simply be condemned as being part of the ever-growing sphere of spectacle. It also—and to a larger extent than is the case in current debates on art—has to be understood as the success of the exhibition format itself. Subsequently, I suggested that this exhibition format owes its success to a set of values funda-

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Quoted after Jon Bird, "Minding the Body," 97.

mental to Western democratic market societies which it ritually enacts: the prioritization of the individual, an incessant need for progression or growth, and the production of material objects and their circulation as products. In this sense, one could describe the exhibition as a kind of new Western ritual; a ritual that changes and transforms itself according to the profound changes in the socio-economic order it is based upon. As long as this order is determined by a modern idea of production and progress, the exhibition can be the privileged site to ritually perform the subjective encounter of objects. What it is today, how it can adjust its ritual to postindustrial and post-bourgeois societies, is yet to be defined.

Dorothea von Hantelmann teaches art history at Freie Universität, Berlin. She is a member of the Collaborative Research Centre 626: Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits, where her main fields of research are contemporary

art and aesthetics, and the history of museums and exhibitions. She is currently preparing a book on the social significance of the art exhibition from 1800 until today. Her most recent book publications are: How to Do Things with Art (JRP|Ringier, 2010) and Die Ausstellung. Politik eines Rituals (Diaphanes, 2010), which she edited together with Carolin Meister.



"Dark Matter into Light": A Round-Table Discussion Author(s): Chris Gilbert, Carlos Basualdo, T. J. Demos, Gregory Sholette

Reviewed work(s):

Source: Art Journal, Vol. 64, No. 3 (Fall, 2005), pp. 84-101

Published by: College Art Association

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20068403

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Dan Peterman, workstation for 61st Street Bottlecap Pasta, 2001–04, installation view, Baltimore Museum of Art (artwork © Dan Peterman, photograph by Jose A. Sanchez, Jr.)

The practice of creating a small clamshell-like pasticcio using a recycled bottle cap as stamp evolved out of the community kitchen and garden operated by Peterman in Chicago's Hyde Park.

Today there are signs of increased attention to informal art production and production networks. A wave of "slacker chic" making the circuits of the galleries joins attempts to historicize the inclusive East Village scene of the 1980s and also sometimes-more-than-passing glances at contemporary street art. These symptoms of a groundswell of interest in the art world's purported others have not gone unrecognized or untheorized; in a series of recent essays, artist and writer

Chris Gilbert, Carlos Basualdo, T. J. Demos, and Gregory Sholette

Gregory Sholette used an astronomical metaphor to frame the vast realm of belowthe-radar production, calling it the "dark matter" to the art world's "light matter." As

Sholette describes the former term, it applies to a range of practices such as "home-crafts, makeshift memorials, Internet

art galleries, amateur photography and pornography, Sundaypainters, self-published newsletters and fan-zines" as well as 'artists who self-consciously work outside and/or against the

**Features** 

## "Dark Matter into Light": A Round-Table Discussion

parameters of the mainstream art world for reasons of political and social critique." Paralleling the relations between gray economies and legal ones, these dark practices exist in dynamic and symbiotic, if usually unrecognized, relationships to the more visible art world. Sholette's discovery—in part an act of nomination—led to his calling for "a radical rezoning of art world real estate," as well as a revision of "the very notion of artistic value as it is defined by bour-

geois ideology."3 In an effort to respond to these ideas and consider their convergence with

autonomist theories of immaterial labor (as well as anthropological work on creative consumption), I recently organized the exhibition Cram Sessions: 02 Dark Matter at the Baltimore Museum of Art (on view November 3-28, 2004). The second in a two-year series of experimental exhibitions, the show proposed a radical leveling of ideas, objects, and programs, all of which were treated as equal inputs into the exhibition space (see diagram on following pages). True to the initial theorization of dark matter, the project included an unusual swath of contemporary production, with contributions by Dan Peterman and Marjetica Potrčartists whose work in different ways steers close to life—as well as work by zinemakers, punk knitters, experimental musical-instrument inventors, and fantasy gamers. Rather than simply presenting or displaying this material, the show proposed that an important part of its agency would be to link, mobilize, and empower the practitioners. With these aims in mind, it staged a series of events that sought to theorize the subject on the one hand, and to organize and politicize both the participants and audience on the other. These events included a panel discussion involving the curator and writer Carlos Basualdo, the art historian and critic T. J. Demos, Gregory Sholette, and me that convened two days before the exhibition's closing. An edited transcript of that discussion follows. -Chris Gilbert

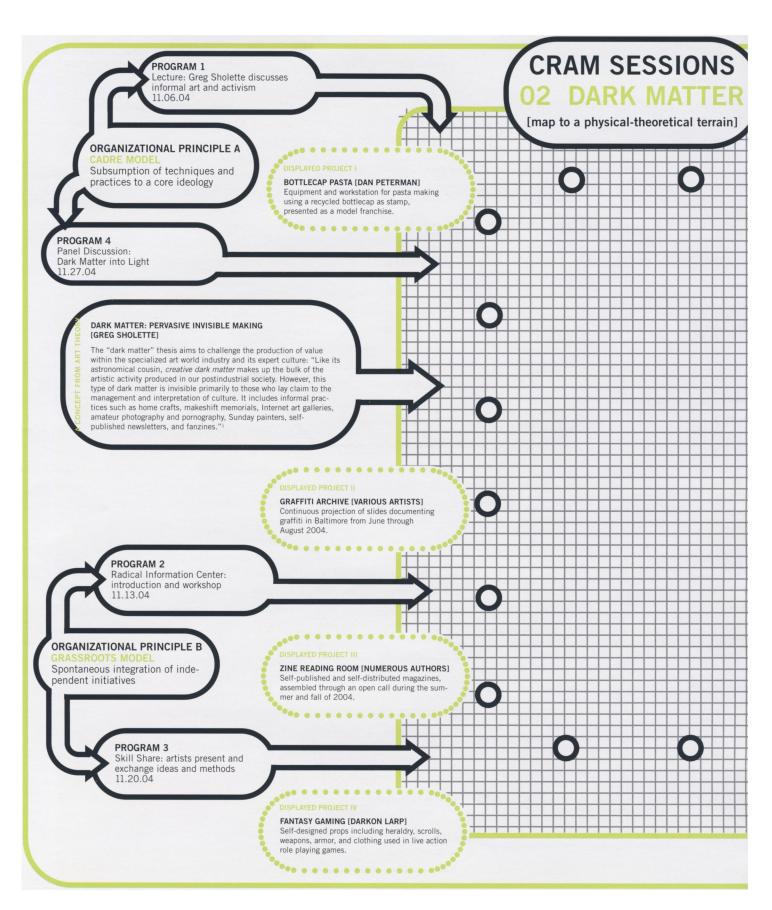
Chris Gilbert: I wanted to begin by making clear that the title of this panel, "Dark Matter into Light"—always used in scare quotes—is not offered without irony. The idea that the agency of the exhibition should consist in making what is unseen seen—this is absolutely not what Cram Sessions: 02 Dark Matter is about. Rather, questioning the effects of taking dark matter into light is central to the

1. Among the indexes of interest in "dark" or informal practices one may note the Yerba Buena Art Center's Beautiful Losers: Contemporary Art and Street Culture (coorganized with the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, on view in San Francisco from July 17 to October 10, 2004), leffrey Deitch's many engagements with street and skater art in shows such as Street Market (an installation by Barry McGee, Steve Powers, and Todd James, on view at Deitch Projects, New York, October 5-December 2, 2000) and the group exhibition Session the Bowl (Deitch Projects, New York, December 14, 2002-February 15, 2003), and the wide-ranging inclusions in the broad sweep of Lawrence Rinder's 2003 Whitney Biennial. In planning the latter exhibition, Rinder asked, "What are the assumptions that underlie the divisions and boundaries that we have come to take for granted and which stipulate that this, but not that, is suitable for museum display?" and proposed to open the door "to the possible richness of a truly expanded view of art practice."

Sholette's discussion of dark matter can be found principally in two essays: "Heart of Darkness: A Journey into the Dark Matter of the Art World" and "Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter Public Sphere," both posted on his Web site, http://gregorysholette.com. In addition, the former text is found in the book Visual Worlds, ed. John R. Hall, Blake Stimson, and Lisa T. Becker (New York: Routledge, 2005), 116-38; the latter will appear in the forthcoming book (Image)ining Resistance, ed. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson, with a short version available in Journal of Aesthetics and Protest 3 (2004): 12-25, and online at: http://www.journalofaestheticsandprotest.org/.

2. Sholette, "Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter-Public Sphere."

3. Ibid.



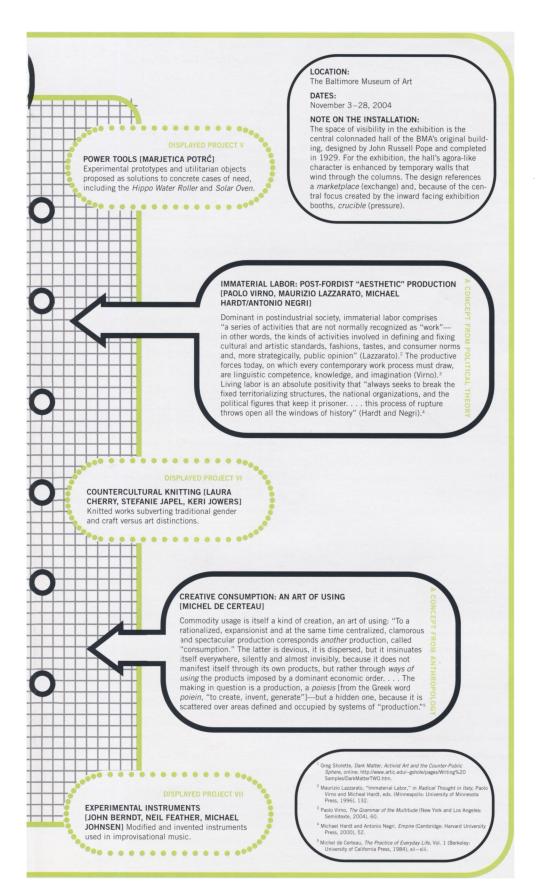


Diagram for Cram Sessions: 02 Dark Matter. The central gridded area schematizes the space of the exhibition.

project's conception and to the discussion we are having now. Nor was the exhibition ever intended to formulate a positive aesthetic proposition but to focus on the political and economic importance of informal, less visible forms of production.

Now, it may seem like a surprising idea, that such creative work could embody a politics. There are actually two sides to that claim: One is that informal art production can have an instrumental value in a political struggle. For example, some of the techniques of do-it-yourself creating, such as zine-making or pirate radio, can be used as ways to distribute minoritarian ideas, especially in contexts of censorship, both outright suppression and more subtle forms of media control. Yet perhaps more significant is the idea that there might be a politics that actually inheres in production, that informal forms of production themselves, in a very general sense, might have irreducible political dimensions. In particular, I am interested in Toni Negri's claim that what he sometimes refers to as the "fundamental productivity of being" might constitute a challenge to capital. In Empire, Michael Hardt and he suggest that, to a certain extent, a failure to track the productive capacity of the multitude is a blind spot of a great deal of thought that holds capitalism to be an unchangeable feature of contemporary life.<sup>4</sup>

This is the basic impetus of the show. As far as this panel discussion is concerned, I would like to put three questions on the table for the discussants. One concerns how fully informal creation and underground practices—their look and their techniques—can be commodified by the market and incorporated into the gallery system. Greg has suggested that dark matter is only superficially appropriable—that the art industry merely trades in simulations of collective informal work and adopts only the look or manner of dark matter. It could be argued, however, that appropriation of an underground is always superficial and that there is something circular about saying that the politics of the work is not appropriable or commodifiable—since, of course, the politics of underground work could be defined as simply that-which-is-not-commodifiable.

A second question concerns the internal structure of dark matter. How are informal production and its creators organized? For example, how are zine-makers connected with each other? A tentative answer, and a seeming given, is that there are many-to-many connections among the producers, who relate to one another through rhizomatic structures rather than arborescent, hierarchical ones. For example, in the way zine creators communicate with each other, a weblike or horizontal structure is immediately suggested. Another seeming given is that there is an inherent collectivity to dark matter's organization; working together, working socially, appears to be integral to labor in its immaterial form.

A third and final question concerns the agency of this exhibition and of art exhibitions more generally. If exhibitions organize work—and exhibition curators are often described as "organizers"—to what degree does their organizational work play into the hands of capital and increase the governability of the work and the producers? This raises the further question of how one can exhibit artworks as singularities (in their singularity) and resist the unifying logic of an exhibition. For some years I've been concerned with the problem of "curatorial panopticism," by which I mean not so much the literal figure of the panopticon as it might be realized in this or that exhibition, but the idea that a panoptic logic underpins the structure of most exhibitions.

<sup>4.</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

**Carlos Basualdo:** In contemporary art contexts there's often and increasingly a notable lack of ideas, so I think all of us here discussing this set of questions is itself quite stimulating. . . . Chris has pointed out that the show has other sources than simply Greg's essays, but since the exhibition is named after them, I would like to begin there. Initially, I was quite surprised to hear Greg use the term dark



Michael Johnsen, Voltage-Controlled Phase Difference Networks, 2002 (artwork © Michael Johnsen, photograph by Margaret Cox)

The Dark Matter exhibition included an array of invented experimental musical instruments.

## following pages:

Installation view of Cram Sessions 02: Dark Matter, Baltimore Museum of Art, 2004 (photograph by Jose A. Sanchez, Jr.) matter for all these activities that have an aesthetic nature but do not quite fit into the art that is seen in the galleries. He referred to unemployed artists (those who went to art school but couldn't find a job in the art system), Sunday painters, activists—categories that to do not quite fit into the record of the art-historical map. When he named all of those categories together, it sounded a little bit like the Chinese encyclopedia that Jorge Luis Borges writes about in one of his short stories, in which you could find animals that bark, animals with two legs, animals with spotted skins, etc. As we know, an encyclopedia pretends to be a matrix for order, but in fact its categories are conventional, and the sheer conventionality of categories in general was what caught Borges's attention in the first place. To me this kind of idiosyncratic encyclopedia of dark matter was at the

same time extremely coherent and extremely incoherent. And it was that paradox that initially attracted me . . .

In the past five to ten years, contemporary art practices seem to have taken two very opposite directions. On the one hand, we have seen the increasing importance of the art market in terms of events like the art fairs, whose relevance -relative to other events such as biennials and group exhibitions in generalnumber, and size have grown so tremendously of late. A good deal of contemporary artistic production seems to be increasingly organized around that growing scene. On the other hand, many other artists seem to be reacting against that tendency. Their work seems to have emerged as a form of contestation against a market-driven art world (though it is important to note that this process seems to be happening without being a form of manifest contestation or criticism of the art system). These alternative ways of working—which often involve working collectively, in collaboration with people coming from other disciplines, in very specific contexts, for longer periods of time, and seem to be targeted to the production of what I would like to call experimental communities—present many challenges. For while we do have a highly sophisticated vocabulary to talk about art objects and about those objects in relationship to a certain genealogy of other objects and actions to which they are related, it is more difficult to talk about these artists and groups that, although they do not seem to completely reject the museum and gallery space and although they sometimes exhibit the results of their work in these spaces, ultimately don't produce art objects in the traditional sense. I think that one of the challenges for the curators who are trying to deal with that situation, with that schism, and with these new forms of production is to develop a critical vocabulary of some sort that is still related to the art-historical legacy, that accounts for those works that ultimately do not quite fit within the parameters of traditional art history. A vocabulary that would itself mediate





between the demands of these evolving practices and the information contained in the art-historical discourse.

I believe the Dark Matter exhibition is positioned in that field: I think that it is trying to deal with those emerging tendencies by considering them in terms of art history while at the same time importing other theoretical sources to the field to account for what has been happening in the last decade or so. To me, that was what was implied in the very notion of dark matter: that in order to take into account, to consider, to be able to talk about these productions that somehow escape the art system as it is, we have to rely on a discourse that somehow goes beyond art-historical language.

**T. J. Demos:** As I see it, the thematization that Dark Matter provides to contemporary artistic practice runs the risk of a couple forms of reduction: First, in grouping modes of creativity that are radically disparate, the danger arises that such generalization may cover over the important differences between practices—such as their motivations and goals—making the field of reference so wide that the term's usefulness is compromised; and second, there is a related risk of creating simplified oppositions—between dark and light matter. More specifically, the problem here is that the art institution becomes understood as some kind of monolithic entity, rather than a complex network made up of heterogeneous practices, diverse publics, mixed political configurations, dominant and resistant forces, and so on. Similarly, so-called dark matter—as represented within the exhibition—is, I think, far from homogeneous or fully outside the institution, but in fact proposes a multiplicity of connections with institutionalized categories.

For me, speaking as a critic, the theorization of dark matter may consequently be of limited value. It might be more productive to focus on specific practices and examine how they situate themselves in relation to dominant institutions—considered in all their complexity—with priority given to those that take on an oppositional, critical relation to power. Turning specifically to the exhibition, what we confront are the very conventional institutions of objectification and homogenization that the museum carries out on material objects that are—in the case of the dark matter—part of process-based activities: this is most evident in the traditional aspects of the exhibition's presentation—the neoclassical, templelike architecture, the use of white partitions, submission to paid admission, supervision by museum guards. The result is that objects are laid out like static things or rarified works of art, subjected to a regime of hands-off visual inspection within a homogenizing format.

What is interesting about the show's conceptualization is that there is not the naive expectation that it could actually present such practices in all their complex dimensions within the confines of the museum. So-called dark matter can't be illuminated in the museum. Rather, the exhibition—in exaggerating the very conventional conditions of display, particularly the white partitions—stages its own limitations, perhaps in order to make visitors consider that this is only a partial view of these so-called informal practices, or what Chris's brochure calls "displayed projects."

This I find intriguing—that the exhibition exposes its own impossibility of illuminating dark matter. More, it turns this impossibility into an object of analysis, which for me brings about two effects: First, the show actually exposes the

ways in which practices deemed dark matter in fact connect to conventional institutions—or forms of governmentality, as Chris has observed. This includes conventions of authorship (the fetishization of the signature within the graffiti), distribution models (the appropriation of low-tech publishing techniques by the zines), traditional visual modes (the pop-cultural representational format of the fantasy games), and traditional audience formations (the construction of a private listener by the models of experimental music—or rather by the exhibition, which provided headphones). In other words, the matter is not nearly as dark as it seems. Second, the show raises as a critical issue the crisis of the museum as it comes to face the problem of how to exhibit "immaterial production." If the museum's development as an institution historically coincided with the formation of an economy of industrial production, then how can the museum todaystill very much tied to the exhibition of objects—integrate contemporary practice that is increasingly based in process, relational aesthetics, tactical media, and discursive sites? I wonder if Dark Matter not only seeks to represent such postindustrial practices, but also announces the obsolescence of the museum as we know it.

Gregory Sholette: I wanted to begin by responding to some of the questions Chris put on the table initially, but first if I may backtrack briefly, I'd like to point out that the concept of creative dark matter his exhibition has significantly contributed to was initially a response to what I perceived as a lack of historical research, pedagogical materials, or sustained, critical discourse about the many politicized (and frequently collectivized) artistic practices that I have come across or have been part of over the past twenty-five years or so. A key idea was that this grayed-out activity may in fact have more in common, structurally speaking—as a form of unofficial production and circulation—with amateur and informal art making, than it does with institutionally legitimated fine art. This is what animates dark matter's polemic, as well as perhaps its appeal.

Now, in terms of Chris's initial question regarding commodification: To say, as I have, that one appropriates by and large the look and not the substance of dark matter—in other words imports the superficial aspects of dark matter and not, let's say, the depth of it—is not to say that this appropriation by the art world doesn't add a new layer of value to those appropriations. It, of course, fetishizes as it take possession, which is inevitable, but there is a particular way that the art world also produces value through fetishization that is different from the usual circulation and ownership of most commodities. So it would be wrong to say that the appropriation of dark matter is a very flat one, completely superficial: it's more complex that that. But, conversely, as T. J. points out, informal production is not autonomous or isolated from capitalism and mass culture by any means. In other words, appropriation works in both directions. The one difference is that the informal or shadow art world doesn't necessarily give back value to the source material or its author, and it doesn't necessarily accrue value for the appropriator either. Instead, it multiplies information. This reverse appropriation is nicely illustrated by the notorious Phantom Edit, which was based on George Lucas's film The Phantom Menace. A group of fans got together and decided that they didn't like the way Lucas had edited the film. One of them actually reedited the film, then uploaded it onto the Internet, so people could download it for free, creating a kind of gift economy . . .

The second point that Chris raises is whether there is an organizational structure to the informal zone of dark matter. He asks, is dark matter consistently rhizomatic? Does it move in a very horizontal fashion? I think that the important thing is to focus on the formal and informal zones and realize that the two are dependent on each other just as the shadow economy depends on the formal economy and vice versa. Think of the drug economy in this country: if we legalized drugs, we wouldn't need nearly as much law enforcement, and a lot of banks would probably suffer as well. There's the same kind of dynamic relationship between the formal structures of culture and the informal ones. The structures of dark matter may be rhizomatic, or at least some of them, but there may also be ways to look at it as more opportunistic. The informal economies and informal art structures tend to beg, borrow, and steal any kind of organizational design they need to get the job done. So while dark matter's structures may often be rhizomatic by default or networked horizontally, they very much have a distorted or displaced relation to capital itself. So I agree with T. J., dark matter or informal art cannot really escape the horizon of what a market economy produces; more accurately, it operates as a displacement, an excess, or a tactical reversal of it. Still, the gifting and generosity frequently displayed by dark matter is unquestionably anathema to the long-term interests of capitalism. In this sense, the term informal practice refers not to an aesthetic category so much as it does to the circulation of dark matter as a type of unregulated, gray economy.

Chris's last question, the one related to the exhibition, I think is the most challenging. When you do an exhibition of something like informal art, or dark matter, are you producing a new canon? Are you bringing the material into light and therefore taming it? Chris referred to the concept of the panopticon, the architectural model that Jeremy Bentham came up with to "humanize" the prison system, and which Foucault later theorized in relation to the regulation of visuality and the body. The question I would raise is: if we are bringing informal art or dark matter into the museum, is there actually a relationship of discipline going on? Are we inevitably managing the work in some way, or are we trying to produce something else? I would say that there are maybe two models that are alternatives to the disciplinary agency of the exhibition. One that was touched on a couple of times is institutional critique. That amounts to looking at the invisible seams between the light and the dark or the seams between the prison and the guard and trying to expose them.

Yet, I want to toss out something else, which is the possibility of an inverse panoptic gaze. That is, perhaps what Chris has done with the exhibition is to operate in cahoots with dark matter. By temporarily bringing it into the museum instead of initiating the now-familiar institutional critique (though in a sense that is being generated by this discussion), he seems to be saying that there is a relation he has with this material—be it extrainstitutional or political or merely pedagogical—and he is provisionally creating or performing a sort of momentary, counterpanoptic gaze.

The problem of aesthetics or of categories in general that both T. J. and Carlos have brought up is becoming more pressing—not that I have never considered this issue, but rather I have been avoiding it! My focus has been less taxonomic than historical and structural. Also, T. J.'s point that the art world is complex and not monolithic is an excellent one. But I think this is addressed

and complicated by my insistence on the interdependency between the far larger realm of informal art that the formal art world is dependent upon. Nor is it that all this dark matter is "out there." Instead it is right in the middle of it all, if invisible or largely so. Finally, is it possible that the perceived reductivism of dark matter—its arrangement of heterodoxical elements and practices— reflects the spatial economizing of the art world itself?

**Demos:** I agree with this stress on interdependency, as long as it includes the more subtle connections between so-called dark matter and dominant modes of visuality, publics, and distribution methods, rather than simply the economic interdependency between center and periphery. I was somewhat surprised by how conventional some of the work is in the exhibition—particularly the retro-



Display booth of foam weapons, heraldry, and garments used by the fantasy gamers of the Darkon Wargaming Club (photograph by Jose A. Sanchez, Jr.)

gressive styles of the quasi-medievalist games, which appear to share in mass-cultural forms of expression, rather than to exist under it or invisibly within it. I think we should reexamine the opposition between art institution and dark matter—perhaps by proposing an examination of the ways in which the two fields intersect in more differentiated ways. This also points to a problem with institutional critique at its worst, when the institution at stake is reduced to a single entity, as if it weren't instead an internally diverse regulatory mechanism for a broad range of practices and categories.

**Gilbert:** I wanted to follow up on Greg's interesting suggestion that the exhibition might embody a kind of reverse panopticism. Presently one could posit a dichotomy in curatorial practice between control curators, who try to occupy a panoptical position and assign

labels to objects, people, and practices, and relational curators who propose ostensibly generous situations of sociality. Greg's figure of an inverse panoptic gaze may accurately describe the way this exhibition draws from both of these modes and, I hope, remixes them. The literal image of the panopticon became very evident to me in the preparations for the show. With the designer Karen Nielsen, I planned the layout as a set of seven booths that face inward and surround a central space, which was conceived as a social space—a kind of forum or town square. Instead of the center being a site of viewing and a mastering gaze—as it would be in an actual panopticon—it was to be an open area that was seen from all the booths. One of the key ideas of the show, then, is that its design is supposed to allow for forms of social agency—including organizational work—focused on that central space. Now, this may be a difference in how I see the show versus how T. J. sees it: I think for him the show is primarily about display and the limitations thereof. For me, however, the ring of booths addresses questions of display, but the central area is conceived as a social space.

Panopticism—in relation to the exhibition—may also be considered in a more figurative way rather than a strictly literal one (hence as a logic more than an image). Thus the exhibition tries to undo the panoptic condition not just with its design but additionally with its eccentric, "ungoverned" organization. Carlos brought up the example of the fabled Chinese encyclopedia in which the

organizational headings have no isomorphism. If I recall Borges's example correctly, his divisions are bizarre in the extreme. They include animals that are owned by the emperor, mermaids, animals that look like flies from a distance, and suckling pigs. This principle of working with categories that have no isomorphism was always on the table in organizing the show; I wished to allow each display booth to be radically heterogeneous. So, for example, one booth



The Radical Information Center during a discussion at the Baltimore Museum of Art on November 13, 2004. The center was intended both to serve as an organizational catalyst for the *Dark Matter* exhibition and to carry its organizing agency forward. A portable structure, it contains numerous reconfigurable pockets serving as sites for information exchange.

represents work of a single producer, a second is an inclusive archive of anonymous work, while a third represents the work of two overlapping quasi-collectives. I think that one of the distinctive features of this exhibition (and this is also true of Greg's theorization of dark matter) is that it follows such an unusual path through the field of contemporary production. Part of that unusualness is indicated by the heterogeneous nature of the elements that make up the set "dark matter."

Rather than seeing the term dark matter as merely reductive, as T. J. does, I see it as purposefully shearing off previous categories—a shearing-off that both reflects and names a historical process. (And if anything were reductive it would be that process.) The result is the possibility of a community that is based on a kind of pure exteriority, on the exposed condition

of being cut loose from previous hermeneutic or interpretive categories. I think it would be mistaken to conceive this exposed condition as constituting a new category of dark matter, the members of which share the same common property (e.g., "darkness")—in fact, that would be reductive. On the level of the exhibition, this is why there is a need for the organizational model of a dark matter community of singularities, which is what I would claim the work in the booths represents. But, Carlos, I know you had some questions about the labeling in the exhibition, which relates to how the show is organized. Do you want to address them?

Basualdo: After the first panel discussion in conjunction with the exhibition, I had an informal conversation with Chris about strategies of display and how to employ them in this particular case, in which most of the show does not fit the traditional notion of art as it is usually deployed by the museum as an institution. We spoke about the possibility of exploring experimental forms of display that could be potentially fairer to the works in the exhibition. I believe in a way this discussion is basically related to T. J.'s comments about the institution. T. J. put it in a very interesting and challenging form by saying that this assemblage of work—this Chinese encyclopedia, if you accept my metaphor—might somehow involve the very possibility of the obsolescence of the museum. It is also interesting to consider that statement when you think about the history of institutional critique. The latter was not intended to show that the institution is obsolete, but to show that the institution is perfectible somehow. And the distance between obsolescence and something that can be challenged and remedied is quite dramatic.

The conclusion that I would take from this is that when we are dealing with an expanded notion of the aesthetic—as it seems to be done in the context of this show—the notion of criticality becomes less useful as a critical tool. It is as if, when considering institutional critique, we would still be surveying practices that cohere in the traditional sense. Of course, any group show whatsoever is an assemblage of singularities, but I think that what allows a group show to cohere



The Radical Information Center outside the Baltimore Museum of Art on November 13, 2004. The project was develped by Jennifer Carrinci, Meghan DellaCrosse, Jeremy Klinger, Evan Morgan, and others.

as an assemblage of singularities is that they share a common name, which is that of "art" or "contemporary art." In this case, however, it's not obvious that these practices share a common name and, seemingly because of that impossibility, they do not seem to be immediately connected to the notion of criticality. So what they propose is something else-something I won't say rests beyond criticality, but something that definitely does not entirely fit into the category of criticality. To go back to the comments that I made initially: I believe that most of the more challenging practices today are not entirely retrievable -and by this I mean understood in their full complexity—by considering them through the perspective of criticality. We need to develop a new language to address them, a language that is not based on criticality. I think

that that is the challenge in terms of how to think about them, how to display them of course, and how to relate any kind of discursive practice to the history of modern and contemporary art.

Demos: It's true: these shadowy practitioners, I think, couldn't care less about the museum or perfecting it further. But what I'm wondering is whether or not a museum can reorient itself and successfully find ways to represent or display new forms of process-based work. The challenge today—and I think Chris is very sensitive to this and is trying to address it—is how can the museum as an institution that is tied to the exhibition of visual objects be made flexible enough to deal with these new types of practices? If this means creating a new and different space of sociability within the museum, or to invite the formation of what Carlos terms "experimental communities," then how will this attempt contend with the rather heavy-handed institutional forces—from the presence of guards to the commonly understood codes of behavior—that work to deny sociability and produce the ideal museum subject (contemplative, docile, individualized)? I question the possibility of creating such social spaces within this site. To put it another way, can curators of relationality operate within museums of control?

**Gilbert:** I want to be clear that I'm not proposing the "generous" relational curator as some kind of remedy to the "manipulative" control curator. Rather I am suggesting that these two roles constitute an antinomy and are almost necessary moments in contemporary curatorial practice. One customary response to process-based work—though I'm not suggesting that anyone here thinks this way—is to claim that it benefits from interactive display. Perhaps it's worth saying

that even the term conjures all kinds of horrifying specters in my mind, insofar as it seems most applicable to the normative modes of activity, such as button-pushing, common to science museums, for which I would propose using Slavoj Žižek's term "interpassivity." If the Dark Matter exhibition aims to draw from the practices of both control curators and relational curators, even leans toward the former position, this is partly because it is purposely avoiding such reifications

Marjetica Potrč, Power Tools, 2002, set of prototypes and utilitarian objects conceived as economically sustainable solutions to concrete cases of need (photograph by Jose A. Sanchez, Jr.)

Collected by the artist from diverse producers, the *Power Tools* include a wind-up radio and cell-phone charger, a solar oven, a flying surveillance device, and the Hippo Water Roller.

of interactivity. Further, I am aware that it takes controlling and aggressive—or if not outright aggressive, certainly ungenerous—measures to secure spaces for alternative modes of thinking within societies of control. If the exhibition is aggressive in denying visitors these easy forms of interactivity—or interpassivity—that's because it aims for a different kind of sociality in the space. Perhaps overly optimistically, I suppose that if I can cut people off from hopelessly reductive interactions—such as button-pushing and touch screens—then there could be other forms of socialization or even mobilization that take place in the exhibition.

I find that I agree with T. J. about the obsolescence of the institution. For a while,

one of my maxims has been: "The institution doesn't exist." That is to say, I think the picture of the coherent institution, and especially the way the institution was framed during the first wave of institutional critique, does not really serve any longer. Here I would refer to the brief text by Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," in which he marks our distance from the disciplinary social configurations that preceded our present control society. The disciplinary society depended on institutions that were more or less discrete, so that people would pass from an independent school to an independent army, and from an independent army to an independent prison. Following Deleuze, I would argue that today institutions are extremely laterally integrated and permeated by each other. Thus, the beginning point for my work is the awareness that the institution does not exist in the way that it was framed under institutional critique. For example, my decision to use this interior, colonnaded court for the exhibition, often a space of corporate parties, could stand for the fact that the institution is already permeated by external agendas—in some cases highly regressive ones. However, I am suggesting that this very permeability might also open up the institution to kinds of progressive agency. That is to say, I wholly concur with the idea that the institution doesn't exist—or is obsolete—and I would argue that its very nonexistence and lack of coherence can constitute a line of flight.

**Sholette:** One can easily be too optimistic about this kind of thing. Still, there are many levels of confrontation and genuine zones of openness inside institutions, if always up to a point. The library of the Museum of Modern Art now has the archives of Political Art Documentation and Distribution, a group I was a part of in the early 1980s. So here's a major, mainstream institution, founded by the

5. Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3–7; also available online at sites including http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/deleuze-societies.cfm.

Rockefellers—and one could go on about some of the things that family did, such as the Ludlow Mine Massacre in Colorado—yet we now have an archive about political opposition housed within it. Now how did this happen? Because someone previously in charge of the MoMA library, Clive Philpot, was very interested in PAD/D's work; he actually helped to name the organization. So you have dark matter inside the institution. There are, in other words, spaces in



Children using the Hippo Water Roller in South Africa (photograph provided by the Hippo Water Roller Project, South Africa)

Among the objects that Potrč collected for the Power Tools series, the Hippo Water Roller was developed in 1997 by Imvubu Projects, South Africa, to help carry water over long distances. Each roller can carry ninety liters of water but creates just twelve kilograms of rolling resistance when full; the roller can also serve as a central water tank in the home. Additionally, the device protects its user from land mines.

between, and the organization is certainly not homogenous. But there is a point at which you will trip a wire, go a little too far, at which time the symbolic institution is produced—I think that is what were talking about: the symbolic production of institutions. There can still be opposition to what happens next, but at that point the institution steps forward as a full-blown creature, as a dragon in Borges's encyclopedia, and it roars back.

**Gilbert:** Are there any questions from the audience?

**Audience member**: I had a question about critical vocabulary, for Carlos. Is the lack of critical vocabulary that you brought up for

these new art practices a good thing or a bad thing?

Basualdo: Last week, in the context of a class, I presented a number of contemporary artists who tend to produce work in a community situation. This is not done in a way that is critical in regard to the institution—they sometimes even appropriate the institution to display the products of their process. I think, in this show, the best example of this kind of work would be Marjetica Potrč. She has displayed a number of what she calls Power Tools, which are instruments that she has most often collected and in certain specific instances produced, that allow people to live better. I would relate Potrč to artists like Thomas Hirschhorn and Jeanne van Heeswijk. One of the questions that came up in the presentation last week was how do we evaluate this work for which we cannot apply the traditional art-historical values and concepts? How do we relate discursively to these works? Of course, it was clear that this kind of work has produced a crisis in the critical vocabulary, which evidently has to be rethought to a certain degree. Clearly the aesthetic agency of this work is not dissociated with its ethical or political efficacy. I don't see that as necessarily good or bad-yet it's a situation that is progressively becoming very clear. Chris has also pushed that envelope with this exhibition. We find work in it that still has a clear connection with activist work in the 1980s-work that we can still trace back in history, with its continuities and disruptions—while there are other practices represented here that we cannot even call "work" in the most favored sense. I think that Dan Peterman may operate in ways similarly to Marjetica Potrč, but to call some of the other practices work is to locate them within a discourse from which they were never intended to function. In a way, by putting these things together he's asking,

What is it that they have in common? How can we talk about that commonality? With what language? Probably it is that commonality that produced T. J.'s astonishment and his thoughts about the possible obsolescence of the museum.

**Sholette:** Is part of the question, do we need judgments, or is it why do we need judgment? I think that is a really interesting question, to which I don't have a complete answer. What has happened here is that when you begin to ask these questions and begin to have a discussion and dialogue about them, then you start to think about what is a museum, what are its boundaries, what are its possibilities, and if it should exist or stop existing. But such inquiry inevitably doesn't start and stop with the object. Honestly, I'm not sure if we absolutely have to have aesthetic judgments in the final instance, which is not to say I am personally free of making them, but there's a way that this critical discourse about the nature of making things is very important and is actually focused not just on the museum, but on life and issues of creativity more broadly, including especially beyond the institutional art world. It is here, I believe, that the political dimension of dark matter arises, both as a tactical critique, but also as potential building material for what Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt call the counter-public sphere: a polemical displacement of Jürgen Habermas's concept that pivots on the actual life experiences of workers and others who are wholly or partially excluded from the idealized realm of citizenship and public opinion making up the Habermassian public sphere.6

**Audience member:** The display in the Dark Matter show, with its white walls, takes the objects out of their contexts in some sense. It's as if they had an operation somewhere, but now they're not operating in the way they would have in their real life. Isn't this a problem, because it turns the things into artifacts, as in a natural-history museum? If the exhibition is only a representation of the work's operation in the real world, isn't that also like putting it inside of a glass vitrine? Doesn't it become only a representation and therefore an attachment of value, and in a way cutting out its potency?

Gilbert: A certain operation of decontextualization is central to the show, though as I've already pointed out, I would not want that decontextualization to be seen as simply about aestheticization, but about potentially creating a transformative community of objects and producers. The other thing I can say in this regard is that, in formulating Cram Sessions: 02 Dark Matter, I was always aware that it would have to work as an enunciation, and that there would be certain conditions for understanding that enunciation. Inevitably, one of the languages employed is the language of contemporary exhibition display. Once you step out of that language too far, you risk destroying the intelligibility of the exhibition. For example, one critic suggested that as an example of immaterial labor I should put my desk in the show, because I'm an immaterial laborer. Though he was correct—that I am mostly an immaterial laborer—with that kind of exotic inclusion, the most common viewer response I feel would have been simply, "Far out!" The "grammatical" conditions for understanding the exhibition probably would have been violated.

The question of criticality that Carlos brought up is, for me, a very interesting one. Criticality, or the ability to judge, is of course dependent on one's epis-

Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

temology. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant famously asserted that there were twelve categories of the understanding that could be deployed in making evaluations. I think that astonishment, which has also come up so often in this discussion as a response to the show, is the response of confronting something that steps outside of known categories, which violates categories (whether twelve or two hundred) and hence challenges our ability to judge and be critical. For me such "extracritical" astonishment is a highly desirable response because it also represents, I believe, a political moment for the spectator. I would suggest that it is in a state of astonishment that one faces contemporary human productivity as an uncontainable—and uncategorizeable—positivity.

It strikes me that there is an antinomy within dark matter—between its instrumental and aesthetic aspects—that has developed through and in our conversation. On one side of this antinomy is the claim that dark matter, as informal production, should be allowed to have a practical agency in the exhibition and shouldn't be aestheticized ("museumified"). On the other side is the legitimate concern that in taking on this instrumental, engaged character it becomes something noncritical, which leaves many of us wishing to restore previous aesthetic categories. Now, we have each proposed ways of addressing this problematic: for example, T. J. proposes that the show is a reductio ad absurdum of the idea of display, Carlos suggests the heterotopia of a fictional encyclopedia, while Greg puts forth the reverse panopticon. For my part, I've been exploring the idea of community based on exteriority, a community of singularities. I think the important thing, however, is to realize that this antinomy might be historically contingent and might be resolved politically—that is, through institutional change. Within their present conditions of marginalization and disempowerment, informal practices take on the characteristics of being highly instrumental and interventionistespecially in museum settings, where they operate through guerrilla tactics and from the margins. That doesn't preclude their primary and deep character—as an expression of man's species being—in changed conditions being something that might more accurately be addressed through a more aesthetic or noninstrumental framework.

Chris Gilbert is Matrix Curator at the Berkeley Museum of Art and Pacific Film Archive. He was from 2003 to 2005 curator of contemporary art at the Baltimore Museum of Art. In 2002–03, he carried out research into new European art spaces, funded in part by a grant from the American Center Foundation, Paris.

Carlos Basualdo is an independent critic and curator, and adjunct professor at the Universitá IUAV in Venice, Italy, where he teaches history of exhibitions. His upcoming exhibition *Tropicália: A Parallel Modernity in Brazil (1967–1972)* opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (October 22, 2005–January 8, 2006) and then travels to the Barbican in London, the Centro Cultural de Belém in Lisbon, and the Bronx Museum in New York.

T. J. Demos is lecturer in the Department of History of Art, University College London. He writes widely on modern and contemporary art, and his essays have appeared in magazines including *Artforum*, *Grey Room*, and *October*. His book *The Exile of Marcel Duchamp* will be published by MIT Press. He is currently working on a book-length study of contemporary art and globalization.

Gregory Sholette is a New York City-based artist and writer and a cofounder of the artist collectives REPOhistory and PAD/D. He is coeditor with Nato Thompson of *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (MIT Press, 2004), and coeditor with Blake Stimson of the forthcoming *Collectivism after Modernism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

# LENIN AND PHILOSOPHY AND OTHER ESSAYS

Louis Althusser

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY BEN BREWSTER



# Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)

# ON THE REPRODUCTION OF THE CONDITIONS OF PRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

I must now expose more fully something which was briefly glimpsed in my analysis when I spoke of the necessity to renew the means of production if production is to be possible. That was a passing hint. Now I shall consider it for itself.

As Marx said, every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production. This may be 'simple' (reproducing exactly the previous conditions of production) or 'on an extended scale' (expanding them). Let us ignore this last distinction for the moment.

What, then, is the reproduction of the conditions of production?

Here we are entering a domain which is both very fam-

<sup>1.</sup> This text is made up of two extracts from an ongoing study. The sub-title 'Notes towards an Investigation' is the author's own. The ideas expounded should not be regarded as more than the introduction to a discussion.

<sup>2.</sup> Marx to Kugelmann, 11 July 1868, Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1955, p. 209.

iliar (since Capital Volume Two) and uniquely ignored. The tenacious obviousnesses (ideological obviousnesses of an empiricist type) of the point of view of production alone, or even of that of mere productive practice (itself abstract in relation to the process of production) are so integrated into our everyday 'consciousness' that it is extremely hard, not to say almost impossible, to raise oneself to the point of view of reproduction. Nevertheless, everything outside this point of view remains abstract (worse than one-sided: distorted) – even at the level of production, and, a fortiori, at that of mere practice.

Let us try and examine the matter methodically.

To simplify my exposition, and assuming that every social formation arises from a dominant mode of production, I can say that the process of production sets to work the existing productive forces in and under definite relations of production.

It follows that, in order to exist, every social formation must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces, and in order to be able to produce. It must therefore reproduce:

- 1. the productive forces,
- 2. the existing relations of production.

# Reproduction of the Means of Production

Everyone (including the bourgeois economists whose work is national accounting, or the modern 'macro-economic' 'theoreticians') now recognizes, because Marx compellingly proved it in *Capital* Volume Two, that no production is possible which does not allow for the reproduction of the material conditions of production: the reproduction of the means of production.

The average economist, who is no different in this than

the average capitalist, knows that each year it is essential to foresee what is needed to replace what has been used up or worn out in production: raw material, fixed installations (buildings), instruments of production (machines), etc. I say the average economist = the average capitalist, for they both express the point of view of the firm, regarding it as sufficient simply to give a commentary on the terms of the firm's financial accounting practice.

But thanks to the genius of Quesnay who first posed this 'glaring' problem, and to the genius of Marx who resolved it, we know that the reproduction of the material conditions of production cannot be thought at the level of the firm, because it does not exist at that level in its real conditions. What happens at the level of the firm is an effect, which only gives an idea of the necessity of reproduction, but absolutely fails to allow its conditions and mechanisms to be thought.

A moment's reflection is enough to be convinced of this: Mr X, a capitalist who produces woollen yarn in his spinning-mill, has to 'reproduce' his raw material, his machines, etc. But he does not produce them for his own production – other capitalists do: an Australian sheep-farmer, Mr Y, a heavy engineer producing machine-tools, Mr Z, etc., etc. And Mr Y and Mr Z, in order to produce those products which are the condition of the reproduction of Mr X's conditions of production, also have to reproduce the conditions of their own production, and so on to infinity – the whole in proportions such that, on the national and even the world market, the demand for means of production (for reproduction) can be satisfied by the supply.

In order to think this mechanism, which leads to a kind of 'endless chain', it is necessary to follow Marx's 'global' procedure, and to study in particular the relations of the circulation of capital between Department I (production of

means of production) and Department II (production of means of consumption), and the realization of surplusvalue, in Capital, Volumes Two and Three.

We shall not go into the analysis of this question. It is enough to have mentioned the existence of the necessity of the reproduction of the material conditions of production.

# Reproduction of Labour-Power

However, the reader will not have failed to note one thing. We have discussed the reproduction of the means of production – but not the reproduction of the productive forces. We have therefore ignored the reproduction of what distinguishes the productive forces from the means of production, i.e. the reproduction of labour power.

From the observation of what takes place in the firm, in particular from the examination of the financial accounting practice which predicts amortization and investment, we have been able to obtain an approximate idea of the existence of the material process of reproduction, but we are now entering a domain in which the observation of what happens in the firm is, if not totally blind, at least almost entirely so, and for good reason: the reproduction of labour power takes place essentially outside the firm.

How is the reproduction of labour power ensured?

It is ensured by giving labour power the material means with which to reproduce itself: by wages. Wages feature in the accounting of each enterprise, but as 'wage capital',3 not at all as a condition of the material reproduction of labour power.

However, that is in fact how it 'works', since wages represents only that part of the value produced by the expenditure of labour power which is indispensable for its reproduction: sc. indispensable to the reconstitution of the labour power of the wage-earner (the wherewithal to pay for housing, food and clothing, in short to enable the wageearner to present himself again at the factory gate the next day - and every further day God grants him); and we should add: indispensable for raising and educating the children in whom the proletarian reproduces himself (in n models where n = 0, 1, 2, etc. as labour power.

Remember that this quantity of value (wages) necessary for the reproduction of labour power is determined not by the needs of a 'biological' Guaranteed Minimum Wage (Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel Garanti) alone, but by the needs of a historical minimum (Marx noted that English workers need beer while French proletarians need wine) - i.e. a historically variable minimum.

I should also like to point out that this minimum is doubly historical in that it is not defined by the historical needs of the working class 'recognized' by the capitalist class, but by the historical needs imposed by the proletarian class struggle (a double class struggle: against the lengthening of the working day and against the reduction of wages).

However, it is not enough to ensure for labour power the material conditions of its reproduction if it is to be reproduced as labour power. I have said that the available labour power must be 'competent', i.e. suitable to be set to work in the complex system of the process of production. The development of the productive forces and the type of unity historically constitutive of the productive forces at a given moment produce the result that the labour power has to be (diversely) skilled and therefore reproduced as such. Diversely: according to the requirements of the sociotechnical division of labour, its different 'jobs' and 'posts'.

How is this reproduction of the (diversified) skills of

labour power provided for in a capitalist regime? Here, unlike social formations characterized by slavery or serfdom, this reproduction of the skills of labour power tends (this is a tendential law) decreasingly to be provided for 'on the spot' (apprenticeship within production itself), but is achieved more and more outside production: by the capitalist education system, and by other instances and institutions.

What do children learn at school? They go varying distances in their studies, but at any rate they learn to read, to write and to add - i.e. a number of techniques, and a number of other things as well, including elements (which may be rudimentary or on the contrary thoroughgoing) of 'scientific' or 'literary culture', which are directly useful in the different jobs in production (one instruction for manual workers, another for technicians, a third for engineers, a final one for higher management, etc.). Thus they learn 'know-how'.

But besides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is 'destined' for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. They also learn to 'speak proper French', to 'handle' the workers correctly, i.e. actually (for the future capitalists and their servants) to 'order them about' properly, i.e. (ideally) to 'speak to them' in the right way, etc.

To put this more scientifically, I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the

workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'.

In other words, the school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'. All the agents of production, exploitation and repression, not to speak of the 'professionals of ideology' (Marx), must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously' - the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists). of the exploiters' auxiliaries (the managers), or of the high priests of the ruling ideology (its 'functionaries'), etc.

The reproduction of labour power thus reveals as its sine qua non not only the reproduction of its 'skills' but also the reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the 'practice' of that ideology, with the proviso that it is not enough to say 'not only but also', for it is clear that it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour

But this is to recognize the effective presence of a new reality: ideology.

Here I shall make two comments.

The first is to round off my analysis of reproduction.

I have just given a rapid survey of the forms of the reproduction of the productive forces, i.e. of the means of production on the one hand, and of labour power on the other.

But I have not yet approached the question of the reproduction of the relations of production. This is a crucial question for the Marxist theory of the mode of production.

To let it pass would be a theoretical omission - worse, a serious political error.

I shall therefore discuss it. But in order to obtain the means to discuss it. I shall have to make another long detour.

The second comment is that in order to make this detour, I am obliged to re-raise my old question: what is a society?

### INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

On a number of occasions I have insisted on the revolutionary character of the Marxist conception of the 'social whole' insofar as it is distinct from the Hegelian 'totality'. I said (and this thesis only repeats famous propositions of historical materialism) that Marx conceived the structure of every society as constituted by 'levels' or 'instances' articulated by a specific determination: the infrastructure, or economic base (the 'unity' of the productive forces and the relations of production) and the superstructure, which itself contains two 'levels' or 'instances': the politico-legal (law and the State) and ideology (the different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.).

Besides its theoretico-didactic interest (it reveals the difference between Marx and Hegel), this representation has the following crucial theoretical advantage: it makes it possible to inscribe in the theoretical apparatus of its essential concepts what I have called their respective indices of effectivity. What does this mean?

It is easy to see that this representation of the structure of every society as an edifice containing a base (infrastruc-

ture) on which are erected the two 'floors' of the superstructure, is a metaphor, to be quite precise, a spatial metaphor: the metaphor of a topography (topique). Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes something visible. What? Precisely this: that the upper floors could not 'stay up' (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base.

Thus the object of the metaphor of the edifice is to represent above all the 'determination in the last instance' by the economic base. The effect of this spatial metaphor is to endow the base with an index of effectivity known by the famous terms: the determination in the last instance of what happens in the upper 'floors' (of the superstructure) by what happens in the economic base.

Given this index of effectivity 'in the last instance', the 'floors' of the superstructure are clearly endowed with different indices of effectivity. What kind of indices?

It is possible to say that the floors of the superstructure are not determinant in the last instance, but that they are determined by the effectivity of the base; that if they are determinant in their own (as yet undefined) ways, this is true only insofar as they are determined by the base.

Their index of effectivity (or determination), as determined by the determination in the last instance of the base, is thought by the Marxist tradition in two ways: (1) there is a 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure with respect to the base; (2) there is a 'reciprocal action' of the superstructure on the base.

We can therefore say that the great theoretical advantage of the Marxist topography, i.e. of the spatial metaphor of

<sup>4.</sup> In For Marx and Reading Capital, 1965 (English editions 1969 and 1970 respectively).

<sup>5.</sup> Topography from the Greek topos: place. A topography represents in a sites occupied by several realities: thus the economic is at the bottom (the base), the superstructure above it.

the edifice (base and superstructure) is simultaneously that it reveals that questions of determination (or of index of effectivity) are crucial; that it reveals that it is the base which in the last instance determines the whole edifice; and that, as a consequence, it obliges us to pose the theoretical problem of the types of 'derivatory' effectivity peculiar to the superstructure, i.e. it obliges us to think what the Marxist tradition calls conjointly the relative autonomy of the superstructure and the reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base.

The greatest disadvantage of this representation of the structure of every society by the spatial metaphor of an edifice, is obviously the fact that it is metaphorical: i.e. it remains descriptive.

It now seems to me that it is possible and desirable to represent things differently. NB, I do not mean by this that I want to reject the classical metaphor, for that metaphor itself requires that we go beyond it. And I am not going beyond it in order to reject it as outworn. I simply want to attempt to think what it gives us in the form of a description.

I believe that it is possible and necessary to think what characterizes the essential of the existence and nature of the superstructure on the basis of reproduction. Once one takes the point of view of reproduction, many of the questions whose existence was indicated by the spatial metaphor of the edifice, but to which it could not give a conceptual answer, are immediately illuminated.

My basic thesis is that it is not possible to pose these questions (and therefore to answer them) except from the point of view of reproduction.

I shall give a short analysis of Law, the State and Ideology from this point of view. And I shall reveal what happens both from the point of view of practice and production on the one hand, and from that of reproduction on the other.

THE STATE

The Marxist tradition is strict, here: in the Communist Manifesto and the Eighteenth Brumaire (and in all the later classical texts, above all in Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and Lenin's on State and Revolution), the State is explicitly conceived as a repressive apparatus. The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the 'class' of big landowners) to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation).

The State is thus first of all what the Marxist classics have called the State apparatus. This term means: not only the specialized apparatus (in the narrow sense) whose existence and necessity I have recognized in relation to the requirements of legal practice, i.e. the police, the courts, the prisons; but also the army, which (the proletariat has paid for this experience with its blood) intervenes directly as a supplementary repressive force in the last instance, when the police and its specialized auxiliary corps are 'outrun by events'; and above this ensemble, the head of State, the government and the administration.

Presented in this form, the Marxist-Leninist 'theory' of the State has its finger on the essential point, and not for one moment can there be any question of rejecting the fact that this really is the essential point. The State apparatus, which defines the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention 'in the interests of the ruling classes' in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is quite certainly the State, and quite certainly defines its basic 'function'.

From Descriptive Theory to Theory as such

Nevertheless, here too, as I pointed out with respect to the metaphor of the edifice (infrastructure and superstructure), this presentation of the nature of the State is still partly descriptive.

As I shall often have occasion to use this adjective (descriptive), a word of explanation is necessary in order to remove any ambiguity.

Whenever, in speaking of the metaphor of the edifice or of the Marxist 'theory' of the State, I have said that these are descriptive conceptions or representations of their objects, I had no ulterior critical motives. On the contrary, I have every grounds to think that great scientific discoveries cannot help but pass through the phase of what I shall call descriptive 'theory'. This is the first phase of every theory, at least in the domain which concerns us (that of the science of social formations). As such, one might and in my opinion one must - envisage this phase as a transitional one, necessary to the development of the theory. That it is transitional is inscribed in my expression: 'descriptive theory', which reveals in its conjunction of terms the equivalent of a kind of 'contradiction'. In fact, the term theory 'clashes' to some extent with the adjective 'descriptive' which I have attached to it. This means quite precisely: (1) that the 'descriptive theory' really is, without a shadow of a doubt, the irreversible beginning of the theory; but (2) that the 'descriptive' form in which the theory is presented requires, precisely as an effect of this 'contradiction', a development of the theory which goes beyond the form of 'description'.

Let me make this idea clearer by returning to our present object: the State.

When I say that the Marxist 'theory' of the State available to us is still partly 'descriptive', that means first and fore-

most that this descriptive 'theory' is without the shadow of a doubt precisely the beginning of the Marxist theory of the State, and that this beginning gives us the essential point, i.e. the decisive principle of every later development of the theory.

Indeed, I shall call the descriptive theory of the State correct, since it is perfectly possible to make the vast majority of the facts in the domain with which it is concerned correspond to the definition it gives of its object. Thus, the definition of the State as a class State, emisting in the repressive State apparatus, casts a brilliant light on all the facts observable in the various orders of repression whatever their domains: from the massacres of June 1848 and of the Paris Commune, of Bloody Sunday, May 1905 in Petrograd, of the Resistance, of Charonne, etc., to the mere (and relatively anodyne) interventions of a 'censorship' which has banned Diderot's La Réligieuse or a play by Gatti on Franco; it casts light on all the direct or indirect forms of exploitation and extermination of the masses of the people (imperialist wars); it casts light on that subtle everyday domination beneath which can be glimpsed, in the forms of political democracy, for example, what Lenin, following Marx, called the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

And yet the descriptive theory of the State represents a phase in the constitution of the theory which itself demands the 'supersession' of this phase. For it is clear that if the definition in question really does give us the means to identify and recognize the facts of oppression by relating them to the State, conceived as the repressive State apparatus, this 'interrelationship' gives rise to a very special kind of obviousness, about which I shall have something to say in a moment: 'Yes, that's how it is, that's really true!' 6

And the accumulation of facts within the definition of the State may multiply examples, but it does not really advance the definition of the State, i.e. the scientific theory of the State. Every descriptive theory thus runs the risk of 'blocking' the development of the theory, and yet that development is essential.

That is why I think that, in order to develop this descriptive theory into theory as such, i.e. in order to understand further the mechanisms of the State in its functioning, I think that it is indispensable to add something to the classical definition of the State as a State apparatus.

# The Essentials of the Marxist Theory of the State

Let me first clarify one important point: the State (and its existence in its apparatus) has no meaning except as a function of State power. The whole of the political class struggle revolves around the State. By which I mean around the possession, i.e. the seizure and conservation of State power by a certain class or by an alliance between classes or class fractions. This first clarification obliges me to distinguish between State power (conservation of State power or seizure of State power), the objective of the political class struggle on the one hand, and the State apparatus on the other.

We know that the State apparatus may survive, as is proved by bourgeois 'revolutions' in nineteenth-century France (1830, 1848), by coups d'état (2 December, May 1958), by collapses of the State (the fall of the Empire in 1870, of the Third Republic in 1940), or by the political rise of the petty bourgeoisie (1890–95 in France), etc., without the State apparatus being affected or modified: it may survive political events which affect the possession of State power.

Even after a social revolution like that of 1917, a large part of the State apparatus survived after the seizure of State power by the alliance of the proletariat and the small peasantry: Lenin repeated the fact again and again.

It is possible to describe the distinction between State power and State apparatus as part of the 'Marxist theory' of the State, explicitly present since Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire and Class Struggles in France.

To summarize the 'Marxist theory of the State' on this point, it can be said that the Marxist classics have always claimed that (1) the State is the repressive State apparatus, (2) State power and State apparatus must be distinguished, (3) the objective of the class struggle concerns State power, and in consequence the use of the State apparatus by the classes (or alliance of classes or of fractions of classes) holding State power as a function of their class objectives, and (4) the proletariat must seize State power in order to destroy the existing bourgeois State apparatus and, in a first phase, replace it with a quite different, proletarian, State apparatus, then in later phases set in motion a radical process, that of the destruction of the State (the end of State power, the end of every State apparatus).

In this perspective, therefore, what I would propose to add to the 'Marxist theory' of the State is already there in so many words. But it seems to me that even with this supplement, this theory is still in part descriptive, although it does now contain complex and differential elements whose functioning and action cannot be understood without recourse to further supplementary theoretical development.

# The State Ideological Apparatuses

Thus, what has to be added to the 'Marxist theory' of the State is something else.

Here we must advance cautiously in a terrain which, in fact, the Marxist classics entered long before us, but without having systematized in theoretical form the decisive advances implied by their experiences and procedures. Their experiences and procedures were indeed restricted in the main to the terrain of political practice.

In fact, i.e. in their political practice, the Marxist classics treated the State as a more complex reality than the definition of it given in the 'Marxist theory of the State', even when it has been supplemented as I have just suggested. They recognized this complexity in their practice, but they did not express it in a corresponding theory.7

I should like to attempt a very schematic outline of this corresponding theory. To that end, I propose the following thesis.

In order to advance the theory of the State it is indispensable to take into account not only the distinction between State power and State apparatus, but also another reality which is clearly on the side of the (repressive) State apparatus, but must not be confused with it. I shall call this reality by its concept: the ideological State apparatuses.

What are the ideological State apparatuses (ISAs)?

They must not be confused with the (repressive) State apparatus. Remember that in Marxist theory, the State Apparatus (SA) contains: the Government, the Admin-

istration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc., which constitute what I shall in future call the Repressive State Apparatus. Repressive suggests that the State Apparatus in question 'functions by violence' - at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, may take non-physical forms).

I shall call Ideological State Apparatuses a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions. I propose an empirical list of these which will obviously have to be examined in detail, tested, corrected and reorganized. With all the reservations implied by this requirement, we can for the moment regard the following institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (the order in which I have listed them has no particular significance):

- the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'),
- the family ISA,8
- the legal ISA,9
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties),
- the trade-union ISA.
- the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.),
- the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.).

I have said that the ISAs must not be confused with the (Repressive) State Apparatus. What constitutes the difference?

<sup>7.</sup> To my knowledge, Gramsci is the only one who went any distance in the road I am taking. He had the 'remarkable' idea that the State could not be reduced to the (Repressive) State Apparatus, but included, as he put it, a certain number of institutions from 'civil society': the Church, the Schools, the trade unions, etc. Unfortunately, Gramsci did not systematize his institutions, which remained in the state of acute but fragmentary notes (cf. Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, International Publishera, 1971, pp. 12, 259, 260-3; see also the letter to Tatiana Schucht, 7 September 1931, in Lettre del Carcere, Einaudi, 1968, p. 479. English-language translation in preparation.

<sup>8.</sup> The family obviously has other 'functions' than that of an ISA. It intervenes in the reproduction of labour power. In different modes of production it is the unit of production and/or the unit of consumption.

<sup>9.</sup> The 'Law' belongs both to the (Repressive) State Apparatus and to the system of the ISAs.

As a first moment, it is clear that while there is one (Repressive) State Apparatus, there is a plurality of Ideological State Apparatuses. Even presupposing that it exists, the unity that constitutes this plurality of ISAs as a body is not immediately visible.

As a second moment, it is clear that whereas the – unified – (Repressive) State Apparatus belongs entirely to the *public* domain, much the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses (in their apparent dispersion) are part, on the contrary, of the *private* domain. Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc., etc., are private.

We can ignore the first observation for the moment. But someone is bound to question the second, asking me by what right I regard as Ideological State Apparatuses, institutions which for the most part do not possess public status, but are quite simply private institutions. As a conscious Marxist, Gramsci already forestalled this objection in one sentence. The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its 'authority'. The domain of the State escapes it because the latter is 'above the law': the State, which is the State of the ruling class, is neither public nor private; on the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private. The same thing can be said from the starting-point of our State Ideological Apparatuses. It is unimportant whether the institutions in which they are realized are 'public' or 'private'. What matters is how they function. Private institutions can perfectly well 'function' as Ideological State Apparatuses. A reasonably thorough analysis of any one of the ISAs proves it.

But now for what is essential. What distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following

basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'.

I can clarify matters by correcting this distinction. I shall say rather that every State Apparatus, whether Repressive or Ideological, 'functions' both by violence and by ideology, but with one very important distinction which makes it imperative not to confuse the Ideological State Apparatuses with the (Repressive) State Apparatus.

This is the fact that the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology. (There is no such thing as a purely repressive apparatus.) For example, the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally.

In the same way, but inversely, it is essential to say that for their part the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attentuated and concealed, even symbolic. (There is no such thing as a purely ideological apparatus.) Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same is true of the Family. . . . The same is true of the cultural IS Apparatus (censorship, among other things), etc.

Is it necessary to add that this determination of the double 'functioning' (predominantly, secondarily) by repression and by ideology, according to whether it is a matter of the (Repressive) State Apparatus or the Ideological State Apparatuses, makes it clear that very subtle explicit or tacit combinations may be woven from the interplay of the (Re-

pressive) State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses? Everyday life provides us with innumerable examples of this, but they must be studied in detail if we are to go further than this mere observation.

Nevertheless, this remark leads us towards an understanding of what constitutes the unity of the apparently disparate body of the ISAs. If the ISAs 'function' massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of 'the ruling class'. Given the fact that the 'ruling class' in principle holds State power (openly or more often by means of alliances between classes or class fractions), and therefore has at its disposal the (Repressive) State Apparatus, we can accept the fact that this same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions. Of course, it is a quite different thing to act by laws and decrees in the (Repressive) State Apparatus and to 'act' through the intermediary of the ruling ideology in the Ideological State Apparatuses. We must go into the details of this difference - but it cannot mask the reality of a profound identity. To my knowledge, no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses. I only need one example and proof of this: Lenin's anguished concern to revolutionize the educational Ideological State Apparatus (among others), simply to make it possible for the Soviet proletariat, who had seized State power, to secure the future of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the transition to socialism.10

10. In a pathetic text written in 1937, Krupskaya relates the history of Lenin's desperate efforts and what she regards as his failure.

This last comment puts us in a position to understand that the Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the stake, but also the site of class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle. The class (or class alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatus, not only because the former ruling classes are able to retain strong positions there for a long time, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in struggle.<sup>11</sup>

Let me run through my comments.

If the thesis I have proposed is well-founded, it leads me back to the classical Marxist theory of the State, while making it more precise in one point. I argue that it is necessary to distinguish between State power (and its possession by...) on the one hand, and the State Apparatus on the other. But I add that the State Apparatus contains

11. What I have said in these few brief words about the class struggle in the ISAs is obviously far from exhausting the question of the class struggle.

To approach this question, two principles must be borne in mind:

The first principle was formulated by Marx in the Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: 'In considering such transformations [a social revolution] a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.' The class struggle is thus expressed and exercised in ideological forms, thus also in the ideological forms of the ISAs. But the class struggle extends far beyond these forms, and it is because it extends beyond them that the struggle of the exploited classes may also be exercised in the forms of the ISAs, and thus turn the weapon of ideology against the classes in power.

This by virtue of the second painciple: the class struggle extends beyond the ISAs because it is rooted elsewhere than in ideology, in the Infrastructure, in the relations of production, which are relations of exploitation and constitute the base for class relations.

two bodies: the body of institutions which represent the Repressive State Apparatus on the one hand, and the body of institutions which represent the body of Ideological State Apparatuses on the other.

But if this is the case, the following question is bound to be asked, even in the very summary state of my suggestions: what exactly is the extent of the role of the Ideological State Apparatuses? What is their importance based on? In other words: to what does the 'function' of these Ideological State Apparatuses, which do not function by repression but by ideology, correspond?

# ON THE REPRODUCTION OF THE RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

I can now answer the central question which I have left in suspense for many long pages: how is the reproduction of the relations of production secured?

In the topographical language (Infrastructure, Superstructure), I can say: for the most part, 12 it is secured by the legal-political and ideological superstructure.

But as I have argued that it is essential to go beyond this still descriptive language, I shall say: for the most part, 12 it is secured by the exercise of State power in the State Apparatuses, on the one hand the (Repressive) State Apparatus, on the other the Ideological State Apparatuses.

What I have just said must also be taken into account, and it can be assembled in the form of the following three features:

1. All the State Apparatuses function both by repression and by ideology, with the difference that the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology.

- 2. Whereas the (Repressive) State Apparatus constitutes an organized whole whose different parts are centralized beneath a commanding unity, that of the politics of class struggle applied by the political representatives of the ruling classes in possession of State power, the Ideological State Apparatuses are multiple, distinct, 'relatively autonomous' and capable of providing an objective field to contradictions which express, in forms which may be limited or extreme, the effects of the clashes between the capitalist class struggle and the proletarian class struggle, as well as their subordinate forms.
- 3. Whereas the unity of the (Repressive) State Apparatus is secured by its unified and centralized organization under the leadership of the representatives of the classes in power executing the politics of the class struggle of the classes in power, the unity of the different Ideological State Apparatuses is secured, usually in contradictory forms, by the ruling ideology, the ideology of the ruling class.

Taking these features into account, it is possible to represent the reproduction of the relations of production<sup>13</sup> in the following way, according to a kind of 'division of labour'.

The role of the repressive State apparatus, insofar as it is a repressive apparatus, consists essentially in securing by force (physical or otherwise) the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the

<sup>12.</sup> For the most part. For the relations of production are first reproduced by the materiality of the processes of production and circulation. But it should not be forgotten that ideological relations are immediately present in these same processes.

<sup>13.</sup> For that part of reproduction to which the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus contribute.

last resort relations of exploitation. Not only does the State apparatus contribute generously to its own reproduction (the capitalist State contains political dynasties, military dynasties, etc.), but also and above all, the State apparatus secures by repression (from the most brutal physical force, via mere administrative commands and interdictions, to open and tacit censorship) the political conditions for the action of the Ideological State Apparatuses.

In fact, it is the latter which largely secure the reproduction specifically of the relations of production, behind a 'shield' provided by the repressive State apparatus. It is here that the role of the ruling ideology is heavily concentrated, the ideology of the ruling class, which holds State power. It is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a (sometimes teeth-gritting) 'harmony' between the repressive State apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, and between the different State Ideological Apparatuses.

We are thus led to envisage the following hypothesis, as a function precisely of the diversity of ideological State Apparatuses in their single, because shared, role of the reproduction of the relations of production.

Indeed we have listed a relatively large number of ideological State apparatuses in contemporary capitalist social formations: the educational apparatus, the religious apparatus, the family apparatus, the political apparatus, the trade-union apparatus, the communications apparatus, the 'cultural' apparatus, etc.

But in the social formations of that mode of production characterized by 'serfdom' (usually called the feudal mode of production), we observe that although there is a single repressive State apparatus which, since the earliest known Ancient States, let alone the Absolute Monarchies, has been formally very similar to the one we know today, the number of Ideological State Apparatuses is smaller and their

individual types are different. For example, we observe that during the Middle Ages, the Church (the religious ideological State apparatus) accumulated a number of functions which have today devolved on to several distinct ideological State apparatuses, new ones in relation to the past I am invoking, in particular educational and cultural functions. Alongside the Church there was the family Ideological State Apparatus, which played a considerable part, incommensurable with its role in capitalist social formations. Despite appearances, the Church and the Family were not the only Ideological State Apparatuses. There was also a political Ideological State Apparatus (the Estates General, the Parlement, the different political factions and Leagues, the ancestors or the modern political parties, and the whole political system of the free Communes and then of the Villes). There was also a powerful 'proto-trade-union' Ideological State Apparatus, if I may venture such an anachronistic term (the powerful merchants' and bankers' guilds and the journeymen's associations, etc.). Publishing and Communications, even, saw an indisputable development, as did the theatre; initially both were integral parts of the Church, then they became more and more independent of it.

In the pre-capitalist historical period which I have examined extremely broadly, it is absolutely clear that there was one dominant Ideological State Apparatus, the Church, which concentrated within it not only religious functions, but also educational ones, and a large proportion of the functions of communications and 'culture'. It is no accident that all ideological struggle, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, starting with the first shocks of the Reformation, was concentrated in an anti-clerical and anti-religious struggle; rather this is a function precisely of the dominant position of the religious ideological State apparatus.

The foremost objective and achievement of the French

Revolution was not just to transfer State power from the feudal aristocracy to the merchant-capitalist bourgeoisie, to break part of the former repressive State apparatus and replace it with a new one (e.g., the national popular Army) – but also to attack the number-one Ideological State Apparatus: the Church. Hence the civil constitution of the clergy, the confiscation of ecclesiastical wealth, and the creation of new ideological State apparatuses to replace the religious ideological State apparatus in its dominant role.

Naturally, these things did not happen automatically: witness the Concordat, the Restoration and the long class struggle between the landed aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie throughout the nineteenth century for the establishment of bourgeois hegemony over the functions formerly fulfilled by the Church: above all by the Schools. It can be said that the bourgeoisie relied on the new political, parliamentary-democratic, ideological State apparatus, installed in the earliest years of the Revolution, then restored after long and violent struggles, for a few months in 1848 and for decades after the fall of the Second Empire, in order to conduct its struggle against the Church and wrest its ideological functions away from it, in other words, to ensure not only its own political hegemony, but also the ideological hegemony indispensable to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production.

That is why I believe that I am justified in advancing the following Thesis, however precarious it is. I believe that the ideological State apparatus which has been installed in the dominant position in mature capitalist social formations as a result of a violent political and ideological class struggle against the old dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational ideological apparatus.

This thesis may seem paradoxical, given that for everyone, i.e. in the ideological representation that the bourgeoisie has tried to give itself and the classes it exploits, it really seems that the dominant ideological State apparatus in capitalist social formations is not the Schools, but the political ideological State apparatus, i.e. the regime of parliamentary democracy combining universal suffrage and party struggle.

However, history, even recent history, shows that the bourgeoisie has been and still is able to accommodate itself to political ideological State apparatuses other than parliamentary democracy: the First and Second Empires, Constitutional Monarchy (Louis XVIII and Charles X), Parliamentary Monarchy (Louis-Philippe), Presidential Democracy (de Gaulle), to mention only France. In England this is even clearer. The Revolution was particularly 'successful' there from the bourgeois point of view, since unlike France, where the bourgeoisie, partly because of the stupidity of the petty aristocracy, had to agree to being carried to power by peasant and plebeian 'journées révolutionnaires', something for which it had to pay a high price, the English bourgeoisie was able to 'compromise' with the aristocracy and 'share' State power and the use of the State apparatus with it for a long time (peace among all men of good will in the ruling classes!). In Germany it is even more striking, since it was behind a political ideological State apparatus in which the imperial Junkers (epitomized by Bismarck), their army and their police provided it with a shield and leading personnel, that the imperialist bourgeoisie made its shattering entry into history, before 'traversing' the Weimar Republic and entrusting itself to Nazism.

Hence I believe I have good reasons for thinking that behind the scenes of its political Ideological State Apparatus, which occupies the front of the stage, what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which

has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ideological State apparatus, the Church. One might even add: the School-Family couple has replaced the Church-Family couple.

Why is the educational apparatus in fact the dominant ideological State apparatus in capitalist social formations, and how does it function?

For the moment it must suffice to say:

- 1. All ideological State apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation.
- 2. Each of them contributes towards this single result in the way proper to it. The political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology, the 'indirect' (parliamentary) or 'direct' (plebiscitary or fascist) 'democratic' ideology. The communications apparatus by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television. The same goes for the cultural apparatus (the role of sport in chauvinism is of the first importance), etc. The religious apparatus by recalling in sermons and the other great ceremonies of Birth, Marriage and Death, that man is only ashes, unless he loves his neighbour to the extent of turning the other cheek to whoever strikes first. The family apparatus . . . but there is no need to go on.
- 3. This concert is dominated by a single score, occasionally disturbed by contradictions (those of the remnants of former ruling classes, those of the proletarians and their organizations): the score of the Ideology of the current ruling class which integrates into its music the great themes of the Humanism of the Great Forefathers, who produced the Greek Miracle even before Christianity, and afterwards

the Glory of Rome, the Eternal City, and the themes of Interest, particular and general, etc. nationalism, moralism and economism.

4. Nevertheless, in this concert, one ideological State apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the School.

It takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most 'vulnerable', squeezed between the family State apparatus and the educational State apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy). Somewhere around the age of sixteen, a huge mass of children are ejected 'into production': these are the workers or small peasants. Another portion of scholastically adapted youth carries on: and, for better or worse, it goes somewhat further, until it falls by the wayside and fills the posts of small and middle technicians, white-collar workers, small and middle executives, petty bourgeois of all kinds. A last portion reaches the summit, either to fall into intellectual semi-employment, or to provide, as well as the 'intellectuals of the collective labourer', the agents of exploitation (capitalists, managers), the agents of repression (soldiers, policemen, politicians, administrators, etc.) and the professional ideologists (priests of all sorts, most of whom are convinced 'laymen').

Each mass ejected en route is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfil in class society: the role of the exploited (with a 'highly-developed' 'professional', 'ethical', 'civic', 'national' and a-political consciousness); the role of the agent of exploitation (ability to

give the workers orders and speak to them: 'human relations'), of the agent of repression (ability to give orders and enforce obedience 'without discussion', or ability to manipulate the demagogy of a political leader's rhetoric), or of the professional ideologist (ability to treat consciousnesses with the respect, i.e. with the contempt, blackmail, and demagogy they deserve, adapted to the accents of Morality, of Virtue, of 'Transcendence', of the Nation, of France's World Role, etc.).

Of course, many of these contrasting Virtues (modesty, resignation, submissiveness on the one hand, cynicism, contempt, arrogance, confidence, self-importance, even smooth talk and cunning on the other) are also taught in the Family, in the Church, in the Army, in Good Books, in films and even in the football stadium. But no other ideological State apparatus has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven.

But it is by an apprenticeship in a variety of know-how wrapped up in the massive inculcation of the ideology of the ruling class that the relations of production in a capitalist social formation, i.e. the relations of exploited to exploiters and exploiters to exploited, are largely reproduced. The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology (because it is . . . lay), where teachers respectful of the 'conscience' and 'freedom' of the children who are entrusted to them (in complete confidence) by their 'parents' (who are free, too,

i.e. the owners of their children) open up for them the path to the freedom, morality and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature and their 'liberating' virtues.

I ask the pardon of those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they 'teach' against the ideology, the system and the practices in which they are trapped. They are a kind of hero. But they are rare and how many (the majority) do not even begin to suspect the 'work' the system (which is bigger than they are and crushes them) forces them to do, or worse, put all their heart and ingenuity into performing it with the most advanced awareness (the famous new methods!). So little do they suspect it that their own devotion contributes to the maintenance and nourishment of this ideological representation of the School, which makes the School today as 'natural', indispensable-useful and even beneficial for our contemporaries as the Church was 'natural', indispensable and generous for our ancestors a few centuries ago.

In fact, the Church has been replaced today in its role as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus by the School. It is coupled with the Family just as the Church was once coupled with the Family. We can now claim that the unprecedentedly deep crisis which is now shaking the education system of so many States across the globe, often in conjunction with a crisis (already proclaimed in the Communist Manifesto) shaking the family system, takes on a political meaning, given that the School (and the School-Family couple) constitutes the dominant Ideological State Apparatus, the Apparatus playing a determinant part in the reproduction of the relations of production of a mode of production threatened in its existence by the world class struggle.

ON IDEOLOGY

When I put forward the concept of an Ideological State Apparatus, when I said that the ISAs 'function by ideology', I invoked a reality which needs a little discussion: ideology.

It is well known that the expression 'ideology' was invented by Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy and their friends, who assigned to it as an object the (genetic) theory of ideas. When Marx took up the term fifty years later, he gave it a quite different meaning, even in his Early Works. Here, ideology is the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group. The ideologico-political struggle conducted by Marx as early as his articles in the *Rheinische Zeitung* inevitably and quickly brought him face to face with this reality and forced him to take his earliest intuitions further.

However, here we come upon a rather astonishing paradox. Everything seems to lead Marx to formulate a theory of ideology. In fact, *The German Ideology* does offer us, after the 1844 Manuscripts, an explicit theory of ideology, but . . . it is not Marxist (we shall see why in a moment). As for Capital, although it does contain many hints towards a theory of ideologies (most visibly, the ideology of the vulgar economists), it does not contain that theory itself, which depends for the most part on a theory of ideology in general.

I should like to venture a first and very schematic outline of such a theory. The theses I am about to put forward are certainly not off the cuff, but they cannot be sustained and tested, i.e. confirmed or rejected, except by much thorough study and analysis.

# Ideology has no History

One word first of all to expound the reason in principle which seems to me to found, or at least to justify, the project of a theory of ideology in general, and not a theory of particular ideologies, which, whatever their form (religious, ethical, legal, political), always express class positions.

It is quite obvious that it is necessary to proceed towards a theory of ideologies in the two respects I have just suggested. It will then be clear that a theory of ideologies depends in the last resort on the history of social formations, and thus of the modes of production combined in social formations, and of the class struggles which develop in them. In this sense it is clear that there can be no question of a theory of ideologies in general, since ideologies (defined in the double respect suggested above: regional and class) have a history, whose determination in the last instance is clearly situated outside ideologies alone, although it involves them.

On the contrary, if I am able to put forward the project of a theory of ideology *in general*, and if this theory really is one of the elements on which theories of ideologies depend, that entails an apparently paradoxical proposition which I shall express in the following terms: *ideology has no history*.

As we know, this formulation appears in so many words in a passage from *The German Ideology*. Marx utters it with respect to metaphysics, which, he says, has no more history than ethics (meaning also the other forms of ideology).

In The German Ideology, this formulation appears in a plainly positivist context. Ideology is conceived as a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All its reality is external to it. Ideology is thus thought as an imaginary construction whose status is exactly like the theoretical status of the dream among writers before Freud. For these writers, the dream was the purely imaginary, i.e. null,

result of 'day's residues', presented in an arbitrary arrangement and order, sometimes even 'inverted', in other words, in 'disorder'. For them, the dream was the imaginary, it was empty, null and arbitrarily 'stuck together' (bricolé), once the eyes had closed, from the residues of the only full and positive reality, the reality of the day. This is exactly the status of philosophy and ideology (since in this book philosophy is ideology par excellence) in The German Ideology.

Ideology, then, is for Marx an imaginary assemblage (bricolage), a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence. It is on this basis that ideology has no history in The German Ideology, since its history is outside it, where the only existing history is, the history of concrete individuals, etc. In The German Ideology, the thesis that ideology has no history is therefore a purely negative thesis, since it means both:

- 1. ideology is nothing insofar as it is a pure dream (manufactured by who knows what power: if not by the alienation of the division of labour, but that, too, is a *negative* determination);
- 2. ideology has no history, which emphatically does not mean that there is no history in it (on the contrary, for it is merely the pale, empty and inverted reflection of real history) but that it has no history of its own.

Now, while the thesis I wish to defend formally speaking adopts the terms of *The German Ideology* ('ideology has no history'), it is radically different from the positivist and historicist thesis of *The German Ideology*.

For on the one hand, I think it is possible to hold that ideologies have a history of their own (although it is determined in the last instance by the class struggle); and on the other, I think it is possible to hold that ideology in general

has no history, not in a negative sense (its history is external to it), but in an absolutely positive sense.

This sense is a positive one if it is true that the peculiarity of ideology is that it is endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e. an *omni-historical* reality, in the sense in which that structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we can call history, in the sense in which the *Communist Manifesto* defines history as the history of class struggles, i.e. the history of class societies.

To give a theoretical reference-point here, I might say that, to return to our example of the dream, in its Freudian conception this time, our proposition: ideology has no history, can and must (and in a way which has absolutely nothing arbitrary about it, but, quite the reverse, is theoretically necessary, for there is an organic link between the two propositions) be related directly to Freud's proposition that the unconscious is eternal, i.e. that it has no history.

If eternal means, not transcendent to all (temporal) history, but omnipresent, trans-historical and therefore immutable in form throughout the extent of history, I shall adopt Freud's expression word for word, and write *ideology is eternal*, exactly like the unconscious. And I add that I find this comparison theoretically justified by the fact that the eternity of the unconscious is not unrelated to the eternity of ideology in general.

That is why I believe I am justified, hypothetically at least, in proposing a theory of ideology *ingeneral*, in the sense that Freud presented a theory of the unconscious *in general*.

To simplify the phrase, it is convenient, taking into account what has been said about ideologies, to use the plain term ideology to designate ideology in general, which I have just said has no history, or, what comes to the same thing, is eternal, i.e. omnipresent in its immutable form

throughout history ( = the history of social formations containing social classes). For the moment I shall restrict myself to 'class societies' and their history.

# Ideology is a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence

In order to approach my central thesis on the structure and functioning of ideology, I shall first present two theses, one negative, the other positive. The first concerns the object which is 'represented' in the imaginary form of ideology, the second concerns the materiality of ideology.

THESIS I: Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.

We commonly call religious ideology, ethical ideology, legal ideology, political ideology, etc., so many 'world outlooks'. Of course, assuming that we do not live one of these ideologies as the truth (e.g. 'believe' in God, Duty, Justice, etc. . . .), we admit that the ideology we are discussing from a critical point of view, examining it as the ethnologist examines the myths of a 'primitive society', that these 'world outlooks' are largely imaginary, i.e. do not 'correspond to reality'.

However, while admitting that they do not correspond to reality, i.e. that they constitute an illusion, we admit that they do make allusion to reality, and that they need only be 'interpreted' to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world (ideology = illusion|allusion).

There are different types of interpretation, the most famous of which are the *mechanistic* type, current in the eighteenth century (God is the imaginary representation of the real King), and the 'hermeneutic' interpretation, inaugurated by the earliest Church Fathers, and revived by

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Feuerbach and the theologico-philosophical school which descends from him, e.g. the theologian Barth (to Feuerbach, for example, God is the essence of real Man). The essential point is that on condition that we interpret the imaginary transposition (and inversion) of ideology we arrive at the conclusion that in ideology 'men represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form'.

Unfortunately, this interpretation leaves one small problem unsettled: why do men 'need' this imaginary transposition of their real conditions of existence in order to 'represent to themselves' their real conditions of existence?

The first answer (that of the eighteenth century) proposes a simple solution: Priests or Despots are responsible. They 'forged' the Beautiful Lies so that, in the belief that they were obeying God, men would in fact obey the Priests and Despots, who are usually in alliance in their imposture, the Priests acting in the interests of the Despots or vice versa, according to the political positions of the 'theoreticians' concerned. There is therefore a cause for the imaginary transposition of the real conditions of existence: that cause is the existence of a small number of cynical men who base their domination and exploitation of the 'people' on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations.

The second answer (that of Feuerbach, taken over word for word by Marx in his Early Works) is more 'profound', i.e. just as false. It, too, seeks and finds a cause for the imaginary transposition and distortion of men's real conditions of existence, in short, for the alienation in the imaginary of the representation of men's conditions of existence. This cause is no longer Priests or Despots, nor their active imagination and the passive imagination of their victims. This cause is the material alienation which reigns

in the conditions of existence of men themselves. This is how, in The Jewish Question and elsewhere, Marx defends the Feuerbachian idea that men make themselves an alienated (= imaginary) representation of their conditions of existence because these conditions of existence are themselves alienating (in the 1844 Manuscripts: because these conditions are dominated by the essence of alienated society - 'alienated labour').

All these interpretations thus take literally the thesis which they presuppose, and on which they depend, i.e. that what is reflected in the imaginary representation of the world found in an ideology is the conditions of existence of men, i.e. their real world.

Now I can return to a thesis which I have already advanced: it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the 'cause' which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. Or rather, to leave aside the language of causality it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the imaginary nature of this relation which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology.

To speak in a Marxist language, if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of existence of the individuals occupying the posts of agents of production, exploitation, repression, ideologization and scientific practice, does in the last analysis arise from the relations of production, and from relations deriving from the relations of production, we can say the following: all ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.

If this is the case, the question of the 'cause' of the imaginary distortion of the real relations in ideology disappears and must be replaced by a different question: why is the representation given to individuals of their (individual) relation to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence and their collective and individual life necessarily an imaginary relation? And what is the nature of this imaginariness? Posed in this way, the question explodes the solution by a 'clique'14, by a group of individuals (Priests or Despots) who are the authors of the great ideological mystification, just as it explodes the solution by the alienated character of the real world. We shall see why later in my exposition. For the moment I shall go no further.

THESIS II: Ideology has a material existence.

I have already touched on this thesis by saying that the 'ideas' or 'representations', etc., which seem to make up ideology do not have an ideal (idéale or idéelle) or spiritual existence, but a material existence. I even suggested that the ideal (idéale, idéelle) and spiritual existence of 'ideas' arises exclusively in an ideology of the 'idea' and of ideology, and let me add, in an ideology of what seems to have 'founded' this conception since the emergence of the sciences, i.e. what

<sup>14.</sup> I use this very modern term deliberately. For even in Communist circles, unfortunately, it is a commonplace to 'explain' some political deviation (left or right opportunism) by the action of a 'clique'.

the practicians of the sciences represent to themselves in their spontaneous ideology as 'ideas', true or false. Of course, presented in affirmative form, this thesis is unproven. I simply ask that the reader be favourably disposed towards it, say, in the name of materialism. A long series of arguments would be necessary to prove it.

This hypothetical thesis of the not spiritual but material existence of 'ideas' or other 'representations' is indeed necessary if we are to advance in our analysis of the nature of ideology. Or rather, it is merely useful to us in order the better to reveal what every at all serious analysis of any ideology will immediately and empirically show to every observer, however critical.

While discussing the ideological State apparatuses and their practices, I said that each of them was the realization of an ideology (the unity of these different regional ideologies – religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc. – being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology). I now return to this thesis: an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.

Of course, the material existence of the ideology in an apparatus and its practices does not have the same modality as the material existence of a paving-stone or a rifle. But, at the risk of being taken for a Neo-Aristotelian (NB Marx had a very high regard for Aristotle), I shall say that 'matter is discussed in many senses', or rather that it exists in different modalities, all rooted in the last instance in 'physical' matter.

Having said this, let me move straight on and see what happens to the 'individuals' who live in ideology, i.e. in a determinate (religious, ethical, etc.) representation of the world whose imaginary distortion depends on their imaginary relation to their conditions of existence, in other words, in the last instance, to the relations of production

and to class relations (ideology = an imaginary relation to real relations). I shall say that this imaginary relation is itself endowed with a material existence.

Now I observe the following.

An individual believes in God, or Duty, or Justice, etc. This belief derives (for everyone, i.e. for all those who live in an ideological representation of ideology, which reduces ideology to ideas endowed by definition with a spiritual existence) from the ideas of the individual concerned, i.e. from him as a subject with a consciousness which contains the ideas of his belief. In this way, i.e. by means of the absolutely ideological 'conceptual' device (dispositif') thus set up (a subject endowed with a consciousness in which he freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes), the (material) attitude of the subject concerned naturally follows.

The individual in question behaves in such and such a way, adopts such and such a practical attitude, and, what is more, participates in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which 'depend' the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject. If he believes in God, he goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance (once it was material in the ordinary sense of the term) and naturally repents and so on. If he believes in Duty, he will have the corresponding attitudes, inscribed in ritual practices 'according to the correct principles'. If he believes in Justice, he will submit unconditionally to the rules of the Law, and may even protest when they are violated, sign petitions, take part in a demonstration, etc.

Throughout this schema we observe that the ideological representation of ideology is itself forced to recognize that every 'subject' endowed with a 'consciousness' and believing in the 'ideas' that his 'consciousness' inspires in him

and freely accepts, must 'act according to his ideas', must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice. If he does not do so, 'that is wicked'.

Indeed, if he does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which, still as a function of the same idealist scheme, implies that he has other ideas in his head as well as those he proclaims, and that he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either 'inconsistent' ('no one is willingly evil') or cynical, or perverse.

In every case, the ideology of ideology thus recognizes, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform. This ideology talks of actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into practices. And I shall point out that these practices are governed by the rituals in which these practices are inscribed, within the material existence of an ideological apparatus, be it only a small part of that apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports' club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc.

Besides, we are indebted to Pascal's defensive 'dialectic' for the wonderful formula which will enable us to invert the order of the notional schema of ideology. Pascal says more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.' He thus scandalously inverts the order of things, bringing, like Christ, not peace but strife, and in addition something hardly Christian (for woe to him who brings scandal into the world!) – scandal itself. A fortunate scandal which makes him stick with Jansenist defiance to a language that directly names the reality.

I will be allowed to leave Pascal to the arguments of his

ideological struggle with the religious ideological State apparatus of his day. And I shall be expected to use a more directly Marxist vocabulary, if that is possible, for we are advancing in still poorly explored domains.

I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject. Naturally, the four inscriptions of the adjective 'material' in my proposition must be affected by different modalities: the materialities of a displacement for going to mass, of kneeling down, of the gesture of the sign of the cross, or of the mea culpa, of a sentence, of a prayer, of an act of contrition, of a penitence, of a gaze, of a hand-shake, of an external verbal discourse or an 'internal' verbal discourse (consciousness), are not one and the same materiality. I shall leave on one side the problem of a theory of the differences between the modalities of materiality.

It remains that in this inverted presentation of things, we are not dealing with an 'inversion' at all, since it is clear that certain notions have purely and simply disappeared from our presentation, whereas others on the contrary survive, and new terms appear.

Disappeared: the term ideas.

Survive: the terms subject, consciousness, belief, actions. Appear: the terms practices, rituals, ideological apparatus.

It is therefore not an inversion or overturning (except in the sense in which one might say a government or a glass is overturned), but a reshuffle (of a non-ministerial type), a rather strange reshuffle, since we obtain the following result.

Ideas have disappeared as such (insofar as they are endowed with an ideal or spiritual existence), to the precise

extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus. It therefore appears that the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system (set out in the order of its real determination): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief.

But this very presentation reveals that we have retained the following notions: subject, consciousness, belief, actions. From this series I shall immediately extract the decisive central term on which everything else depends: the notion of the *subject*.

And I shall immediately set down two conjoint theses:

- 1. there is no practice except by and in an ideology;
- 2. there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects.

I can now come to my central thesis.

# Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects

This thesis is simply a matter of making my last proposition explicit: there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Meaning, there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, by the category of the subject and its functioning.

By this I mean that, even if it only appears under this name (the subject) with the rise of bourgeois ideology, above all with the rise of legal ideology, 15 the category of the

subject (which may function under other names: e.g., as the soul in Plato, as God, etc.) is the constitutive category of all ideology, whatever its determination (regional or class) and whatever its historical date – since ideology has no history.

I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects. In the interaction of this double constitution exists the functioning of all ideology, ideology being nothing but its functioning in the material forms of existence of that functioning.

In order to grasp what follows, it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition), i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology in the sense in which I have said that 'man is an ideological animal by nature'.

That the author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a 'subject' from 'his' scientific discourse (for all scientific discourse is by definition a subject-less discourse, there is no 'Subject of science' except in an ideology of science) is a different question which I shall leave on one side for the moment.

As St Paul admirably put it, it is in the 'Logos', meaning in ideology, that we 'live, move and have our being'. It follows that, for you and for me, the category of the subject is a primary 'obviousness' (obviousnesses are always primary): it is clear that you and I are subjects (free, ethical, etc. . . .). Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word 'name a thing' or 'have a meaning' (therefore including

<sup>15.</sup> Which borrowed the legal category of 'subject in law' to make an ideological notion: man is by nature a subject.

the obviousness of the 'transparency' of language), the 'obviousness' that you and I are subjects – and that that does not cause any problems – is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect. It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot fail to recognize and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'

At work in this reaction is the ideological recognition function which is one of the two functions of ideology as such (its inverse being the function of misrecognition – méconnaissance).

To take a highly 'concrete' example, we all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognize that 'it is him', or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there'. To take another example, when we recognize somebody of our (previous) acquaintance ((re)-connaissance) in the street, we show him that we have recognized him (and have recognized that he has recognized us) by saying to him 'Hello, my friend', and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life – in France, at least; elsewhere, there are other rituals).

In this preliminary remark and these concrete illustrations, I only wish to point out that you and I are always already subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we

are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently<sup>17</sup> performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition, including the 'obviousness' with which the 'truth' or 'error' of my reflections may impose itself on you.

But to recognize that we are subjects and that we function in the practical rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject, etc.) – this recognition only gives us the 'consciousness' of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition – its consciousness, i.e. its recognition – but in no sense does it give us the (scientific) knowledge of the mechanism of this recognition. Now it is this knowledge that we have to reach, if you will, while speaking in ideology, and from within ideology we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subjectless) discourse on ideology.

Thus in order to represent why the category of the 'subject' is constitutive of ideology, which only exists by constituting concrete subjects as subjects, I shall employ a special mode of exposition: 'concrete' enough to be recognized, but abstract enough to be thinkable and thought, giving rise to a knowledge.

As a first formulation I shall say: all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject.

<sup>16.</sup> Linguists and those who appeal to linguistics for various purposes often run up against difficulties which arise because they ignore the action of the ideological effects in all discourses – including even scientific discourses.

<sup>17.</sup> NB: this double 'currently' is one more proof of the fact that ideology is 'eternal', since these two 'currentlys' are separated by an indefinite interval; I am writing these lines on 6 April 1969, you may read them at any subsequent time.

This is a proposition which entails that we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other, although at this level concrete subjects only exist insofar as they are supported by a concrete individual.

I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'18

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was really him who was hailed' (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by 'guilt feelings', despite the large numbers who 'have something on their consciences'.

Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. There are individuals walking along. Somewhere (usually behind them) the hail rings out: 'Hey, you there!' One individual (nine times out of ten it is the right one) turns round, believing/suspecting/ knowing that it is for him, i.e. recognizing that 'it really is he' who is meant by the hailing. But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing.

I might add: what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'. It is necessary to be outside ideology, i.e. in scientific knowledge, to be able to say: I am in ideology (a quite exceptional case) or (the general case): I was in ideology. As is well known, the accusation of being in ideology only applies to others, never to oneself (unless one is really a Spinozist or a Marxist, which, in this matter, is to be exactly the same thing). Which amounts to saying that ideology has no outside (for itself), but at the same time that it is nothing but outside (for science and reality).

Spinoza explained this completely two centuries before Marx, who practised it but without explaining it in detail. But let us leave this point, although it is heavy with consequences, consequences which are not just theoretical, but also directly political, since, for example, the whole theory of criticism and self-criticism, the golden rule of the Marxist-Leninist practice of the class struggle, depends on it.

Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects. As ideology is eternal, I must now suppress the temporal form in which I have presented the functioning of ideology, and say: ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear

<sup>18.</sup> Hailing as an everyday practice subject to a precise ritual takes a quite 'special' form in the policeman's practice of 'hailing' which concerns the hailing of 'suspects'.

that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: individuals are always-already subjects. Hence individuals are 'abstract' with respect to the subjects which they alwaysalready are. This proposition might seem paradoxical.

That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all. Freud shows that individuals are always 'abstract' with respect to the subjects they always-already are, simply by noting the ideological ritual that surrounds the expectation of a 'birth', that 'happy event'. Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the 'sentiments', i.e. the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal/ conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less 'pathological' (presupposing that any meaning can be assigned to that term) structure that the former subjectto-be will have to 'find' 'its' place, i.e. 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance. It is clear that this ideological constraint and pre-appointment, and all the rituals of rearing and then education in the family, have some relationship with what Freud studied in the forms of the pre-genital and genital 'stages' of sexuality, i.e. in the 'grip' of what Freud registered by its effects as being the unconscious. But let us leave this point, too, on one side.

Let me go one step further. What I shall now turn my attention to is the way the 'actors' in this mise en scène of interpellation, and their respective roles, are reflected in the very structure of all ideology.

# An Example: The Christian Religious Ideology

As the formal structure of all ideology is always the same, I shall restrict my analysis to a single example, one accessible to everyone, that of religious ideology, with the proviso that the same demonstration can be produced for ethical, legal, political, aesthetic ideology, etc.

Let us therefore consider the Christian religious ideology. I shall use a rhetorical figure and 'make it speak', i.e. collect into a fictional discourse what it 'says' not only in its two Testaments, its Theologians, Sermons, but also in its practices, its rituals, its ceremonies and its sacraments. The Christian religious ideology says something like this:

It says: I address myself to you, a human individual called Peter (every individual is called by his name, in the passive sense, it is never he who provides his own name), in order to tell you that God exists and that you are answerable to Him. It adds: God addresses himself to you through my voice (Scripture having collected the Word of God, Tradition having transmitted it, Papal Infallibility fixing it for ever on 'nice' points). It says: this is who you are: you are Peter! This is your origin, you were created by God for all eternity, although you were born in the 1920th year of Our Lord! This is your place in the world! This is what you must do! By these means, if you observe the 'law of love' you will be saved, you, Peter, and will become part of the Glorious Body of Christ! Etc. . . .

Now this is quite a familiar and banal discourse, but at the same time quite a surprising one.

Surprising because if we consider that religious ideology is indeed addressed to individuals.19 in order to 'transform them into subjects', by interpellating the individual, Peter, in order to make him a subject, free to obey or disobey the appeal, i.e. God's commandments; if it calls these individuals by their names, thus recognizing that they are alwaysalready interpellated as subjects with a personal identity (to the extent that Pascal's Christ says: 'It is for you that I have shed this drop of my blood!'); if it interpellates them in such a way that the subject responds: 'Yes; it really is me!' if it obtains from them the recognition that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence: 'It really is me, I am here, a worker, a boss or a soldier!' in this vale of tears; if it obtains from them the recognition of a destination (eternal life or damnation) according to the respect or contempt they show to 'God's Commandments', Law become Love; - if everything does happen in this way (in the practices of the wellknown rituals of baptism, confirmation, communion, confession and extreme unction, etc. . . .), we should note that all this 'procedure' to set up Christian religious subjects is dominated by a strange phenomenon: the fact that there can only be such a multitude of possible religious subjects on the absolute condition that there is a Unique, Absolute, Other Subject, i.e. God.

It is convenient to designate this new and remarkable Subject by writing Subject with a capital S to distinguish it from ordinary subjects, with a small s.

It then emerges that the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the 'existence' of a Unique and central Other Subject, in whose Name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects. All this is clearly<sup>20</sup> written in what is rightly called the Scriptures. 'And it came to pass at that time that God the Lord (Yahweh) spoke to Moses in the cloud. And the Lord cried to Moses, "Moses!" And Moses replied "It is (really) I! I am Moses thy servant, speak and I shall listen!" And the Lord spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am that I am"'.

God thus defines himself as the Subject par excellence, he who is through himself and for himself ('I am that I am'), and he who interpellates his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation, i.e. the individual named Moses. And Moses, interpellated-called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject. The proof: he obeys him, and makes his people obey God's Commandments.

God is thus the Subject, and Moses and the innumerable subjects of God's people, the Subject's interlocutors-interpellates: his mirrors, his reflections. Were not men made in the image of God? As all theological reflection proves, whereas He 'could' perfectly well have done without men, God needs them, the Subject needs the subjects, just as men need God, the subjects need the Subject. Better: God needs men, the great Subject needs subjects, even in the terrible inversion of his image in them (when the subjects wallow in debauchery, i.e. sin).

Better: God duplicates himself and sends his Son to the Earth, as a mere subject 'forsaken' by him (the long complaint of the Garden of Olives which ends in the Crucifixion), subject but Subject, man but God, to do what prepares the way for the final Redemption, the Resurrection

<sup>19.</sup> Although we know that the individual is always already a subject, we go on using this term, convenient because of the contrassing effect it produces.

<sup>20.</sup> I am quoting in a combined way, not to the letter but 'in spirit and truth'.

of Christ. God thus needs to 'make himself' a man, the Subject needs to become a subject, as if to show empirically, visibly to the eye, tangibly to the hands (see St Thomas) of the subjects, that, if they are subjects, subjected to the Subject, that is solely in order that finally, on Judgement Day, they will re-enter the Lord's Bosom, like Christ, i.e. re-enter the Subject.<sup>21</sup>

Let us decipher into theoretical language this wonderful necessity for the duplication of the Subject into subjects and of the Subject itself into a subject-Subject.

We observe that the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject is speculary, i.e. a mirror-structure, and doubly speculary: this mirror duplication is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning. Which means that all ideology is centred, that the Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it subjects the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) the guarantee that this really concerns them and Him, and that since everything takes place in the Family (the Holy Family: the Family is in essence Holy), 'God will recognize his own in it', i.e. those who have recognized God, and have recognized themselves in Him, will be saved.

Let me summarize what we have discovered about ideology in general.

The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology ensures simultaneously:

- I. the interpellation of 'individuals' as subjects;
- 2. their subjection to the Subject;
- 3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself;<sup>22</sup>
- 4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right:

  Amen 'So be it'.

Result: caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of subjection to the Subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects 'work', they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the 'bad subjects' who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right 'all by themselves', i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses). They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs. They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (das Bestehende), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself', etc. Their concrete, material behaviour is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: 'Amen - So be it'.

Yes, the subjects 'work by themselves'. The whole

<sup>21.</sup> The dogma of the Trinity is precisely the theory of the duplication of the Subject (the Father) into a subject (the Son) and of their mirror-connexion (the Holy Spirit).

<sup>22.</sup> Hegel is (unknowingly) an admirable 'theoretician' of ideology insofar as he is a 'theoretician' of Universal Recognition who unfortunately ends up in the ideology of Absolute Knowledge. Feuerbach is an astonishing 'theoretician' of the mirror connexion, who unfortunately ends up in the ideology of the Human Essence. To find the material with which to construct a theory of the guarantee, we must turn to Spinoza.

mystery of this effect lies in the first two moments of the quadruple system I have just discussed, or, if you prefer, in the ambiguity of the term subject. In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission. This last note gives us the meaning of this ambiguity, which is merely a reflection of the effect which produces it: the individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'. There are no subjects except by and for their subjection. That is why they 'work all by themselves'.

'So be it! . . .' This phrase which registers the effect to be obtained proves that it is not 'naturally' so ('naturally': outside the prayer, i.e. outside the ideological intervention). This phrase proves that it has to be so if things are to be what they must be, and let us let the words slip: if the reproduction of the relations of production is to be assured, even in the processes of production and circulation, every day, in the 'consciousness', i.e. in the attitudes of the individual-subjects occupying the posts which the sociotechnical division of labour assigns to them in production, exploitation, repression, ideologization, scientific practice, etc. Indeed, what is really in question in this mechanism of the mirror recognition of the Subject and of the individuals interpellated as subjects, and of the guarantee given by the Subject to the subjects if they freely accept their subjection to the Subject's 'commandments'? The reality in question in this mechanism, the reality which is necessarily ignored (méconnue) in the very forms of recognition

(ideology = misrecognition/ignorance) is indeed, in the last resort, the reproduction of the relations of production and of the relations deriving from them.

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- P.S. If these few schematic theses allow me to illuminate certain aspects of the functioning of the Superstructure and its mode of intervention in the Infrastructure, they are obviously *abstract* and necessarily leave several important problems unanswered, which should be mentioned:
- 1. The problem of the total process of the realization of the reproduction of the relations of production.

As an element of this process, the ISAs *contribute* to this reproduction. But the point of view of their contribution alone is still an abstract one.

It is only within the processes of production and circulation that this reproduction is *realized*. It is realized by the mechanisms of those processes, in which the training of the workers is 'completed', their posts assigned them, etc. It is in the internal mechanisms of these processes that the effect of the different ideologies is felt (above all the effect of legal-ethical ideology).

But this point of view is still an abstract one. For in a class society the relations of production are relations of exploitation, and therefore relations between antagonistic classes. The reproduction of the relations of production, the ultimate aim of the ruling class, cannot therefore be a merely technical operation training and distributing individuals for the different posts in the 'technical division' of labour. In fact there is no 'technical division' of labour except in the ideology of the ruling class: every 'technical' division, every 'technical' organization of labour is the form and mask of a social ( = class) division and organization of

labour. The reproduction of the relations of production can therefore only be a class undertaking. It is realized through a class struggle which counterposes the ruling class and the exploited class.

The total process of the realization of the reproduction of the relations of production is therefore still abstract, insofar as it has not adopted the point of view of this class struggle. To adopt the point of view of reproduction is therefore, in the last instance, to adopt the point of view of the class struggle.

2. The problem of the class nature of the ideologies existing in a social formation.

The 'mechanism' of ideology in general is one thing. We have seen that it can be reduced to a few principles expressed in a few words (as 'poor' as those which, according to Marx, define production in general, or in Freud, define the unconscious in general). If there is any truth in it, this mechanism must be abstract with respect to every real ideological formation.

I have suggested that the ideologies were realized in institutions, in their rituals and their practices, in the ISAs. We have seen that on this basis they contribute to that form of class struggle, vital for the ruling class, the reproduction of the relations of production. But the point of view itself, however real, is still an abstract one.

In fact, the State and its Apparatuses only have meaning from the point of view of the class struggle, as an apparatus of class struggle ensuring class oppression and guaranteeing the conditions of exploitation and its reproduction. But there is no class struggle without antagonistic classes. Whoever says class struggle of the ruling class says resistance, revolt and class struggle of the ruled class.

That is why the ISAs are not the realization of ideology in general, nor even the conflict-free realization of the ideology of the ruling class. The ideology of the ruling class does not become the ruling ideology by the grace of God. nor even by virtue of the seizure of State power alone. It is by the installation of the ISAs in which this ideology is realized and realizes itself that it becomes the ruling ideology. But this installation is not achieved all by itself; on the contrary, it is the stake in a very bitter and continuous class struggle: first against the former ruling classes and their positions in the old and new ISAs, then against the exploited class.

But this point of view of the class struggle in the ISAs is still an abstract one. In fact, the class struggle in the ISAs is indeed an aspect of the class struggle, sometimes an important and symptomatic one: e.g. the anti-religious struggle in the eighteenth century, or the 'crisis' of the educational ISA in every capitalist country today. But the class struggles in the ISAs is only one aspect of a class struggle which goes beyond the ISAs. The ideology that a class in power makes the ruling ideology in its ISAs is indeed 'realized' in those ISAs, but it goes beyond them, for it comes from elsewhere. Similarly, the ideology that a ruled class manages to defend in and against such ISAs goes beyond them, for it comes from elsewhere.

It is only from the point of view of the classes, i.e. of the class struggle, that it is possible to explain the ideologies existing in a social formation. Not only is it from this starting-point that it is possible to explain the realization of the ruling ideology in the ISAs and of the forms of class struggle for which the ISAs are the seat and the stake. But it is also and above all from this starting-point that it is possible to understand the provenance of the ideologies which are realized in the ISAs and confront one another there. For if it is true that the ISAs represent the form in which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be

realized, and the form in which the ideology of the ruled class must necessarily be measured and confronted, ideologies are not 'born' in the ISAs but from the social classes at grips in the class struggle: from their conditions of existence, their practices, their experience of the struggle, etc.

April 1970

# Appendix

# The Index of the Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain)\*

### GEORGES DIDI-HUBERMAN

translated by THOMAS REPENSEK

Almost Nothing to See

It is a large piece of linen serge, covered with stains. Lined with red silk (one side is therefore covered over), it has been carefully rolled up and placed in a silver reliquary. The reliquary itself is locked behind a metal grating within a monumental altar that stands beneath Guarini's soaring black marble dome in Turin. None of the sheet (lenzuolo) itself, therefore, is visible. One kneels before a photographic negative, as it were, enshrined in the altar and illuminated from within.

Sometimes—though very rarely—it is carried in a procession, an ostentation of the object, in person, if we can call it that. But even then nothing can be seen. All the faithful express the same dissatisfaction: "... I was disappointed: non si vede niente (you can't see anything) everyone was saying. We tried. ..." But the dissatisfaction and the attempt to see constitute something. In fact, almost nothing was visible. "We tried to see something else," the spectator goes on to say, "and little by little we could see." Almost nothing was visible, that is to say: already something other than nothing was visible in that almost. One actually saw, then, something else, simply in the looking forward to it or the desiring of it.

But the modalities of the desire to see are extremely refined. The little-by-little of this "discovery" itself takes on the form of a dizzying spiral that is both precise, as dialectic, and overwhelming, as unending baptism of sight. Following it to its source raises the very question of the advent of the visible. And that involves an entire constellation of ideas, conventions, and phantasms, which I will deal with here only partially, from the point of view of a single stain.

<sup>\*</sup> This text is a summary of a paper presented at Urbino in July 1983 at the colloquium "Rhetoric of the Body," in response to the well-developed arguments of Louis Marin on Nicole and the Veronica question.

<sup>1.</sup> Pierre Vignon, reply to M. Donnadieu, in L'Université catholique, XL, no. 7 (1902), p. 368.

Ibid.

Let us recall that the historic impetus that rendered the shroud of Turin visible—or more precisely, figurative—is found in the history of photography.<sup>3</sup> When Secondo Pia immersed in the chemical bath his last attempt to produce a clear photograph of the holy shroud—his earlier attempts had all been underexposed—this is what happened: there in the dark room, the moment the negative image took form (the inaugural glimpse), a face looked out at Pia from the bottom of the tray. A face he had never before seen on the shroud. A face that was, he said, *unexpected*. And seeing it he almost fainted. The event took place during the night of the 28th to the 29th of May, 1894.<sup>4</sup>

It was after this "amazing" occurrence (just as the negative coalesced) that the pattern of stains on the shroud of Turin took on a recognizable form. The photographic negative revealed what one had never hoped to see on the shroud itself. As the photographic "evidence" objectified an aspect of the shroud, it became proof of a miracle. Not only did it sanction an unprecedented sort of expository value for this relic heretofore hidden from view, it reestablished the aura of the shroud, investing the object itself with a counterpart to its semiotic status. The holy shroud became the negative imprint of the body of Christ, its luminous index miraculously produced and miraculously inverted in the very act of resurrection, henceforth to be conceived of in photographic terms. <sup>5</sup>

The stain we are concerned with here remains, with others, outside the confines of this splendid hermeneutical elaboration, since it cannot be explained by the theory of a negative flash of light, achiropoiete, that would reconstitute the actual appearance of the Christly body. It doesn't seem to lend itself to being raised up (in the sense of the dialectical Aufhebung) into something figurative; it seems to defy comprehension as a recognizable image. It says nothing about the economy of its support (which would at least establish the hypothesis of a luminous-negative index). It seems to exist only in terms of its tonal variations, only as an effect of its support. Yet the tonal variations of the fabric have no precise limits, sequence, or articulation. It seems to exist, therefore, only as the uncertain effect of something as undifferentiated background. Between the spatium (the background in question) and the pure surface, this stain reveals itself only in the precarious opening of the becoming visible; it is deployed only as a closing of signification, a closing to signification. It says nothing. It doesn't seem made to be understood (whereas a figure, a recognized image, a facial ap-

<sup>3.</sup> I use the term *impetus* rather than *origin* because it concerns the universalizing moment of this *making visible*. Before the camera was passionately focused on the shroud of Turin and the train of its hermeneutic or polemical effects (the thousands of articles written on the topic since 1898), few authors devoted themselves to the study of a relic that had been exceedingly discreet and stingy in its allocation of miracles. They include: Pingone (1581), Paleotto (1598), Chifflet (1624), Capré (1662).

<sup>4.</sup> Cf. especially A. Loth, Le portrait de N.S. Jésus-Christ d'après le Saint Suaire de Turin, Oudin, Paris, n.d. [1900], pp. 25-27.

<sup>5.</sup> The reader is referred to my study, "Le négatif et al relève de figurabilité – Note sur un drap photographié," forthcoming.

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pearance always point to or at least carry the promise of meaning). It seems to arise from pure contingency. It tells nothing in itself about its origin. Would segmenting or scanning it give it meaning? Yet it appears to be outside the bounds of scansion or any sort of narrativity. It is only a chain of nonmimetic, chance occurrences, neither imperceptible nor yet perceptible as figures.

The stain (Vignon, 1938).



The Indexical Presupposition, Retracement

What we need is a concept of figurative Aufhebung. We would have to consider the dichotomy of its field and its means, and how they deploy a dialectical mimesis as initiation of absolute knowledge; how it attempts to transform sensible space<sup>6</sup> and to begin a movement (Hegel would have said automovement) in the direction of certitude, figural certitude. An absolute seeing that would transcend the scansion of seeing and of knowing; an absolutely reflexive representation. Confronted with its formless stains, interpreters of the shroud imagined such a transformation, which photography would actually accomplish. A phantasm associating Christ's passion with the medium of photography would hallucinate such a transformation (with all the beauty, rigor, and insane precision the term implies).

We have to look at this stain again, but this time with the "foresight" of such figural certainty in mind, or its "phantasm," its *phantasia* in the Hegelian sense; for Hegel considered *Phantasia* an *Aufhebung*, and spoke of the movement of truth as a delirium of absolute translucidity.

But first it must be stated that in that very place where figuration abolishes itself—as in this stain—it also generates itself. This, in a way, amounts to setting forth a transcendental phenomenology of the visible, which would describe with regard to this stain, appearance (phainesthai, which, however, has the same root as phantasia in the element signifying light) as the very process of disfiguration; it would describe how this stain came not to possess a figurative aspect. That requires in any case inventing a structure of substitutions, returns, and representations: a structure of retracement. Retrace, in other words, tell, retell a story, but also trace a line over it, a line that, let's say, will make the original trace "represent a subject for other traces," those traditional narratives known as the gospels.

The prodigality (sophism) of hermeneutics consists therefore in laying this trace over a story which it does not in any way represent. If this constitutes an aporia, then it must be noted that a hermeneutic enterprise is able to override any semiotic aporia that threatens to impede the automovement of its figural certainty. This movement has its premise in the hypothesis declared earlier (it is a ravishing hypothesis in any case), that there, just where figuration effaces itself, it generates itself as well. But the unlooked-for corollary, the supplement, would be the following: the effacement of all figuration in this trace is itself the guarantee of a link, of authenticity; if there is no figuration it is because contact

<sup>6.</sup> Hegel considers every signifying process an Aufhebung of sense-space intuition. Cf. Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology," in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.
7. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A. V. Miller, Lon-

<sup>7.</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, London, Oxford University Press, 1977; and J.-L. Nancy, *La remarque speculative*, Paris, Galilée, 1973, pp. 137-140.

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has taken place. The noniconic, nonmimetic nature of this stain guarantees its indexical value. I might add that the word authenticity is common to the vocabulary used by Peirce to describe the index<sup>8</sup> and to the cultural discourse of theologians concerning relics (the stain itself is like a micro-session—and no less important for that—in the great authenticating process focused on the shroud of Turin, a process that never ends).

The absence of figuration therefore serves as proof of existence. Contact having occurred, figuration would appear false. And the signifying opaqueness itself reinforces the *it was* of an object (in the Peircian sense, we know that an index does not cease to be an index when the interpretant fails to account for it, whereas the existence of its referential object—the illness related to a symptom. for example—is semiotically essential<sup>9</sup>). Every figure has its origin where it is effaced, if that place of origin is a place of contact.

But that also means that an act is thereby—though no less originarily—set in motion. Peirce defines the symptom as a paradigm of the index, because the symptom locates on a semiotic plane an illness in the process of acting!—a drama, that is, an action fraught with consequences; in Greek there is a word for murder and a word for ritual. Figuration is effaced just where drama provides its index; this means, in its fullest sense, that the more fully drama is freighted with consequence, the greater, and more beautiful, will be the splotch, the disfiguration, the stain.

For in fact we are dealing here with crime, blood, and ritual. Figural certitude takes the decisive step of *seeing* substance in this brownish stain. Henceforth it will see a bloodstain. Thus is established the existence of a sheet of linen as a shroud.

The third stage of the argument: If all physical contact calls to mind the act that establishes it (in an indexical relationship), every act calls forth as well, and imperatively, the proper name of the actor: he who left some of his blood on this linen sheet (Peirce also considers the proper name to be a paradigm of the index, because it is associated with an absolutely specific subject; he says, however, that the proper name is also a "legisign," because it is a sign that legalizes its relationship to the subject; it is there precisely as an imperative; elsewhere Peirce writes that "if an index could be translated into sentence form, that sentence would be in the imperative or exclamatory mood, as in Look over there! or Watch out!"). Now since we are dealing with him in whose Name the shroud is placed in the reliquary altar, and with the drama of his Passion, such as it is found written for all eternity in the books of the gospels, the imperative takes

He lates

Memors



<sup>8.</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, vols. I-VI, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; vols. VII-VIII, ed. Arthur Burks, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1931-1935; 1958.

<sup>9.</sup> Ibid., 2:304.

<sup>10.</sup> Ibid., 8:119.

<sup>11.</sup> Ibid., 3:361.

on another meaning, that of dogma. As for the index, it acquires an added disconnection as a prescription to a treasure-trove of symbols. If there is any paralogical paralogical index reduced to the symbolic imperative of a symbolic imperative of a symbolic imperative of a symbolic imperative of a symbolic index reduced to the body must - semiologically speaking - play a part. The disappointing tenor of this line of thought is felt at once, for it consists of "affirming" the indexicality of a visible sign for the sole purpose of making it shine forth as a beacon of symbolic law.

Elaboration of Detail

It is necessary, in spite of everything, to subject this contingent stain to law (concatenation), a passage to discreet order - a division. A discernment, a word whose root, cernere, contains the three signifying vectors "sifting," "seeing," and "deciding," which is exactly what is involved here.

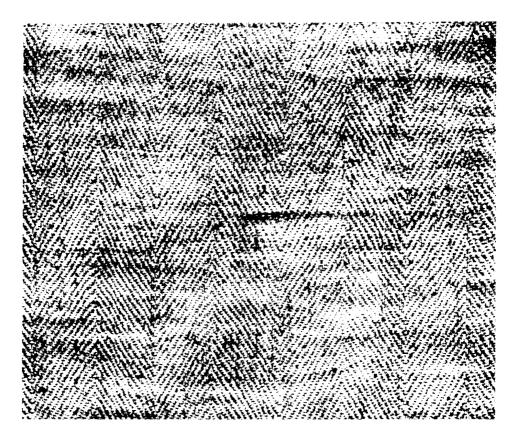
Decidedly, then, let us look at this stain once again; let us draw close to it again, to discern, to define an order of detail and articulation. Yet this stain is, in its physical conditions as in its perceptual effects, inseparable from the texture of its support. Looking closely at a stain on the shroud of 1 urin results and fortunately in a total loss of perspective. The weave "eats up" all effect of outline, and even tonal distinction. An intimate knowledge of this stained fabric is a horacle to discernment; because it gives priority to the materiality of the fabric, it compromises the hermeneutical process.

This is undoubtedly, in one sense, an aspect of the epistemic nature of detail. Detail, Bachelard recalled, is anti- and ante-categorical. In order to describe a detail, "you have to judge material disturbances beneath the surface. And then, conclusions fluctuate. The first conclusion [from a distance] was correct; it was qualitative, it developed in the discontinuity of numerous predicates. . . . [Detail] is richness, but also uncertainty. Along with its subtle nuances occur profoundly irrational disturbances. . . . At the level of detail, Thought and Reality appear to be set adrift from one another so that as Reality is distanced from the scale at which our thinking normally takes place, it loses its solidity in a certain way, its constancy, its substance. Finally, Reality and Thought are engulfed in the same nothingness."12 It should be noted in passing that interpretation (Deutung), in the Freudian sense, is established in the contemplation of this very uncertainty of detail (uncertainty thought of henceforth in terms of an attempt at overspecification); this doesn't in the slightest set it in opposition to a hermeneutic enterprise that functions only "en masse." 13

But this "voracious burst" of detail seen at too close a range has a place in

Gaston Bachelard, Essai sur la connaissance approchée, Paris, Vrin, 1927, pp. 253, 257. Cf. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, trans. James Strachey, London, Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, vols. IV & V; Hubert Damisch, "Le gardien de l'interprétation," in Tel Quel, no. 44 (1971), p. 78; Naomi Schor, "Le détail chez Freud," in Littérature, no. 37 (1980), pp. 3-14.

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The fabric (Vignon, 1938).

the phenomenology of visible discernment. From among many possible sources, we could cite Ernst Bloch's Experimentum mundi, which develops the theme of the closely considered surface as a "contamination" of the space and a blinding hold on the eye. Proximity is with all justification thought of as an obstacle, an obscurantist view, an alienating immediacy. I would like to call it the effect of surface (to distinguish it from ground, which can be apprehended in its parts; to suggest also its anguished, even catastrophic, terror-striken nature, as a space become wall, wall become sky, sky become hole, intimate dizziness). Now, since obstacles are there to be surmounted, we ought to sense the inevitable appeal of Aushebung. Bloch calls it mediation, elevation, negation, ostentation, rotation by seeing. And this is how, he says, a figure will "appear" or "reappear." He calls this process finally an elaboration. And that alone tells us that the problem

<sup>14.</sup> I am summarizing the general theme of his argument. Cf. Ernst Bloch, Experimentum mundi. Frage, Kategorien d. Herausbringens, Praxis, Suhrkamp, 1975.

of detail does not have its source only in the problematic of pure perception. The problem here is not one of a Gestalttheorie, in as much as, according to Merleau-Ponty's critique, Gestalttheorie uses a concept of "form" as pure cause or something "real," given. 15 It is a question rather of considering the appearance of figuration or recognizable form as a process of elaborated distancing. Distancing creates visibility, in as much as it involves elaboration.

I think it is necessary to understand this word in its Freudian sense as elaboration or working through (Verarbeitung, Bearbeitung); an associative process that presupposes its object, rendering it suitable to support a fantasy. Case in point: a fantasy of the Christly body, filigreed in discernment, on the sheet, a (double) "silhouette." We may get some understanding of this presupposition and of this elaborated distancing from Paul Vignon, one of the principal interpreters of the holy shroud, in a passage where he attests to the appearance of a recognizable image on the stained fabric: "Close up, in place of the images, he [he is referring to himself hardly saw anything except formless spots, similar to mildew or rust stains, which several persons also reported seeing. From a distance however. . . , all these stains blended together and harmoniously arranged themselves so as to constitute the two images which since then have become well known. . . . "16

Now to return to the close-up view, this time with figural certainty provisioned (previsioned) well in advance. Vignon provides this detailed view of the fabric: "One area beneath the left hand . . . at first seemed void of any impression.... By looking from rather far away, you could make out shadowy impressions caused by the first phalanxes of the index finger and the middle finger of the right hand, which extend on the diagonal from the upper right to the lower left."17

# The Dramaturgical Deduction: The Wound

"Getting near involves playing at getting farther away. The game of far and near is the game of distance," writes Maurice Blanchot. 18 Elaboration makes the detour possible. The detour involves distancing. It calls forth its own return; it invokes the story of something rising up from "the depths of time," something that fills up a period of waiting. Something unique and far away, however near it may be. 19 In this game of near and far, therefore, there is an effect of aura, in-

Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Structure of Behavior, trans. Alden L. Fisher, Boston, Beacon Press, 1963, p. 144.

Vignon, reply to Donnadieu, p. 370. I have italicized the words that seem to designate the presupposition of knowledge in the illusion of its afterthought.

Vignon, Le Saint Suaire de Turin devant la science, l'archéologie, l'histoire, l'iconographie, la logique. Paris, Masson, 1938, p. 33.

<sup>18.</sup> Maurice Blanchot, Le pas au-delà, Paris, Gallimard, 1973, p. 99.
19. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Some motifs in Baudelaire," in Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. Harry Zohn, London, New Left Books, pp. 107-154.

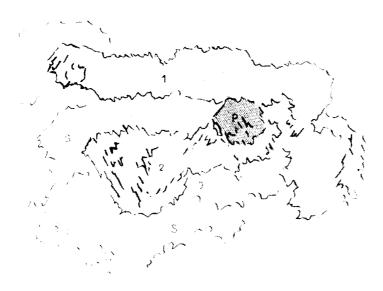
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volved in the surface of the photograph itself (the shroud of Turin reproduced on film realizes the delicious paradox of glorifying its cultural value). There is finally, in this game of near and far, the ubiquitous presence of the Christly body, which is in the shroud, there without being there, doubly absent, as dead body and body brought back to life, and present in the terrible signs of its Passion. So it is that the power of narrative is grafted eternally to seeing.

This is possible precisely because the elaborated distancing of view locates the shroud on a screen. It aims to orthogonalize the indexical vector, to make it projective. If the bloodstain is both the index of a contact and the vector of a projection, then anything is possible.

And the first thing possible for this trace is its tracing, in the sense of trace drawing. For it becomes possible actually to draw the unfigurable, to plot it, in as much as it appears to be projectable. By reducing background to surface we are led to believe that we are actually seeing everything in its smallest detail. The detour of a "transfer drawing" provides the context therefore for some very precise captions: "P: orifice, half filled with flesh from wound made when nail removed. 1: path where blood first flowed from hand and quickly dried. 2: last blood, diluted by serum, along same line. S: serum from wound after blood had dried." 20

20. Vignon, Le Saint Suaire, p. 3.



Trace drawing (Vignon, 1938).

From this sort of "photographic" detail, the tracing can easily be seen as a "photograph" of a scene. As a dramatic event. The unfigurability of this stain will therefore be the index not only of a contact, not only of a substance (blood), but of a "living" wound which interpreters of the shroud have agreed is that of the left hand of Christ, believed to be placed on the right side, at the level of the groin, at the time of burial.

This absent wound will therefore set the stage, by the simple expedient of the tracing of a stain, for the excruciatingly precise scenario of the insertion and removal of the nail, the opening and partial closing of the flesh. A paradigm perhaps of any originating event. This will unquestionably have benefited from the incalculable power of having preestablished a sense of figurability, understood as a means of staging - a translation suggested by Lacan for what is generally called the consideration of representability, which Freud refers to as Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit. This is where the field I referred to as figurative Aufhebung has its fantasmatic extension, in thoughts expressed as images or, as Freud says, as pseudothoughts; in substituting for logic pure relationships of formal contiguity; in the play of displacements of plastic intensity, in their ability to focus and fascinate (referred to here as the "center of the hole," marked P-P as in plaie [wound], P as in profondeur [depth]—on Vignon's diagram; enchanting the view as long as one takes care to imagine more, to the bottom of the hole, the very "bottom" of the body of Jesus); finally, in its ability to use "concrete words," according to Freud, as "links" in a chain<sup>21</sup> (the word serum, for example, which reengages the visibility of the stain in its entirety).

The appeal to Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit of course presupposes its extension to Rücksicht auf Verstandlichkeit, a "coming to grips with intelligibility" (what is also known as secondary elaboration), which, Freud writes, draws figurability out from a dream, from the side of fantasy, which redisplaces the visual intensities, limits them or uses them - he says - as a means of "rebuilding a façade," of subsuming the intense image, even the scene, into scenario. 22 Into coherence, narrative logic.

•ur figurative Aufhebung functions therefore on the one hand as the "regressive attraction" of a memory (here, a visual phantasm of the Passion as related in the gospels) in the light of its reappearance, its restaging (essentially this is how Freud establishes his definition of coming to grips with figurability<sup>23</sup>); on the other hand, it is an operation dialectalized by the "dramaturgical deduction" of a secondary elaboration. But it is not "secondary" in the sense of appearing after the fact, for this elaboration is inscribed at the very outset of this entire operation.

And this operation is constructed so as never to stop. Because it is Aufhebung

there to see

Cf. Freud, "The Means of Representation in Dreams," pp. 310-338. 21.

<sup>22.</sup> 

Ibid., "Secondary Revision," pp. 488-508.
Ibid., "Considerations of Representability," pp. 339-349.





itself. It will henceforth account for all stains and all traces. It will determine a system of traces that will tell the history of the shroud itself, and of its accidents (water stains, for example, or scorch marks from fires that it miraculously escaped); a system of traces of the blood of the Passion, blood that the commentators call "living," 24 and "dead" — deposited on the shroud during the process of burial; and even a system of traces of the partial obliteration of traces, that is, a system that can account for the "white" areas. Thus Paul Vignon saw, beneath "our" stain, "under the left hand (the one with the wound), an organic liquid that stained the sheet with pale, irregularly shaped, circular marks. This liquid partially redissolved the imprint — as it was being formed — of the fingers of the left hand, washing before it the already brownish-colored substance." 25

In fact, this operation is made to stop only at the moment of grace when not only status, substance, and act would be characterized from every trace and even every absence of trace, but even the exact reference to every passage in the gospel concerning the way of the cross, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. It is the *entire* Passion which, imagined, must be *called up* (both in the reference point and in the sense of *Aufhebung*) from the holy shroud. "Geometry" and "experimental science" will be the means employed by this will to an absolute vision.

Abject Proof

A fantasy of referentiality sustains this entire will to see. Actually, to resee. The hermeneutic of the holy shroud lodges its power of verification in the "reality" (in fact, in the photographic visibility of a stained piece of cloth) of the gospel text. This is why it demands an *experimental verification* of its own semiotic hypotheses.

 <sup>24</sup> Cf., for example, A. Legrand, Le Linceul de Turín, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1980, p. 156.
 25. Vignon, Le Saint Suaire, p. 35.

The problem arises then concerning "our" stain and its *localization*, that is, its exact position on the "body-assumed-visible" beyond the fabric (the body of Christ). This stain, we are told, is the blood of the crucified hands. The problem is to find out where exactly the nails made their entry. Pierre Barbet, a surgeon at the Hôpital Saint Joseph in Paris, wrote a work in 1935 entitled Les cinq plaies du Christ, étude anatomique et expérimentale, 26 in which he frankly stated that his purpose was to "find out where the nails had been driven through; what I did was to reconstruct the crucifixion and then X-rayed and dissected the parts."27 Attempting to prove that Iesus had been crucified from the wrists rather than the palms, he experimented nailing the arms of corpses to a cross by the palms; when he pulled on them, the wound always tore open and the limb would fall to the ground. And then: "After amputating an arm I quickly took an 8-millimetersquare nail, like those used for the crucifixion, which I had shortened to a 5centimeter length for easier X-raying. With the hand lying flat, face up against the plank, I placed the point of the nail in the middle of the wrist joint, and, holding it straight up, hit it with a large hammer, carefully driving it in straight, and then hard like an executioner."28 Since the result was conclusive -it "held" - Barbet claimed he "held" proof that it was indeed from the wrist (the Destot opening, in fact) that crucifixion took place. He produced X-rays and diagrams in support of this proof.

We have seen how the figurative elaboration of the stain on the shroud of Turin essentially required a denial of the materiality of its support (in that it necessitated its idealization as screen). But here with Barbet's act there is a denial of the very surface, since it attempts to explore the fabric as a thickness ca-

<sup>26.</sup> Pierre Barbet, Les cinq plaies du Christ. Étude anatomique et expérimentale, Dillen/Tertiaires Carmélites de l'Action des Grâces, Paris, 1935, 45 pp. (reprinted and expanded in 1950: La Passion de Jésus-Christ selon le chirurgien, Apostolat des éditions, Paris, 10 ed., 1982, 262 pp.).

<sup>27.</sup> Ibid., p. 11. Author's emphasis.

<sup>28.</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

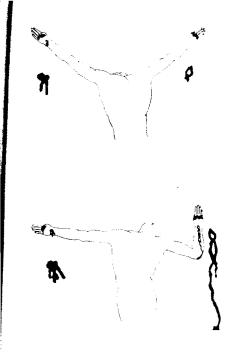


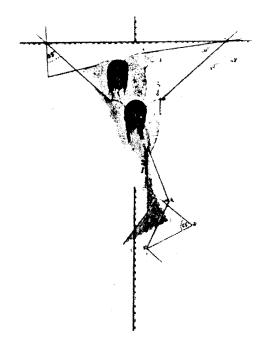
"Geometry" of the stain (Ricci, 1972).

pable of being the object of surgery; it digs into the surface as one would penetrate a body. Photographic elevation of the X-rayed stain of a wound produced by piercing.

The locale of our stain is now clearly identified, in terms of the sort of ground that subsumes it: the divine proportions of the Christly body. <sup>29</sup> In addition, the formulation of the ground makes it possible to organize the scattered stains into a system; to plot a "geometric figure" that will correlate each stain to each dramatic event of bodily contact, that is, to each "monad" of its suffering—finally to each moment in the Passion of Christ. Elevation of a locus of points into quasi-medico-legal narrative terms. In this way we can arrive at the total number of lashes received in the flagellation (although the number varies, depending on the source, from 90 to 121). From this "geometry" we will attempt to make an inference as to the posture of the brutally beaten body, of the body crucified, of the body entombed. We will add a supporting cast of characters having the "right" proportions (deduced from the shroud itself) to reconstruct every ritualized moment of the Passion. And in addition to a ground plan, there will be a staging. Proof garnered from the scene for experimental verification. But the staging possesses a logic of its own, and so from a simple stained sheet

<sup>29.</sup> That the body of the holy shroud is not only the body of a "real" Christ, but also the ideal one of religious iconography, is another bridge cast out over the abyss in studies by Vignon, Le Saint Suaire, pp. 115-192; I. Wilson, Le Suaire de Turin, linceul du Christ<sup>3</sup>, trans. Albeck, Albin Michel, Paris, 1978, pp. 128-165; L. Ferri, La Sindone vista da uno scultore, La Parola, Rome, 1978, passim.





Postural inference (Ricci, 1972).

Axonometry of the crucifixion (Ricci, 1972).

the entire story of the gospel will be told, and what the gospels don't tell as well: the saliva of the last utterance, the shackle on the left foot of Christ on the Way of the Cross, its precise appearance, etc.<sup>30</sup> It is not for nothing that the shroud of Turin is dubbed the *fifth gospel*.

Our stain will therefore have proven itself susceptible to "geometrization." And this "geometry" will not only facilitate certain postural inferences (position of the nails in the hand, shape and size of the cross), but perhaps will identify something at the source of this entire agonizing fantasy: the very rhythm of Christ's mortal expiration. Interestingly enough, Monsignor Ricci, one of the principle contemporary "sindonologists," uses the term exonometry to describe the reconstitution of the spasm. His analysis also provides the principle of formal emergence of the stain, attempting, as it does, to demonstrate why the stain has the appearance that it does, or rather, how it came to have such an appearance, at a given moment of the Passion.

One might perhaps think we have come full circle here. But no. This is movement made never to stop. Pierre Barbet gives a last and abject proof at the conclusion of his work; "one more for good measure," although you sense that in addition to its retrospective function there is also a foundational function: "I apologize for including these last two photographs, which even I think are hideous and blasphemous. . . . I found some human tatter in the Anatomy cloak-

<sup>30.</sup> Cf. G. Ricci, Via Crucis secondo la Sindone, Centro Romano di Sindonologia, Rome, 1972 (French trans., 1981), pp. 17-19, 54.

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Experimental restaging of a crucifixion (Barbet, 1935).

room, perfectly fresh and supple";<sup>31</sup> and he actually crucified it, according to his theory of crucifixion. The photographic visibility of a pure effect of the weave of the fabric was finally transformed into the pure and abject effect of the "real" thing (a "real" person crucified). This is what I was referring to as a fantasy of referentiality.

This abject part of the proof at least signifies that what is called the dramaturgical "deduction" is not a deduction, and not even an induction (in the Aristotelian sense of inductive syllogism). It is really something more like an abduction. This is what Aristotle calls a syllogism whose major premise is evident (it is evident that if there are stains on the shroud of Turin they are the index of something), but whose minor premise is only likely (probable); the probability of the conclusion, therefore, is only as great as that of the minor premise. For Peirce, an abduction is any sort of reasoning whose conclusion is only probable. In the rhetoric of proof generated from the shroud of Turin, the minor premise would consist of the stage of simulation, of the probability of the reconstruction of the drama of the Passion. The probability of the minor premise is that abduction would therefore be pure scenic verisimilitude: a pure resemblance. And

<sup>31.</sup> Barbet, Les cinq plaies du Christ, p. 43.

<sup>32.</sup> Aristotle, The Prior Analytics, trans. John Warrington, New York, Dutton, 1964, II. 25, pp. 71-73.

we see what an abject effect it has, this "too highly detailed"—that is, perverse—restaging of an event.

I will cite one last sindonological avatar, Father Côme, whose thesis is defended in La Sindone e la Scienza, a small work published by the author, which was presented at a congress in Turin in October 1978.<sup>33</sup> According to his theory there is on the shroud an ultimate detail, which is waiting to be seen, underneath the stain we have been dealing with: "In order to fold the hands of the victim over the pubic region, which conceals the sexual organs, it would have been necessary to draw the arms back along the body and bend the elbows in spite of the advanced rigidity of rigor mortis and the effect of tetanus due to crucifixion. The persons who first prepared the body for burial were therefore concerned to conceal something they thought should not be seen."34 No one had ever seen what it was, because, Côme writes, no one had dared to look that closely. He tells us what it is: "the most atrocious detail of the Passion of Christ." This something is Christ's sperm. This reflex response is documented in medical accounts of crucifixions and hangings: "the ultimate spasm of erection and ejaculation of the crucified," of which there is, he continues, "on the holy shroud, within view, the means of direct verification, if one only wishes to avail oneself of it. . . . "35

Baptism by Sight

The historic value of this theory is unimportant. It is no less exemplary, however, for all its eccentricity.

On the one hand, it effects a passage to the limit of what I referred to as a fantasy of referentiality, the very one contained in the indexical presupposition relating to the stains on the holy shroud, and "elevated" into what could be called "the game of greatest naturalism." Now there is nothing more "naturalistic" than detail as it functions in fantasy (Freud stresses this in regard to screen memories). It is interesting that all this hermeneutical analysis of stains — noniconic signifiers, pure effects of support or tonality—tends to define, in fact, a new art of *iconic devotion* (in every sense of the term). Most sindonological studies include illustrations of drawings or models that purport to represent the real Christ crucified (in its iconographic sense). Werisimilitude regarding the Passion—an act of torture—cannot logically operate within an economy of abjection; these new icons are remarkable rather for the baroque obscenity of the wound and, in particular, its secretion.

Yet it is also true that this excessive naturalism (which has its paradoxical

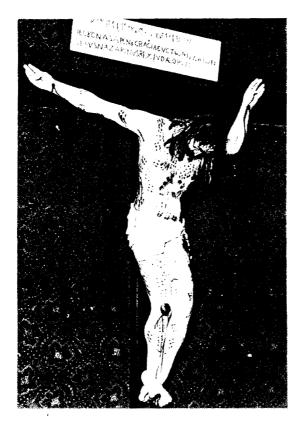
<sup>33.</sup> R. P. Côme, La suprême abjection de la Passion du Christ, F. Tanazacq, 1955, 2nd rev. ed., 1975, 22 pp.; "Le détail le plus atroce de la Passion du Christ," in La Sindone e la Scienza, ed. Paoline/Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia, Turin, 1978, pp. 424-427.

<sup>34.</sup> Côme, "Le détail le plus atroce," p. 425.

<sup>35.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>36.</sup> Cf. Barbet, Ricci, Ferri.

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Crucifixion: wood sculpture based on data taken from the holy shroud (Ricci, 1972).

source in the historicist and positivist criticism of religion contemporary with the implementation of photography) is entirely contained within a theological order. Côme offers his hypothesis as a veritable télos of faith, because it carries compassion to the level of atrocity, that is, he believes, "to the limit of total truth." Télos of the eucharistic communion; the drops of divine sperm being the "innumerable sacred fragments of our communion." Télos, finally, of the incarnation; Jesus rendering the forfeiture of his death absolute in extremity. This also has its logical confirmation. The "ultimate detail," writes Cême, "finally allows us to feel we are looking at a complete portrait." 39

<sup>37.</sup> Côme, La suprême abjection, p. 6.

<sup>38.</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>39.</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

It is in fact the picture that is complete. The indefinite retracing of the index actually permits its own reversal, its iconic and symbolic elevation. It is like a baptism of sight that the hermeneutic of the holy shroud demands in the sense that as in baptism, "by receiving the imprint (to antitupon: the index) of the Holy Spirit, everything is accomplished in you as image (eikonikôs: as icon), because you are the images (eikones) of Christ."40

In summary then there was a piece of stained linen. A determination was reached as to its nature: it was blood. Through the fact of contact, the act was described and the actor identified. And his death recreated. Bloodstains made it possible to imagine the meaning and the drama of Christ's Passion.

Lest we forget: the blood itself may only be a product of the imagination. To continue the logic of the index, the experimental fantasy and love of verification, we should perhaps wonder whether it really is blood at all. The infallible method of peroxydation (used in legal medicine to test even invisible stains or very old stains) reveals nothing, nothing at all.<sup>41</sup> To this day there is no known blood to be found on the holy shroud.

It goes without saying that in this logic of an indexical assertion, whose aim is to be overwhelmed by the iconic and symbolic dimensions, this desired in really constitute an objection to "authenticity" (to divinity). For the index of the desired in index It is an achiropoïete icon; the blood-substance will inin all cases be transformed by a luminous vector, and in all cases the contact, implied by the trace, will be transformed by a vector of virgin passage (crossing a King. surface without touching it: the birth of Christ, Pentecost, and his resurrection, all from the linen shroud). An argument found in Saint Thomas Aquinas could, I believe, be used to characterize this hermeneutical question (and in a certain way, theologically speaking, it rescues it) regarding the substance of our stain. Is it or is it not the blood of Christ? Thomas would say that the blood of Christ is in its entirety elsewhere: although blood is a humor, and therefore susceptible to corruption, the blood of Christ is not tainted by original sin; it is wholly revived and glorified. There is a problem, however: "Certain churches preserve as a relic a small amount of Christ's blood. His body is therefore not revived in the integrity of all its parts." Solution: "As for the blood that certain churches preserve as a relic, it did not flow from the side of Christ, but miraculously, they say, from an image of Christ (imagine Christi) that someone had struck."42 It is therefore imag(inary) blood. And no less miraculous for that.

Berk J.S. Huz

Cyril of Jerusalem, Catéchèses mystagogiques, ed. Piedagnel, Cerf, Paris, 1966, II, p. 1. 40.

Cf. Wilson, Le Suaire de Turin, pp. 101-105. 41.

<sup>42.</sup> Thomas Aquinas, Summa, III, Qu. 54. Art. 3.

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Grief, terror courage the position for survival and far more than survival, are here in the personal and political searchings of a great poet. Lorde is the Amazon warrior who also knows how to tell the tale of battle what happened, and why, what are the weapons, and who are the contrades she found. More than this, her book offers women a new and deeply feminist challenge.

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II

#### **BREAST CANCER:**

#### A BLACK LESBIAN FEMINIST EXPERIENCE

# March 25, 1978

The idea of knowing, rather than believing, trusting, or even understanding, has always been considered heretical. But I would willingly pay whatever price in pain was needed, to savor the weight of completion, to be utterly filled, not with conviction nor with faith, but with experience—knowledge, direct and different from all other certainties.

# October 10, 1978

I want to write about the pain. The pain of waking up in the recovery room which is worsened by that immediate sense of loss. Of going in and out of pain and shots. Of the correct position for my arm to drain. The euphoria of the 2nd day, and how it's been downhill from there.

I want to write of the pain I am feeling right now, of the lukewarm tears that will not stop coming into my eyes—for what? For my lost breast? For the lost me? And which me was that again anyway? For the death I don't know how to postpone? Or how to meet elegantly?

I'm so tired of all this. I want to be the person I used to be, the real me. I feel sometimes that it's all a dream and surely I'm about to wake up now.

### November 2, 1978

How do you spend your time, she said. Reading, mostly, I said. I couldn't tell her that mostly I sat staring at blank walls, or getting stoned into my heart, and then, one day when I found I could finally masturbate again, making love to myself for hours at a time. The flame was dim and flickering, but it was a welcome relief to the long coldness.

### December 29, 1978

What is there possibly left for us to be afraid of, after we have dealt face to face with death and not embraced it? Once I accept the existence of dying, as a life process, who can ever have power over me again?

This is work I must do alone. For months now I have been wanting to write a piece of meaning words on cancer as it affects my life and my consciousness as a woman, a black lesbian feminist mother lover poet all I am. But even more, or the same, I want to illuminate the implications of breast cancer for me, and the threats to self-revelation that are so quickly aligned against any woman who seeks to explore those questions, those answers. Even in the face of our own deaths and dignity, we are not to be allowed to define our needs nor our feelings nor our lives.

I could not even write about the outside threats to my vision and action because the inside pieces were too frightening.

This reluctance is a reluctance to deal with myself, with my own experiences and the feelings buried in them, and the conclusions to be drawn from them. It is also, of course, a reluctance to living or re-living, giving life or new life to that pain. The pain of separation from my breast was at least as sharp as the pain of separating from my mother. But I made it once before, so I know I can make it again.

Trying to even set this all down step by step is a process of focussing in from the periphery towards the center.

A year ago I was told I had an 80% chance of having breast cancer. That time, the biopsy was negative. But in that interim of three weeks between being told that I might have cancer and finding out it was not so, I met for the first time the essential questions of my own mortality. I was going to die, and it might be a lot sooner than I had ever conceived of. That knowledge did not disappear with the diagnosis of a benign tumor. If not now, I told my lover, then someday. None of us have 300 years. The terror that I conquered in those three weeks left me with a determination and freedom to speak as I needed, and to enjoy and live my life as I needed to for my own meaning.

During the next summer, the summer of 1978, I wrote in my journal:

Whatever the message is, may I survive the delivery of it. Is letting go a process or a price? What am I paying for, not seeing sooner? Learning at the edge? Letting go of something precious but no longer needed?

So this fall I met cancer, as it were, from a considered position, but it still knocked me for a hell of a loop, having to deal with the pain and the fear and the death I thought I had come to terms with once before. I did not recognize then how many faces those terms had, nor how many forces were aligned within our daily structures against them, nor how often I would have to redefine the terms because other experiences kept presenting themselves. The acceptance of death as a fact, rather than the desire to die, can empower my energies with a forcefulness and vigor not always possible when one eye is out unconsciously for eternity.

Last month, three months after surgery, I wrote in my journal:

I seem to move so much more slowly now these days. It is as if I cannot do the simplest thing, as if nothing at all is done without a decision, and every decision is so crucial. Yet I feel strong and able in general, and only sometimes do I touch that battered place where I am totally inadequate to any thing I most wish to accomplish. To put it another way, I feel always tender in the wrong places.

In September 1978, I went into the hospital for a breast biopsy for the second time. It all happened much faster this time than the year before. There was none of the deep dread of the previous biopsy, but at the same time there was none of the excitement of a brand new experience. I said to my surgeon the night before—"I'm a lot more scared this time, but I'm handling it better." On the surface, at least, we all expected it to be a repeat. My earlier response upon feeling this lump had been—"I've been through this once before. What do we do for encore?"

Well, what we did for encore was the real thing.

I woke up in the recovery room after the biopsy colder than I can remember ever having been in my life. I was hurting and horrified. I knew it was malignant. How, I didn't know, but I suspect I had absorbed that fact from the operating room while I still was out. Being "out" really means only that you can't answer back or protect yourself from what you are absorbing through your ears and other senses. But when I raised my hand in the recovery room and touched both bandaged breasts, I knew there was a malignancy in one, and the other had been biopsied also. It was only for affirmation. I would have given anything to have been warmer right then. The gong in my brain of "malignant," "malignant," and the icv sensations of that frigid room, cut through the remnants of anesthesia like a fire hose trained on my brain. All I could focus upon was getting out of that room and getting warm. I yelled and screamed and complained about the cold and begged for extra blankets, but none came. The nurses were very put out by my ruckus and sent me back to the floor early.

My doctor had said he would biopsy both breasts if one was malignant. I couldn't believe this hospital couldn't shut off the air-conditioning or give me more blankets. The Amazon girls were only 15, I thought, how did they handle it?

Frances was there by the door of my room like a great sunflower. I surfaced from anesthesia again as she took my hand in her deliciously warm ones, her dear face bent over mine. "It is malignant, isn't it, Frances, it is malignant," I said. She squeezed my hand and I saw tears in her eyes. "Yes, my love, it is," she said, and the anesthesia washed out of me again before the sharp edge of fact. "Baby, I'm so cold, so cold," I said. The night before I had said to her, crying, before she left, "The real victory will be my waking up out of the anesthetic."

The decisions seemed much easier. The whole rest of that day seemed a trip back and forth through the small pain in both breasts and my acute awareness of the fact of death in the right one. This was mixed with the melting and chewing over of the realities, between Frances and me. Our comforting each other—"We'll make it through this together"—and the cold, the terrible cold of that first hour. And between us both, our joint tears, our rich loving. I swam in and out of sleep, mostly out.

Our friends came and were there, loving and helpful and there, brought coats to pile upon my bed and then a comforter and blankets because the hospital had no spare blankets, they said, and I was so desperately chilled from the cold recovery room.

I remember their faces as we shared the knowledge and the promise of shared strength in the trial days to come. In some way it was as if each of the people I love most dearly came one by one to my bedside where we made a silent pledge of strength and sisterhood no less sacred than if it had been pledged in blood rather than love.

Off and on I kept thinking. I have cancer. I'm a black lesbian feminist poet, how am I going to do this now? Where

are the models for what I'm supposed to be in this situation? But there were none. This is it, Audre. You're on your own.

In the next two days, I came to realize as I agonized over my choices and what to do, that I had made my decision to have surgery if it were needed even before the biopsy had been done. Yet I had wanted a two-stage operation anyway, separating the biopsy from the mastectomy. I wanted time to re-examine my decision, to search really for some other alternative that would give me good reasons to change my mind. But there were none to satisfy me.

I wanted to make the decision again, and I did, knowing the other possibilities, and reading avidly and exhaustively through the books I ordered through Frances and Helen and my friends. These books now piled up everywhere in that wretched little room, making it at least a little bit like home.

Even before the biopsy, from the time I was admitted into the hospital Monday afternoon, the network of woman support had been begun by our friends. Blanche and Clare arrived from Southampton just in time before visiting hours were over bearing a gorgeous French rum and mocha cake with a marzipan banner that said 'we love you, audre,' outrageously rich and sinfully delicious. When the findings were malignant on Tuesday, this network swung into high gear. To this day, I don't know what Frances and I and the children would have done without it.

From the time I woke up to the slow growing warmth of Adrienne's and Bernice's and Deanna's and Michelle's and Frances' coats on the bed, I felt Beth Israel Hospital wrapped in a web of woman love and strong wishes of faith and hope for the whole time I was there, and it made self-healing more possible, knowing I was not alone. Throughout the hospitalization and for some time after, it seemed that no problem was too small or too large to be shared and handled.

My daughter Beth cried in the waiting room after I told her I was going to have a mastectomy. She said she was sentimentally attached to my breasts. Adrienne comforted her, somehow making Beth understand that hard as this was, it was different for me from if I had been her age, and that our experiences were different.

Adrienne offered to rise early to park the car for Frances so she could be with me before the operation. Blanche and Clare took the children shopping for school clothes, and helped give them a chance to cut up and laugh in the midst of all this grimness. My sister Helen made chicken soup with homemade dumplings. Bernice gathered material and names and addresses and testimonials for alternative treatments for breast cancer. And through those three days between the biopsy and the mastectomy, good wishes came pouring in by mail and telephone and the door and the psychic ether.

To this day, sometimes I feel like a corporate effort, the love and care and concern of so many women having been invested in me with such open-heartedness. My fears were the fears of us all.

And always, there was Frances, glowing with a steady warm light close by to the island within which I had to struggle alone.

I considered the alternatives of the straight medical profession, surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. I considered the holistic health approaches of diet, vitamin therapy, experimental immunotherapeutics, west german pancreatic enzymes, and others. The decision whether or not to have a mastectomy ultimately was going to have to be my own. I had always been firm on that point and had chosen a surgeon with that in mind. With the various kinds of information I had gathered together before I went into the hospital, and the additional information acquired in the hectic three days after biopsy, now more than ever before I had to examine carefully the pros and cons of every possibility, while being constantly and acutely aware that so much was still not known.

And all the time as a background of pain and terror and disbelief, a thin high voice was screaming that none of this was true, it was all a bad dream that would go away if I became totally inert. Another part of me flew like a big bird to the ceiling of whatever place I was in, observing my actions and providing a running commentary, complete with suggestions

of factors forgotten, new possibilities of movement, and ribald remarks. I felt as if I was always listening to a concert of voices from inside myself, all with something slightly different to say, all of which were quite insistent and none of which would let me rest.

They very effectively blotted out the other thin high voice that counseled sleep, but I still knew it was there, and sometimes in the middle of the night when I couldn't sleep, I wondered if perhaps it was not the voice of wisdom rather than despair.

I now realize that I was in a merciful state akin to shock in those days. In a sense it was my voices—those myriad pieces of myself and my background and experience and definitions of myself I had fought so long and hard to nourish and maintain—which were guiding me on automatic, so to speak. But it did not feel so at the time. I felt sometimes utterly calm cool and collected, as if this whole affair was an intellectual problem to be considered and solved: should I have a mastectomy or not? What was the wisest approach to take having a diagnosis of breast cancer and a history of cystic mastitis? Other times, I felt almost overwhelmed by pain and fury, and the inadequacies of my tools to make any meaningful decition, and yet I had to.

I was helped by the fact that one strong voice kept insisting that I had in truth made this decision already, all I had to do was remember the pieces and put them together. That used to annoy me sometimes, the feeling that I had less to decide than to remember.

I knew the horror that I had lived with for a year since my last biopsy had now become a reality, and in a sense that reality, however difficult, was easier to deal with than fear. But it was still very hard for me not only to face the idea of my own fragile mortality, but to anticipate more physical pain and the loss of such a cherished part of me as my breast. And all these things were operating at the same time I was having to make a decision as to what I should do. Luckily, I had been in training for a long time.

I listened to my voices, considered the alternatives,

chewed over the material that concerned women brought to me. It seems like an eternity went by between my returning from the biopsy and my making a decision, but actually it was only a day and a half.

On Wednesday afternoon I told Frances that I had decided to have surgery, and tears came to her eyes. Later she told methat she had been terrified that I might refuse surgery, opting instead for an alternative treatment, and she felt that she was prepared to go along with whatever I would decide, but she also felt surgery was the wisest choice.

A large factor in this decision was the undeniable fact that any surgical intervention in a cystic area can possibly activate cancer cells that might otherwise remain dormant. I had dealt with that knowledge a year ago when deciding whether or not to have a biopsy, and with the probabilities of a malignancy being as high as they were then, I felt then I had no choice but to decide as I did. Now, I had to consider again whether surgery might start another disease process. I deluged my surgeon with endless questions which he answered in good faith, those that he could. I weighed my options. There were malignant cells in my right breast encased in a fatty cyst, and if I did not do something about that I would die of cancer in fairly short order. Whatever I did might or might not reverse that process, and I would not know with any certainty for a very long time.

When it came right down to deciding, as I told Frances later, I felt inside myself for what I really felt and wanted, and that was to live and to love and to do my work, as hard as I could and for as long as I could. So I simply chose the course that I felt most likely to achieve my desire, knowing that I would have paid more than even my beloved breast out of my body to preserve that self that was not merely physically defined, and count it well spent.

Having made that decision, I felt comfortable with it and able to move on. I could not choose the option of radiation and chemotherapy because I felt strongly that everything I had read about them suggested that they were in and of themselves carcinogenic. The experimental therapies without sur-

gery were interesting possibilities, but still unproven. Surgery, a modified radical mastectomy, while traumatic and painful would arrest any process by removal. It was not in and of itself harmful at this point, since whatever process might have been started by surgery had already been begun by the biopsy. I knew that there might come a time when it was clear that surgery had been unnecessary because of the efficacy of alternate therapies. I might be losing my breast in vain. But nothing else was as sure, and it was a price I was willing to pay for life, and I felt I had chosen the wisest course for me. I think now what was most important was not what I chose to do so much as that I was conscious of being able to choose, and having chosen, was empowered from having made a decision, done a strike for myself, moved.

Throughout the three days between the mastectomy and the biopsy I felt positively possessed by a rage to live that became an absolute determination to do whatever was necessary to accomplish that living, and I remember wondering if I was strong enough to sustain that determination after I left the hospital. If I left the hospital. For all the deciding and great moral decisions going on, I was shit-scared about another bout with anesthesia. Familiarity with the procedures had not lessened my terror.

I was also afraid that I was not really in control, that it might already be too late to halt the spread of cancer, that there was simply too much to do that I might not get done, that the pain would be just too great. Too great for what, I did not know. I was afraid. That I would not survive another anesthesia, that the payment of my breast would not be enough; for what? Again, I did not know. I think perhaps I was afraid to continue being myself.

The year before, as I waited almost four weeks for my first biopsy, I had grown angry at my right breast because I felt as if it had in some unexpected way betrayed me, as if it had become already separate from me and had turned against me by creating this tumor which might be malignant. My beloved breast had suddenly departed from the rules we had agreed upon to function by all these years.

But on the day before my mastectomy I wrote in my journal:

September 21, 1978

The anger that I felt for my right breast last year has faded, and I'm glad because I have had this extra year. My breasts have always been so very precious to me since I accepted having them it would have been a shame not to have enjoyed the last year of one of them. And I think I am prepared to lose it now in a way I was not quite ready to last November, because now I really see it as a choice between my breast and my life, and in that view there cannot be any question.

Somehow I always knew this would be the final outcome, for it never did seem like a finished business for me. This year between was like a hiatus, an interregnum in a battle within which I could so easily be a casualty, since I certainly was a warrior. And in that brief time the sun shone and the birds sang and I wrote important words and have loved richly and been loved in return. And if a lifetime of furies is the cause of this death in my right breast, there is still nothing I've never been able to accept before that I would accept now in order to keep my breast. It was a 12 month reprieve in which I could come to accept the emotional fact/truths I came to see first in those horrendous weeks last year before the biopsy. If I do what I need to do because I want to do it, it will matter less when death comes, because it will have been an ally that spurred me on.

I was relieved when the first tumor was benign, but I said to Frances at the time that the true horror would be if they said it was benign and it wasn't. I think my body knew there was a malignancy there somewhere, and that it would have to be dealt with eventually. Well, I'm dealing with it as best I can. I

wish I didn't have to, and I don't even know if I'm doing it right, but I sure am glad that I had this extra year to learn to love me in a different way.

I'm going to have the mastectomy, knowing there are alternatives, some of which sound very possible in the sense of right thinking, but none of which satisfy me enough. . . . Since it is my life that I am gambling with, and my life is worth even more than the sensual delights of my breast, I certainly can't take that chance.

7:30 p.m. And yet if I cried for a hundred years I couldn't possibly express the sorrow I feel right now, the sadness and the loss. How did the Amazons\* of Dahomey feel? They were only little girls. But they did this willingly, for something they believed in. I suppose I am too but I can't feel that now.

Eudora Garrett was not the first woman with whom I had shared body warmth and wildness, but she was the first woman who totally engaged me in our loving. I remember the hesitation and tenderness I felt as I touched the deeply scarred hollow under her right shoulder and across her chest, the night the finally shared the last pain of her mastectomy with me in the clear heavy heat of our Mexican spring. I was 19 and she was 47. Now I am 44 and she is dead.

Eudora came to me in my sleep that night before surgery in that tiny cold hospital room so different from her bright hot dishevelled bedroom in Cuernavaca, with her lanky snap-dragon self and her gap-toothed lopsided smile, and we held hands for a while.

The next morning before Frances came I wrote in my journal:

Tt is said that the Amazon warriors of Dahomey have their right breasts cut off to make themselves more effective archers.

September 22, 1978

Today is the day in the grim rainy morning and all I can do now is weep. Eudora, what did I give you in those Mexican days so long ago? Did you know how I loved you? You never talked of your dying, only of your work.

Then through the dope of tranquilizers and grass I remember Frances' hand on mine, and the last sight of her dear face like a great sunflower in the sky. There is the horror of those flashing lights passing over my face, and the clanging of disemboweled noises that have no context nor relationship to me except they assault me. There is the dispatch with which I have ceased being a person who is myself and become a thing upon a Guerney cart to be delivered up to Moloch, a dark living sacrifice in the white place.

I remember screaming and cursing with pain in the recovery room, and I remember a disgusted nurse giving me a shot. I remember a voice telling me to be quiet because there were sick people here, and my saying, well, I have a right, because I'm sick too. Until 5:00 a.m. the next morning, waking was brief seas of localized and intense pain between shots and sleep. At 5:00 a nurse rubbed my back again, helped me get up and go to the bathroom because I couldn't use the bedpan, and then helped me into a chair. She made me a cup of tea and some fruit juice because I was parched. The pain had subsided a good deal.

I could not move my right arm nor my shoulder, both of which were numb, and wrapped around my chest was a wide Ace bandage under which on my left side the mound of my left breast arose, and from which on the right side protruded the ends of white surgical bandages. From under the Ace bandage on my right side, two plastic tubes emerged, running down into a small disc-shaped plastic bottle called a hemovac which drained the surgical area. I was alive, and it was a very beautiful morning. I drank my tea slowly, and then went back to bed.

I woke up again at about 7:30 to smell Frances outside

my door. I couldn't see her because the sides of my bed were still up, but I sat up as best I could one-armed, and peeped around the corner and there she was, the person I needed and wanted most to see, and our smiles met each other's and bounced around the room and out into the corridor where they warmed up the whole third floor.

The next day the sun shone brilliantly, and for ten days steadily thereafter. The autumn equinox came—the middle—the sun now equidistant, then going away. It was one of those rare and totally gorgeous blue New York City autumns.

That next day after the operation was an incredible high. I now think of it as the euphoria of the second day. The pain was minimal. I was alive. The sun was shining. I remember feeling a little simple but rather relieved it was all over, or so I thought. I stuck a flower in my hair and thought "This is not as bad as I was afraid of."

During the first two days after surgery, I shared thanksgiving with beautiful and beloved women and slept. I remember the children coming to visit me and Beth joking, but how
both of their faces were light with relief to see me so well. I
felt as if there was grey smoke in my head and something I
wasn't dealing with, but I wasn't sure what. Once I put a
flower in my hair and walked through the halls looking for
Frances who had gone into the waiting room with Michelle
and Adrienne to let me rest.

From time to time I would put my hand upon the flattish mound of bandages on the right side of my chest and say to myself—my right breast is gone, and I would shed a few tears if I was alone. But I had no real emotional contact yet with the reality of the loss; it was as if I had been emotionally anesthetized also, or as if the only feelings I could reach were physical ones, and the scar was not only hidden under bandages but as yet was feeling little pain. When I looked at myself in the mirror even, the difference was not at all striking, because of the bulkiness of the bandages.

And my friends, who flooded me with love and concern and appreciation and relief gave me so much energy that for those first 48 hours I really felt as if I was done with death and pain, and even loss, and that I had for some unknown reason been very very lucky. I was filled with a surety that everything was going to be all right, in just those indeterminate phrases. But it was downhill from there.

On the morning of the third day, the pain returned home bringing all of its kinfolk. Not that any single one of them was overwhelming, but just that all in concert, or even in small repertory groups, they were excruciating. There were constant ones and intermittent ones. There were short sharp and long dull and various combinations of the same ones. The muscles in my back and right shoulder began to screech as if they'd been pulled apart and now were coming back to life slowly and against their will. My chest wall was beginning to ache and burn and stab by turns. My breast which was no longer there would hurt as if it were being squeezed in a vise. That was perhaps the worst pain of all, because it would come with a full complement of horror that I was to be forever reminded of my loss by suffering in a part of me which was no longer there. I suddenly seemed to get weaker rather than stronger. The euphoria and numbing effects of the anesthesia were beginning to subside.

My brain felt like grey mush—I hadn't had to think much for the past two days. Just about the time that I started to feel the true quality of the uphill climb before me—of adjustment to a new body, a new time span, a possible early death—the pains hit. The pain grew steadily worse and I grew more and more furious because nobody had ever talked about the physical pain. I had thought the emotional and psychological pain would be the worst, but it was the physical pain that seemed to be doing me in, or so I wrote at that time.

Feeling was returning to the traumatized area at the same time as I was gradually coming out of physical and emotional shock. My voices, those assorted pieces of myself that guided me between the operations were settling back into their melded quieter places, and a more and more conscious part of me was struggling for ascendancy, and not at all liking what she was finding/feeling.

In a way, therefore, the physical pain was power, for it

kept that conscious part of me away from the full flavour of my fear and loss, consuming me, or rather wearing me down for the next two weeks. That two week period of time seems like an age to me now, because so many different changes passed through me. Actually the course of my psychic and physical convalescence moved quite quickly.

I do not know why. I do know that there was a tremendous amount of love and support flowing into me from the women around me, and it felt like being bathed in a continuous tide of positive energies, even when sometimes I wanted a bit of negative silence to complement the pain inside of me.

But support will always have a special and vividly erotic set of image/meanings for me now, one of which is floating upon a sea within a ring of women like warm bubbles keeping me afloat upon the surface of that sea. I can feel the texture of inviting water just beneath their eyes, and do not fear it. It is the sweet smell of their breath and laughter and voices calling my name that gives me volition, helps me remember I want to turn away from looking down. These images flow speckly, the tangible floods of energy rolling off these women boward me that I converted into power to heal myself.

There is so much false spirituality around us these days, calling itself goddess-worship or "the way." It is false because to cheaply bought and little understood, but most of all because it does not lend, but rather saps, that energy we need to do our work. So when an example of the real power of lealing love comes along such as this one, it is difficult to use the same words to talk about it because so many of our best and most erotic words have been so cheapened.

Perhaps I can say this all more simply; I say the love of women healed me.

It was not only women closest to me, although they were the backbone. There was Frances. Then there were those women whom I love passionately, and my other friends, and my acquaintances, and then even women whom I did not know.

In addition to the woman energy outside of me, I know that there must have been an answering energy within myself

that allowed me to connect to the power flowing. One never really forgets the primary lessons of survival, if one continues to survive. If it hadn't been for a lot of women in my lifetime I'd have been long dead. And some of them were women I didn't even like! (A nun; the principal of my high school; a boss.)

I had felt so utterly stripped at other times within my life for very different reasons, and survived, so much more alone than I was now. I knew if I lived I could live well. I knew that if the life spark kept burning there would be fuel; if I could want to live I would always find a way, and a way that was best for me. The longer I survive the more examples of that I have, but it is essentially the same truth I knew the summer after my friend Genevieve died. We were sixteen.

To describe the complexities of interaction between the love within and the love without is a lifetime vocation.

Growing up Fat Black Female and almost blind in america requires so much surviving that you have to learn from it or die. Gennie, rest in peace. I carry tattooed upon my heart a list of names of women who did not survive, and there is always a space left for one more, my own. That is to remind me that even survival is only part of the task. The other part is teaching. I had been in training for a long time.

After I came home on the fifth day after surgery, the rest of those two weeks were permeated with physical pain and dreams. I spent the days mostly reading and wandering from room to room, or staring at blank walls, or lying outdoors in the sun staring at the insides of my eyelids. And finally, when at last I could again, masturbating.

Later, as the physical pain receded, it left room for the other. But in my experience, it's not true that first you cry. First you hurt, and then you cry.

For me, there was an important interim period between the actual event and my beginning to come to terms emotionally with what having cancer, and having lost a breast, meant and would mean to my life. The psychic self created a little merciful space for physical cellular healing and the devastating effects of anesthesia on the brain. Throughout that period, I kept feeling that I couldn't think straight, that there was something wrong with my brain I couldn't remember. Part of this was shock, but part of it was anesthesia, as well as conversations I had probably absorbed in the operating room while I was drugged and vulnerable and only able to record, not react. But a friend of mine recently told me that for six months after her mother died, she felt she couldn't think or remember, and I was struck by the similarity of the sensations.

My body and mind had to be allowed to take their own course. In the hospital, I did not need to take the sleeping pills that were always offered. My main worry from day three onward for about ten more was about the developing physical pain. This is a very important fact, because it is within this period of quasi-numbness and almost childlike susceptibility to ideas (I could cry at any time at almost anything outside of myself) that many patterns and networks are started for women after breast surgery that encourage us to deny the realities of our bodies which have just been driven home to us so graphically, and these old and stereotyped patterns of response pressure us to reject the adventure and exploration of our own experiences, difficult and painful as those experiences may be.

On the second day in the hospital I had been crying when the head nurse came around, and she sent in another woman from down the hall who had had a mastectomy a week ago was about to go home. The woman from down the hall a smallbodied feisty redhead in a pink robe with a flower her hair. (I have a permanent and inexplicable weakness for women with flowers in their hair.) She was about my own age, and had grown kids who, she said, wanted her to come home. I knew immediately they must be sons. She patted my hand and gestured at our bandages.

"Don't feel bad," she said, "they weren't that much good anyway." But then she threw open her robe and stuck out her almost bony chest dressed in a gay printed pajama top, saying, "Now which twin has the Toni?" And I had to laugh in spite of myself, because of her energy, and because

she had come all the way down the hall just to help make me feel better.

The next day, when I was still not thinking too much, except about why was I hurting more and when could I reasonably expect to go home, a kindly woman from Reach for Recovery came in to see me, with a very upbeat message and a little prepared packet containing a soft sleep-bra and a wad of lambswool pressed into a pale pink breast-shaped pad. She was 56 years old, she told me proudly. She was also a woman of admirable energies who clearly would uphold and defend to the death those structures of a society that had allowed her a little niche to shine in. Her message was, you are just as good as you were before because you can look exactly the same. Lambswool now, then a good prosthesis as soon as possible, and nobody'll ever know the difference. But what she said was, "You'll never know the difference," and she lost me right there, because I knew sure as hell I'd know the difference.

"Look at me," she said, opening her trim powder-blue man-tailored jacket and standing before me in a tight blue sweater, a gold embossed locket of no mean dimension provocatively nestling between her two considerable breasts. "Now can you tell which is which?"

I admitted that I could not. In her tight foundation garment and stiff, up-lifting bra, both breasts looked equally unreal to me. But then I've always been a connoisseur of women's breasts, and never overly fond of stiff uplifts. I looked away, thinking, "I wonder if there are any black lesbian feminists in Reach for Recovery?"

I ached to talk to women about the experience I had just been through, and about what might be to come, and how were they doing it and how had they done it. But I needed to talk with women who shared at least some of my major concerns and beliefs and visions, who shared at least some of my language. And this lady, admirable though she might be, did not.

"And it doesn't really interfere with your love life, either, dear. Are you married?"

"Not anymore," I said. I didn't have the moxie or the

"Well, don't you worry. In the 6 years since my operation I married my second husband and buried him, god bless im, and now I have a wonderful friend. There's nothing I ad before that I don't still do now. I just make sure I carry extra form just in case, and I'm just like anybody else. The sicone ones are best, and I can give you the names of the tter salons."

I was thinking, "What is it like to be making love to a oman and have only one breast brushing against her?"

I thought, "How will we fit so perfectly together ever

I thought, "I wonder if our love-making had anything do with it?"

I thought, "What will it be like making love to me? Will as still find my body delicious?"

And for the first time deeply and fleetingly a groundell of sadness rolled up over me that filled my mouth and almost to drowning. My right breast represented such an of feeling and pleasure for me, how could I bear never feel that again?

The lady from Reach for Recovery gave me a book of ercises which were very very helpful to me, and she showed how to do them. When she held my arm up to assist me, grip was firm and friendly and her hair smelled a little as sun. I thought what a shame such a gutsy woman wasn't tyke, but they had gotten to her too early, and her grey hair adyed blond and heavily teased.

After she left, assuring me that Reach for Recovery was ready to help, I examined the packet she had left shind.

The bra was the kind I was wearing, a soft front-hooking ep-bra. By this time, the Ace bandage was off, and I had a apple surgical bandage taped over the incision and the one maining drain. My left breast was still a little sore from ting been biopsied, which is why I was wearing a bra. The mbswool form was the strangest part of the collection. I ex-

amined it, in its blush-pink nylon envelope with a slighter, darker apex and shaped like a giant slipper-shell. I shuddered at its grotesque dryness. (What size are you, she'd said. 38D I said. Well I'll leave you a 40C she said.)

I came around my bed and stood in front of the mirror in my room, and stuffed the thing into the wrinkled folds of the right side of my bra where my right breast should have been. It perched on my chest askew, awkwardly inert and lifeless, and having nothing to do with any me I could possibly conceive of. Besides, it was the wrong color, and looked grotesquely pale through the cloth of my bra. Somewhere, up to that moment, I had thought, well perhaps they know something that I don't and maybe they're right, if I put it on maybe I'll feel entirely different. I didn't. I pulled the thing out of my bra, and my thin pajama top settled back against the flattened surface on the right side of the front of me.

I looked at the large gentle curve my left breast made under the pajama top, a curve that seemed even larger now that it stood by itself. I looked strange and uneven and peculiar to myself, but somehow, ever so much more myself, and therefore so much more acceptable, than I looked with that thing stuck inside my clothes. For not even the most skillful prosthesis in the world could undo that reality, or feel the way my breast had felt, and either I would love my body one-breasted now, or remain forever alien to myself.

Then I climbed back into bed and cried myself to sleep, even though it was 2:30 in the afternoon.

On the fourth day, the other drain was removed. I found out that my lymph nodes had shown no sign of the spread of cancer, and my doctor said that I could go home on the following day, since I was healing so rapidly.

I looked down at the surgical area as he changed the dressing, expecting it to look like the ravaged and pitted battlefield of some major catastrophic war. But all I saw was my same soft brown skin, a little tender-looking and puffy from the middle of my chest up into my armpit, where a thin line

ran, the edges of which were held closed by black sutures and two metal clamps. The skin looked smooth and tender and antroubled, and there was no feeling on the surface of the area at all. It was otherwise quite unremarkable, except for the absence of that beloved swelling I had come so to love over 44 years, and in its place was the strange flat plain down across which I could now for the first time in my memory view the unaccustomed bulge of my rib-cage, much broader than I had imagined it to be when it had been hidden beneath my large breasts. Looking down now on the right side of me could see the curve of the side of my stomach across this new and changed landscape.

I thought, "I wonder how long it was before the Dahomean girl Amazons could take their changed landscapes for granted?"

I cried a few times that day, mostly, I thought, about inconsequential things. Once I cried though simply because I furt deep down inside my chest and couldn't sleep, once because it felt like someone was stepping on my breast that wasn't there with hobnailed boots.

I wanted to write in my journal but couldn't bring myif to. There are so many shades to what passed through me
those days. And I would shrink from committing myself
paper because the light would change before the word was
ut, the ink was dry.

In playing back the tapes of those last days in the hostal, I found only the voice of a very weakened woman saying with the greatest difficulty and almost unrecognizable:

September 25th, the fourth day. Things come in and out of focus so quickly it's as if a flash goes by; the days are so beautiful now so golden brown and blue; I wanted to be out in it, I wanted to be glad I was alive, I wanted to be glad about all the things I've got to be glad about. But now it hurts. Now it hurts. Things chase themselves around inside my eyes and there are tears I cannot shed and words like cancer, pain, and dying.

Later, I don't want this to be a record of grieving only. I don't want this to be a record only of tears. I want it to be something I can use now or later, something that I can remember, something that I can pass on, something that I can know came out of the kind of strength I have that nothing nothing else can shake for very long or equal.

My work is to inhabit the silences with which I have lived and fill them with myself until they have the sounds of brightest day and the loudest thunder. And then there will be no room left inside of me for what has been except as memory of sweetness enhancing what can and is to be.

I was very anxious to go home. But I found also, and couldn't admit at the time, that the very bland whiteness of the hospital which I railed against and hated so, was also a kind of protection, a welcome insulation within which I could continue to non-feel. It was an erotically blank environment within whose undifferentiated and undemanding and infantalizing walls I could continue to be emotionally vacant—psychic mush—without being required by myself or anyone to be anything else.

Going home to the very people and places that I loved most, at the same time as it was welcome and so desirable, also felt intolerable, like there was an unbearable demand about to be made upon me that I would have to meet. And it was to be made by people whom I loved, and to whom I would have to respond. Now I was going to have to begin feeling, dealing, not only with the results of the amputation, the physical effects of the surgery, but also with examining and making my own, the demands and changes inside of me and my life. They would alter, if not my timetable of work, at least the relative pieces available within that timetable for whatever I was involved in or wished to accomplish.

For instance, there were different questions about time that I would have to start asking myself. Not, for how long do I stand at the window and watch the dawn coming up over Brooklyn, but rather, how many more new people do I admit so openly into my life? I needed to examine and pursue the implications of that question. It meant plumbing the depths and possibilities of relating with the people already in my life, deepening and exploring them.

The need to look death in the face and not shrink from it, yet not ever to embrace it too easily, was a developmental and healing task for me that was constantly being sidelined by the more practical and immediate demands of hurting too much, and how do I live with myself one-breasted? What posture do I take, literally, with my physical self?

I particularly felt the need-craved the contact, reallyof my family, that family which we had made of friends, which for all its problems and permutations was my family, Rlanche and Clare and Michelle and Adrienne and Yolanda and Yvonne and Bernice and Deanna and Barbara and Beverly and Millie, and then there were the cousins and surely Demita and Sharon and them, even Linda, and Bonnie and Cessie and Cheryl and Toi with her pretty self and Diane and even my sister Helen. All through that time even the most complicated antanglements between other family members-and there were many not having to do directly with me--all those entanglements and fussings and misunderstandings and stubbornesses **Welt** like basic life-pursuits, and as such were, no matter how annoying and tiresome, fundamentally supportive of a life force within me. The only answer to death is the heat and confusion of living; the only dependable warmth is the warmth of the blood. I can feel my own beating even now.

In that critical period the family women enhanced that maswer. They were macro members in the life dance, seeking an answering rhythm within my sinews, my synapses, my very bones. In the ghost of my right breast, these were the micro members from within. There was an answering rhythm in the thost of those dreams which would have to go in favor of those which I had some chance of effecting. The others had lain around unused and space-claiming for a long time anyway, and at best needed to be re-aired and re-examined.

For instance, I will never be a doctor. I will never be a

deep-sea diver. I may possibly take a doctorate in etymology, but I will never bear any more children. I will never learn ballet, nor become a great actress, although I might learn to ride a bike and travel to the moon. But I will never be a millionaire nor increase my life insurance. I am who the world and I have never seen before.

Castaneda talks of living with death as your guide, that sharp awareness engendered by the full possibility of any given chance and moment. For me, that means being-not ready for death—but able to get ready instantly, and always to balance the "I wants" with the "I haves." I am learning to speak my pieces, to inject into the living world my convictions of what is necessary and what I think is important without concern (of the enervating kind) for whether or not it is understood, tolerated, correct or heard before. Although of course being incorrect is always the hardest, but even that is becoming less important. The world will not stop if I make a mistake.

And for all that, I wish sometimes that I had still the myth of having 100 years in this frame, and this hunger for my sister stilled.

Women who speak with my tongue are lovers; the woman who does not parry yet matches my thrust, who will hear; the woman I hold in my arms, the woman who arms me whole...

I have found that people who need but do not want are far more difficult to front than people who want without needing, because the latter will take but sometimes give back, whereas the former simply absorb constantly while always looking away or pushing against and taking at the same time. And that is a wasting of substance through lack of acknowledgement of both our energies, and waste is the worst. I know this because I have done them both.

Coming home from the hospital, it was hard not to feel like a pariah. There were people who avoided me out of their In pain or fear, and others who seemed to expect me to denly become someone other than who I have always en, myself, rather than saint or buddha. Pain does not melwyou, nor does it ennoble, in my experience. It was hard to feel pariah, or sometimes too vulnerable to exist. There women who were like the aide in the hospital who had ted so nicely with me until she heard my biopsy was posite. Then it was as if I had gone into purdah; she only came ar me under the strictest of regulatory distance.

The status of untouchable is a very unreal and lonely a, although it does keep everyone at arm's length, and protes as it insulates. But you can die of that specialness, of cold, the isolation. It does not serve living. I began quickly yearn for the warmth of the fray, to be good as the old en while the slightest touch meanwhile threatened to be bearable.

The emphasis upon wearing a prosthesis is a way of coiding having women come to terms with their own pain loss, and thereby, with their own strength. I was already essed to go home when the head nurse came into my room say goodbye. "Why doesn't she have a form on?" she asked ances, who by this time was acknowledged by all to be my retner.

"She doesn't want to wear it," Frances explained.

"Oh you're just not persistent enough," the head nurse plied, and then turned to me with a let's-have-no-nonsensew look, and I was simply too tired. It wasn't worth the efact to resist her. I knew I didn't look any better.

At home I wept and wept and wept, finally. And made we to myself, endlessly and repetitively, until it was no longer tentative.

Where were the dykes who had had mastectomies? I noted to talk to a lesbian, to sit down and start from a comon language, no matter how diverse. I wanted to share dykewight, so to speak. The call went out. Sonny and Karyn came the house that evening and the four of us shared our fears dour stories across age and color and place and difference and I will be forever grateful to Sonny and Karyn.

"Take it easy," Sonny said. "Remember you're not really as strong now as you feel." I knew what she meant because I could tell how easily I fell apart whenever I started to believe my own propaganda and overdo anything.

But still she told me about her going to an educational conference three weeks after her surgery, and that she thought now that it probably had been a mistake. But I knew why she had done it and so did she, and we both speechlessly acknowledged that she would probably do it again. It was the urge, the need, to work again, to feel a surge of connection begin with that piece of yourself. To be of use, even symbolically, is a necessity for any new perspective of self, and I thought of that three weeks later, when I knew I needed to go to Houston to give a reading, even though I felt weak and inadequate.

I will also be always grateful to Little Sister. My brother-in-law, Henry, who lives in Seattle and whom I had not seen for seven years, was working in Virginia and had come up to New York to see my mother, passing through Philadelphia where he had grown up to pick up his youngest sister who was called Little Sister, actually Li'l Sister.

Li'l Sister had been quite a hell-raiser in her younger days, but now was an established and matronly black lady of Philadelphia with a college-bound son and rimless glasses. I had never met her before but she knew my mother quite well. When they got to New York my mother told Henry and Li'l Sister that I had had a mastectomy and was home just now from the hospital, so they decided to drop by and see me on their way back to Philadelphia which is only 1½ hours south of Staten Island.

Over the phone my mother said to me, with the slightest air of reproach in her voice, "I didn't know all these years that Li'l Sister had had that same operation!" Li'l Sister had had a mastectomy 10 years ago, and neither her brother nor her inlaws had known any thing about it.

Henry is one of the gentlest men I have ever met, although not the most tactful. "Howya doing, girl?" he said, giving me a kiss and settling down to his beer.

I welcomed Li'l Sister, we shared perfunctory remarks and inquiries about each other's children, and very soon the hree of us were seated around the dining room table, Henry with his hat and his beer, Li'l Sister proper, reticent and elemently erect, and me, rather disheveled in a lounging robe. It'l Sister and I were deeply and busily engaged in discussing tur surgeries, including pre- and post-mastectomy experiences. We compared notes on nurses, exercises, and whether or not occoa-butter retarded black women's tendencies to keloid, he process by which excess scar tissue is formed to ward off infection.

At one point brother Henry sort of wrinkled up his nose and said plaintively, "Can't y'all talk about somethin' else ow? Ya kinda upsetting' my stomach."

Li'l Sister and I just looked at him for a moment, and hen returned to our conversation. We disagreed about prospess, but she was very reassuring, and told me what to look-ut for, like rainy days and colds in the chest. We did every hing but show each other our scars.

At the end of an hour, having refused another cup of ea, Li'l Sister got up, smoothed down her jacket and adjusted er glasses.

"Well, it's been real nice to meet you, Audre," she said, I've sure enjoyed talking with you. C'mon, Henry, we have get back to Philly, now."

And they left. Somehow, I had the distinct feeling that he had never talked to anyone about her mastectomy before, or 10 years. I could be wrong.

Even propped up on pillows I found I couldn't sleep pore than three or four hours at a time because my back and houlder were paining me so. There were fixed pains, and hoveable pains, deep pains and surface pains, strong pains and eak pains. There were stabs and throbs and burns, gripes and tickles and itches. I would peep under the bandage when changed it; the scar still looked placid and inoffensive, like trussed rump of a stuffed goose, and once the stitches ere out, even the puffiness passed.

I would sleep for a few hours and then I would get up, go to the john, write down my dreams on little scraps of paper without my glasses, take two aspirin, do my hand exercises, spider-crawling up the wall of the bathroom, and then go back to bed for another few hours and some more dreams.

I pretty much functioned automatically, except to cry. Every once in a while I would think, "what do I eat? how do I act to announce or preserve my new status as temporary upon this earth?" and then I'd remember that we have always been temporary, and that I had just never really underlined it before, or acted out of it so completely before. And then I would feel a little foolish and needlessly melodramatic, but only a little.

On the day after the stitches came out and I got so furious with the nurse who told me I was bad for the morale of the office because I did not wear a prosthesis, I wrote in my journal:

### October 5, 1978

I feel like I'm counting my days in milliseconds, never mind hours. And it's a good thing, that particular consciousness of the way in which each hour passes, even if it is a boring hour. I want it to become permanent. There is so much I have not said in the past few days, that can only be lived now—the act of writing seems impossible to me sometimes, the space of time for the words to form or be written is long enough for the situation to totally alter, leaving you liar or at search once again for the truth. What seems impossible is made real/tangible by the physical form of my brown arm moving across the page; not that my arm cannot do it, but that something holds it away.

In some way I must aerate this grief, bring heat and light around the pain to lend it some proportion, and god knows the news is nothing to write home about—the new pope is dead, the yankees won the game. . .

#### Later

If I said this all didn't matter I would be lying. I see this as a serious break in my work/living, but also as a serious chance to learn something that I can share for use. And I mourn the women who limit their loss to the physical loss alone, who do not move into the whole terrible meaning of mortality as both weapon and power. After all, what could we possibly be afraid of after having admitted to ourselves that we had dealt face to face with death and not embraced it? For once we accept the actual existence of our dying, who can ever have power over us again?

Now I am anxious for more living—to sample and partake of the sweetness of each moment and each wonder who walks with me through my days. And now I feel again the large sweetness of the women who stayed open to me when I needed that openness like rain, who made themselves available.

am writing this now in a new year, recalling, trying to piece gether that chunk of my recent past, so that I, or anyone se in need or desire, can dip into it at will if necessary to not the ingredients with which to build a wider construct. That is an important function of the telling of experience. It is also writing to sort out for myself who I was and was beaming throughout that time, setting down my artifacts, not also for later scrutiny, but also to be free of them. I do not ish to be free from their effect, which I will carry and use ternalized in one way or another, but free from having to arry them around in a reserve part of my brain.

But I am writing across a gap so filled with death—real ath, the fact of it—that it is hard to believe that I am still very much alive and writing this. That fact of all these other aths heightens and sharpens my living, makes the demand on it more particular, and each decision even more crucial.

Breast cancer, with its mortal awareness and the am-

putation which it entails, can still be a gateway, however cruelly won, into the tapping and expansion of my own power and knowing.

We must learn to count the living with that same particular attention with which we number the dead.

# February 20, 1979

I am often afraid to this day, but even more so angry at having to be afraid, of having to spend so much of my energies, interrupting my work, simply upon fear and worry. Does my incomplete gall bladder series mean I have cancer of the gall bladder? Is my complexion growing yellow again like it did last year, a sure sign, I believe, of the malignant process that had begun within my system? I resent the time and weakening effect of these concerns—they feel as if they are available now for diversion in much the same way the FBI lies are available for diversion, the purpose being to sway us from our appointed and self-chosen paths of action.

I must be responsible for finding a way to handle those concerns so that they don't enervate me completely, or bleed off the strength I need to move and act and feel and write and love and lie out in the sun and listen to the new spring birdsong.

I think I find it in work, being its own answer. Not to turn away from the fear, but to use it as fuel to help me along the way I wish to go. If I can remember to make the jump from impotence to action, then working uses the fear as it drains it off, and I find myself furiously empowered.

Isn't there any other way, I said.

In another time, she said,

28 February 1979

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# **BREAST CANCER: POWER VS. PROSTHESIS**

On Labor Day, 1978, during my regular monthly selframination, I discovered a lump in my right breast which ter proved to be malignant. During my following hospitalation, my mastectomy and its aftermath, I passed through any stages of pain, despair, fury, sadness and growth. I oved through these stages, sometimes feeling as if I had no noice, other times recognizing that I could choose oblivion a passivity that is very close to oblivion—but did not want . As I slowly began to feel more equal to processing and exmining the different parts of this experience, I also began to el that in the process of losing a breast I had become a more hole person.

After a mastectomy, for many women including myself, ere is a feeling of wanting to go back, of not wanting to resevere through this experience to whatever enlightenment light be at the core of it. And it is this feeling, this nostalgia, hich is encouraged by most of the post-surgical counseling or women with breast cancer. This regressive tie to the past emphasized by the concentration upon breast cancer as a sametic problem, one which can be solved by a prosthetic etense. The American Cancer Society's Reach For Recovery togram, while doing a valuable service in contacting women amediately after surgery and letting them know they are not

alone, nonetheless encourages this false and dangerous nostalgia in the mistaken belief that women are too weak to deal directly and courageously with the realities of our lives.

The woman from Reach For Recovery who came to see me in the hospital, while quite admirable and even impressive in her own right, certainly did not speak to my experience nor my concerns. As a 44 year old Black Lesbian Feminist, I knew there were very few role models around for me in this situation, but my primary concerns two days after mastectomy were hardly about what man I could capture in the future, whether or not my old boyfriend would still find me attractive enough, and even less about whether my two children would be embarrassed by me around their friends.

My concerns were about my chances for survival, the effects of a possibly shortened life upon my work and my priorities. Could this cancer have been prevented, and what could I do in the future to prevent its recurrence? Would I be able to maintain the control over my life that I had always taken for granted? A lifetime of loving women had taught me that when women love each other, physical change does not alter that love. It did not occur to me that anyone who really loved me would love me any less because I had one breast instead of two, although it did occur to me to wonder if they would be able to love and deal with the new me. So my concerns were quite different from those spoken to by the Reach For Recovery volunteer, but not one bit less crucial nor less poignant.

Yet every attempt I made to examine or question the possibility of a real integration of this experience into the totality of my life and my loving and my work, was ignored by this woman, or uneasily glossed over by her as not looking on "the bright side of things." I felt outraged and insulted, and weak as I was, this left me feeling even more isolated than before.

In the critical and vulnerable period following surgery, self-examination and self-evaluation are positive steps. To imply to a woman that yes, she can be the 'same' as before surgery, with the skillful application of a little puff of lambs-

wool, and/or silicone gel, is to place an emphasis upon prosthesis which encourages her not to deal with herself as physically and emotionally real, even though altered and traumatized. This emphasis upon the cosmetic after surgery re-inforces this society's stereotype of women, that we are only what we look or appear, so this is the only aspect of our existence we need to address. Any woman who has had a breast removed because of cancer knows she does not feel the same. But we are allowed no psychic time or space to examine what our true feelings are, to make them our own. With quick cosmetic reassurance, we are told that our feelings are not important, our appearance is all, the sum total of self.

I did not have to look down at the bandages on my chest to know that I did not feel the same as before surgery. But I still felt like myself, like Audre, and that encompassed so much more than simply the way my chest appeared.

The emphasis upon physical pretense at this crucial point in a woman's reclaiming of her self and her body-image has two negative effects:

- 1. It encourages women to dwell in the past rather than a future. This prevents a woman from assessing herself in the present, and from coming to terms with the changed planes of her own body. Since these then remain alien to her, buried under prosthetic devices, she must mourn the loss of her breast in secret, as if it were the result of some crime of which she were guilty.
- 2. It encourages a woman to focus her energies upon the mastectomy as a cosmetic occurrence, to the exclusion of other factors in a constellation that could include her own death. It removes her from what that constellation means in terms of her living, and from developing priorities of usage for whatever time she has before her. It encourages her to ignore the necessity for nutritional vigilance and psychic armament that can help prevent recurrence.

I am talking here about the need for every woman to live a considered life. The necessity for that consideration grows and deepens as one faces directly one's own mortality and death. Self scrutiny and an evaluation of our lives, while painful, can be rewarding and strengthening journeys toward a deeper self. For as we open ourselves more and more to the genuine conditions of our lives, women become less and less willing to tolerate those conditions unaltered, or to passively accept external and destructive controls over our lives and our identities. Any short-circuiting of this quest for self-definition and power, however well-meaning and under whatever guise. must be seen as damaging, for it keeps the post-mastectomy woman in a position of perpetual and secret insufficiency, infantilized and dependent for her identity upon an external definition by appearance. In this way women are kept from expressing the power of our knowledge and experience, and through that expression, developing strengths that challenge those structures within our lives that support the Cancer Establishment. For instance, why hasn't the American Cancer Society publicized the connections between animal fat and breast cancer for our daughters the way it has publicized the connection between cigarette smoke and lung cancer? These links between animal fat, hormone production and breast cancer are not secret. (See G. Hems, in British Journal of Cancer, vol. 37, no. 6, 1978.)

Ten days after having my breast removed, I went to my doctor's office to have the stitches taken out. This was my first journey out since coming home from the hospital, and I was truly looking forward to it. A friend had washed my hair for me and it was black and shining, with my new grey hairs glistening in the sun. Color was starting to come back into my face and around my eyes. I wore the most opalescent of my moonstones, and a single floating bird dangling from my right ear in the name of grand assymmetry. With an African kentecloth tunic and new leather boots, I knew I looked fine, with that brave new-born security of a beautiful woman having come through a very hard time and being very glad to be alive.

I felt really good, within the limits of that grey mush that still persisted in my brain from the effects of the anesthesia.

When I walked into the doctor's office, I was really rather pleased with myself, all things considered, pleased with the way I felt, with my own flair, with my own style. The doctor's nurse, a charmingly bright and steady woman of about my own age who had always given me a feeling of quiet no-nonsense support on my other visits, called me into the examining room. On the way, she asked me how I was feeling.

"Pretty good," I said, half-expecting her to make some comment about how good I looked.

"You're not wearing a prosthesis," she said, a little anxiously, and not at all like a question.

"No," I said, thrown off my guard for a minute. "It really doesn't feel right," referring to the lambswool puff given to me by the Reach For Recovery volunteer in the hospital.

Usually supportive and understanding, the nurse now looked at me urgently and disapprovingly as she told me that even if it didn't look exactly right, it was "better than nothing," and that as soon as my stitches were out I could be fitted for a "real form."

"You will feel so much better with it on," she said. 'And besides, we really like you to wear something, at least when you come in. Otherwise it's bad for the morale of the office."

I could hardly believe my ears! I was too outraged to speak then, but this was to be only the first such assault on my right to define and to claim my own body.

Here we were, in the offices of one of the top breast cancer surgeons in New York City. Every woman there either had a breast removed, might have to have a breast removed, or was afraid of having to have a breast removed. And every woman there could have used a reminder that having one breast did not mean her life was over, nor that she was less a woman, nor that she was condemned to the use of a placebo in order to feel good about herself and the way she looked.

Yet a woman who has one breast and refuses to hide that fact behind a pathetic puff of lambswool which has no relationship nor likeness to her own breasts, a woman who is at-

tempting to come to terms with her changed landscape and changed timetable of life and with her own body and pain and beauty and strength, that woman is seen as a threat to the "morale" of a breast surgeon's office!

Yet when Moishe Dayan, the Prime Minister of Israel, stands up in front of parliament or on TV with an eyepatch over his empty eyesocket, nobody tells him to go get a glass eye, or that he is bad for the morale of the office. The world sees him as a warrior with an honorable wound, and a loss of a piece of himself which he has marked, and mourned, and moved beyond. And if you have trouble dealing with Moishe Dayan's empty eye socket, everyone recognizes that it is your problem to solve, not his.

Well, women with breast cancer are warriors, also. I have been to war, and still am. So has every woman who had had one or both breasts amputated because of the cancer that is becoming the primary physical scourge of our time. For me, my scars are an honorable reminder that I may be a casualty in the cosmic war against radiation, animal fat, air pollution, McDonald's hamburgers and Red Dye No. 2, but the fight is still going on, and I am still a part of it. I refuse to have my scars hidden or trivialized behind lambswool or silicone gel. I refuse to be reduced in my own eyes or in the eyes of others from warrior to mere victim, simply because it might render me a fraction more acceptable or less dangerous to the still complacent, those who believe if you cover up a problem it ceases to exist. I refuse to hide my body simply because it might make a woman-phobic world more comfortable.

As I sat in my doctor's office trying to order my perceptions of what had just occurred, I realized that the attitude towards prosthesis after breast cancer is an index of this society's attitudes towards women in general as decoration and externally defined sex object.

Two days later I wrote in my journal:

I cannot wear a prosthesis right now because it feels like a lie more than merely a costume, and I have already placed this, my body under threat, seeking For me, the primary challenge at the core of mastectomy was the stark look at my own mortality, hinged upon the fear of a life-threatening cancer. This event called upon me to reexamine the quality and texture of my entire life, its priorities and commitments, as well as the possible alterations that might be required in the light of that re-examination. I had already faced my own death, whether or not I acknowledged it, and I needed now to develop that strength which survival had given me.

Prosthesis offers the empty comfort of "Nobody will know the difference." But it is that very difference which I wish to affirm, because I have lived it, and survived it, and wish to share that strength with other women. If we are to translate the silence surrounding breast cancer into language and action against this scourge, then the first step is that women with mastectomies must become visible to each other.\* For silence and invisibility go hand in hand with powerlessness. By accepting the mask of prosthesis, one-breasted women proclaim ourselves as insufficients dependent upon pretense. We reinforce our own isolation and invisibility from each other, as well as the false complacency of a society which would rather not face the results of its own insanities. In addition, we withhold that visibility and support from one another which is such an aid to perspective and self-acceptance. Surrounded by other women day by day, all of whom appear to have two breasts, it is very difficult sometimes to remember that I AM NOT ALONE. Yet once I face death as a life process, what is there possibly left for me to fear? Who can every really have power over me again?

As women, we cannot afford to look the other way, nor consider the incidence of breast cancer as a private nor

particular thanks to Maureen Brady for the conversation which developed this maight.

secret personal problem. It is no secret that breast cancer is on the increase among women in America. According to the American Cancer Society's own statistics on breast cancer survival, of the women stricken, only 50% are still alive after three years. This figure drops to 30% if you are poor, or Black, or in any other way part of the underside of this society. We cannot ignore these facts, nor their implications, nor their effect upon our lives, individually and collectively. Early detection and early treatment is crucial in the management of breast cancer if those sorry statistics of survival are to improve. But for the incidence of early detection and early treatment to increase, american women must become free enough from social stereotypes concerning their appearance to realize that losing a breast is infinitely preferable to losing one's life. (Or one's eyes, or one's hands. . . .)

Although breast self-examination does not reduce the incidence of breast cancer, it does markedly reduce the rate of mortality, since most early tumors are found by women themselves. I discovered my own tumor upon a monthly breast exam, and so report most of the other women I know with a good prognosis for survival. With our alert awareness making such a difference in the survival rate for breast cancer. women need to face the possibility and the actuality of breast cancer as a reality rather than as myth, or retribution, or terror in the night, or a bad dream that will disappear if ignored. After surgery, there is a need for women to be aware of the possibility of bilateral recurrence, with vigilance rather than terror. This is not a spread of cancer, but a new occurrence in the other breast. Each woman must be aware that an honest acquaintanceship with and evaluation of her own body is the best tool of detection.

Yet there still appears to be a conspiracy on the part of Cancer Inc. to insist to every woman who has lost a breast that she is no different from before, if with a little skillful pretense and a few ounces of silicone gel she can pretend to herself and the watching world—the only orientation toward the world that women are supposed to have—that nothing has happened to challenge her. With this orientation a woman

after surgery is allowed no time or space within which to weep, rage, internalize, and transcend her own loss. She is left no space to come to terms with her altered life, not to transform it into another level of dynamic existence.

The greatest incidence of breast cancer in american women appears within the ages of 40 to 55. These are the very years when women are portrayed in the popular media as fading and desexualized figures. Contrary to the media picture, I find myself as a woman of insight ascending into my highest powers, my greatest psychic strengths, and my fullest satisfactions. I am freer of the constraints and fears and indecisions of my younger years, and survival throughout these years has taught me how to value my own beauty, and how

look closely into the beauty of others. It has also taught me to value the lessons of survival, as well as my own perceptions. I feel more deeply, value those feelings more, and can put those feelings together with what I know in order to fashion a vision of and pathway toward true change. Within this time of assertion and growth, even the advent of a lifethreatening cancer and the trauma of a mastectomy can be integrated into the life-force as knowledge and eventual strength, fuel for a more dynamic and focussed existence. Since the supposed threat of self-actualized women is one that our society seeks constantly to protect itself against, it is not coincidental that the sharing of this knowledge among women is diverted, in this case by the invisibility imposed by an insistence upon prosthesis as a norm for post-mastectomy women.

There is nothing wrong, per se, with the use of prostheses, if they can be chosen freely, for whatever reason, after a woman has had a chance to accept her new body. But usu-

prostheses serve a real function, to approximate the performance of a missing physical part. In other amputations and with other prosthetic devices, function is the main point of their existence. Artificial limbs perform specific tasks, al-

manipulate or to walk. Dentures allow us to chew our food. Only false breasts are designed for appearance only, if the only real function of women's breasts were to appear in a certain shape and size and symmetry to onlookers, or to yield to external pressure. For no woman wearing a prosthesis can even for one moment believe it is her own breast, any more than a woman wearing falsies can.

Yet breast prostheses are offered to women after surgery in much the same way that candy is offered to babies after an injection, never mind that the end effect may be destructive. Their comfort is illusory; a transitional period can be provided by any loose-fitting blouse. After surgery, I most certainly did not feel better with a lambswool puff stuck in the front of my bra. The real truth is that certain other people feel better with that lump stuck into my bra, because they do not have to deal with me nor themselves in terms of mortality nor in terms of difference.

Attitudes toward the necessity for prostheses after breast surgery are merely a reflection of those attitudes within our society towards women in general as objectified and depersonalized sexual conveniences. Women have been programmed to view our bodies only in terms of how they look and feel to others, rather than how they feel to ourselves, and how we wish to use them. We are surrounded by media images portraying women as essentially decorative machines of consumer function, constantly doing battle with rampant decay. (Take your vitamins every day and he might keep you, if you don't forget to whiten your teeth, cover up your smells, color your grey hair and iron out your wrinkles. . . .) As women, we fight this depersonalization every day, this pressure toward the conversion of one's own self-image into a media expectation of what might satisfy male demand. The insistence upon breast prostheses as 'decent' rather than functional is an additional example of that wipe-out of self in which women are constantly encouraged to take part. I am personally affronted by the message that I am only acceptable if I look 'right' or 'normal,' where those norms have nothing to do with my own perceptions of who I am. Where 'normal' means the 'right' color, shape, size, or number of breasts, a woman's perception of her own body and the strengths that come from that perception are discouraged, trivialized, and ignored. When I

mourn my right breast, it is not the appearance of it I mourn, but the feeling and the fact. But where the superficial is supreme, the idea that a woman can be beautiful and one-breasted is considered deprayed, or at best, bizarre, a threat to 'morale.'

In order to keep me available to myself, and able to concentrate my energies upon the challenges of those worlds through which I move, I must consider what my body means to me. I must also separate those external demands about how I look and feel to others, from what I really want for my own body, and how I feel to my selves. As women we have been taught to respond with a guilty twitch at any mention of the particulars of our own oppression, as if we are ultimately guilty of whatever has been done to us. The rape victim is accused of enticing the rapist. The battered wife is accused of having angered her husband. A mastectomy is not a guilty act that must be hidden in order for me to regain acceptance or protect the sensibilities of others. Pretense has never brought about lasting change or progress.

Every woman has a right to define her own desires, make her own choices. But prostheses are often chosen, not from desire, but in default. Some women complain it is too much effort to fight the concerted pressure exerted by the fashion industry. Being one-breasted does not mean being unfashionable; it means giving some time and energy to choosing or constructing the proper clothes. In some cases, it means making or remaking clothing or jewelry. The fact that the fashion needs of one-breasted women are not currently being met doesn't mean that the concerted pressure of our demands cannot change that.\*

There was a time in America not long ago when pregnant women were supposed to hide their physical realities. The pregnant woman who ventured forth into public had to design and construct her own clothing to be comfortable and

particular thanks to Frances Clayton for the conversations that developed this insight.

attractive. With the increased demands of pregnant women who are no longer content to pretend non-existence, maternity fashion is now an established, flourishing and particular sector of the clothing field.

The design and marketing of items of wear for onebreasted women is only a question of time, and we who are now designing and wearing our own asymmetrical patterns and New Landscape jewelry are certainly in the vanguard of a new fashion!

Some women believe that a breast prosthesis is necessary to preserve correct posture and physical balance. But the weight of each breast is never the same to begin with, nor is the human body ever exactly the same on both sides. With a minimum of exercises to develop the habit of straight posture, the body can accommodate to one-breastedness quite easily, even when the breasts were quite heavy.

Women in public and private employment have reported the loss of jobs and promotions upon their return to work after a mastectomy, without regard to whether or not they wore prostheses. The social and economic discrimination practiced against women who have breast cancer is not diminished by pretending that mastectomies do not exist. Where a woman's job is at risk because of her health history, employment discrimination cannot be fought with a sack of silicone gel, nor with the constant fear and anxiety to which such subterfuge gives rise. Suggesting prosthesis as a solution to employment discrimination is like saying that the way to fight race prejudice is for Black people to pretend to be white. Employment discrimination against post-mastectomy women can only be fought in the open, with head-on attacks by strong and self-accepting women who refuse to be relegated to an inferior position, or to cower in a corner because they have one breast.

When post-mastectomy women are dissuaded from any realistic evaluation of themselves, they spend large amounts of time, energy, and money in following any will-o-wisp that seems to promise a more skillful pretense of normality. Without the acceptance of difference as part of our lives, and in a

guilty search for illusion, these women fall easy prey to any shabby confidence scheme that happens along. The terror and silent loneliness of women attempting to replace the ghost of a breast leads to yet another victimization.

The following story does not impugn the many reputable makes of cosmetic breast forms which, although outrageously overpriced, can still serve a real function for the woman who is free enough to choose when and why she wears one or not. We find the other extreme reported upon in *The New York Times*, December 28, 1978:

### ARTIFICIAL BREAST CONCERN CHARGED WITH CHEATING

A Manhattan concern is under inquiry for allegedly having victimized cancer patients who had ordered artificial breasts after mastectomies. . . . The number of women allegedly cheated could not be determined. The complaints received were believed to be "only a small percentage of the victims" because others seemed too embarrassed to complain. (italics mine)

Although the company in question, Apres Body Replacement, founded by Mrs. Elke Mack, was not a leader in the field of reputable makers of breast forms, it was given ample publicity on the ABC-TV program, "Good Morning, America" in 1977, and it is here that many women first heard of Apres. What was so special about the promises of this product that it enticed such attention, and so much money out of the pockets of women from New York to Maine? To continue

The New York Times article:

Apres offered an "individually designed product that is a total duplicate of the remaining breast," and "worn on the body by use of a synthetic adhesive" supposedly formulated by a doctor.

It is reported that in some cases, women paid up to \$600, sight unseen, for this article which was supposedly made

from a form cast from their own bodies. When the women arrived to pick up the prosthesis, they received something having no relation or kinship to their own breasts, and which failed to adhere to their bodies, and which was totally useless. Other women received nothing at all for their money.

This is neither the worst nor the most expensive victimization, however. Within the framework of superficiality and pretense, the next logical step of a depersonalizing and woman-devaluating culture is the advent of the atrocity euphemistically called "breast reconstruction." This operation is now being pushed by the plastic surgery industry as the newest "advance" in breast surgery. Actually it is not new at all, being a technique previously used to augment or enlarge breasts. It should be noted that research being done on this potentially life-threatening practice represents time and research money spent—not on how to prevent the cancers that cost us our breasts and our lives—but rather upon how to pretend that our breasts are not gone, nor we as women at risk with our lives.

The operation consists of inserting silicone gel implants under the skin of the chest, usually shortly after a mastectomy and in a separate operation. At an approximate cost of \$1500 to \$3000 an implant (in 1978), this represents a lucrative piece of commerce for the cancer and plastic surgery industries in this country. There are now plastic surgeons recommending the removal of the other breast at the same time as the mastectomy is done, even where there is no clinically apparent reason.

It is important when considering subcutaneous mastectomy to plan to do both breasts at the same time. . . . it is extremely difficult to attain the desired degree of symmetry under these circumstances with a unilateral prosthesis.

R.K. Snyderman, M.D. in "What The Plastic Surgeon Has To Offer in the Management of Breast Tumors"

In the same article appearing in Early Breast Cancer, Detection and Treatment, edited by Stephen Gallegher, M.D., the author states:

The companies are working with us. They will make prostheses to practically any design we desire. Remember that what we are doing in the reconstruction of the female breast is by no means a cosmetic triumph. What we are aiming for is to allow women to look decent in clothes. (italics mine). . . . The aim is for the patient to look normal and natural when she has clothes on her body.

Is it any coincidence that the plastic surgeons most interested in pushing breast reconstruction and most involved in the superficial aspects of women's breasts speak the language of sexist pigs? What is the positive correlation?

The American Cancer Society, while not openly endorsing this practice, is doing nothing to present a more balanced viewpoint concerning the dangers of reconstruction. In covering a panel on Breast Reconstruction held by the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, the Spring, 1978 issue of the ACS Cancer News commented:

Breast reconstruction will not recreate a perfect replica of the lost breast, but it will enable many women who have had mastectomies to wear a normal bra or bikini. (italics mine)

So, even for the editor of the ACS Cancer News, when a woman has faced the dread of breast cancer and triumphed, for whatever space of time, her primary concern should still be whether or not she can wear a normal bra or bikini. With unbelieveable cynicism, one plastic surgeon reports that for patients with a lessened likelihood of cure—a poor prognosis for survival—he waits two years before implanting silicone gel into her body. Another surgeon adds,

Even when the patient has a poor prognosis, she wants a better quality of life. (italics mine)

In his eyes, obviously, this better quality of life will come, not through the woman learning to come to terms with her living and dying and her own personal power, but rather through her wearing a 'normal' bra.

Most of those breast cancer surgeons who oppose this practice being pushed by the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons either are silent, or tacitly encourage its use by their attitude toward the woman whom they serve.

On a CBS-TV Evening News Special Report on breast reconstruction in October, 1978, one lone doctor spoke out against the use of silicone gel implantations as a potentially carcinogenic move. But even he spoke of women as if their appearance and their lives were equally significant. "It's a real shame," he said, "when a woman has to choose between her life or her femininity." In other words, with a sack of silicone implanted under her skin, a woman may well be more likely to die from another cancer, but without that implant, according to this doctor, she is not 'feminine.'

While plastic surgeons in the service of 'normal bras and bikinis' insist that there is no evidence of increase in cancer recurrence because of breast reconstructions, Dr. Peter Pressman, a prominent breast cancer surgeon at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, has raised some excellent points. Although silicone gel implants have been used in enough nonmalignant breast augmentations to say that the material probably is not, in and of itself, carcinogenic, Dr. Pressman raises a number of questions which still remain concerning these implants after breast cancer.

1. There have been no large scale studies with matched control groups conducted among women who have had post-mastectomy reconstruction. Therefore, we cannot possibly have sufficient statistics available to demonstrate whether reconstruction has had any negative effect upon the recurrence of breast cancer.

2. It is possible that the additional surgery necessary for insertion of the prosthesis could stir up cancer cells which might otherwise remain dormant.

3. In the case of a recurrence of breast cancer, the recurrent tumor can be masked by the physical presence of the implanted prosthesis under the skin. When the nipple and skin tissue is preserved to be used later in 'reconstruction,' minute cancer cells can hide within this tissue undetected.

Any information about the prevention or treatment of breast cancer which might possibly threaten the vested interests of the american medical establishment is difficult to acquire in this country. Only through continuing scrutiny of various non-mainstream sources of information, such as alternative and women's presses, can a picture of new possibilities for prevention and treatment of breast cancer emerge.

Much of this secrecy is engineered by the American Cancer Society, which has become "the loudest voice of the Cancer Establishment." The ACS is the largest philanthropic institution in the United States and the world's largest non-religious charity. Peter Chowka points out that the National Information Bureau, a charity watchdog organization, listed the ACS among the groups which do not meet its standards. During the past decade, the ACS collected over \$1 billion from the american public. In 1977 it had a \$176 million fund balance, yet less than 15% of its budget was spent on assisting cancer patients.

Any holistic approach to the problem of cancer is viewed by ACS with suspicion and alarm. It has consistently focussed upon treatment rather than prevention of cancer, and then only upon those treatments sanctioned by the most conservative branches of western medicine. We live in a profit economy and there is no profit in the prevention of cancer; there is only profit in the treatment of cancer. In 1976, 70% of the ACS research budget went to individuals and institutions with whom ACS board members were affiliated.<sup>4</sup> And of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Chowka, Peter. "Checking UpOn the ACS." New Age Magazine, April '80, p. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Epstein, Samuel. The Politics of Cancer. Anchor Books, New York. 1979. p. 456.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

194 members of its governing board, one is a labor representative and one is Black. Women are not even mentioned.

The ACS was originally established to champion new research into the causes and the cure of cancer. But by its blacklisting of new therapies without testing them, the ACS spends much of its remaining budget suppressing new and unconventional ideas and research.<sup>5</sup> Yet studies from other countries have shown interesting results from treatments largely ignored by ACS. European medicine reports hopeful experiments with immunotherapy, diet, and treatment with hormones and enzymes such as trypsin.<sup>6</sup> Silencing and political repression by establishment medical journals keep much vital information about breast cancer underground and away from the women whose lives it most affects. Yet even in the United States, there are clinics waging alternative wars against cancer and the medical establishment, with varying degrees of success.<sup>7</sup>

Breast cancer is on the increase, and every woman should add to her arsenal of information by inquiring into these areas of 'underground medicine.' Who are its leaders and proponents, and what are their qualifications? Most important, what is their rate of success in the control of breast cancer, and why is this information not common knowledge?

The mortality for breast cancer treated by conventional therapies has not decreased in over 40 years. The ACS and its governmental partner, the National Cancer Institute, have been notoriously indifferent, if not hostile, to the idea of general environmental causes of cancer and the need for regulation and prevention. Since the american medical estab-

lishment and the ACS are determined to suppress any cancer information not dependent upon western medical bias, whether this information is ultimately useful or not, we must pierce this silence ourselves and aggressively seek answers to these questions about new therapies. We must also heed the unavoidable evidence pointing toward the nutritional and environmental aspects of cancer prevention.

Cancer is not just another degenerative and unavoidable disease of the ageing process. It has distinct and identifiable causes, and these are mainly exposures to chemical or physical agents in the environment. In the medical literature, there is mounting evidence that breast cancer is a chronic and systemic disease. Post-mastectomy women must be vigilantly aware that, contrary to the 'lightning strikes' theory, we are the most likely of all women to develop cancer somewhere else in the body. 12

Every woman has a militant responsibility to involve herself actively with her own health. We owe ourselves the protection of all the information we can acquire about the treatment of cancer and its causes, as well as about the recent findings concerning immunology, nutrition, environment, and stress. And we owe ourselves this information before we may have a reason to use it.

It was very important for me, after my mastectomy, to develop and encourage my own internal sense of power. I needed to rally my energies in such a way as to image myself as a fighter resisting rather than as a passive victim suffering. At all times, it felt crucial to me that I make a conscious commitment to survival. It is physically important for me to be loving my life rather than to be mourning my breast. I believe it is this love of my life and my self, and the careful tending of that love which was done by women who love and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Chowka, Peter. p. 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Martin, Wayne. "Let's Cut Cancer Deaths In Half." Let's Live Magazine, August, 1978. p. 356.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Null, Gary. "Alternative Cancer Therapies." Cancer News Journal, vol. 14, no. 4, December, 1979. (International Association of Cancer Victims and Friends, Inc. publication).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>*lbid.* p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Kushner, Rose. Breast Cancer. Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch. 1975. p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> Epstein, Samuel. p. 462.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>12</sup> Kushner, Rose. p. 163.

support me, which has been largely responsible for my strong and healthy recovery from the effects of my mastectomy. But a clear distinction must be made between this affirmation of self and the superficial farce of "looking on the bright side of things."

Like superficial spirituality, looking on the bright side of things is a euphemism used for obscuring certain realities of life, the open consideration of which might prove threatening or dangerous to the status quo. Last week I read a letter from a doctor in a medical magazine which said that no truly happy person ever gets cancer. Despite my knowing better, and despite my having dealt with this blame-the-victim thinking for years, for a moment this letter hit my guilt button. Had I really been guilty of the crime of not being happy in this best of all possible infernos?

The idea that the cancer patient should be made to feel guilty about having had cancer, as if in some way it were all her fault for not having been in the right psychological frame of mind at all times to prevent cancer, is a monstrous distortion of the idea that we can use our psychic strengths to help heal ourselves. This guilt trip which many cancer patients have been led into (you see, it is a shameful thing because you could have prevented it if only you had been more...) is an extension of the blame-the-victim syndrome. It does nothing to encourage the mobilization of our psychic defenses against the very real forms of death which surround us. It is easier to demand happiness than to clean up the environment. The acceptance of illusion and appearance as reality is another symptom of this same refusal to examine the realities of our lives. Let us seek 'joy' rather than real food and clean air and a saner future on a liveable earth! As if happiness alone can protect us from the results of profit-madness.

Was I wrong to be working so hard against the oppressions afflicting women and Black people? Was I in error to be speaking out against our silent passivity and the cynicism of a mechanized and inhuman civilization that is destroying our earth and those who live upon it? Was I really fighting the

spread of radiation, racism, woman-slaughter, chemical invasion of our food, pollution of our environment, the abuse and psychic destruction of our young, merely to avoid dealing with my first and greatest responsibility—to be happy? In this disastrous time, when little girls are still being stitched shut between their legs, when victims of cancer are urged to court more cancer in order to be attractive to men, when 12 year old Black boys are shot down in the street at random by uniformed men who are cleared of any wrong-doing, when ancient and honorable citizens scavenge for food in garbage pails, and the growing answer to all this is media hype or surgical lobotomy; when daily gruesome murders of women from coast to coast no longer warrant mention in The N.Y. Times, when grants to teach retarded children are cut in favor of more billion dollar airplanes, when 900 people commit mass suicide rather than face life in america, and we are told it is the job of the poor to stem inflation; what deprayed monster could possibly be always happy?

The only really happy people I have ever met are those of us who work against these deaths with all the energy of our living, recognizing the deep and fundamental unhappiness with which we are surrounded, at the same time as we fight to keep from being submerged by it. But if the achievement and maintenance of perfect happiness is the only secret of a physically healthy life in america, then it is a wonder that we are not all dving of a malignant society. The happiest person in this country cannot help breathing in smokers' cigarette fumes, auto exhaust, and airborne chemical dust, nor avoid drinking the water, and eating the food. The idea that happiness can insulate us against the results of our environmental madness is a rumor circulated by our enemies to destroy us. And what Woman of Color in america over the age of 15 does not live with the knowledge that our daily lives are stitched with violence and with hatred, and to naively ignore that reality can mean destruction? We are equally destroyed by false happiness and false breasts, and the passive acceptance of false values which corrupt our lives and distort our experience.

The idea of having a breast removed was much more traumatic for me before my mastectomy than after the fact, but it certainly took time and the loving support of other women before I could once again look at and love my altered body with the warmth I had done before. But I did. In the second week after surgery, on one of those tortuous night rounds of fitful sleep, dreams, and exercises, when I was moving in and out of physical pain and psychic awareness of fear for my life and mourning for my breast, I wrote in my journal:

In a perspective of urgency, I want to say now that I'd give anything to have done it differently—it being the birth of a unique and survival-worthy, or survival-effective, perspective. Or I'd give anything not to have cancer and my beautiful breast gone, fled with my love of it. But then immediately after I guess I have to qualify that—there really are some things I wouldn't give. I wouldn't give my life, first of all, or else I wouldn't have chosen to have the operation in the first place, and I did. I wouldn't give Frances, or the children, or even any one of the women I love. I wouldn't give up my poetry, and I guess when I come right down to it I wouldn't give my eyes, nor my arms. So I guess I do have to be careful that my urgencies reflect my priorities.

Sometimes I feel like I'm the spoils in a battle between good and evil, right now, or that I'm both sides doing the fighting, and I'm not even sure of the outcome nor the terms. But sometimes it comes into my head, like right now, what would you really give? And it feels like, even just musing, I could make a terrible and tragic error of judgement if I don't always keep my head and my priorities clear. It's as if the devil is really trying to buy my soul, and pretending that it doesn't matter if I say yes because everybody knows he's not for real anyway. But I don't know that. And I don't think this

is all a dream at all, and no, I would not give up love.

Maybe this is the chance to live and speak those things I really do believe, that power comes from moving into whatever I fear most that cannot be avoided. But will I ever be strong enough again to open my mouth and not have a cry of raw pain leap out?

I think I was fighting the devil of despair within myself for my own soul.

When I started to write this article, I went back to the books I had read in the hospital as I made my decision to have a mastectomy. I came across pictures of women with one breast and mastectomy scars, and I remembered shrinking from these pictures before my surgery. Now they seemed not at all strange or frightening to me. At times, I miss my right breast, the actuality of it, its presence, with a great and poignant sense of loss. But in the same way, and just as infrequently, as I sometimes miss being 32, at the same time knowing that I have gained from the very loss I mourn.

Right after surgery I had a sense that I would never be able to bear missing that great well of sexual pleasure that I connected with my right breast. That sense has completely passed away, as I have come to realize that that well of feeling was within me. I alone own my feelings. I can never lose that feeling because I own it, because it comes out of myself. I can attach it anywhere I want to, because my feelings are a part of me, my sorrow and my joy.

I would never have chosen this path, but I am very glad to be who I am, here.

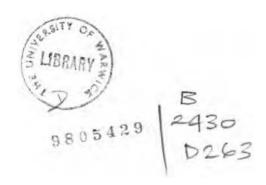
30 March 1979

## essays critical and clinical

Gilles Deleuze

Translated by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco





The publishers gratefully acknowledge financial assistance provided by the French Ministry of Culture for the translation of this book

First published in the UK by Verso 1998
This edition © Verso 1998
Translation © Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco 1998
First published as Critique et Clinique
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Verso

UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1V 3HR

USA: 180 Varick Street, New York NY 10014-4606

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN 1-86091-614-6

### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn Great books are written in a kind of foreign language.

—Proust, Contre Sainte-Beuve

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### Translators' Preface

Although this translation was undertaken jointly, each of the translators took responsibility for the first and final drafts of specific essays. Essays 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 15 were done by Michael A. Greco; the remainder, except the final essay, were done by Daniel W. Smith. The translation of Essay 18, by Anthony Uhlmann, first appeared in Sub-Stance 78 (1995), pp. 3-28, and is published here in revised form. The French version of this essay was originally published as the postface to Samuel Beckett, Quad et autres pièces pour la télévision, trans. Edith Fournier (Paris: Minuit, 1992), and we thank Jerome Lindon of Éditions de Minuit for his permission to include it in this collection. We consulted translations of earlier versions of two essays: "On Four Poetic Formulas Which Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy," translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, in Gilles Deleuze, Kant's Critical Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), and "He Stuttered," translated by Constantin V. Boundas, in Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy, edited by Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994). Throughout the translation, we have tried to err on the side of fidelity to the French rather than felicity in the English. In conformity with Deleuze's claim that the third person is the condition for literary enunciation, for example, we have consistently translated the French on as "one," even in contexts where this introduces a certain stylistic tension in the English. As far as possible, we have tried to maintain a terminological consistency with earlier translations of Deleuze's books. On this score, we would like to acknowledge our indebtedness to, in particular, Constantin V. Boundas, Marrin Joughin, Brian Massumi, Paul Patton, and Hugh Tomlinson, whose translations we consulted. We would like

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### Bartleby; or, The Formula

"Bartleby" is neither a metaphor for the writer nor the symbol of anything whatsoever. It is a violently comical text, and the comical is always literal. It is like the novellas of Kleist, Dostoyevsky, Kafka, or Beckett, with which it forms a subterranean and prestigious lineage. It means only what it says, literally. And what it says and repeats is *I would prefer not to*. This is the formula of its glory, which every loving reader repeats in turn. A gaunt and pallid man has uttered the formula that drives everyone crazy. But in what does the literality of the formula consist?

We immediately notice a certain mannerism, a certain solemnity: prefer is rarely employed in this sense, and neither Bartleby's boss, the attorney, nor his clerks normally use it ("queer word, I never use it myself"). The usual formula would instead be I had rather not. But the strangeness of the formula goes beyond the word itself. Certainly it is grammatically correct, syntactically correct, but its abrupt termination, NOT TO, which leaves what it rejects undetermined, confers upon it the character of a radical, a kind of limit-function. Its repetition and its insistence render it all the more unusual, entirely so. Murmured in a soft, flat, and patient voice, it attains to the irremissible, by forming an inarticulate block, a single breath. In all these respects, it has the same force, the same role as an agrammatical formula.

Linguists have rigorously analyzed what is called "agrammaticality." A number of very intense examples can be found in the work of the American poet e. e. cummings—for instance, "he danced his did," as if one said in French il dansa son mit ("he danced his began") instead

of il se mit à danser ("he began to dance"). Nicolas Ruwet explains that this presupposes a series of ordinary grammatical variables, which would have an agrammatical formula as their limit: he danced his did would be a limit of the normal expressions he did his dance, he danced his dance, he danced what he did . . . This would no longer be a portmanteau word, like those found in Lewis Carroll, but a "portmanteauconstruction," a breath-construction, a limit or tensor. Perhaps it would be better to take an example from the French, in a practical situation: someone who wants to hang something on a wall and holds a certain number of nails in his hand exclaims, I'EN AI UN DE PAS ASSEZ ("I have one not enough"). This is an agrammatical formula that stands as the limit of a series of correct expressions: I'en ai de trop, Je n'en ai pas assez, Il m'en manque un . . . ("I have too many," "I don't have enough," "I am one short" . . . ). Would not Bartleby's formula be of this type, at once a stereotypy of Bartleby's and a highly poetic expression of Melville's, the limit of a series such as "I would prefer this. I would prefer not to do that. That is not what I would prefer . . . "? Despite its quite normal construction, it has an anomalous ring to it.

I WOULD PREFER NOT TO. The formula has several variants. Sometimes it abandons the conditional and becomes more curt: I PREFER NOT TO. Sometimes, as in its final occurrences, it seems to lose its mystery by being completed by an infinitive, and coupled with to: "I prefer to give no answet," "I would prefer not to be a little reasonable," "I would prefer not to take a clerkship," "I would prefer to be doing something else"... But even in these cases we sense the muted presence of the strange form that continues to haunt Bartleby's language. He himself adds, "but I am not a particular case," "there is nothing particular about me," I am not particular, in order to indicate that whatever else might be suggested to hum would be yet another particularity falling under the ban of the great indeterminate formula, I PREFER NOT TO, which subsists once and for all and in all cases.

The formula occurs in ten principal circumstances, and in each case it may appear several times, whether it is repeated verbatim or with minor variations. Bartleby is a copyist in the attorney's office; he copies ceaselessly, "silently, palely, mechanically." The first instance takes place when the attorney tells him to proofread and collate the two clerks' copies: I WOULD PREFER NOT TO. The second, when the attorney tells Bartleby to come and reread his own copies. The third, when the attorney invites Bartleby to reread with him personally, tête à

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tête. The fourth, when the attorney wants to send him on an errand. The fifth, when he asks him to go into the next room. The sixth, when the attorney enters his study one Sunday afternoon and discovers that Bartleby has been sleeping there. The seventh, when the attorney satisfies himself by asking questions. The eighth, when Bartleby has stopped copying, has renounced all copying, and the attorney asks him to leave. The ninth, when the attorney makes a second attempt to get rid of him. The tenth, when Bartleby is forced out of the office, sits on the banister of the landing while the panic-stricken attorney proposes other, unexpected occupations to him (a clerkship in a dry goods store, bartender, bill collector, traveling companion to a young gentleman . . .). The formula bourgeons and proliferates. At each occutrence, there is a stupor surrounding Bartleby, as if one had heard the Unspeakable or the Unstoppable. And there is Bartleby's silence, as if he had said everything and exhausted language at the same time. With each instance, one has the impression that the madness is growing: not Bartleby's madness in "particular," but the madness around him, notably that of the attorney, who launches into strange propositions and even stranger behaviors.

Without a doubt, the formula is ravaging, devastating, and leaves nothing standing in its wake. Its contagious character is immediately evident: Bartleby "ties the tongues" of others. The queer words, I would prefer, steal their way into the language of the clerks and of the attorney himself ("So you have got the word, too"). But this contamination is not the essential point; the essential point is its effect on Bartleby: from the moment he says I WOULD PREFER NOT TO (collate), he is no longer able to copy either. And yet he will nevet say that he prefers not to (copy): he has simply passed beyond this stage. And doubtless he does not realize this immediately, since he continues copying until after the sixth instance. But when he does notice it, it seems obvious, like the delayed reaction that was already implied in the first statement of the formula: "Do you not see the reason for yourself?" he says to the attorney. The effect of the formula-block is not only to impugn what Bartleby prefers not to do, but also to render what he was doing impossible, what he was supposed to prefer to continue doing.

It has been noted that the formula, I prefer not to, is neither an affirmation nor a negation. Bartleby "does not refuse, but neither does he accept, he advances and then withdraws into this advance, barely exposing himself in a nimble retreat from speech."2 The attorney would

be relieved if Bartleby did not want to, but Bartleby does not refuse, he simply rejects a nonpreferred (the proofreading, the errands . . .). And he does not accept either, he does not affirm a preference that would consist in continuing to copy, he simply posits its impossibility. In short, the formula that successively refuses every other act has already engulfed the act of copying, which it no longer even needs to refuse. The formula is devastating because it eliminates the preferable just as mercilessly as any nonpreferred. It not only abolishes the term it refers to, and that it rejects, but also abolishes the other term it seemed to preserve, and that becomes impossible. In fact, it renders them indistinct: it hollows out an ever expanding zone of indiscernibility or indetermination between some nonpreferred activities and a preferable activity. All particularity, all reference is abolished. The formula annihilates "copying," the only reference in relation to which something might or might not be preferred. I would prefer nothing rather than something: not a will to nothingness, but the growth of a nothingness of the will. Bartleby has won the right to survive, that is, to remain immobile and upright before a blind wall. Pure patient passivity, as Blanchot would say. Being as being, and nothing more. He is urged to say yes or no. But if he said no (to collating, running errands . . .), or if he said yes (to copying), he would quickly be defeated and judged useless, and would not survive. He can survive only by whirling in a suspense that keeps everyone at a distance. His means of survival is to prefer not to collate, but thereby also not to prefer copying. He had to refuse the former in order to render the latter impossible. The formula has two phases and continually recharges itself by passing again and again through the same states. This is why the attorney has the vertiginous impression, each time, that everything is starting over again from zero.

The formula at first seems like the bad translation of a foreign language. But once we understand it better, once we hear it more clearly, its splendor refutes this hypothesis. Perhaps it is the formula that carves out a kind of foreign language within language. It has been suggested that e. e. cummings's agrammaticalities can be considered as having issued from a dialect differing from Standard English, and whose rules of creation can be abstracted. The same goes for Bartleby: the rule would lie in this logic of negative preference, a negativism beyond all negation. But if it is true that the masterpieces of literature always form a kind of foreign language within the language in which they are written, what wind of madness, what psychotic breath thereby passes into language

as a whole? Psychosis characteristically brings into play a procedure that treats an ordinary language, a standard language, in a manner that makes it "render" an original and unknown language, which would perhaps be a projection of God's language, and would carry off language as a whole. Procedures of this type appear in France in Roussel and Brisset, and in America in Wolfson. Is this not the schizophrenic vocation of American literature: to make the English language, by means of driftings, deviations, de-taxes or sur-taxes (as opposed to the standard syntax), slip in this manner? To introduce a bit of psychosis into English neurosis? To invent a new universality? If need be, other languages will be summoned into English in order to make it echo this divine language of storm and thunder. Melville invents a foreign language that runs beneath English and carries it off: it is the OUTLANDISH or Deterritorialized, the language of the Whale. Whence the interest of srudies of Moby-Dick that are based on Numbers and Letters, and their cryptic meaning, to set free at least a skeleton of the inhuman or superhuman originary language.3 It is as if three operations were linked together: a certain treatment of language; the result of this treatment, which tends to constitute an original language within language; and the effect, which is to sweep up language in its entirety, sending it into flight, pushing it to its very limit in order to discover its Outside, silence or music. A great book is always the inverse of another book that could only be written in the soul, with silence and blood. This is the case not only with Moby-Dick but also with Pierre, in which Isabelle affects language with an incomprehensible murmus, a kind of basso continuo that carries the whole of language on the chords and tones of its guitar. And it is also the angelic or adamic Billy Budd, who suffers from a stuttering that denatures language but also gives rise to the musical and celestial Beyond of language as a whole. It is like the "persistent horrible twittering squeak" that muddles the resonance of words, while the sister is getting the violin ready to respond to Gregor.

Bartleby also has an angelic and Adamic nature, but his case seems different because he has no general Procedure, such as stuttering, with which to treat language. He makes do with a seemingly normal, brief Formula, at best a localized tick that crops up in certain circumstances. And yet the result and the effect are the same: to carve out a kind of foreign language within language, to make the whole confront silence, make it topple into silence. Bartleby announces the long silence, broken only by the music of poems, into which Melville will enter and from

which, except for *Billy Budd*, he will never emerge.<sup>4</sup> Bartleby himself had no other escape than to remain silent and withdraw behind his partition every time he uttered the formula, all the way up until his final silence in prison. After the formula there is nothing left to say: it functions as a procedure, overcoming its appearance of particularity.

The attorney himself concocts a theory explaining how Bartleby's formula ravages language as a whole. All language, he suggests, has references or assumptions. These are not exactly what language designates, but what permit it to designate. A word always presupposes other words that can replace it, complete it, or form alternatives with it: it is on this condition that language is distributed in such a way as to designate things, states of things and actions, according to a set of objective, explicit conventions. But perhaps there are also other implicit and subjective conventions, other types of reference or presupposition. In speaking, I do not simply indicate things and actions; I also commit acts that assure a relation with the interlocutor, in keeping with our respective situations: I command, I interrogate, I promise, I ask, I emit "speech acts." Speech acts are self-referential (I command by saying "I order you . . . "), while constative propositions refer to other things and other words. It is this double system of references that Bartleby ravages,

The formula I PREFER NOT TO excludes all alternatives, and devours what it claims to conserve no less than it distances itself from everything else. It implies that Battleby stop copying, that is, that he stop reproducing words; it hollows out a zone of indetermination that renders words indistinguishable, that creates a vacuum within language [langage]. But it also stymies the speech acts that a boss uses to command, that a kind friend uses to ask questions or a man of faith to make promises. If Bartleby had refused, he could still be seen as a rebel or insurrectionary, and as such would still have a social role. But the formula stymies all speech acts, and at the same time, it makes Bartleby a pure outsider [exclu] to whom no social position can be attributed. This is what the attorney glimpses with dread: all his hopes of bringing Bartleby back to reason are dashed because they rest on a logic of presuppositions according to which an employer "expects" to be obeyed, or a kind friend listened ro, whereas Bartleby has invented a new logic, a logic of preference, which is enough to undermine the presuppositions of language as a whole. As Mathieu Lindon shows, the formula "disconnects" words and things, words and actions, but also speech

acts and words—it severs language from all reference, in accordance with Bartleby's absolute vocation, to be a man without references, someone who appears suddenly and then disappears, without reference to himself or anything else. This is why, despite its conventional appearance, the formula functions as a veritable agrammaticality.

Bartleby is the Bachelor, about whom Kafka said, "He has only as much ground as his two feet take up, only as much of a hold as his two hands encompass"-someone who falls asleep in the winter snow to freeze to death like a child, someone who does nothing but take walks, yet who could take them anywhere, without moving.6 Bartleby is the man without references, without possessions, without properties, without qualities, without particularities: he is too smooth for anyone to be able to hang any particularity on him. Without past or future, he is instantaneous. I PREFER NOT TO is Bartleby's chemical or alchemical formula, but one can read inversely I AM NOT PARTICULAR as its indispensable complement. The entire nineteenth century will go through this search for the man without a name, regicide and parricide, the modern-day Ulysses ("I am No One"): the crushed and mechanized man of the great metropolises, but from which one expects, perhaps, the emergence of the Man of the Future or New World Man. And, in an identical messianism, we glimpse him, sometimes as a Proletarian, sometimes as an American. Musil's novel will also follow this quest, and will invent the new logic of which The Man without Qualities is both the thinker and the product. And though the derivation of Musil from Melville seems certain to us, it should be sought not in "Bartleby," but rather in Pierre; or, the Ambiguities. The incestuous couple Ulrich-Agathe is like the return of the Pierre-Isabelle couple; in both cases, the silent sister, unknown or forgotten, is not a substitute for the mother, but on the contrary the abolition of sexual difference as particularity, in favor of an androgynous relationship in which both Pierre and Ulrich are or become woman. In Bartleby's case, might not his relation with the attorney be equally mysterious, and in turn mark the possibility of a becoming, of a new man? Will Bartleby be able to conquer the place where he takes his walks?

Perhaps Bartleby is a madman, a lunatic or a psychotic ("an innate and incurable disorder" of the soul). But how can we know, if we do not take into account the anomalies of the attorney, who continues to behave in the most bizarre ways? The attorney had just received an important professional promotion. One will recall that President

Schreber unleashed his own delirium only after receiving a promotion, as if this gave him the audacity to take rhe risk. But what is the attorney going to risk? He already has two scriveners who, much like Kafka's assistants, are inverted doubles of each other, the one normal in the morning and drunk in the afternoon, the other in a perpetual state of indigestion in the morning but almost normal in the afternoon. Since he needs an extra scrivener, he hires Bartleby after a brief conversation without any references because his pallid aspect seemed to indicate a constancy that could compensate for the irregularities of the two others. But on the first day he places Bartleby in a strange arrangement: Bartleby is to sit in the attorney's own office, next to some folding doors separating it from the clerk's office, between a window that faces the side of a neighboring building and a high screen, green as a prairie, as if it were important that Bartleby be able to hear, but without being seen. Whether this was a sudden inspiration on the attorney's part or an agreement reached during the short conversation, we will never know. But the fact is that, caught in this arrangement, the invisible Bartleby does an extraordinary amount of "mechanical" work. But when the attorney tries to make him leave his retreat, Bartleby emits his formula, and at this first occurrence, as with those that follow, the attorney finds himself disarmed, bewildered, stunned, thunderstruck, without response or reply. Bartleby stops copying altogether and remains on the premises, a fixture. We know to what extremes the attorney is forced to go in order to rid himself of Bartleby: he returns home, decides to relocate his office, then takes off for several days and hides out, avoiding the new tenant's complaints. What a strange flight, with the wandering attorney living in his rockaway . . . From the initial arrangement to this irrepressible, Cain-like flight, everything is bizarre, and the attorney behaves like a madman. Murder fantasies and declarations of love for Bartleby alternate in his soul. What happened? Is it a case of shared madness, here again, another relationship between doubles, a nearly acknowledged homosexual relation ("yes, Bartleby . . . I never feel so private as when I know you are here . . . I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life . . . ")?<sup>8</sup>

One might imagine that hiring Bartleby was a kind of pact, as if the attorney, following his promotion, had decided to make this person, without objective references, a man of confidence [un homme de confiance] who would owe everything to him. He wants to make him his man. The pact consists of the following: Bartleby will sit near his

master and copy, listening to him but without being seen, like a night bird who cannot stand to be looked at. So there is no doubt that once the attorney wants to draw (without even doing it on purpose) Bartleby from behind his screen to correct the copies with the others, he breaks the pact. This is why Bartleby, once he "prefers not to" correct, is already unable to copy. Bartleby will expose himself to view even more than he is asked to, planted in the middle of the office, but he will no longer do any copying. The attorney has an obscure feeling about it, since he assumes that if Bartleby refuses to copy, it is because his vision is impaired. And in effect, exposed to view, Bartleby for his part no longer sees, no longer looks. He has acquired what was, in a certain fashion, already innate in him: the legendary infirmity, oneeyed and one-armed, which makes him an autochthon, someone who is born to and stays in a particular place, while the attorney necessarily fills the function of the traitor condemned to flight. Whenever the attorney invokes philanthropy, charity, or friendship, his protestations are shot through with an obscure guilt. In fact, it is the attorney who broke the arrangement he himself had organized, and from the debris Bartleby pulls a trait of expression, I PREFER NOT TO, which will proliferate around him and contaminate the others, sending the attorney fleeing. But it will also send language itself into flight, it will open up a zone of indetermination or indiscernibility in which neither words nor characters can be distinguished—the fleeing attorney and the immobile, petrified Bartleby. The attorney starts to vagabond while Battleby remains tranquil, but it is precisely because he remains tranquil and immobile that Bartleby is treated like a vagabond.

Is there a relation of identification between the artorney and Bartleby? But what is this relation? In what direction does it move? Most often, an identification seems to bring into play three elements, which are able to interchange or permutate: a form, image, or representation, a portrait, a model; a subject (or at least a virtual subject); and the subject's efforts to assume a form, to appropriate the image, to adapt itself to this image and the image to itself. It is a complex operation that passes through all of the adventures of resemblance, and that always risks falling into neurosis or turning into narcissism. A "mimetic rivalry," as it is sometimes called. It mobilizes a paternal function in general: an image of the father par excellence, and the subject is a son, even if the determinations are interchangeable. The bildungsroman

[roman de formation], or one could just as easily say the reference novel [roman de reference], provides numerous examples.

Certainly, many of Melville's novels begin with images or portraits, and seem to tell the story of an upbringing under a paternal function: Redburn, for instance. Pierre; or, The Ambiguities begins with an image of the father, with a statue and a painring. Even Moby-Dick begins by amassing information at the beginning in order to give the whale a form and sketch out its image, right down to the dark painting hanging in the inn. "Bartleby" is no exception to the rule. The two clerks are like paper images, symmetrical opposites, and the attorney fills the paternal function so well that one can hardly believe the story is taking place in New York. Everything starts off as in an English novel, in Dickens's London. But in each case, something strange happens, something that bluss the image, marks it with an essential uncertainty, keeps the form from "taking," but also undoes the subject, sets it adrift and abolishes any paternal function. It is only here that things begin to get interesting. The statue of the father gives way to his much more ambiguous portrait, and then to yet another portrait that could be of anybody or nobody. All referents are lost, and the formation [formation] of man gives way to a new, unknown element, to the mystery of a formless, nonhuman life, a Squid. Everything began à l'anglaise but continues à l'américaine, following an irresistible line of flight. Ahab can say with good reason that he is fleeing from everywhere. The paternal function is dropped in favor of even more obscure and ambiguous forces. The subject loses its texture in favor of an infinitely proliferating patchwork: the American patchwork becomes the law of Melville's oeuvre, devoid of a center of an upside down or right side up. It is as if the traits of expression escaped form, like the abstract limes of an unknown writing, or the furrows that twist from Ahab's brow to that of the Whale, or the "horrible contortions" of the flapping lanyards that pass through the fixed rigging and can easily drag a sailor into the sea, a subject into death. In Pierre; or, The Ambiguities, the disquieting smile of the unknown young man in the painting, which so resembles the father's, functions as a trait of expression that emancipates itself, and is just as capable of undoing resemblance as it is of making the subject vacillate. I PREFER NOT TO is also a trait of expression that contaminates everything, escaping linguistic form and stripping the father of his exemplary speech, just as it strips the son of his ability to reproduce or copy.

It is still a process of identification, but rather than following the adventures of the neurotic, it has now become psychotic. A little bit of schizophrenia escapes the neurosis of the Old World. We can bring together three distinctive characteristics. In the first place, the formless trait of expression is opposed to the image or to the expressed form. In the second place, there is no longer a subject that tries to conform to the image, and either succeeds or fails. Rather, a zone of indistinction, of indiscernibility, or of ambiguity seems to be established between two terms, as if they had reached the point immediately preceeding their respective differentiation: not a similitude, but a slippage, an extreme proximity, an absolute contiguity; not a natural filiation, but an unnatural alliance. It is a "hyperborean," "arctic" zone. It is no longer a question of Mimesis, but of becoming. Ahab does not imitate the whale, he becomes Moby-Dick, he enters into the zone of proximity [zone de voisinage] where he can no longer be distinguished from Moby-Dick, and strikes himself in striking the whale. Moby-Dick is the "wall, shoved near" with which he merges. Redburn renounces the image of the father in favor of the ambiguous traits of the mysterious brother. Pierre does not imitate his father, but reaches the zone of proximity where he can no longer be distinguished from his half sister, Isabelle, and becomes woman. While neurosis flounders in the nets of maternal incest in order to identify more closely with the father, psychosis liberates incest with the sister as a becoming, a free identification of man and woman: in the same way Kleist emits atypical, almost animal traits of expression—stutterings, grindings, grimaces—that feed his passionate conversation with his sister. This is because, in the third place, psychosis pursues its dream of establishing a function of universal fraternity that no longer passes through the father, but is built on the ruins of the paternal function, a function that presupposes the dissolution of all images of the father, following an autonomous line of alliance or proximity that makes the woman a sister, and the other man, a brother, like the terrible "monkey-rope" uniting Ishmael and Queequeg as a married couple. These are the three characteristics of the American Dream, which together make up the new identification, the New World: the Trait, the Zone, and the Function.

We are in the process of melding together characters as different as Ahab and Bartleby. Yet does not everything instead set them in opposition to each other? Melvillian psychiatry constantly invokes two poles: monomaniaes and hypochondriaes, demons and angels, torturers and

victims, the Swift and the Slow, the Thundering and the Petrified, the Unpunishable (beyond all punishment) and the Irresponsible (beyond all responsibility). What is Ahab doing when he lets loose his harpoons of fire and madness? He is breaking a pact. He is betraying the Whalers' Law, which says that any healthy whale encountered must be hunted, without choosing one over another. But Ahab, thrown into his indiscernible becoming, makes a choice—he pursues his identification with Moby-Dick, putting his crew in mortal danger. This is the monstrous preference that Lieutenant Starbuck bitterly objects to, to the point where he even dreams of killing the treacherous captain. Choosing is the Promethean sin par excellence.10 This was the case with Kleist's Penthesilea, an Ahab-woman who, like her indiscernible double Achilles, had chosen her enemy, in defiance of the law of the Amazons forbidding the preference of one enemy over another. The priestess and the Amazons consider this a betrayal that madness sanctions in a cannibal identification. In his last novel, Billy Budd, Melville himself brings another monomaniacal demon into the picture with Claggart: the master-at-arms. We should have no illusions about Claggart's subordinate function: his is no more a case of psychological wickedness than Captain Ahab's. It is a case of metaphysical perversion that consists in choosing one's prey, preferring a chosen victim with a kind of love rather than observing the maritime law that requires him to apply the same discipline to everyone. This is what the narrator suggests when he recalls an ancient and mysterious theory, an expose of which is found in Sade: secondary, sensible Nature is governed by the Law (or laws), while innately depraved beings participate in a terrible supersensible Primary Nature, original and oceanic, which, knowing no Law, pursues its own irrational aim through them. Nothingness, Nothingness. 11 Ahab will break through the wall, even if there is nothing behind it, and will make nothingness the object of his will: "To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough," 12 Melville says that only the eye of a Prophet, and not a psychologist, is capable of discerning or diagnosing such obscure beings as these creatures of the abyss, without being able to prevent their mad enterprise, the "mystery of iniquity" ...

We are now in a position to classify Melville's great characters. At one pole, there are those monomaniacs or demons who, driven by the will to nothingness, make a monstrous choice: Ahab, Claggait, Babo...
But at the other pole are those angels or saintly hypochondriacs, al-

most stupid, creatures of innocence and purity, stricken with a constitutive weakness but also with a strange beauty. Petrified by nature, they prefer... no will at all, a nothingness of the will rather than a will to nothingness (hypochondriacal "negativism"). They can only survive by becoming stone, by denying the will and sanctifying themselves in this suspension. 13 Such are Cereno, Billy Budd, and above all Bartleby. And although the two types are opposed in every way—the former innate traitors and the latter betrayed in their very essence; the former monstrous fathers who devour their children, the latter abandoned sons without fathers—they haunt one and the same world, forming alternations within it, just as Melville's writing, like Kleist's, alternates between stationary, fixed processes and mad-paced procedures: style, with its succession of catatonias and accelerations . . . This is because both poles, both types of characters, Ahab and Bartleby, belong to this Primary Nature, they inhabit it, they constitute it. Everything sets them in opposition, and yet they are perhaps the same creature—primary, original, stubborn, seized from both sides, marked merely with a "plus" or a "minus" sign: Ahab and Bartleby. Or in Kleist, the terrible Penthesilea and the sweet little Catherine, the first beyond conscience, the second before conscience: she who chooses and she who does not choose, she who howls like a she-wolf and she who would prefer-notto speak.14

There exists, finally, a third type of character in Melville, the one on the side of the Law, the guardian of the divine and human laws of secondary nature: the prophet. Captain Delano lacks the prophet's eye, but Ishmael in Moby-Dick, Captain Vere in Billy Budd, and the attorney in Bartleby all have this power to "See": they are capable of grasping and understanding, as much as is possible, the beings of Primary Nature, the great monomaniacal demons or the saintly innocents, and sometimes both. Yet they themselves are not lacking in ambiguity, each in his own way. Though they are able to see into the Primary Nature that so fascinates them, they are nonetheless representatives of secondary nature and its laws. They bear the paternal image—they seem like good fathers, benevolent fathers (or at least protective big brothers, as Ishmael is toward Queequeg). But they cannot ward off the demons, because the latter are too quick for the law, too surprising. Nor can they save the innocent, the irresponsible: they immolate them in the name of the Law, they make the sacrifice of Abraham. Behind their paternal mask, they have a kind of double identification: with the

innocent, toward whom they feel a genuine love, but also with the demon, since they break their pact with the innocent they love, each in his own manner. They betray, then, but in a different way than does Ahab or Claggart: the latter broke the law, whereas Vere or the attorney, in the name of the law, break an implicit and almost unavowable agreement (even Ishmael seems to turn away from his savage brother Queequeg). They continue to cherish the innocent they have condemned: Captain Vere will die muttering the name of Billy Budd, and the final words of the attorney's narrative will be, "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!" which does not indicate a connection, but rather an alternative in which he has had to choose the all-too-human law over Bartleby. Torn between the two Natures, with all their contradictions, these characters are extremely important, but do not have the stature of the two others. Rather, they are Witnesses, narrators, interpreters. There is a problem that escapes this third type of character, a very important problem that is settled between the other two.

The Confidence-Man (much as one says the Medicine-Man) is sprinkled with Melville's reflections on the novel. The first of these reflections consists in claiming the rights of a superior irrationalism (chapter 14). Why should the novelist believe he is obligated to explain the behavior of his characters, and to supply them with reasons, whereas life for its part never explains anything and leaves in its creatures so many indeterminate, obscure, indiscernible zones that defy any attempt at clarification? It is life that justifies; it has no need of being justified. The English novel, and even more so the French novel, feels the need to rationalize, even if only in the final pages, and psychology is no doubt the last form of rationalism: the Western reader awaits the final word. In this regard, psychoanalysis has revived the claims of reason. But even if it has hardly spared the great novelistic works, no great novelist contemporaneous with psychoanalysis has taken much interest in it. The founding act of the American novel, like that of the Russian novel, was to take the novel far from the order of reasons, and to give birth to characters who exist in nothingness, survive only in the void, defy logic and psychology and keep their mystery until the end. Even their soul, says Melville, is "an immense and terrifying void," and Ahab's body is an "empty shell." If they have a formula, it is certainly not explanatory. I PREFER NOT TO remains just as much a cabalistic formula as that of the Underground Man, who can not keep two and two from making four, but who will not RESIGN himBARTLEBY; OR, THE FORMULA

self to it either (he prefers that two and two not make four). What counts for a great novelist—Melville, Dostoyevsky, Kafka, or Musil is that things remain enigmatic yet nonarbitrary; in short, a new logic, definitely a logic, but one that grasps the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason. The novelist has the eye of a prophet, not the gaze of a psychologist. For Melville, the three great categories of characters belong to this new logic, just as much as this logic belongs to them. Once it has reached that sought-after Zone, the hyperborean zone, far from the temperate regions, the novel, like life. needs no justification. 15 And in truth, there is no such thing as reason; it exists only in bits and pieces. In Billy Budd, Melville defines monomaniacs as the Masters of reason, which is why they are so difficult to surprise; but this is because theirs is a delirium of action, because they make use of reason, make it serve their own sovereign ends, which in truth are highly unreasonable. Hypochondriacs are the Outcasts of reason, without our being able to know if they have excluded themselves from it in order to obtain something reason can not give them the indiscernible, the unnameable with which they will be able to merge. In the end, even prophets are only the Castaways of reason: if Vere, Ishmael, or the attorney clings so tightly to the debris of reason, whose integrity they try so hard to restore, it is because they have seen so much, and because what they have seen has marked them forever.

But a second remark by Melville (chapter 44) introduces an essential distinction between the characters in a novel. Melville says that we must above all avoid confusing true Originals with characters that are simply remarkable or singular, patticular. This is because the particulars, who tend to be quite populous in a novel, have characteristics that determine their form, properties that make up their image; they are influenced by their milieu and by each other, so that their actions and reactions are governed by general laws, though in each case they retain a particular value. Similarly, the sentences they utter are their own, but they are nonetheless governed by the general laws of language. By contrast, we do not even know if an original exists in an absolute sense, apart from the primordial God, and it is already something extraordinary when we encounter one. Melville admits that it is difficult to imagine how a novel might include several of them. Each original is a powerful, solitary Figure that exceeds any explicable form: it projects flamboyant traits of expression that mark the stubbornness of a thought without image, a question without response, an extreme and

nonrational logic. Figures of life and knowledge, they know something inexpressible, live something unfathomable. They have nothing general about them, and are not particular—they escape knowledge, defy psychology. Even the words they utter surpass the general laws of language (presuppositions) as well as the simple particularities of speech, since they are like the vestiges or projections of a unique, original language [langue], and bring all of language [language] to the limit of silence and music. There is nothing particular or general about Bartleby: he is an Original.

Originals are beings of Primary Nature, but they are inseparable from the world or from secondary nature, where they exert their effect: they reveal its emptiness, the imperfection of its laws, the mediocrity of particular creatures . . . the world as masquerade (this is what Musil, for his part, will call "parallel action"). The role of prophets, who are not originals, is to be the only ones who can recognize the wake that originals leave in the world, and the unspeakable confusion and trouble they cause in it. The original, says Melville, is not subject to the influence of his milieu; on the contrary, he throws a livid white light on his surroundings, much like the light that "accompanies the beginning of things in Genesis." Originals are sometimes the immobile source of this light—like the foretopman high up on the mast, Billy Budd the bound, hanged man who "ascends" with the glimmering of the dawn, or Bartleby standing in the attorney's office—and sometimes its dazzling passage, a movement too rapid for the ordinary eye to follow, the lightning of Ahab or Claggart. These are the two great original Figures that one finds throughout Melville, the panoramic shot and the tracking shot, stationary process and infinite speed. And even though these are the two elements of music, though stops give rhythm to movement and lightning springs from immobility, is it not this contradiction that separates the originals, their two types? What does Jean-Luc Godard mean when, in the name of cinema, he asserts that between a tracking shot and a panoramic shot there lies a "moral problem"? Perhaps it is this difference that explains why a great novel cannot, it seems, include more than a single original. Mediocre novels have never been able to create the slightest original character. But how could even the greatest novel create more than one at a time? Ahab or Bartleby . . . It is like the great Figures of the painter Francis Bacon, who admits that he has not yet found a way of bringing together two figures in a single painting. 16 And yet Melville will find a way. If he finally broke his silence in the

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end to write Billy Budd, it is because this last novel, under the penetrating eye of Captain Vere, brings together two originals, the demonic and the petrified. The problem was not to link them together through a plot-an easy and inconsequential thing to do, since it would be enough for one to be the victim of the other—but to make them work together in the picture (if Benito Cereno was already an attempt in this direction, it was a flawed one, under the myopic and blurred gaze of Delano).

What then is the biggest problem haunting Melville's oeuvre? To recover the already-sensed identity? No doubt, it lies in reconciling the two originals but thereby also in reconciling the original with secondary humanity, the inhuman with the human. Now what Captain Vere and the attorney demonstrate is that there are no good fathers. There are only monstrous, devouring fathers, and petrified, fatherless sons. If humanity can be saved, and the originals reconciled, it will only be through the dissolution or decomposition of the paternal function. So it is a great moment when Ahab, invoking Saint Elmo's fire, discovers that the father is himself a lost son, an orphan, whereas the son is the son of nothing, or of everyone, a brother.17 As Joyce will say, paternity does not exist, it is an emptiness, a nothingness-or rather, a zone of uncertainty haunted by brothers, by the brother and sister. The mask of the charitable father must fall in order for Primary Nature to be appeased, and for Ahab and Claggart to recognize Bartleby and Billy Budd, releasing through the violence of the former and the stupor of the latter the fruit with which they were laden: the fraternal relation pure and simple. Melville will never cease to elaborate on the radical opposition between fraternity and Christian "charity" or paternal "philanthropy." To liberate man from the father function, to give birth to the new man or the man without particularities, to reunite the original and humanity by constituting a society of brothers as a new universality. In the society of brothers, alliance replaces filiation and the blood pact replaces consanguinity. Man is indeed the blood brother of his fellow man, and woman, his bloodsister: acccording to Melville, this is the community of celibates, drawing its members into an unlimired becoming. A brother, a sister, all the more true for no longer being "his" or "hers," since all "property," all "proprietorship," has disappeared. A burning passion deeper than love, since it no longer has either substance or qualities, but traces a zone of indiscernibility in which it passes through all intensities in every direction, extending all the way to the homosexual relation between brothers, and passing through the incestuous relation between brother and sister. This is the most mysterious relation, the one in which Pierre and Isabelle are swept up, the one that draws Heathcliff and Catherine along in Wuthering Heights, each one becoming Ahab and Moby-Dick by turns: "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. . . . My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. . . . I am Heathcliff—he's always always in my mind-not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being ..."18

How can this community be realized? How can the biggest problem be resolved? But is it not already resolved, by itself, precisely because it is not a personal problem, but a historical, geographic, or political one? It is not an individual or particular affair, but a collective one, the affair of a people, or rather, of all peoples. It is not an Oedipal phantasm but a political program. Melville's bachelor, Bartleby, like Kafka's, must "find the place where he can take his walks"... America.19 The American is one who is freed from the English paternal function, the son of a crumbled father, the son of all nations. Even before their independence, Americans were thinking about the combination of States, the State-form most compatible with their vocation. But their vocation was not to reconstitute an "old State secret," a nation, a family, a heritage, or a father. It was above all to constitute a universe, a society of brothers, a federation of men and goods, a community of anarchist individuals, inspired by Jefferson, by Thoreau, by Melville. Such is the declaration in Moby-Dick (chapter 26): if man is the brother of his fellow man, if he is worthy of trust or "confidence," it is not because he belongs to a nation or because he is a proprietor or shareholder, but only insofar as he is Man, when he has lost those characteristics that constitute his "violence," his "idiocy," his "villainy," when he has no consciousness of himself apart from the proprieties of a "democratic dignity" that considers all particularities as so many ignominious stains that arouse anguish or pity. America is the potential of the man without particularities, the Original Man. Already in Redburn:

You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world. Be he Englishman, Frenchman, German, Dane, or Scot; the European who scoffs at an American, calls his own brother Raca, and stands in danger of the judgment. We are not a narrow tribe of men, with a bigoted Hebrew nationality—whose blood has been debased in the attempt to enoble it, by maintaining an exclusive succession among ourselves. . . . We are not a nation, so much as a world; for unless we may claim all the world for our sire, like Melchisedec, we are without father or mother. . . We are the heirs of all time, and with all nations we divide our inheritance . . . <sup>20</sup>

The picture of the nineteenth-century proletarian looks like this: the advent of the communist man or the society of comrades, the future Soviet, being without property, family, or nation, has no other determination than that of being man, Homo tantum. But this is also the picture of the American, executed by other means, and the traits of the former often intermingle with or are superimposed over those of the latter. America sought to create a revolution whose strength would lie in a universal immigration, émigrés of the world, just as Bolshevik Russia would seek to make a revolution whose strength would lie in a universal prolerarization, "Proletarians of the world" . . . the two forms of the class struggle. So that the messianism of the nineteenth century has two heads and is expressed no less in American pragmatism than in the ultimately Russian form of socialism.

Pragmatism is misunderstood when it is seen as a summary philosophical theory fabricated by Americans. On the other hand, we understand the novelty of American thought when we see pragmatism as an attempt to transform the world, to think a new world ot new man insofar as they create themselves. Western philosophy was the skull, or the paternal Spirit that realized itself in the world as totality, and in a knowing subject as proprietor. Is it against Western philosophy that Melville directs his insult, "metaphysical villain"? A contemporary of American transcendentalism (Emerson, Thoreau), Melville is already sketching out the traits of the pragmatism that will be its continuation. It is first of all the affirmation of a world in process, an archipelago. Not even a puzzle, whose pieces when fitted together would constitute a whole, but rather a wall of loose, uncernented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also in relation to others; isolated and floating relations, islands and straits, immobile points and sinuous lines-for Truth always has "jagged edges." Not a skull but the vertebral column, a spinal cord; not a uniform piece of clothing but a Harlequin's coat, even white on white, an infinite patchwork with multiple joinings, like the jacket of Redburn, White Jacket or the Great Cosmopolitan: the American invention par excellence, for the Americans invented patchwork, just as the Swiss are said to have invented the cuckoo clock. But to reach this point, it was also necessary for the knowing subject, the sole proprietor, to give way to a community of explorers, the brothers of the archipelago, who replace knowledge with belief, or rather with "confidence"—not belief in another world, but confidence in this one, and in man as much as in God ("I am going to attempt the ascent of Ofo with hope, not with faith. . . . I will follow my own path . . .").

Pragmatism is this double principle of archipelago and hope.<sup>21</sup> And what must the community of men consist of in order for truth to be possible? Truth and trust. 22 Like Melville before it, pragmatism will fight ceaselessly on two fronts: against the particularities that pit man against man and nourish an irremediable mistrust; but also against the Universal or the Whole, the fusion of souls in the name of great love or charity. Yet, what remains of souls once they are no longer attached to particularities, what keeps them from melting into a whole? What remains is precisely their "originality," that is, a sound that each one produces, like a ritornello at the limit of language, but that it produces only when it takes to the open road (or to the open sea) with its body, when it leads its life without seeking salvation, when it embarks upon its incarnate voyage, without any particular aim, and then encounters other voyagers, whom it recognizes by their sound. This is how Lawrence described the new messianism, or the democratic contribution of American literature; against the European morality of salvation and charity, a morality of life in which the soul is fulfilled only by taking to the road, with no other aim, open to all contacts, never trying to save other souls, turning away from those that produce an overly authoritarian or groaning sound, forming even fleeting and unresolved chords and accords with its equals, with freedom as its sole accomplishment, always ready to free itself so as to complete itself.<sup>23</sup> According to Melville or Lawrence, brotherhood is a matter for original souls: perhaps it begins only with the death of the father or God, but it does not derive from this death, it is a whole other matter—"all the subtle sympathizings of the incalculable soul, from the bitterest hate to passionate love."

This requires a new perspective, an archipelago-perspectivism that conjugates the panoramic shor and the tracking shot, as in *The Encantadas*. It requires an acute perception, both visual and auditory, as *Benito Cereno* shows, and must replace the concept with the "percept,"

that is, with a perception in becoming. It requires a new community, whose members are capable of trust or "confidence," that is, of a belief in themselves, in the world, and in becoming. Bartleby the bachelor must embark upon his voyage and find his sister, with whom he will consume the ginger nut, the new host. Bartleby lives cloistered in the office and never goes out, but when the attorney suggests new occupations to him, he is not joking when he responds, "There is too much confinement . . . " And if he is prevented from making his voyage, then the only place left for him is prison, where he dies of "civil disobedience," as Thoreau says, "the only place where a free man can stay with honor."24 William and Henry James are indeed brothers, and Daisy Miller, the new American maiden, asks for nothing more than a little confidence, and allows herself to die because even this meager request remains unfulfilled. And what was Bartleby asking for if not a little confidence from the attorney, who instead responds to him with charity and philanthropy—all the masks of the paternal function? The attorney's only excuse is that he draws back from the becoming into which Bartleby, through his lonely existence, threatens to drag him: rumors are already spreading . . . The hero of pragmatism is not the successful businessman, it is Bartleby, and it is Daisy Miller, it is Pierre and Isabelle, the brother and sister.

The dangers of a "society without fathers" have often been pointed out, but the only real danger is the return of the father.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, it is difficult to separate the failure of the two revolutions, the American and the Soviet, the pragmatic and the dialectical. Universal emigration was no more successful than universal proletarization. The Civil War already sounded the knell, as would the liquidation of the Soviets later on. The birth of a nation, the restoration of the nation-state—and the monstrous fathers come galloping back in, while the sons without fathers start dying off again. Paper images---this is the fate of the American as well as the Proletarian. But just as many Bolsheviks could hear the diabolical powers knocking at the door in 1917, the pragmatists, like Melville before them, could see the masquerade that the society of brothers would lead to. Long before Lawrence, Melville and Thoreau were diagnosing the American evil, the new cement that would rebuild the wall: paternal authority and filthy charity. Bartleby therefore lets himself die in prison. In the beginning, it was Benjamin Franklin, the hypocritical lightning-rod Merchant, who instituted the magnetic

American prison. The city-ship reconstitutes the most oppressive law, and brotherhood exists among the topmen only when they remain immobile, high up on the masts (White lacket). The great community of celibates is nothing more than a company of bons vivants, which certainly does not keep the rich bachelor from exploiting the poor and pallid workers, by reconstituting the two unreconciled figures of the monstrous father and the orphaned daughters (The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids). The American confidence-man appears everywhere in Melville's work. What malignant power has turned the trust into a company as cruel as the abominable "universal nation" founded by the Dog-Man in The Encantadas? The Confidence-Man, in which Melville's critique of charity and philanthropy culminates, brings into play a series of devious characters who seem to emanate from a "great Cosmopolitan" in patchwork clothing, and who ask for no more than . . . a little human confidence, in order to pull off a multiple and rebounding confidence game.

Are these false brothers sent by a diabolical father to restore his power over overly credulous Americans? But the novel is so complex that one could just as easily say the opposite: this long procession [théorie] of con men would be a comic version of authentic brothers, such as overly suspicious Americans see them, or rather have already become incapable of seeing them. This cohort of characters, including the mysterious child at the end, is perhaps the society of Philanthropists who dissimulate their demonic project, but perhaps it is also the community of brothers that the Misanthropes are no longer able to recognize in passing. For even in the midst of its failure, the American Revolution continues to send out its fragments, always making something take flight on the horizon, even sending itself to the moon, always trying to break through the wall, to take up the experiment once again, to find a brotherhood in this enterprise, a sister in this becoming, a music in its stuttering language, a pure sound and unknown chords in language itself. What Kafka would say about "small nations" is what Melville had already said about the great American nation: it must become a patchwork of all small nations. What Kafka would say about minor literatures is what Melville had already said about the American literature of his time: because there are so few authors in America, and because its people are so indifferent, the writer is not in a position to succeed as a recognized master. Even in his failure,

the writer remains all the more the bearer of a collective enunciation, which no longer forms part of literary history and preserves the rights of a people to come, or of a human becoming. <sup>26</sup> A schizophrenic vocation: even in his catatonic or anorexic state, Bartleby is not the patient, but the doctor of a sick America, the *Medicine-Man*, the new Christ or the brother to us all.

### 11

# An Unrecognized Precursor to Heidegger: Alfred Jarry

Pataphysics (epi meta ta phusika) has as its exact and explicit object the great Turning, the overcoming of metaphysics, the rising up beyond or before, "the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether in itself or outside of itself, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics." We can thus consider Heidegger's work as a development of pataphysics in conformity with the principles of Sophrotates the Armenian, and of his first disciple, Alfred Jarry. The great resemblances, memorial or historical, concern the Being of phenomena, planetary technology, and the treatment of language.

I. In the first place, pataphysics as the overcoming of metaphysics is inseparable from a phenomenology, that is, from a new sense and a new comprehension of phenomena. There is a striking resemblance between the two authors. The phenomenon can no longer be defined as an appearance, nor can it be defined as an apparition, as in Husserl's phenomenology. The apparition refers to a consciousness to which it appears, and can still exist in a form different from the one it makes appear. The phenomenon, on the contrary, is that which shows itself in itself.<sup>2</sup> A watch appears round whenever one reads the time (utensility); or again, independently of its utility, and by virtue of the demands of consciousness alone (everyday banality), the facade of a house appears square, in accordance with the constants of reduction. But the

Pierre Boulez: Conversations with Celestin Deliege (London: Eulenburg, 1976), chapter 12 ("the course of a work ought to be multiple," p. 81).

#### 10. Bartleby; or, The Formula

- 1. Nicolas Ruwet, "Parallélismes et déviations en poésie," in Langue, discours, société, ed. Julia Kristeva and Nicholas Ruwet (Parts: Settil, 1975), pp. 334-44 (on "portmanteau-constructions").
- 2. Philippe Jaworski, Melville, le désert et l'empire (Paris: Presses de l'Ecole Normale, 1986), p. 19.
  - 3. See Viola Sachs, Lo contre-Bible de Melville (Paris: Mouton, 1975).
- 4. On Bartleby and Melville's silence, see Armand Farrachi, La part du silence (Paris: Barraulr, 1984), pp. 40-45.
  - 5. Mathieu Lindon, "Bartleby," Delta 6 (May 1978); 22.
- 6. Kafka's great text almost reads like another version of "Bartleby." See Franz Kafka, The Diaries of Franz Kafka: 1910-1913, ed. Max Brod, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1948), p. 26.
- 7. Blanchot demonstrates that Musil's character is not only without qualities, but "without particularities," since he has no more substance than he does qualities. See Le livre à venir (Paris: Gallimard/Folio, 1963), pp. 202-3. This theme of the man without particularities, the modern-day Ulysses, arises early in the nineteenth century, and in France appears in the rathet strange book of Ballanche, a friend of Chateauhriand; see Pierre Simon Ballanche, Essais de palingénésie sociale, notably "La ville des expiations" (1827), in Oewvres complètes (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967).
- 8. Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener," in Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories, ed. Harold Beaver (London: Penguin Classics, 1967), p. 89.
- 9. Régis Durand, in his Melville, signes et métaphores (Paris: L'Age d'Homme, 1980), pp. 103-7, has pointed out the role played by loose lines aboard a whalet, as opposed to the formalized riggings. Both Durand's and Jaworski's books are among the most profound analyses of Melville tohave appeared recently.
- 10. George Dumézil, preface to Georges Charachidzé, Prométhée ou le Caucase: Essai de mythologie contrastive (Paris: Flammarion 1986): "The Greek myth of Prometheus has remained, through the ages, an object of reflection and reference. The god who does not take part in his brothers' dynastic struggle against their cousin Zeus, but who, on petsonal grounds, defies and ridicules this same Zeus . . . this anarchist, affects and stirs up dark and sensitive zones in us."
- 11. On this conception of the two Natures in Sade (the theory of the pope in the New Justine), see Pierre Klossowski, Sade My Neighbor, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp. 99 ff.
- 12. Herman Melville, Moby-Dick: or, the Whale, chapter 36 (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992), p. 178.
- 13. See Schopenhauer's conception of sainthood as the act by which the Will denies itself in the suppression of all particularity. Pierre Leyris, in his second preface to the French translation of Billy Budd (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), recalls Melville's profound interest in Schopenhauer. Nietzsche saw Parsifal as a type of Schopenhauerian samt, a kind of Bartleby. But after Nietzsche, man still preferred being a demon to being a saint: "man would rather will nothingness than not will." Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), third essay, § 28, p. 163.
- 14. See Heinrich Kleist's letter to H. J. von Collin, December 1808, in An Abyss

  Deep Enough: The Letters of Heinrich Von Kleist, ed. Philip B. Miller (New York: Dut-

- ton. 1982). Catherine Heithronn had her own formula, close to that of Bartleby's: "I
- 15. The comparison between Musil and Melville would pertain to the following four points: the critique of reason ("Principle of insufficient reason"), the denunciation of psychology ("the great hole we call the soul"), the new logic ("the other state"), and the hyperborean Zone (the "Possible").
- 16. See Francis Bacon and David Sylvester, The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 22. And Melville said: "For the same reason that there is but one planet to one orbit, so can there be but one such original character to one work or invention. Two would conflict to chaos." Herman Melville, The Confidence-Man. ed. Stephen Matterson (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), p. 282.
- 17. See R. Durand, p. 153. May oux writes: "On the personal plane, the question of the father is momentarily postponed, if not settled.... But it is not only a question of the father. We are all orphans. Now is the age of fraternity." Jean-Jacques Mayoux, *Melville*, trans. John Ashbery (New York: Grove, 1960), p. 109, translation modified.
  - 18. Emily Bronte, Wuthering Heights (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 122.
  - 19. Kafka, Diaries 1910-1913, p. 28.
- 20. Herman Melville, Redburn: His Maiden Voyage (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1969), p. 169.
- 21. Jaworski has analyzed this world-as-archipelago or this patchwork experiment. These themes are to be found throughout Pragmatism, and notably among William James's most beautiful pages: the world as "shot point blank with a pistol." This is inseparable from the search for a new human community. In Pierre; or, The Ambiguities, Plotinus Plinlimmon's mysterious tract already seems like the manifestation of an absolute pragmatism. On the history of pragmatism in general, philosophical and political, see Gérard Deledalle, La philosophie américaine (Paris: L'Age d'Homme, 1983): Royce is particularly important, with his "absolute pragmatism" and his "great community of Interpretation" that unites individuals. There are many Melvilban echoes in Royce's work. His strange trio of the Aventuret, the Beneficiary, and the Insurer seems in certain ways to derive from Melville's trio of the Monomaniac, the Hypochondriac, and the Prophet, or even to refer to characters in The Confidence-Man, who would already prefigure the trio's comic version.
  - 22. [In English in the original.—Trans.]
- 23. D. H. Lawrence, "Whitman," in Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: Viking, 1953). This hook also includes two famous studies on Melville. Lawrence criticizes both Melville and Whitman for having succumhed to the very things they denounced; nonetheless, he says, it was American literature that, thanks to them, marked out the path.
- 24. [See Henry David Thoreau, Walden and Civil Disobedience, ed. Owen Thomas (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 233: "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."—Trans.]
- 2.5. See Alexander Mitscherlich's Society without the Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology, trans. Eric Musbacher (New York: J. Aronson, 1974), which is written from a psychoanalytic point of view that remains indifferent to the movements of History and invokes the benefits of the paternal English Constitution.
- 26. See Melville's text on American literature, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in The fortable Melville, ed. Jay Leyda (New York: Vikmg, 1952), pp. 411-14, which should be compared with Kafka's text on "the literature of small peoples," in The Diaries of Franz Kafka: 1910-1913. entry for December 25, 1911, pp. 210 ff.

#### ANDRÉ MALRAUX

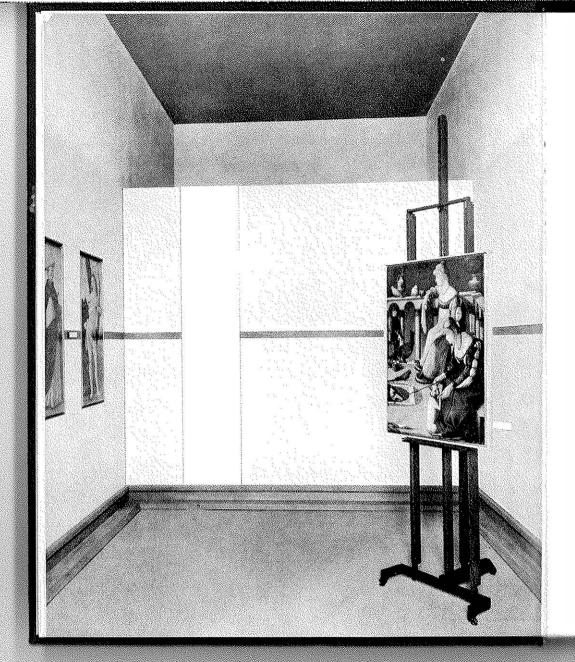
THE VOICES OF SILENCE

## Museum Without Walls

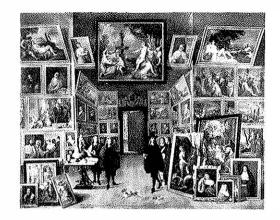
Translated from the French by Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price

Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York 1967









A Romanesque crucifix was not regarded by its contemporaries as a work of sculpture; nor Cimabue's *Madonna* as a picture. Even Phidias' *Pallas Athene* was not, primarily, a statue.

So vital is the part played by the art museum in our approach to works of art today that we find it difficult to realize that no museums exist, none has ever existed, in lands where the civilization of modern Europe is, or was, unknown; and that, even in the Western world, they have existed for barely two hundred years. They were so important to the artistic life of the nineteenth century and are so much a part of our lives today that we forget they have imposed on the spectator a wholly new attitude toward the work of art. They have tended to estrange the works they bring together from their original functions and to transform even portraits into "pictures." Though a bust of Caesar or an equestrian statue of Charles V may remain for us Caesar and the Emperor Charles, Count-Duke Olivares has become pure Velazquez. What do we care who the Man with the Helmet or the Man with the Glove may have been in real life? For us, their names are Rembrandt and Titian. The portrait has ceased to be primarily a likeness of an indi-

- ◀ 1. Venice Room in the Museo Correr.
  - 2. Téniers The Gallery of the Archduke Leopold at Brussels.

vidual. Until the nineteenth century a work of art was essentially a representation of something, real or imaginary. Only in the artist'seyes was painting specifically painting; and often, even to him, it was also a form of poetry. The effect of the museum is to suppress the model in almost every portrait (even that of a dream figure) and to divest works of art of their functions. It does away with the significance of Palladium, of saint and Savior; rules out associations of sanctity, qualities of adornment and possession, of likeness or imagination; and presents the viewer with images of things, differing from the things themselves, and drawing their raison d'être from this very difference. It is a confrontation of metamorphoses.

The reason the art museum made its appearance in Asia so belatedly (and, even then, only under European influence and patronage) is that, for an Asiatic, and especially the man of the Far East, artistic contemplation and the picture gallery are incompatible. In China, the full enjoyment of works of art necessarily involved ownership, except where religious art was concerned; above all it demanded their isolation. A painting was not exhibited, but unfurled before an art lover in a fitting state of grace; its function was to deepen and enhance his communion with the universe. The practice of confronting works of art with other works of art is an intellectual activity, and diametrically opposed to the mood of relaxation which alone makes contemplation possible. In Asiatic eyes, the museum may be a place of learning and teaching, but considered as anything else it is no more than an absurd concert in which contradictory themes are mingled and confused in an endless succession.

For over a century our approach to art has been growing more and more intellectualized. The museum invites comparison of each of the expressions of the world it brings together, and forces us to question what it is that brings them together. The sequence of seemingly antagonistic schools has added to the simple "delight of the eye" an awareness of art's impassioned quest, of a re-creation of the universe, confronting the Creation. After all, a museum is one of the places that show man at his noblest. But our knowledge covers a wider field than our museums. The visitor to the Louvre knows that it contains no significant representation of either Goya or of the great English artists, of Piero della Francesca or of Grünewald, of the paintings of Michelangelo or even those of Vermeer. In a place where the work of art no longer has any function other than that of being a work of art, and at a time when the artistic exploration of the world is in active progress, the assemblage of so many masterpieces—from which, nevertheless, so many

are missing—conjures up in the mind's eye *all* of the world's masterpieces. How indeed could this mutilated possible fail to evoke the whole gamut of the possible?

Of what is it necessarily deprived? Until the present, at least, of such things as stained glass and frescoes, which form part of a whole; of objects, such as sets of tapestries, which are difficult to display; of everything that cannot be moved or cannot be acquired. Even when the greatest zeal and enormous resources have gone into its making, a museum owes much to opportunities that chance has thrown its way. Napoleon's victories did not enable him to bring the Sistine to the Louvre, and no art patron, however wealthy, will take to the Metropolitan Museum the Royal Portal of Chartres or the Arezzo frescoes. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century what migrated was the portable, with the result that far more Rembrandt paintings than Giotto frescoes have been offered for sale. Thus the art museum, born when the easel picture was the one living form of art, came to be a museum not of color but of paintings; not of sculpture but of statues.

In the nineteenth century the "grand tour" filled in the gaps left by the museums. But how many artists of the time were familiar with all of Europe's masterpieces? Gautier saw Italy (without seeing Rome) when he was thirtynine; Edmond de Goncourt when he was thirty-three; Hugo as a child; Baudelaire and Verlaine, never. And yet Italy was the traditional heart of the "tour." They might have seen portions of Spain and Germany, and perhaps Holland; Flanders was relatively well known. The eager crowds that thronged the salons—composed largely of real connoisseurs—owed their art education to the Louvre. Baudelaire never set eyes on the masterpieces of El Greco, Michelangelo, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, or Grünewald, Titian, or of Hals—or of Goya, though he had casy access to the Galerie d'Orléans. His *Phares* begins with the sixteenth century.

What had he seen? What, until 1900, had been seen by all those whose views on art still impress us as revealing and important; whom we take to be speaking of the same works, referring to the same sources, as those we know ourselves? Two or three of the great museums, and photographs, engravings, or copies of a handful of the masterpieces of European art. Most of their readers had seen even less. In the art knowledge of those days there existed an area of ambiguity: comparison of a picture in the Louvre with another in Madrid, in Florence, or in Rome was comparison of a present vision with a memory. Visual memory is not infallible, and successive periods of study were often separated by weeks of travel. From the seven-

teenth to the nineteenth century, pictures, interpreted by engraving, had become engravings; they had retained their drawing (at least relatively) but lost their colors, which were replaced by an interpretation in black and white; also, while losing their dimensions, they acquired margins. The nineteenth-century photograph was merely a more faithful print. The art lover of the time knew pictures in the same manner as we knew mosaics and stained-glass windows in the years preceding World War II.

Today, an art student can examine color reproductions of most of the world's great paintings and discover for himself a host of secondary works, as well as the archaic arts, the great epochs of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and pre-Columbian sculpture, some Byzantine art, Romanesque frescoes, and primitive and "folk" art. How many statues could be seen in reproduction in 1850? Since sculpture can be reproduced in black and white more faithfully than painting, our contemporary art books have found in it a realm in which they are eminently successful. At one time, the student visited the Louvre and some subsidiary galleries and memorized what he saw as best he could. We, however, have far more great works available to refresh our memories than even the greatest of museums could bring together.

A museum without walfs has been opened to us, and it will carry infinitely farther that limited revelation of the world of art which the real museums offer us within their walls: in answer to their appeal, the plastic arts have produced their printing press.

### **Skidmore College**

Action, Story and History: On Re-reading The Human Condition

Author(s): PAUL RICOEUR

Reviewed work(s):

Source: Salmagundi, No. 60, On Hannah Arendt (Spring-Summer 1983), pp. 60-72

Published by: Skidmore College

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## Action, Story and History: On Re-reading *The Human Condition\**

BY PAUL RICOEUR

The distinction between labor, work and action — which is the cornerstone of Hannah Arendt's The Human Condition (1958) — has usually been examined and criticized via the disciplines of sociology and political science. Questions have been raised as to the accuracy and coherence of her criteria, and above all, as to whether or not they were consistent with the principal presuppositions of her other major works, namely The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951) and On Revolution (1963). I should like to undertake an examination of the central concepts from a different point of view, one closer to philosophical anthropology than to political science. For this purpose I have chosen as a leading thread the connection between action, story and history which appears in the section of The Human Condition devoted to action and which is expanded in "The Modern Concept of History" (1958), reprinted in Between Past and Future (1961). By philosophical anthropology I mean an inquiry aimed at identifying the most enduring features of the temporal condition of man — those which are the least vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the modern age.

I am aware of the danger of an analysis which stresses what is basic to *The Human Condition* rather than the critique of modernity which is usually considered to be Hannah Arendt's main contribution to modern thought. But the very composition of *The Human Condition* warrants this kind of approach. In spite of her repeated incursions into the problem of modernity in her five first chapters, she felt compelled to devote a sixth distinct chapter to "The *Vita Activa* and the Modern Age" (pp. 248 ff.). The distinction between *Vita Contemplativa* and

<sup>\*</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, quotations in this text are taken from Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

the Vita Activa is the undeveloped presupposition of the book. It serves to govern the whole of the analysis from above, bolstered by the distinction between "The Public and the Private Realm" (which is introduced before the three main categories of Vita Activa) and the ordering of these three categories of labor, work and action. These categories are not categories in the Kantian sense, i.e. a-historical structures of the mind. They are themselves historical structures. Nevertheless, throughout their manifold permutations they retain a kind of flexible identity which allows us to recognize them as components of the human condition which deserve to be described under such names. If this were not the case, the ceaseless references to Homer, Plato, Aristotle, the Romans and the Medieval thinkers would amount to, at best, a kind of nostalgia, and at worst, to the repetition of unjustified anachronisms. The claim underlying such borrowings is that modernity itself, in spite of its pretension to radical newness, can still be understood with the help of such concepts as poiesis, praxis, animal laborans, homo faber, vita activa, and so on. It is precisely in order to vindicate the strategy of the author, combining ancient categories with novel situations, that I deliberately choose to disentangle the temporal traits characteristic of the categories of labor, work and action from the more controversial and polemical assessment of the state of modern man. This preliminary analysis will introduce my main topic, namely the transition from action to story and from story to history. What will interest me in this second stage of my inquiry is less the contribution of Hannah Arendt to the epistemology of historiography than the amplification of the description of human time implicit in the first stage of our inquiry devoted to the temporal features of labor, work and action.

#### I. The Temporal Features of Labor, Work and Action

It's worth our while to underscore the permanent features of these three categories in order to understand not only the radical transformation they undergo but also the book's polemical stance concerning their modern reordering. The crucial issue is: how could the author question on the one hand the underestimation of the *vita practica* in the platonic and neoplatonic tradition and in the early and medieval stages of Christianity for the sake of *vita contemplativa*, and on the other hand, the overestimation of the category of labor after Adam Smith and Marx, if the hierarchy and balance between *vita* 

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contemplativa and vita activa and within vita activa itself had not some normative value, ruled by some enduring teleological constitution?

My contention is that this normative and teleological ordering can be vindicated in the most convincing way if the categories under consideration are dealt with as specific responses to specific questions raised by the temporal condition of "mortal" beings. We are all familiar with the definition of labor as an activity submitted to vital necessities and to the care for individual and species survival; with the definition of work as the fabrication of a man-made world of artifacts; and with the definition of action as the irreducible condition of politics. My task will be to disentangle the permanent temporal features pertaining to each of these stages of vita practica. As I just suggested, all of them have to do with man's "mortality." The question of time is raised, or rather time is raised as a question, because man is the only being which knows that it is "mortal," because man alone thinks and thinks what is eternal. Hannah Arendt never departed from this basic worldview which is both presocratic and hebraic — that eternity is what we think, but that it is as "mortals" that we think it. In this sense, it is vita contemplativa which allows vita activa to understand itself and to reflect upon its own temporal condition.2 This gap between man's mortal condition and the thinking of eternity is the most fundamental presupposition of the temporal traits that we shall now consider. All of them are, in their own ways, attempts to confer immortality upon perishing things. In this regard, the distinction between eternity and immortality is fundamental. It is stated very early in The Human Condition. Eternity is what is lacking to mortals, but to the extent that we think, we think eternity. (We might even say that to think is to think eternity.) Immortality is what we attempt to confer upon ourselves in order to endure our mortal condition. The political enterprise, in this respect, is the highest attempt to "immortalize" ourselves. From this attempt springs both the greatness and the illusion of the whole human enterprise. Hannah Arendt, as one who thinks the

<sup>1</sup> This claim is asserted in the following terms: the three activities constitutive of *vita activa* "are fundamental because each corresponds to one of the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man."

<sup>2</sup> This point is nowhere emphasized in *The Human Condition* and recognized only in Hannah Arendt's unfinished work, *The Life of the Mind*, published posthumously and edited by Mary McCarthy (1978). This shortcoming of *The Human Condition* is acknowledged by the author in her contribution to the Toronto Conference devoted to "The Work of Hannah Arendt." See *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (1972), ed. Melvyn A. Hill, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1979, p. 305.

political status of man without being herself a political actor (except by accident and by necessity), consistently refused to despise this greatness in spite of its vanity — or to conceal this illusion for the sake of its greatness. This unequivocal equivocity pertains to the relationship between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*.

Let us now proceed stage by stage.

The activity called *labor* draws its temporal characterization from the transitory nature of things produced for the sake of subsistance. Labor remains today an activity submitted to vital necessities, i.e. to the ceaseless renewal of life. This is why Locke was right to say that all those "good things" which are "really useful to the life of man," to the "necessity of subsisting," are "generally of short duration, such as — if they are not consumed by use — will decay and perish by themselves." Hannah Arendt agrees: "the least durable of tangible things are those needed for the life process itself." Absence of durability, accordingly, characterizes the level of animal laborans. This apparent paradox must be correctly understood in order to make sense of the vehement attack directed against modern reductions of work to labor. Work, as we shall see, constitutes the realm of durability for reasons we shall spell out later. The characterization of labor as that which lacks durability looks paradoxical when we consider the accumulation of tools and instruments, the constitution of capital, and the abundance of commodities and goods in advanced industrial societies — at least as long as the problem of the exhaustion of nonrenewable energies and resources has not emerged as a crucial predicament for the whole economic community. For Hannah Arendt all these achievements resulting from the liberation of labor, which itself preceeds the political liberation of laborers, tend to conceal the inescapable fact that life has to be unceasingly entertained and renewed, and that labor exhausts itself in the reproduction of a perpetually dying life, as Marx clearly explained in *The German Ideology*. Therefore, we should not let ourselves be deceived by the phenomenon of accumulation proper to modern production, but keep as a guideline throughout our analyses the ceaseless destruction of goods linked to consumption. It is the consumability of the products of labor which gives them their transient nature. Under this condition, it is no paradox to say that "it is . . . the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind." To consume is to exhaust. Labor, accordingly, underscores and reinforces the devouring character of life itself. But, if deceived by the accumulation of capital and the abundance of the products of labor, 64 PAUL RICOEUR

we project upon labor the permanence, stability and durability characteristic of work, we become oblivious to the ephemeral nature — ephemeral in the original sense of what lasts only one day — of a devouring consumption. Only the substitution of the durability of the products of work for the perishability of the products of labor vindicates Hannah Arendt's major attack against modernity: "we have changed work into laboring," she repeatedly insists. Labor's products are to be consumed. The products of work are to be used. The difference between consumption and use has a basically temporal connotation. It concerns the difference between passing and enduring, between change and duration.

The analysis of labor has already compelled us to anticipate that of work. The principal aspect of work, from a temporal point of view, is durability. Durability characterizes the essence of "human artifice." i.e. objects used but not consumed. The whole of these work products, although man-made, constitutes a world, not a nature which is simply the matrix of mortal life. The world, accordingly, is the whole of durable objects which resist the erosion of time: "the world, the man-made home erected on earth and made of the material which earthly nature delivers into human hands, consists not of things that are consumed but of things that are used." The products of labor don't become more durable thanks to abundance; on the other hand, the products of work, if dealt with as products of labor, become transformed into consumable goods and brought back to the futility of life: "Without being at home in the midst of things whose durability makes them fit for use and for erecting a world whose very permanence stands in direct contrast to life, this life would never be human." Hume was well aware of the futility of a life which "does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject which endures after [its] labour is past" (quoted in Human Condition, p. 135).

A new paradox arises here: destruction, the author says, is incidental to use, but it is inherent to consumption. The paradox, it seems, is that houses, temples, paintings, and poems are man-made to the extent that labor produces, preserves and repairs them. Besides the fact that their existence relies on the endurance of matter — stone, canvas, printed texts — it is through the mediation of tools and instruments that such works are made durable. But here too, the paradox may be dismissed if we look more carefully at the temporal features not of production but of consumption and use, i.e. of the ways in which we relate ourselves

to labor and work products. The function of the human artifice, says Hannah Arendt, is "to offer mortals a dwelling place more permanent and more stable than themselves." We cannot help thinking here of Heidegger's analysis of the act of dwelling. It is this act which draws the line between consuming and using: "The man-made world of things, the human artifice erected by homo faber, becomes a home for mortal man, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions, only insomuch as it transcends both the sheer functionalism of things produced for consumption and the sheer utility of objects produced for use." (Use, in this last quotation, is brought back to the side of consumption, by reference to the utilitarian tradition of our culture whose intention is precisely to cancel the distinction between use and consumption.) It's only when this distinction is preserved that mortality itself reaches its tragic meaning: to be born is to gain access to a world of durability instead of merely to come into the midst of the deathless repetition of nature; and to die is to recede, to pass out of a durable world. It's within a humanized world that man is born and dies. For the same reason, the span of time between birth and death deserves to be called Biso and no longer Zōē. Life, then, is full of events "which ultimately can be told as a story, establish a biography."

This last remark already anticipates the category of action and its close link, thanks to speech, with "a story with enough coherence to be told." Actually, the transition between work and action is secured by the notion of *remembrance*, considered as a structure of work itself. Works as such are the documents and the monuments of the past. They witness to the difference between time as duration and time as passage. If we keep in mind this polarity between duration and passage, regardless of the social or cultural changes which tend to blur the differences between work and labor, the reference to time as *passage* remains the mark of labor and the reference to time as *duration*, that of work.

We move now to the category of action. Its major criterion, according to Hannah Arendt, is the disclosure of who. Action, connected with speech, reveals man as an agent, i.e. the one who begins and rules (the Greek term arkhein meaning both), the one who initiates changes in the world. A first emphasis falls on the who, i.e., the responsible subject. But Hannah Arendt is too Aristotelian to get trapped in an individualism or a subjectivism which would make her turn her back on political

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philosophy. *Inter homines esse* is the motto of the political and speaking animal. That is why a second stress is laid on the term *disclosure* which will bring forth some new temporal considerations. The disclosure of who implies that man appears, is seen and heard by others. Now, the notion of a *space of appearance* required by that of *disclosure* implies in turn the constitution of a *public realm* contrasting with a *private realm*. This notion is so important that it is introduced very early in *The Human Condition*, long before the category of action and even before those of labor and work. But the notion becomes operative only when the explication of the concept of disclosure leads to the consideration of "the web of human relationships" in which each human life displays his or her own story. All these terms overlap: public realm, space of appearance, web of human relationships, disclosure of who. Altogether they make up the condition of *political life*.

If we read backwards the sequence labor, work, action, it appears that the very distinction between labor and work is preserved by the distinction between the *economic/social* and the *political* sphere of action. In spite of Marx, Arendt insists that economy remains linked to the *oikia*, i.e. the household, and in that sense to the private realm. The genuine "common," public realm is the political realm. Economy, ultimately, remains a kind of collective housekeeping. Any overestimation of the economic or social life at the expense of the political one amounts to substituting social behaviors for action, and consequently to abolishing the distinction between the public and the private realm, private life taking refuge in privacy and intimacy. Finally the "who" which action discloses is the citizen as distinct from the laborer and even from the fabricator of man-made artifacts. When politics is absorbed by social engineering, man, the bearer of action, man, the citizen, is absorbed by the laborer-consumer.

Once more, the polemical stance of *The Human Condition* has to be brought back to the underlying philosophical anthropology. And once more it is to the *temporal* constitution of the hierarchy of activities that we are directed by this philosophical anthropology. But, strangely enough, we have not yet spoken of time but only of space. All the previous expressions: public realm, space of appearance, web of human relationships, and even disclosure, have a prevailing *spatial* connotation. It is at that point that we must introduce the connection

<sup>3 &</sup>quot;The disclosure of who" requires "the shining brightness we once called glory and which is possible only in the public realm." (p. 180)

between action and story, which is the turning point for our whole inquiry.4

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The connection between action and story is one of the most striking themes of the whole treatise on *The Human Condition*. This link is a very subtle one. Hannah Arendt does not want to say that any lifespan constitutes a story as such, nor even that the disclosure of the who is by itself a story. It is only jointly that the disclosure of the who and the web of human relationships engenders a process from which the unique life story of any newcomer may emerge. Why link in this way the disclosure of the who and the web of human relationships? In order to give an account of the opaqueness of any life-story for its "hero." The life-story proceeds as a compromise from the encounter between the events initiated by man as the agent of action and the interplay of circumstances induced by the web of human relationships. The result is a story in which everyone is the hero without being the author: "nobody is the author or the producer of his own life-story. In other words, the stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author." Hannah Arendt repeatedly asserts: story and history are only the "outcome of action," but "the hero of the story, we never can point unequivocally to him as the author of its eventual outcome."

These remarks remain obscure as long as one does not acknowledge the new temporal dimensions introduced by political action. After the futility of life and the durability of the man-made world, we have to consider the "frailty of human affairs." This turn may look puzzling, if not baffling. After the plea for the durability of work over against the evanescent character of the objects of consumption, this way of underscoring the frailty of human affairs looks like a step backward in the whole argument of the book. Let us take a closer look at this concept of frailty. It does not bring us back to the futility of life, but

<sup>4</sup> Actually, the concept of story has already been anticipated in relation to the power of remembrance belonging to works, notably works of art. It could not be otherwise, since story (and history) are works of discourse. As speech, they belong to the third level, a level defined by action-and-speech. As works they belong to the world of durability. It's this durability which will receive a new meaning in connection with "the frailty of human affairs." See below.

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takes us beyond the durability of work. Frailty is a trait proper to action as such. How?

First, whereas work leaves behind monuments and documents whose totality constitute the permanence of the world, action in common exists only as long as the actors sustain it. More precisely, the public realm is kept coherent thanks to *power*. And power, as the word suggests, remains always *potential*, in contrast with *strength* which endures. *Power* exists when people act together; it vanishes when they disperse. (Hence the strong temptation to substitute violence for power.) *Power* is the paradigm of an activity which leaves no work behind and exhausts its meaning in its own exercise.

Furthermore, action cannot escape the condition of "plurality." That means that for each agent the outcome of an action seldom coincides with its original intention. This constraint expresses the dependance of individual activity on the web of human relationships. It implies that some make an action, others undergo it. Men are both actors and sufferers.

This "frailty" of human affairs is reflected in the activity of storytelling. Only when action is over can it be told: "action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian." This reaffirms Arendt's assertion that "although history owes its existence to men, it is still obviously not 'made' by them."

But we should be unable to understand why and how story and history could be "made" by the storyteller and the historian without merely lying, if we did not coordinate the activity of storytelling and history writing with the main function of political activity, namely confronting the challenge of the frailty of human affairs: "The original, philosophic Greek remedy for the frailty had been the foundation of the polis." Nothing allows us to suppose that such is no longer the case today. The causes of frailty are so deeply rooted that the function of politics outlives the fate of the polis. I think that I interpret Hannah Arendt's thought correctly if I say that the connection established in The Human Condition between the frailty of human affairs and the political enterprise provides not only a guideline for understanding the peripeties of modern politics but a normative principle by which to judge the eclipse of politics as the supreme expression of free action and to condemn all the attempts to dissolve politics into human engineering. We should say that the political constitution of the State is to the frailty of human affairs what the durability of work is to the perishable nature of the products of labor. In this sense, politics expresses man's ultimate attempt to "immortalize" himself or herself.

We may now return to the activity of storytelling and history writing. They must be understood in terms of the same effort at self-immortalization. We have learned this lesson in Homer, Herodotus and Thucydides. The permanence of human greatness relies solely on the poets. But this is possible because the city is already "a kind of organized remembrance." What the poet does is compose a *mimēsis*, that is, a creative imitation of action understood in terms of its political dimension.

In her 1958 essay "The Modern Concept of History" (The Review of Politics, 1958, pp. 570-590), reprinted in Between Past and Future under the title "The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern," Hannah Arendt starts once more from the Greek definition of history as an attempt "to save human deeds from the futility that comes from oblivion." It is true that in this essay, the author is more mindful of the difference between ancient and modern history which results from the reversal of the relation between nature and history. Whereas the tacit assumption of Greek historiography is "the distinction between the mortality of men and the immortality of nature, between man-made things and things which come into being by themselves," with the advent of Platonism and Christianity it is man who is seen as immortal and nature perishable. This reversal accounts for the fact that history lacked real philosophical significance in Western thought until Vico. But modern man's lack of interest in personal immortality, his reverence for the iron laws of nature and the increasing recognition that history is "made" by men just as nature is "made" by God, according to Vico's motto, has brought us back to the Greek assessment of the task of history. It is no longer the futility of mortal life which calls for the remedy of remembrance, but the futility of action itself. "The Concept of History" confirms The Human Condition on this point: "Action [in contrast with fabrication], as the Greeks were the first to discover, is in and by itself utterly futile; it never leaves an end product behind itself."

Nevertheless, this analysis does not prevent Hannah Arendt from acknowledging that there is a *modern* concept of history. This concept is based on the belief in the *process*-character pervading both history and nature. "Certainly nothing more sharply distinguishes the modern concept of history from that of antiquity." This concept of process is as far from Christian eschatology as it is from the Roman conception of history as a storehouse of examples and from the Greek concept of 5 See also: "History and Immortality," *Partisan Review*, Winter 1957, pp. 11-53.

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remembrance of the perishable. It amounts to the "concept of an earthly immortality of mankind," which finds "its climactic consummation in Hegel's philosophy."

But, precisely because the stress is once again laid on the public realm — thanks to the rise of the secular state of modern man — politics regains "that grave and decisive relevance for the existence of men which it has lacked since antiquity because it was irreconcilable with a strictly Christian understanding of the secular." Once more the drive toward immortality lies at the foundation of political communities.

In this way, Hannah Arendt seems more interested in the rediscovery of antiquity through the process of secularization than in the novelty of the modern concept of history. Of course, "the immortalizing process may become independent of cities, states and nations; it encompasses the whole of mankind, whose history Hegel was consequently able to see as one uninterrupted development of the Spirit." But "politically speaking, within the secular realm itself secularization meant nothing more or less than that men once more had become mortals."

The reader may wonder, nevertheless, whether the "earthly immortality" of the secular realm, in modern terms, still leaves room for the kind of meditation on the frailty of human affairs proposed in *The Human Condition*. Has the secular realm extended more stability to the whole of mankind than the Greek *polis*? Does not the very concept of *process* express a subtle obliviousness to the frailty of human affairs? Is not Marx's notion of "making history" the sheer denial of what was said about history, namely that we do not "make it," rather, we comprehend it only through the backward glance of the storyteller and the historian?

Here we reach the point where Arendt must declare her anti-modern stance. The very concept of "making history" marks the regression of acting to making. In the modern historical consciousness "we can easily detect the age-old attempt to escape from the frustrations and fragilities of human action by construing it in the image of making." This is why the essay devoted to "The Modern Concept of History" is both an overt recognition of the inescapable originality of the modern age and a covert denial of its main claim, that is, earthly immortality. The failure of this claim is the secret of "the growing meaninglessness of the modern world" which the essay underscores in its last pages. The reason for this failure is the shattering of the illusion that history can be made. "Only patterns can be 'made,' whereas meanings cannot be, but, like truth, will only disclose or reveal themselves."

What Hannah Arendt ultimately repudiates is the substitution of a contemplative philosophy of history, with its escape into the "whole," for a political philosophy, which remains within the borders of the vita activa. Nothing among the achievements of the modern age convinces her that the hierarchy within the vita activa itself — "where the acting of the statesman occupies the highest position, the making of the craftsman and artist an intermediary, and the laboring which provides the necessities for the functioning of the human organism the lowest" — that this hierarchy could be reversed without unspeakable damages.

The detour through the essay "The Modern Concept of History" may perhaps cast some light on the puzzling pages which conclude the chapter on "Action" in *The Human Condition*. Taught by the frightening transformation of political philosophy when it is submitted to the claim of making history as a whole, we may return to the very concept of immortality through politics. To what extent does Hannah Arendt assume this concept, even under the condition of a more modest concept of politics?

The answer to this question is difficult and dubious. The reason for our hesitation resides in the ambiguity of the writer's position in trying to understand the vita activa from the point of view of the vita contemplativa, without explaining what she means by vita contemplativa, except that it is thought, not knowledge. This ambiguous position allows her both to write an apology for politics over against its reduction to social and economic activities, and to resist all the illusions linked to the attempt of mortals to "immortalize" themselves. Here the Nietzschean side of the thinker balances her Aristotelian side. This explains the strange way in which the section on action is closed. Stress is laid not only on the frailty of human affairs but on the weaknesses of the remedies themselves. These weaknesses are summarized in two words: irreversibility and unpredictability. Needless to say, these terms put the last touch on the underlying philosophy of time. On the one hand, what has been done cannot be undone. On the other hand, what follows cannot be forecast. Now, what defense can we muster against these ultimate weaknesses of human time when it has withstood the challenge of political action? To irreversibility, the only answer is the power to forgive; to unpredictability, the power of promise. Forgiveness unties what is tied; promise binds what is uncertain. There are, of course, political applications to promise (pacta sunt servanda: treaties are inviolable); it is doubtful that there is room 72 PAUL RICOEUR

for forgiveness in politics. We have obviously reached — if not trespassed — a threshold, the one which connects the vita activa to the vita contemplativa. This trespassing may explain the perplexity of readers confronted with this final declaration: "The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'material' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted." And the last lines: "It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their 'glad tidings': 'A child has been born unto us'." Period.

We will be less puzzled by this unexpected ending if we locate it on the trajectory of the temporal experience underlying Hannah Arendt's philosophical anthropology. This trajectory starts with the deathless repetition of the natural world, goes through the futility of laboring and the durability of cultural works, and finally reaches a frailty more formidable than any futility. This acknowledgment of the frailty of a history that we don't "make," and which undermines all the works that we "make," sounds like an ultimate memento mori. Our mortality is, so to speak, reasserted at the end of our travel. What, then, remains to the thinker — not to the political animal — in front of death? The exaltation of birth, of a new beginning. Only natality — perhaps — escapes the illusion of immortality on the part of mortals who think eternity.



On the Ruins of Theory

On the Museum's Ruins by Douglas Crimp; Louise Lawler

Review by: Greg Sholette

Oxford Art Journal, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1996), pp. 121-124

Published by: Oxford University Press

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14. Peter Daniel and Sally Stein, 'Introduction', in Daniel et al., Official Images: New Deal Photographs, pp. vii-xii. Smith does acknowledge the existence of these other archives (pp. 485-6, n. 9).

15. See, for instance, Ronald Radosh, 'The Myth of the New Deal', in Ronald Radosh and Murray N. Rothbard (ed.), A New History of Leviathan: Essays on the Rise of the American Corporate State (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1972), pp. 146–87. For a discussion of the origins of the theory and an early critique, see Fred Block, 'Beyond Corporate Liberalism', Social Problems, vol. 24, no. 3, February 1977, pp. 352–61. See also the ensuing exchange with Edward T. Silva in Social Problems, vol. 25, no. 3, February 1978, pp. 345–51.

The 'Corporate Liberal' model also informs the account of the FSA in Maren Stange's important study of the documentary mode, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America 1890–1950* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), ch. 3.

16. On business and the New Deal, see Thomas Ferguson, 'Industrial Conflict and the Coming of the New Deal: The Triumph of Multinational Liberalism in America', and Michael A. Bernstein, 'Why the Great Depression was Great: Towards a New Understanding of the Intervar Economic Crisis in the United States', in Fraser and Gerstle, The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order. On the inadequacy of the Corporate Liberal thesis, see David Brody, Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth-Century Struggle (2nd edn., Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1993), pp. 135–56; Dubofsky, State and Labor in Modern America, p. xiv. As Fraser and Gerstle remark in their introduction, the condemnatory tone of New Left writing as it bore on the welfare state was partly based on the assumption that the New Deal reforms were permanent. Now that they have been eroded and are threatened with further dismantling, it no longer seems apt.

17. See David Brody, 'The New Deal, Labor, and World War II', in In Labor's Cause: Main Themes on the History of the American Worker (Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1993).

18. Nelson Lichtenstein, 'From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era', in Fraser and Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*.

19. Fred Block, 'The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State', Socialist Revolution, vol. 7, no. 3, May–June 1977, pp. 6–28; Theda Skocpol, 'Political Response to Capitalist Crisis: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the Case of the New Deal', Politics and Society, vol. 10, no. 2, 1980, especially pp. 160–9. To give an instance of such conflicts within the state, Dubofsky has shown how attempts by the National Labor Board and later National Labor Relations Board to

implement the labour provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act in the years 1933–1935 were constantly undercut by pro-business officials in the National Recovery Administration who were directly hostile to them. See Dubofsky, *State and Labor in Modern America*, pp. 111–28.

20. Maren Stange has observed that 'photographers engaged material that pushed against the limitations set by the projects ideological presumptions. The photographic representations of complex social situations subverted official ideology' (Maren Stange, '"The Record Itself": Farm Security Administration Photography and the Transformation of Rural Life', in Daniel et al., Official Images, p. 4). See also Sally Stein, 'Marion Post Wolcott: Thoughts on Some Lesser Known FSA Photographs', in Marion Post Wolcott: FSA Photographs (The Friends of Photography, Untitled 34; Carmel, CA, 1983).

21. Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, 12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States (Viking Press, New York, 1941; reprint, Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, 1988).

22. The Film and Photo League, precursor of the Photo League, is discussed in William Alexander, Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1981), ch. 1. For the League itself, see Anne Tucker, 'Strand as Mentor', and Walter Rosenblum, 'A Personal Memoir', in Maren Stange (ed.), Paul Strand: Essays on his Life and Work (Aperture, New York, 1990).

23. Louise Ault, 'George Ault: A Biography' (copy of a typescript held at the National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC), pp. 27-9.

24. See, for example, Holger Cahill, 'American Resources in the Arts', in Francis V. O'Connor (ed.), Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project (New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, CT, 1973). I do not wish to suggest that there were no constraints within the WPA or that Cahill's notion of Americanism is beyond critique. But the programme was relatively liberal in its administration, and encompassed a wide range of styles and iconographies which cannot be reduced to some simple instrument of state corporatism.

25. Walter Benjamin, 'Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian', in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (Continuum, New York, 1988), p. 234; 'Sie vermhert wohl die Last der Schätze, die sich auf dem Rücken der Menscheit haufen. Aber sie gibt ihre die Kraft nicht, diese abzuschutten, um sie dergestalt in die Hand zu bekommen' (Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelle Schriften*, Rolf Tiedermann and H. Schweppenhauser (eds.), Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1977), Bd. II, p. 478).

## On The Ruins of Theory

**GREG SHOLETTE** 

Douglas Crimp with photographs by Louise Lawler, On the Museum's Ruins. The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, and London, 1993. 348pp., hardback ISBN 0-262-0309-0, £24.95.

Many of the previously published essays collected in *On the Museum's Ruins* date from a time when the kind of photographic appropriation, now emblematic of much post-modern art, was seen by some as heir to the reflexive and political practices of the early Soviet and European avant-garde. At least such a succession seemed possible to the writers and editors of the journal *October* in which the bulk of these writing's first appeared.

As a contributing editor to the MIT publication known for its viscous theoretical writing, Douglas Crimp along with fellow *Octoberists*, Craig Owens and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, helped ignite the careers of Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, and Sherrie Levine while simultaneously linking the latter's cannibalized images to an emerging discourse about postmodernism. But having once been depicted as dangerous transgressors about to trash the culture industry's veneration of auratic and patriarchal relics, these artists now grace institutional

spaces all over the world with their limited editions of high-art simulacra. This then is the state of affairs that Douglas Crimp must contend with as he tries to frame these decade-old essays for a contemporary reader.

While the author is eager to show in his introduction that these sundry texts form 'a useful analysis of what might be called a discourse on the objects of knowledge', he would have done better to use Foucault more sparingly and to have simply placed this work in an historical context. But then it is just this over-reliance on a well-groomed theory that finds him reconsidering his original concept of postmodernism. 'Indeed', he muses, 'I now think it would be more accurate to say of the essays published here that they are about the end of modernism.' Nevertheless the reader of these essays must be reminded of the cultural zeitgeist at the beginning of the last decade before dismissing Crimp's previous assertions about the transgressive nature of certain art practices.

A few years after the election of Ronald Reagan, New York's financial, real estate, and fine art markets had swollen to unprecedented proportions. At the same time, and certainly not by accident, artists like Julien Schnabel were piloting the art world away from the cerebral and experimental art of the seventies, towards an expressive and figurative imagery rendered in conventional media.

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Blissful collectors, museum curators, dealers, and corporate buyers embraced the return of canvases and cast bronze forsaken by artists of the preceding generation. With paint still wet on their jeans, even young artists saw their reputations bulge and their net value blossom. Simply put, after having endured the iconoclasm of conceptual art and the icy geometry of minimalism, art again looked like art. Moreover, this return to recognizable imagery and old fashioned craft bore the telltale signature of a dawning post-modern aesthetic. Practiced collectors and neophytes alike paid inflated sums for a vestige of high culture, even if these refined commodities were an unintelligible pastiche of past styles.

To Crimp and the other writers at *October*, this was both an aesthetic and a politically regressive trend, symptomatic of a collapsing modernist paradigm. Douglas Crimp's writing aimed to counter this backwards slide by theorizing a different post-modern art, one that could re-take possession of that historical art practice where formal innovation and progressive politics had once converged:

The practices I claimed as postmodernist seemed to me to continue the unfinished avant-garde project. Indeed, the prewar avant-garde appeared, through the lens of a postmodernism critical of modernism, virtually as postmodernism *avant-la-lettre* (p. 19).

Ironically, Crimp's description collapses temporal distances and cultural differences by suturing the New York City of 1979 to the Soviet Union of 1919, thus replicating the same ahistorical pastiche so despised by the *October* cabal. Yet while this analysis is notoriously inattentive to the vastly different political stakes involved, Crimp's emphasis on living artists is significant. It is this odd mixture of an idealized and loosely historicized theoretical model with a tenacious commitment to the actual material practices of artists that makes for both the strengths and failures of these essays, and by extension much of the work associated with *October* itself.

One of the distinctive features of Crimp's work here is his desire to locate political resistance in the very form of a work of art. This is evident when he defends with atypical passion the embattled Richard Serra during the artist's Tilted Arc débâcle. Crimp builds his case by first strongly condemning a fellow art critic who has written approvingly of George Segal's figurative sculpture depicting two steel workers cast in bronze, a work that the city of Youngstown Ohio had commissioned. Youngstown was a steel-town economically imploding as a result of runaway capital. Crimp angrily challenges his colleague's praise of the city's art commission:

It is a cynical art policy indeed that would condone, much less laud, a monument mythologizing work in steel mills when the real historical condition of the steelworkers is that of being forced into the industrial reserve army. Just whose tenacity does this work really pay tribute to? To the steelworkers hopelessly trying to maintain their dignity in the face of joblessness? Or to the society — including the business community, steel companies, and labor unions whose largesse contributed to that work — that will go to any length to ensure that those steelworkers will never recognize the nature of the economic forces arrayed against them?

### Adding a bit further on:

The fact that their identification is manipulated, that the worker's pride is only intended to make their slavery more toler-

able, is precisely what such a cultural policy is concerted toward (p. 175).

Crimp then contrasts the product of such ideologically manipulative public art policies with an unadorned, decidedly non-figurative Richard Serra sculpture titled *Terminal*, made for a steel town in Germany:

Serra presents the steelworkers with the very product of their alienated labor, untransformed into any symbol at all. If the workers are then repelled and heap scorn on *Terminal* [which they did], it is because they are already alienated from the material; for although they produced those steel plates or materials like them, they never owned them; the steelworkers have no reason whatsoever to take pride in or identify with any steel product (p. 173).

Perhaps it is the rawness of Serra's art that engenders a defense strategy based on such an unvarnished deployment of false consciousness theory, yet I caught myself rooting for Serra in spite of the many contradictions his public work makes manifest.

This emphasis on the content of form carries over to the very packaging of On the Museum's Ruins. Following the reflexive practices championed by Crimp in this early work, OMR has been designed to both appear like and also call attention to its own status as a specialized commodity. Printed across the pale beige cover is a strip of ghosted-out packing tape giving it the look of a faded parcel that has been left sitting around the storage room of a museum. Covering the book is a transparent plastic jacket. This jacket is printed with a blue-grey photograph depicting clear polyethylene sheets draped over what looks like a sculpture of a laughing child. Inside the book this imagery continues. Spread across the end-papers the plastic wrap resembles a sticky membrane which has trapped an elbow, assorted limbs, and a mannequin-like hand inside. Here again a horizontal ribbon of packing tape cuts across the book's pages and leads us, like Ariadne's thread in reverse, towards the interior.

Taken altogether, *OMR*'s packaging is a parody of the mummified objects interned within the museum. Indeed the book appears to have been made to slip into the museum gift shop undetected and like the wooden horse of the Trojans unleash its counter-discourse from within.

The photographs on the cover and throughout the book are the work of the artist Louise Lawler. Crimp describes her involvement with *OMR* as a collaboration 'intended not simply to illustrate my ideas but to expand on and reorient them':

I am here re-framing my own critical work — in part, of course, on conventional principles: under the sign of authorship and with a view to thematic coherence. But by conceiving the book as a collaboration with Lawler, I hope to strain these conventions (p. viii).

Given the potential of such a collaboration it is disappointing to see Louise Lawler's typically ingenious photographs perform as ironic, yet ultimately conventional illustrations that either supplement Crimp's theoretical writing, or form visual bridges tying together the larger thematic sections of the book. The result is in the end a sumptuous but cordial meeting of minds.

However, a far more consequential re-framing is undertaken by the author in his introduction. Before considering this revisionism in any detail, we must first

understand the central theoretical argument made in *OMR* about the role photography allegedly plays in bringing about the end of modernism and the rise of the post-modern:

Postmodernism may be said to be founded in part on this paradox: it is photography's re-evaluation as a modernist medium that signals the end of modernism. Postmodernism begins when photography comes to pervert modernism (p. 77).

Here is Crimp's paradox. On the one hand, photographs serve the needs of the art world by storing and transporting replicas of the high-art commodities, the very stock and trade of museum curators, collectors and historians. On the other hand, photographs are:

too multiple, too useful to other discourses, ever to be wholly contained within traditional definitions of art. Photography will always exceed the institutions of art, will always participate in non-art practices, will always threaten the insularity of art's discourse (p. 134).

Which is to say, as long as these photographic images were simply a substitute for the actual object, a mechanically produced simulacrum, there was no danger to the hermetic discourse of the museum. On the contrary, photography was an ideal tool for expanding the mission of the museum. Crimp argues:

the history of museology is a history of the various attempts to deny the heterogeneity of the museum, to reduce it to a homogeneous system or series (p. 54).

Photography facilitates this unification by systematically ordering the diverse artifacts of art history into a homogeneous 'supermuseum'. The archetype of this levelling process was André Malraux's *Musée imaginaire*. Malraux first conceived of his simulated museum in 1947. Describing the way the objects of Malraux's project interact, Crimp writes:

Through photographic reproduction a cameo takes up residence on the page next to a painted tondo or a sculpted relief; a detail of a Rubens in Antwerp is compared to that of a Michelangelo in Rome. The art historian's slide lecture and the art history student's slide comparison exam inhabit the museum without walls (p. 54).

### As for Photography itself, it:

was excluded from the museum and art history because, virtually of necessity, it points to a world outside itself. Thus, when photography is allowed entrance to the museum as one art among others, the museum's epistemological coherence collapses. The 'world outside' is allowed in, and art's autonomy is revealed as a fiction, a construction of the museum (p. 13).

There is only so long that a photograph showing a policeman beating a civil rights demonstrator can be discussed exclusively in formal terms or presented as the unique vision of a gifted artist, before someone visiting the museum is going to cry foul. More than that, photography's limitless reproducibility makes it difficult to treat as a unique object of aesthetic vision.

After all that is written here about photography immanently contorting the museum, I was far more interested in how the author now saw the specific shortcomings of his theory in light of the way this medium has

taken refuge within high culture, be it late modern or post-modern. As already mentioned, this new coalition includes the work of appropriationist artists, but it also includes the far more scandalous, though more conventional, photographic work of Robert Mapplethorpe. Ultimately it is the author's own about-face regarding Mapplethorpe's work that signals a change in his thinking, but it is a measured shift that leaves much unaccounted for.

If Douglas Crimp once theorized that the admission of photography into the museum would be a 'watershed' for modernism, his personal turning-point has been AIDS activism. The implications of this transition are dramatically put to the reader when he writes in his introductory essay: 'It was the specter of death that finally revealed to me the limits of my conception of postmodernism' (p. 21). Yet despite the sensational expectations this epiphanal imagery portends, Crimp's revised outlook is less of a transformation than a variation of his previous position.

The author now considers his earlier *October*-era speculations about the rise of postmodernism both parochial and limited. Significantly, the circumstances that initiated this turn did not come from the realm of theory, but from events originating outside the artworld, events whose impact on the artworld was both profound and unprecedented.

The first blow came from the right when U.S. Senator Jesse Helms led a conservative drive against the work of the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. This was commensurate with an all-out attack on the National Endowment for the Arts over alleged obscenities paid for by taxpayers' money (no not Cruise missiles). In his 1982 essay 'Appropriating Appropriation', Crimp described Mapplethorpe's work as a naïve sort of appropriation that only borrows the style of past art, whereas Sherrie Levine's sophisticated approach 'reflects on the strategy of appropriation itself (p. 129). But in his new mode the critic now considers Mapplethorpe's images the more radical. Apart from the national debate they ignited. Mapplethorpe's sexually conspicious portraits of male anatomy operate by 'momentarily rendering the male spectator a homosexual subject' (p. 27), effectively 'queering' the gaze of homophobes like Jessie Helms and Hilton Kramer.

The debate around this contentious imagery with its openly defiant insistence on sexual and cultural difference was further amplified by the convulsive response taken by the gay community to counter the growing devastation of the AIDS epidemic. Almost from the start of the plague, artists and activists responded with poster campaigns, agitprop theatre, and public actions. By 1988 Crimp had himself become involved in such collective work. While initially targeted inside the gay community, AIDS activists soon expanded their aim. A campaign promoting safe-sex practices between men grew to include lesbian and heterosexual couples as well. A second front was opened within the political arena when members of the collective staged public incidents meant to shock a complacent populace and force the Reagan and later Bush administrations into faster action in stopping the crisis. Typically these activities were choreographed to gain maximum media exposure.

Crimp points out that 'confronting aesthetic responses to AIDS, it is impossible to stay within the museum', contending that the cultural practice of these groups:

eludes the museum, not because it is never shown there but because it is made outside the museum's compass. Arising out of a collective movement, AIDS activist art practices articulate, actually *produce*, the politics of that movement. Often anonymously and collectively made; appropriating techniques of 'high art', popular culture, and mass advertising; aimed at and constitutive of specific constituencies; relevant only to local and transitory circumstances; useless for preservation and posterity. Is this not an example of the 'sublation of art into the praxis of life?' Or perhaps the question should be, is this not postmodern art? (p. 22)

Here he levels another criticism at his former self by proposing the work he once called post-modern was instead simply late modernism. This explains, presumably, why so much of it now hangs in those same contemptible mausoleums of cultural snobbery. But if the discourse of the museum had sequestered itself from the heterogeneity of life and the messiness of politics, popular culture and the like, then the arena of activist art that Crimp now champions is, by the same measure, conceived of as altogether removed from the discourse of the museum. This description is just too neat. While distancing himself from the model put forward by Frederic Jameson where postmodernist culture can be viewed as symptomatic of the late capitalist economy, Crimp's earlier theoretical model was so narrowly drawn, and appeared so tidy at times, that one was tempted to interrupt his handwringing about the 'discredited institution of the museum' and ask him why he seemed surprised that the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Museum of Modern art never stopped putting its 'bric-à-brac' in order. By stepping out of the museum's ruins he repeats this error, only now those cultural forces operating outside the museum are as unfettered by high art as high art was ignorant of them.

History again takes a back seat to theory as no mention is made of groups like Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PAD/D), Carnival Knowledge, Artists Meeting for Social Change (AMCC) or many others, who considered what they were doing inside labour unions and anti-nuclear organizations, at political demonstrations, and in the street, just the kind of 'adversarial practice' that 'eluded the museum' because it 'emerged from collective activity'. The point is that the work of AIDS activists, as exceptional as it has often been, is not without precedents — precedents whose varied practices form a complicated history that at times exhibit their own form of mythologizing and self-delusion. One of these delusions is the often repeated line that activist culture is altogether external to and unaffected by the discourse of high art.

This is a misapprehension that Crimp repeats here even as he makes reference to the interest taken by mainstream art world institutions in the work of Gran Fury, the artist collective that produced Kissing doesn't Kill, the extraordinary bus and billboard poster showing hiplooking same sex and hetero couples kissing. Indeed, just how does such work both appropriate 'techniques of "high art" and arise 'outside the museum's compass'? Consider the manner in which these sophisticated graphic techniques are taken up by activist groups. University

trained artists join or help create activist collectives. They often borrow ideas from artists such as Andy Warhol who had borrowed his from commercial advertising which in turn had procured them from avant-garde artists like Rodchenko and Lissitsky. The result is a convoluted genealogy that also works in reverse as the recent appearance of print ads with bold reverse type in black and red boxes imitates the look of Barbara Kruger's art that had itself copied the style of 1950s American advertising.

The question is, why must the realm of oppositional practice be construed as untained by contradiction in order legitimately to claim the right to dissent? Does progressive work become invalid if its practitioners harbour desires about their own careers? Finally, isn't this adversarial arena *also* a contested space that is not, and could never be, altogether outside the reach of the art world, especially in a city like New York?

On the Museum's Ruins is not about these adversary practices. Yet by re-framing his older writing through the lens of a more recent activism, Douglas Crimp has raised important questions that he does not, or perhaps cannot as yet, address. Still, what haunts the good looks and clever writing of OMR is the same problem that all political savvy cultural practitioners must confront. The radical art historian, the cultural critic, and the committed artist all operate within a discourse that is inextricably embedded in the institutions she or he works to depose. As an elegy to a certain theoretical approach, On the Museums Ruin's proves just how provisional some recent attempts at solving that problem have turned out to be.

### Notes

1. In 1983 Sotheby's sold Schnabel's painting Notre Dame for \$93 000, a price some 232 times as large as the original purchase price of \$4000 a few years earlier. According to the Arts Dealers Association, 1985 saw New York City's share of the market hit a billion dollars, ten times the average market share for the previous twenty years even after inflation. In a well-researched piece titled Speculating: a Fine Art by Jane Addams Allen from which these examples were drawn, the 1980s art world expanded as collecting became 'chic, with yuppies getting brownie points for the art they have on their walls'. 'Instead of getting involved with big cars and boats, they've started to collect art.' So says the then reigning gallery dealer Mary Boone quoted in the same piece from the Washington Times Magazines, Insight of 31 March 1986.

An excellent history of Gran Fury can be found in the essay This is to Enrage You: Gran Fury and the Graphics of AIDS Activism written by Richard Meyer and included in the book But is it art: the spirit of art as activism, edited by Nina Felshin and published in 1995 by the Bay Press in Seattle, Washington. But as good as this chronicle is, Meyer also tends to undervalue the art activist precedents for AIDS collectives as well as side-step the slippery issue of the group's relationship to the art world. It should be noted regarding the latter that Gran Fury or members of the group participated in the Venice Bienniale, created work for Artforum, and made installations for The New Museum in New York, and the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art, hardly describable as wholly 'outside' the influence of high art. And perhaps this work should not be outside the museum. Either way, just as Crimp's concept of photography is based on a paradox, isn't it conceivable that activist art is also inherently contradictory? Douglas Crimp has himself edited or coauthored two valuable books dealing with the cultural and political response to AIDS. One of these is AIDS-DEMO-GRAPHICS by Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston and published in 1990 by Bay Press in Seattle, the other is AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism which is an October Book edited by Douglas Crimp and published by MIT Press in 1987.

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# 1881 MATTERS OF PROVENANCE (PICKING UP AFTER HEGEL)

It is always the case that what we experience in one moment, whole and unquestioning, becomes incomprehensible and confused when we seek to bind it to our enduring ownership.

Robert Musil, Young Törless

I WANT TO BEGIN WITH A DATE AND A PLACE. In 1881, the so-called *Provenienzprinzip* or principle of provenance (PP) was introduced at the Privy State Archive in Berlin. It stipulated that archival files were to be arranged in strict accordance with the order in which they had accumulated in the place where they had originated *before* being transferred to the archive: "The arrangement of the Privy State Archive is carried out according to the provenance of its materials." The PP does not merely place the specific *origin* of the archival record—its provenance—above everything else, it also excludes or limits its arrangement by subject matter: "Whenever records are brought together originally in relation to action, they should not be rearranged according to subject. A subject arrangement is alien to their nature." Oriented topographically rather than semantically, the archive arranged according to the PP collects not what exists in an extra-archival outside but what has already been collected, arranged, and organized *in another place*. From the PP's point of view, the archive is not a grid or a principle, not a concept, an empty

category, or a series of such categories. The records kept in an archive based on the PP refer their users back to the conditions under which they emerged (in the otherplace), the media that helped produce them, the business of which they once were a part, the techniques and technologies that were critical for their emergence; and it is these conditions—this rather than meaning (or history) that the nineteenth-century archive aims to reconstruct: not simply content, but the formal (administrative) and technical conditions for its emergence.

2.1
Files at the Privy State Archive (year unknown). © Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, G'S"tA PK, IX.HA Bilder, II, Nr. 236916

The PP reminds us that in an archive, it is never just a question of what is being stored but rather of what is being stored where. Archival storage has something to do with topology, and the authority of the archivist derives from his or her ability to interpret texts in relation both to their place in the archive and to the place from which they emerged: "The significance of archives lies not only in the matter of each document, but also in the interrelationship of documents within a group: the student needs to appreciate this in his researches, but, even more important, the custodian must understand and carefully preserve the original interdependence of documents if their evidence is not to be confused or falsified." The unspoken assumption here is that the archive's physiognomy is a function of the confluence of two distinct orders, the present order of the archive ("the matter of each document") and the past order of the agency or individual that first accumulated its records ("the original interdependence of documents"). The idea that the evaluation of records has to proceed with an eye both to the present (the archive) and to a topographically concrete (past) beyond which can only be reconstructed by taking that very present as a departure point is of considerable importance for the modernist mindset. Its archaeological logic

still permeates Walter Benjamin's definition of "authentic memories" (wahrhafte Erinnerungen): "For authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them." 5 With his emphasis on the materially concrete site where memories are acquired, Benjamin, in the spirit of the principle of provenance, takes issue with the Kantian idea that spatial concreteness (Räumlichkeit) is not a necessary condition for cognition and knowledge, 6 insisting that the authenticity of memories is moored in the topography of the present rather than the elusive past. Such mapping, whose element is the present and whose most emblematic figure is the archive with its insistence on spatial concreteness and its privileging of formal relations over semantics ("The significance of archives lies not only in the matter of each document, but also in the interrelationship of documents within a group"), has antecedents in the use nineteenth-century scientists made of provenance. For instance, Rudolf Virchow, one of the pioneers of anatomical pathology, argued that there could not be an abstract understanding of disease, since the pathological nature of a given tissue was not to be found in the tissue itself but in the place where it occurred; disease, in Virchow's formulation, was the appearance of cells in the wrong place at the wrong time. A recognized archaeologist who excavated with Heinrich Schliemann in Troy, Virchow treated pathological tissue in exactly the way that an archaeologist treats a fragment he finds in the ground or the way a nineteenth-century philologist treated words: as discrete, isolated pieces of evidence that can be understood only in the context of the place (and the time) where they were detected, a place where they lie side by side with other discrete objects in specific constellations.

Where even cells are treated as context-bound clues that derive their meaning from the topography in which they are found—their provenance—the difference between facts of nature and facts of culture is no longer categorical. In his Cellular Pathology (1858), Virchow compared an organism composed of cells with a well-administered state, "complete with junior and senior officials." If physical bodies can be studied like social organisms, we can no longer see the difference between nature and culture in the fact that cultural phenomena are historical while those of nature are not. To Virchow, and to nineteenth-century scientists more generally, every phenomenon, to the extent that it emerged from a specific topography or context, was historical: "All knowledge of facts is historical ... because ... we know accurately onlywhat we know through history. The naked facts are doubtful weapons."

Where Virchow treated the facts of nature like so many historical objects, nineteenth - century archivists, conversely, treated the records stored in archives as a form of life, frequently comparing them to "organic wholes" and living bodies composed of organic cells. 10 The idea behind such archival vitalism was that the strict adherence to the PP would reveal a preexisting organic "archive body" whose "single files and records represent the cells of a living body flooded by a life force [Lebenskraft]. "11 The nineteenth-century archive was much more than a facility for storing discarded paperwork; it was in a sense the anatomy—a kind of administrative skeleton—of life itself. Rather than being simply "natural," life's anatomical deep structure is, in the nineteenth-century reading, analogous to the bureaucracy, its archives and filing rooms. In the words of Friedrich Meinecke, "every single administrative registry ... [becomes] an organism in and of itself, with its own vital principle."12 According to such vitalist archivistics, whenever the archival body falls ill—whenever, in other words, a registry is missing files—the archivist intervenes like a surgeon to repair the damage. As one archivist writes: "Certainly the organism grows, but in the end what grows may be pathological and unorganic. And should we conserve what is pathological at all cost?" The author's eugenicist terminology, which the editors of his archive manual call "rather awkward," highlights the tension between a view of the archive as an instrument to register time in the form of discrete "cells" or files and the urge to create a healthy, beautiful body—in short, the tension between the archive on the one hand and aesthetics on the other.

If the nineteenth-century archive establishes a relationship with otherness, it does so with a decisive twist. For as I mentioned above, the other sphere to which the archive alludes, its beyond, is not an extra-archival outside but another collection, the site where records accumulate before their transfer to the archive. Not coincidentally, nineteenth-century administrative archives in continental Europe adopted not single records but series of documents that had already been collected in the so-called *Registraturen* (registries), instances of a prearchival accumulation of records that helped agencies and larger companies control paperwork while it was still in circulation and before it was transferred to the archive proper. Like modern registries, the earliest archives known had involved chronological lists that stored ongoing business and correspondence in chronological order. With the increasing availability of paper and the increasing accumulation of records in public offices, the archive and the registry became separate institutions. While the registry stored paperwork that was still in

circulation, still part of ongoing business, the archive confined itself to the storage of those records that had been taken out of circulation because they were no longer needed for the dispatch of ongoing business.<sup>14</sup>

The registry is crucial for my purposes here not only because its name evokes registration, the idea of producing an analogue recording of ongoing activities, but also because it represents the middle element in a triad that has had a formative influence on what we have come to define as modern: the office, where records are produced; the registry, where they are kept as long as they circulate; and the archive itself, where they are stored in perpetuity. In altered form, this triad returns in the Freudian psychic apparatus—modernism's most formidable archive gadget—where its separate elements connote different mnemonic functions. 15

The relationship between the registry and the archive was thought to be supplementary; the documents that were meticulously entered on a registry's ledger frequently bore call marks that were identical to those the same files would bear after their consignment to the archive. This meant that already in the registry, papers were classified with a view to their future place in the archive itself. As the former director of Berlin's Privy State Archive, Georg Winter, noted: "Those files that are still [in the registry] and those that have already been deposited in the Privy State Archive belong together according to their arrangement like two ... cartae dentatae, or like two tools produced by a metal worker, one of which was carved out of the other."16 If archives store archives—series of records that have accumulated in the registry—it is also true that whatever is consigned to the registry emerged from the very beginning with the archive in mind. 17 This indicates that records do not simply come to the archive (nor does the archive, like a library, choose them); they return there. Or, in other words, the paperwork that circulates in an office or agency is touched or structured by its demise or death—its withdrawal from circulation—from the moment it is produced. This in turn hints at the possibility that every act of original registration may already be archival, a conclusion that comes tantalizingly close to Freud's analysis, roughly at the time when the PP was first introduced, of registration inside the psyche. Here, too, whatever is stored in the psychical apparatus—in the archive-first has to be withdrawn from circulation (from consciousness); such withdrawal, which is tantamount to forgetting, was for Freud the prerequisite for all permanent storage.

In her essay on eighteenth century police archives, Arlette Farge claims that archives may give rise to the "naive but profound feeling of tearing apart a veil, of cutting across the opaqueness of knowledge, and of entering, as if after a long and uncertain journey, the essence of beings and things."18 What Farge calls the archive's "effect of the real" (effet du réel) is the idea that the documents read, the images seen in archives confront us with a presence that seems purely accidental, as if the archive recorded life itself, focusing on what seems utterly insignificant and random and what is, therefore, all the more haunting.19 But if, in one sense, the archive's "effect of the real" is linked to the fact that it stores what was never meant to be stored, in another, much of what enters the archive would never have come into existence without the archive in mind. Of course, to the extent that the police reports Farge studied at the Bastille were part of a regulated investigation, and to the extentthat they were filed and recorded according to procedures that were more or less well established, using media and discursive formations that had their own rules and that generated their own forms of control and surveillance, these reports were destined for the archive the moment they were spoken.

In the eighteenth century, archives were often celebrated as the messages history itself dispatched in order to give away some of its best-kept secrets. In the preface to his Archival Side-Products and News of Different Kinds Togetherwith Original Documents (1783), Philipp Ernst Spiesz explains with great enthusiasm that his volume of accidental discoveries in various archives "consists for the most part either in the discovery of a new historical circumstance or in the eradication of an error, or in the illumination of various obscure matters."<sup>20</sup> Spiesz's exploration of the archive leaves everything to chance; what is collected in his book finds its place to the extent that it may become useful in an unspecified future by chance. In a sense, the nineteenth century's obsession with the historicity of all facts only draws the inevitable consequence from Spiesz's approach: if we cannot know what will or will not be useful in the future, then archives have to preserve all the paperwork. However, where archives have to collect everything. because everything may become useful in the future, their storage capacities are soon exhausted. Not surprisingly, anxiety over disorder and entropic chaos is a staple of nineteenth-century writing about archives. More often than not, such anxiety was articulated in terms that identified chaos and disorder with women and order with men. If archives and registries were strictly male domains, the reason was that messy registries in which nothing could be found were routinely

associated with women's intrinsic inability to keep order. While in the nine-teenth century the *production* of paperwork became increasingly the task of women, its arrangement, preservation, and protection in the registry were the undisputed prerogative of men:

That registry work has a definitely male character is tacitly assumed.... He must be intelligent and must have a good memory and mature judgment, because if he lacks these virtues disorder and confusion will predominate in the registry. He should have a quiet, calm, and well-poised mind, since a sanguine and fickle temperament would not be compatible with the profession. He must not be talkative, but must have his tongue in his heart and not his heart upon his tongue. He should have adequate fundaments and should in general talk very little lest he blab out the secrets of his registry.<sup>21</sup>

The need to separate women from men (by shutting them out of the registry) not only came from the fear that women might not keep the archive's secrets; it was also a displaced symptom of the increasing difficulties nineteenth-century archivists experienced in separating records from garbage. In the post-Hegelian world the boundary that once separated Fall from Abfall. fact from garbage, was no longer easily drawn. Whereas in Hegel's time data that were deemed worthy of entering the archive of culture had been limited to those that reflected in some way the systematic workings of the Weltgeist, now literally everything-including Abfall, which in German means both "garbage" and "heresy"—was considered historical and thus worthy of being archivized, preserved, documented.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the archivist's fear of women, which here as elsewhere translates into a fear of the masses more generally, cannot be separated from the fear that the archive might drown in masses of paperwork if women were admitted into it. The archive's code of ethics, a litany of virile virtues ranging from punctiliousness to patriotism and higher Bildung, functioned like an armor that shielded both registry and archive from the office, where women were becoming more and more common. In late modernity, the archive, much like the army, helped shore up a male ego that was feeling increasingly vulnerable.

The nineteenth-century historian's most fundamental fantasy consisted of the successful integration of sets of data with hermeneutic reading, of contingent time with historiography, and of the discreteness of records with an overarching Gestalt. In Philip Rosen's words, "the ambition of the historian is to be able to discover and authoritatively transmit the actuality of the past.... A perfect historian would have to be out of time, able to be in at least two different times simultaneously-past and present."23 Indeed historians treated the records preserved in archives as the quasi-spontaneous transcripts of contingent time itself, crediting them with a degree of authenticity denied to documents produced explicitly for the record: "Human beings cannot express the exact truth about matters.... But if, when performing some action, they record information, and are unaware of its historical importance, then such information is more likely to be impersonal and impartial." The enunciation of the "exact truth," in matters of administration, does not have consciousness as a prerequisite. On the contrary, the truth of a given record, or a series of such records, was viewed as inversely proportional to the historical awareness that went into its production. Wherever records were produced "in the process of accomplishing some definite administrative, legal, business, or other social end" rather than with a view to their historical importance, such records were thought to be impartial and could be consigned to the archive. 25

The German term for the files stored in archives, Akten, is derived from the neuter form of the passive past participle of the Latin verb agere (to act) and could be translated as "that which has been acted upon." Written memories not so much of the contents of a decision, its "final copy," but rather of the process that led to its adoption, Akten come into being when several documents that share a common subject are combined by either physically tying them together in a binder of some sort or grouping them as a loose collection.<sup>27</sup> Such a collection—itself a kind of archive—contains all the notes, sketches, and drafts that pertain to an administrative decision, but that would not be contained in the final document or letter. In other words, what is present in the file is what the final document excludes. Nineteenth-century historians thought of the files stored in archives as primary—in other words, not part of culture—because they viewed them as transcriptions of activities of which they were themselves a part. Ranke for instance treated Akten as recordings of past events that were in perfect sync with the process of these events' unfolding: "It is a general conviction that we can observe things even more precisely in their flow ... especially if we have occasion to sort through the archives where the most original knowledge is laid down in the correspondence that accompanies the events."28 As Siegfried Kracauer and others have

remarked, the approach to files adopted by historians such as Ranke shows many parallels with an idea of photography. <sup>29</sup> With its ability to archivize even the most inconspicuous details, while at the same time strippingthese details of any index of the past in which they once belonged, photography, together with the *Akten* found in archives, represents the backbone of nineteenth-century historiography. Consider the following passage from Johann Gustav Droysen's *Historik*:

Finally there are the remnants of the written process of various public as well as private transactions as they present themselves in the files kept in archives, reports, evaluations, correspondences, bills, etc. What is characteristic of these materials is that they were moments of transactions in process, accidentally and partially preserved moments from the continuity of these transactions but not the transactions themselves.<sup>30</sup>

As "moments" torn from the continuity of past actions, the traces preserved in archival files, much like the details caught by a photographic image, function as indices whose power to testify to the past is directly linked to their accidental preservation. The beliefthat archival records register what eludes summary symbolic representation ("not the transactions themselves") has its basis both in their "unconscious" mode of production and in the reality that they were compiled for reasons different from those that motivate historians to consult them. <sup>31</sup>

If, as Mary Ann Doane has noted, modernism was obsessed with "the contradictory desire of archiving presence," the most compelling testimony to this desire is the "documents, remains, survivals, ruins and edifices, fossils—in short, indexical traces that attest to a past by emerging into the present from it." Since these materials exist as discrete elements in an archive in the present, the historian has to realize that the only entryway into the past is that very present. As Droysen notes, "even if historical narrative relates the occurrence of things from a certain origin [Anfangspunkt] by imitating the development of things by means of representation ..., true historiography goes the opposite way.... It remains conscious of the fact that it deals with material that stands in the present." Refusing to turn on this material the melancholy gaze of the flâneur, nineteenth-century historians aimed to produce accounts of history where not the past but the archive (the present) would serve as departure point, a point Ranke referred to as "the correct standpoint" (der richtige Standpunkt). Doane is right to point

out that the nineteenth century's claim to create archives of the present is contradictory because "what is archivable loses its presence, becomes immediately the past."<sup>36</sup> Yet the historian's insistence on "material in the present" (Droysen) was designed, precisely, to wrest historiography away from metaphysics. To Droysen and his colleagues, the often fragmentary traces the historian finds in an archive function as reminders that whatever is kept in an archive, to the extent that it is a material remnant in the present, is likely to be incomplete or fragmented, as some parts of the past survive while others are lost. Droysen's phrase "material in the present" may be taken to mean that the past we come to inspect in an archive is fully contingent on the conditions (and constraints) of the process of archivization itself, and that to take note of this is to acknowledge the difference between historiography and fiction. Much as a photograph shows us the isolated fragments of a past whose existence is inextricably tied to the specific modalities of the technical image, so archives too confronted the nineteenth-century historian not with the past as such but with its remediation in the present. Nineteenth-century archives therefore function not unlike technical media, if by this term we mean, as did the modernists, a set of framing protocols or conventions whose (sel f-) reflection is central to their mission, the reproduction of a past in the present.

Understood as medium, the nineteenth-century archive informs Walter Benjamin's discussion of photography and film in his essay on the "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935–1936). To Benjamin, both media function as collections of traces at a time when the original to which these traces once belonged has long since disappeared. In the era of technical reproduction, it is the gathering and visual deployment of formerly site-bound traces by a mobile medium such as photography or film (enabling the original "to meet the recipient halfway")37 that assume the function of originality formerly associated with the "original in its place." This operation is closely linked to time. Where the auratic original in its place was not only removed from technical reproduction but also shielded in its essence from the effects of time-remaining selfsame and authentic no matter how long it remained in its traditional place—technical, process-bound image (re-) production refracts that original into a series of individual shots that show it from a variety of different perspectives. The fact that film and photography, in Benjamin's examples, often leave their objects unrecognizable because they reproduce only parts of them or because they reproduce them at very close range ("enlargement not merely clarifies what we see

indistinctly 'in any case,' but brings to light entirely new structures of matter")<sup>38</sup> is equivalent to the presence of fragmentary remnants of the past in an archive. Like the latter, photography and film take as their departure point not the past original but a series of fragmentary traces in the present, suggesting that any access to that original has to proceed from an archive of such fragments.

As is the case with photography, the efficacy of archives as media that allow for the perception of the past within the context of the present is tied to the transformation of temporal relationships into spatial ones. As Wolfgang Ernst has written, "historiography means the transformation of the archive's space into the effect of a [temporal narrative]."39 As I mentioned earlier, Droysen suggested that the point in time we call the "present" is actually part of a series of such moments—each one of them static in itself—in which it merely occupies the central position. Only by adopting one such moment as the starting point for historiography can the historian hope to make the present the starting point for his endeavor to write history. In a similar vein, Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of the modern discipline of psychology, had located the origin of our idea of time (Zeitvorstellung) in a series of discrete moments—not coincidentally designated by the letters of the alphabet—with the present moment at its center: "The elements a b c d e f in a temporal series can appear to us as one single complex once the series has reached the letter f: yet they can also appear to us as a series of points in space. However, while [a series of points in space] .... due to the ... eye's reflex movements, is always ordered according to the central point of vision, which can alternate between anyof the external impressions a to f, when it comes to the idea of time, it is the actually present impression toward which all the others orient themselves."40 Where the perception of a series of points in space is anchored in a central yet variable point that shifts with the movement of our eyes (any point can serve as center), for a Zeitvorstellung to arise there has to be a stable point of origin, the central letter in the series whose task is to mark the present moment. To Wundt, the present is that point toward which past and future points gravitate, and the order of their elements cannot be changed without the entire series changing in the process: "Similar to the spatial ones, temporal entities ... are characterized by the fact that the elements into which they can be divided show a certain unchanging order, so that if this order changes, the given entity ... becomes a different one." Such spatialization of time—embodied by the archive-became crucial to modernist efforts to make time productive, consumable, and maximally profitable. In Wundt's spirit, Frank and Lillian

Gilbreth—one of whose first important clients was the typewriter manufacturer Remington & Sons<sup>42</sup>—divided practical tasks such as bricklaying or typing into sets of elementary variables ("variables of the worker," "variables of the surroundings," "variables of the motion") that function as equivalents to Wundt's series of letters.<sup>43</sup> These sets of variables, which in turn were broken down into smaller and smaller segments, allowed the Gilbreths to focus on single moments in the present, one step at a time. (Frank Gilbreth's methods led him straight to photography, which he used to break down each motion into smaller and smaller segments in the way Etienne-Jules Marey and Ottomar Anschütz had done with the help of chronophotography.)

Nineteenth-century historiography was caught between the lure of fiction, on the one hand, and the complete abandonment of the symbolic order for the sake of the synchronicity of the "moment" on the other. This latter scenario, whereby historiography fragments into a random collection of discrete moments without coherence—as we will see, this is Duchamp's model—was powerfully dramatized in Jorge Luis Borges's short story "Funes the Memory Artist." Set in the 1880s—the decade when the principle of provenance was introduced in Berlin—the story focuses on Funes's inability to forget anything he has ever seen, heard, or felt. At the age of nineteen, Funes falls from a horse and is gravely injured. 44 After this incident he has an almost unbearably sharp consciousness of the present, which is to say that he remains conscious of everything he has perceived at any time in the past as if it were the present: "In Funes's overstuffed world there was nothing except details, almost immediate ones."45 If Funes looks at the same leaf a dozen times, his mind produces precisely a dozen records of each individual perception. 46 Behind these details, all summary concepts disappear: "Not only did he have trouble understanding that the general symbol dog encompasses so many individual creatures of varying sizes and varying forms; it bothered him that the dog of 3 o'clock 14 minutes (which he saw in profile) should carry the same name as the dog of 3 o'clock 15 minutes (which he had seen from the front)."47

His inability to establish similarities between moments in time except by juxtaposing them on a chronological axis (one thing after another) links Funes to the archival impulse of his age. the compulsion to privilege differences in space (and time) over summary concepts such as words. The opposition between words—a summary shorthand for what unfolds over time and defies summary—and the archive as a series of discrete, differentiated moments was a matter of

sharp debate in the 1880s, and Borges's story seems to allude to this debate. In his Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations (1886), Ernst Mach had argued that even though we use the same word "table" in both cases, there is no reason to assume that the table we see at a certain point in time is the same table we see, under different light conditions and from a different perspective, at another. To Mach nothing exists beyond discrete sensations and the attributes on which they are based. If this general decomposition without an organizing center (a subject) suggests a general archive, it is an archive without objects in which the only principle of organization is accumulation over time, one sensation after another. A passage from the beginning of Rilke's novel The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge (1910) may illustrate Mach's point:

Electric street-cars rage ringing through my room. Automobiles run their way over me. A door slams. Somewhere a window-pane falls clattering; I hear its big splinters laugh, its little ones snicker. Then suddenly a dull, muffled noise from the other side, within the house. Someone is climbing the stairs. Coming, coming incessantly.... And again the street. A girl screams. Ahtais-toi, je ne veux plus. An electric car races up excitedly, then away, away over everything. Someone calls. People are running, overtake each other. A dog barks. What a relief: a dog. 49

Many if not all of the signals that reach Malte from outside consist of noise, more or less meaningless fragments to which he attaches equally random thoughts. The scene demonstrates what happens when there is literally nothing but the "presence of materials" of which nineteenth-century historians dreamed, without the retrospective, ordering, past-creating, focalizing activity of a subject-agent. Si

Malte, and Funes, comprise but the reverse side of a coin presented by Nietzsche's acerbic critique of the nineteenth century's archival ambitions. In the second of his *Unfashionable Observations* ("On the Utility and Liability of History for Life," 1874), Nietzsche expressed his distaste for an epoch in which everything, even the present itself, was treated as historical: "Before the war is even over, it has already been transformed into a hundred thousand pages of printed paper, it has already been served up as the latest delicacy to the exhausted

palates of the history-hungry."52 Incapable of forgetting anything, the nineteenthcentury subject measures any future action against the past actions it resembles. persuading himself that to act is to repeat the monumental activities of the past: "But he also wondered about himself and how he was unable to learn to forget and always clung to what was past; no matter how far or how fast he runs, that chain runs with him."53 Nietzsche found the archival ambitions of his age deeply suspicious: "The Ego wants everything. It seems that the sole purpose of human action is possession: this idea is, at least, contained in the various languages, which re gard all past action as having put us in possession of something ('I have spoken, struggled, conquered': that is to say. I am now in possession of my speech, struggle, victory). How greedy man appears here! He does not want to extricate himself even from the past, but wants to continue to have it!"54 Like the nineteenthcentury archive more generally, Nietzsche's "Ego" not only wants to "have" the past—a will that manifests itself in the very structure of its language, which can express a relation to past action only in terms that imply possession—it wants to possess it as the continuing, contingent process it once was (it "wants to continue to have it!"). Where Funes clings to time as a realm of difference, Nietzsche's "historical man" clings to history as a realm of similarity and resemblance; where Funes produces discrete sets of data. der historische Mensch turns life into a narrative modeled on existing texts. Nietzsche's nineteenth-century man is un able to act because he sees the present as a province of the past (everything he does is in emulation, and imitation, of past deeds). Funes on the other hand regards the past as a province of the present (in the spirit of Ranke and Droysen, yet without their hermeneutic zeal): he cannot conceive of the past, as every detail of it remains acutely present to him. His inability to treat the word "dog" as a fitting pointer to a concept beyond and above its concrete incarnations in space and time, and his refusal to organize perceptions in any other way than according to the sequence in which they occurred, are vivid testimony to this mindset. While Nietzsche's historischer Mensch is obsessed with a will to possess the past, Funes represents that will in a state of radical dispossession—where everything is stored, nothing is possessed. What we witness in Funes is remembering as an autonomous agency that pledges no allegiance whatsoever to subjects or objects (its institutional outlet is the archive)—the very autonomy that will come under attack by the early-twentieth-century avant-garde.

The nineteenth-century archive is founded on the suspicion that, to the extent that they could be treated as the material traces of an obscure beyond—

time, history, life itself—whose limitations were profoundly unknown or unknowable, literally anything could be or become a clue. In a speech given in 1862, Hermann von Helmholtz provided eloquent testimony to this mindset, positing that since Hegel's time science had been confronted with an exponential increase in the amount of data at its disposal: "The philologists of earlier centuries kept themselves sufficiently busy studying Greek and Latin; only for immediately practical purposes did they learn, perhaps, other European languages.... Now, every lost fragment by an ancient writer, every note taken by a pedantic grammarian or by a Byzantine court poet, any broken gravestone of a Roman official that might be found in some dark corner of a forest in Hungary, Spain, or Africa might contain a message or proof [eine Nachricht oderein Beweisstück] that could become important in its own right."55 The increase in available data is due to the fact that a large number of objects that up to that point may have been regarded as insignificant have now—in an age of ever-expanding possibilities for technical observation—become worthy of attention ("every lost fragment by an ancient writer"). 56 As Giovanni Morelli demonstrated by bypassing a painting's Gestalt to determine its author on the basis of unsystematic clues, the best (art) historian or scientist may well be the detective (or, in Freud's case, the psychoanalyst).<sup>57</sup> In the age of the clue, whatever is latent and unconscious is progressively brought into the purview of consciousness, where it helps in detecting the ways in which the unknowable past—in the last resort, death—is woven into the present.

The question is whether and how the potentially infinite growth of such an archive of clues might come to an end, rescuing it from the inescapable fate of entropic chaos. According to Helmholtz, only the bold formulation of "laws and causes" (Gesetze und Ursachen) may impose limits on a potentially boundless archive of scientific facts. Helmholtz argues that it is not enough to gather and organize knowledge; the point is to formulate general laws on the basis of this data that will make any further accumulation unnecessary: "It is not enough to know the records; science comes into being only at that point where the law and the causes of these records reveal themselves." Once data have revealed their "law and causes," any future expansion of the archive is unnecessary, from a scientific point of view. As inductions that emerge directly from the records to which they are thought to apply, the "lawand causes" do not, like Goethe's Urpflanze, preexist their individual existence, even though they establish legislative power over information that has not yet been gathered ("this law does not only comprise those cases that we or other people have already observed, but we will also not

hesitate to extend it to cases that have not yet been observed"). Helmholtz's laws are summaries (Zusammenfassungen), a kind of shorthand for the records of nature. The general concept (Begriff) found by the scientist "comprises within itself a multitude of particulars and represents them in our thinking." The German word Helmholtz uses here is vertreten ("vertritt sie in unserem Denken"), a term that, not coincidentally, is also used to describe political representation by elected officials in a democratic state. The concepts and rules that reveal themselves after data collection "represent" these records, but they do not precede them, let alone replace them, the way a metaphysical category might be said to precede its material embodiment. Helmholtz thus finds a way of limiting the potentially infinite accumulation of data, a happy endgame of data collection that results in a kind of data democracy.

The opposite scenario of an archive that never finds its end is most eloquently described in Flaubert's novel Bouvard and Pécuchet, which was published in 1881, the year the principle of provenance was introduced. Since, to Flaubert's two protagonists, nothing—literally nothing—can be dismissed because literally everything has to be collected and inventoried, even the slightest omission might cause the entire edifice to collapse: "To judge impartially they would have to read all the histories, all the memoirs, all the journals, and all the manuscript documents, for the slightest omission may cause an error which will lead to others ad infinitum."60 The two heroes have no mechanism for dispensing with knowledge, for ridding themselves of what is inessential for their project, a fact that in turn means that the positivity of their collection remains, to them, forever elusive and unformulated. There simply is no discourse or organizing principle that could be adequate to their project as long as their goal is to encompass everything: "Others who claim simply to narrate are no better; because one cannot say everything, there must be some choice. But in choosing documents a certain spirit will prevail, and it varies according to the writer's conditions. History will never be fixed."61

The problem Bouvard and Pécuchet face is that the number of recorded facts had become so large by the late nineteenth century that their totalizing representation within one archive seemed increasingly impossible. To the two protagonists literally every object that surrounds them has the potential to be or to become a historical record, even literary prose. For isn't the realist novel's claim to existence tied to its ambition to include everything? Bouvard and Pécuchet seem to endorse this idea: "What they objected to in all these books was that they said nothing about the background, the period, the costume of the characters.

Only their heart is dealt with; always sentiment, as if there was nothing else in the world!"<sup>62</sup> Bouvard, whose admiration for Balzac is tellingly immense, claims that literature is to become a means of recording observation not unlike the measuring and recording instruments used in the sciences. To this, Pécuchet objects that literature might then become mere "statistics" if infinite amounts of "drivel" were included in novels. <sup>63</sup> Bouvard responds that, even if this were so, novels would still "have curiosity value as documents."

There is, then, no position from which the data collected by the two characters could be referred to that is not that of the archive. Whenever such a position—a position outside of their endeavor, outside of the collection they have established—comes within reach, they quickly discover that it is itself part of yet another archive, another discipline or field of knowledge that has to be studied, inventoried, and mastered. The maddening conundrum faced by Bouvard and Pécuchet is that everything that can be known is already archival. As a storehouse of knowledge, the modern archive refers us to a place outside of itself, the very place Bouvard and Pécuchet are seeking. But this beyond-the-archive is not a transcendent outside or an empty space waiting to be filled; it is in fact another archive.

- 22 In her study of contingent time and cinema, Mary Ann Doane contends that "the cinema has worked to confirm the legibility of the contingent." Mary Ann Doane, The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 208.
- 23 Dorothea Dietrich, untitled, in Leah Dickerman, ed., *Dada*, exh. cat. (Washington: National Gallery of Art. 2006), 163.
- 24 Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 75.
- 25 "The analysis of the archive, then, involves a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside of ourselves, delimits us." Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 130.
- 26 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973),297.
- 27 ibid., 304.
- 28 The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: NYU Press, 1979), 287.

### 2 1881: MATTERS OF PROVENANCE (PICKING UP AFTER HEGEL)

- 1 An early predecessor was the *classement par fonds* introduced by the French Ministry of the interior in 1841. It stipulated that documents were to be classified according to the agencies in which they originated. The French term *fonds* originally referred to a plot of land.
- 2 Johannes Schultze, "Gedanken zum Provenienzgrundsatze," in Hans Beschorner, ed., Archivstudien: Zum siebzigsten Geburtstage von Woldemar Lippert (Dresden: Verlag der Buchdruckerel der Wilhelm und Bertha v. Baensch Stiftung, 1931), 225. On the principle of provenance as a model for the generation and preservation of modern culture, see also Sven Spieker, ed., Leidenschaften der Bürokratie: Kultur- und Mediengeschichte im Archiv (Berlin: Kadmos, 2004).
- 3 T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 93.
- 4 John Howard Hodson, The Administration of Archives (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1972), 4.
- 5 Walter Benjamin, "Excavation and Memory," in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 576. A better translation of *wahrhaft* might be "truthful."
- 6 Kant considered the idea that "everything that exists is some place and some time [Alles was ist, ist irgendwo und irgendwann]" to be a "false axiom [ein erschlichenes Axiom]." Immanuel Kant, "De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis" ("Von der Form der Sinnen- und Verstandeswelt und ihren Gründen"), in Kant, Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik I, Werkausgabe, vol. 5 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 91.
- 7 On the relevance of the present for Benjamin's concept of remembering, see also T. J. Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: MiT Press, 2007), 226–228, 41.
- 8 Rudolf Vlrchow, "Atoma und indlylduen," in Vlrchow, *Drel Reden über Leben und Kranksein* (Munich: Kindler, 1971), 50. Translation mine.
- 9 Rudolf Virchow, "Dle naturwissenschaftliche Methode und die Standpunkte in der Therapie," in Virchow, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 336. Translation mine. See also Sven Spieker "Cellularbürokratie: Pathologie als Ordnungswissenschaft, am Beispiel Rudolf Virchow," in Christoph Hoffmann and Caroline Welsh, eds., Umwege des Lesens: Aus dem Labor philologischer Neugierde (Berlin: Parerga, 2006), 276–290.
- 10 S. Muller, J. A. Feith, and R. Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives:*Drawn Up by Direction of the Netherlands Association of Archivists (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1968), 19.
- 11 Adolf Brenneke, Archivkunde (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1953), 22.

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- 12 Friedrich Meinecke, Erlebtes, 1862-1901 (Leipzig: Koehier und Amelang, 1941), 142-143.
- 13 Brenneke, Archivkunde, 70.
- 14 Already in the eighteenth century, a great number of administrative agencies had their own Registraturen. in 1769 a Prussian minister referred to a properly organized Registratur as the "soul of the department." Cited in Ernst Posner, Archives and the Public Interest: Selected Essays (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1967), 89.
- In a letter to Fliess, Freud argued that the "psychic mechanism" is the result of memory traces being rearranged (retranscribed) as new traces are added. Freud calls these rearrangements "registrations," distinguishing between three different types: consciousness, unconsciousness, and preconsciousness. See *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, 1887–1904, ed. Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 207–208.
- Georg Winter, "Das Provenlenzprinzlp in den preussischen Staatsarchiven," Revista de la biblioteca, archivo y museo 38 (1933), 186. On the relationship between registry and archivist from a British perspective, see A. Jenkinson, Manual of Archive Administration (London: Percy Lund, 1965), 189–190.
- 17 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 128–131.
- 18 Arlette Farge, Le goût de l'archive (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 14. Translation mine.
- 19 On the archival trace as accident, Arjun Appadurai writes that "the central property of the archive in this humanist vision is to be found in the ideology of the 'trace.'... This property is the product of contingency, indeed of accident, and not of any sort of design. The archive is fundamentally built on accidents that produce traces. All design, all agency and all intentionalities come from the uses we make of archives, not from the archive itself." Arjun Appadural, "Archive and Aspiration," in Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder, eds., Information Is Alive: Art and Theory on Archiving and Retrieving Data (Rotterdam: V2 Publishing/nal Publishers, 2003), 15.
- 20 Philipp Ernst Spiesz, *Archivische Nebenaibeiten und Nachrichten vermlschten Inhalts mit Urkunden* (Halle: Johann Jacob Gebauer, 1783), 2.
- 21 Posner, Archives and the Public Interest, 95–96. Posner's remark refers to registries in Germany.
- 22 On such post-Hegelian waste disposal, see Friedrich Kittler, Eine Kulturgeschlchte der Kulturwlssenschaft (Munich: Fink, 2000), 132.
- 23 Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 133.
- 24 Posner, Archives and the Public Interest, 92.
- 25 T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 13.
- 26 For a definition of *Akten*, see also Eckhart Franz, *Einführung in die Archivkunde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgemeinschaft, 1974), 45–49.
- 27 The emergence of *Akten* is tied to the transition from orality to literacy in matters of administration, and to the increasing use of paper instead of parchment. For a cultural history of files, see Cornelia Vismann, *Akten: Medientechnik und Recht* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2000).
- 28 Leopold von Ranke, "Vorrede zur ersten Ausgabe," in Ranke, *Preussische Geschichte, Werke*, vol. 5 (Lübeck: Vollmer, 1957), 48. Translation mine. Another word for *Akte* is *Vorgang*, which sugges a temporal flow or process.
- 29 Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 49.
- 30 Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik: Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädle und Methodologie der Geschichte* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1937), 47. Translation mine.

- 31 "To be archives, materials must be preserved for reasons other than those for which they were created or accumulated." Schellenberg, *ModernArchives*, 13. As Yosef H. Yerushalmi has observed, "ideally an archive should be naïve.... Copies of contracts and deeds of property were preserved in archives in case any future disputes should arise, not so that we might write economic history." Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Series Z: An Archival Fantesy," http://www.psychomedia.it/jep/number3-4/yerushalmi.htm.
- 32 Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 82.
- 33 Rosen, Change Mummified, 115.
- 34 Droysen, Historik, 47.
- 35 Quoted in Friedrich Jäger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus: Eine Einführung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992), 89.
- as Ihid
- 37 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version," in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 254.
- 38 lbid., 266.
- 39 Wolfgang Ernst, Das Rumoren der Archive: Ordnung aus Unordnung (Berlin: Merve, 2002), 49.
- **40** Wilhelm Wundt, *Grundriss der Psychologie*, 8th ed. (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1907), 184–185. All translations from this text are mine.
- 41 lbid., 172-173.
- 42 See Darren Wershler-Henry, *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 2005), 145.
- 43 Frank B. Gilbreth, *Motion Study: A Method for Increasing the Efficiency of the Workman* (Easton, Pa.: Hive, 1972),6–7.
- 44 The story of Simonides, the ancient inventor of mnemotechnics, also begins with a fall.
- 45 Jorge Luis Borges, "Funes el memorioso," in Borges, *Prosa completa*, voi. 1 (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1980), 484. All translations from this text are mine. Funes's problem is not remembering—he recalls everything effortlessly—but the far more complicated dilemma of how *not* to remember. To limit the scope of his memory he tries to restrict himself to seventy thousand memories a day, but he soon realizes that such an undertaking would be futile.
- 46 "In effect, Funes not only remembers every leaf of every tree of every forest but also every single time he had perceived or imagined It." Ibid., 482.
- 47 lbid., 483.
- 48 Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical*, trans. C. M. Williams (New York: Dover, 1959), 2.
- 49 Rainer Maria Rilke, The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge (New York: Norton, 1949), 14.
- 50 Clearly, it is the phonograph that inflects the quoted scene. Malte receives the noises from outside like so many discrete signals reaching the surface of a phonographic plate, regardless of their meaning or coherence. Despite all this, remnants of a coherent ego do of course persist in the quoted passage, as the listener does identify the provenance of the sounds he hears.
- 51 See also Kittler's remark that "the montage of its senseless accumulation of fact made psychophysics into the mental disturbance it was investigating." Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 310.
- 52 Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life," in Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 116.
- 53 lbid., 87.
- 54 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 286.

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- 55 Hermann von Helmholtz, *Rede zum Geburtstage des höchstseligen Grossherzogs Karl Friedrich von Baden und zur akademischen Preisvertheilung am 22. November 1862* (Heidelberg: Buchdruckerei Georg Mohr, 1862), 4. Translation mine.
- 56 According to Wolfgang Hagen, the separation of the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) from the natural sciences occurred in the 1870s, shortly before the Prussian archive reforms. Cf. Wolfgang Hagen, "Was helsst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Mediengeschichte?," www.hagen.de/vortraege/antrittsvortesunghtm/vorlesung.htm, 8.
- Morelli distinguished originals from copies not with reference to "the most conspicuous characteristics of a painting, which are the easiest to imitate: eyes raised towards the heavens in the figures of Perugino, Leonardo's smiles, and so on," but rather with reference to "the most trivial details that would have been influenced least by the mannerisms of the artist's school: earlobes, fingernails, shapes of fingers and of toes." With the help of this marginal information, Morelli "identified and faithfully catalogued ... the shape of the ear in figures by Botticelli, Cosmé Tura, and others, traits that were present in the originals but not in copies," a procedure that helped him identify some of the most famous paintings hanging in European museums. See Carlo Ginzburg, Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 97.
- 58 Helmholtz, Rede zum Geburtstage, 14.
- **59** ibid.
- **60** Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet, with the Dictionary of Received Ideas*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 121.
- 61 ibid., 124.
- 62 ibid., 132.
- **B3** ibid., 133.
- On the archive in Flaubert's novel, see also Marco Codebò, "The Archive and the Novel: Documentation and Narrative in the Modern Age" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005), 85–127.

### 3 FREUD'S FILES

- 1 Derrida asked, "which archive? that of Sigmund Freud? that of the psychoanalytic institution or science? Where does one draw the limit? What is this new science of which the institutional and theoretical archive ought by rights to comprise the most private documents, sometimes secret?" Jacques Derrida, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 20.
- 2 The term used by Freud to designate the events taking place in the psyche, *psychische Akte* (psychical acts), is the same as the one used for office files (German *Akte* = file).
- 3 In his letter to Wilhelm Fliess of February 9, 1898, Freud writes that "the dream process is played out in a different psychic territory." The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904, ed. Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 299.
- 4 Heinrich Hertz, *The Principles of Mechanics Presented in a New Form* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 12.
- 5 Hertz subsequently argues that a new law must be found that can encompass all types of motions, those that appear in nature and those that do not. He calls this new law the principle of the conservation of energy. There are no forces that violate the principle (now called the first law of thermodynamics) which says that in any system energy cannot be created or destroyed.
- 6 Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*, *SE*, vol. 5 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 641.

7 ibid.

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Notes Moyra
on Davey
Photography
&
Accident

For a long time I've had a document on my desktop called "Photography & Accident." It contains passages from Walter Benjamin's "Short History of Photography," Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, and Janet Malcolm's *Diana & Nikon*. All of the quotes hover around the idea that accident is the lifeblood of photography.

Walter Benjamin: "The viewer [of the photograph] feels an irresistible compulsion to seek the tiny spark of accident, the here and now."

Susan Sontag: "Most photographers have always had an almost superstitious confidence in the lucky accident."

Janet Malcolm: "[A]ll the canonical works of photography retain some trace of the medium's underlying, life-giving, accident-proneness."

Add to these exceptional writers on photography Roland Barthes and his notion of the *punctum*: that "cast of the dice . . . that accident which pricks" (*Camera Lucida*).

Benjamin's masterpiece is from 1931, Sontag and Malcolm were publishing their superlative prose in the mid-'70s in the *New York* 

Review of Books and the New Yorker respectively, Barthes' Camera Lucida appeared in 1980. I have long been drawn to these writers, and I am fascinated by the ways their thinking overlaps. Some instances are well known, as in the homage paid by Sontag to Benjamin and Barthes, but other connections are more buried: Sontag's references to the photograph as "memento mori" and "inventory of mortality" before Camera Lucida; Sontag and Malcolm circling around the same material in the '70s (accident, surreal-

ism, the vitality of the snapshot versus formalism) and coming to remarkably similar conclusions about "the enigma of photography."

The notion of accident has had many meanings, from "decisive moment" to "photographing to see what something will look like photographed." But is this an anachronism for contemporary work, decades after the ethos of the street?

Roberta Smith, writing in the *New York Times*, has aptly characterized recent trends in image making (very large, staged color photographs) as "the Pre-Raphaelite painting of our day." The problem, to state it baldly, is one of stilt coupled with bloat. Absent from these oversized tableaux is the inherently surrealist, contingent, "found" quality of the vernacular photograph, the quality my quartet of writers so eloquently identifies and holds so dear. My goal is to reclaim this critical history of ideas in relation to contemporary photographs, and to understand how the notion of accident might still be relevant.

And I have another motive as well: I want to make some photographs, but I want them to take seed in words.

### BEING

July 2006. In the hospital, on steroids, I have the feeling for perhaps the first time in my life that I can simply "be." I no longer have to push myself to do anything, to prove anything. I can just sit on the bed and be.

#### WRITERS

Why these particular writers and critics now? I admit to an acolyte's devotion to Malcolm, to a thirst for everything she writes. There's a thrill to reading her that comes from the moments when her writing breaks ever so subtly with the decorum of journalistic worldliness to hint at something personal, painful even, about Malcolm herself.

Malcolm generally operates at a metadiscursive level—in some ways it's her signature as a writer-but I'm thinking here of instances that are more localized, of remarks almost having the quality of a Freudian slip, that crop up in the essays and give the reader pause. A small aside, perhaps having to do with aging or the unhappiness of artists, or families, or childhood, will unexpectedly open up a window of emotional life onto what had otherwise been a fairly hermetic discursive field. It is tempting to call these punctum moments, small ruptures in the studium (Barthes' term for the aspect of a photograph that gets taken for granted, doesn't surprise) of Malcolm's flawless, expository prose. For Barthes the punctum could not be willed, and while Malcolm's interjections are clearly not accidents, they have a strong unconscious quality. Her view of the world is profoundly and understatedly psychoanalytic. I love to read her because of this, and it reminds me of why I could never read Nabokov: he had an utter disdain for Freud and psychoanalysis. Malcolm's perceptions thrill because they signal "truth" in the way that strange, eccentric details nearly always do.

A punctum moment comes in Benjamin's "Short History of Photography" when he describes, and shows, an early studio portrait of Karl Dauthendey and his betrothed. This woman, Benjamin tells us, would "one day [be found] shortly after the birth of their sixth child . . . in the bedroom of [Dauthendey's] Moscow house with arteries slashed." Prefiguring Barthes and his scrutiny of images of condemned men ("he is dead and he is going to die"), Benjamin notes the "irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of accident," the contingency or sign that might allow us to read in the photographic record of this woman a foretelling of her tragic end. It's very eccentric, the way Benjamin includes this biographical information in a text on photography, and contemporary readers of this poignant aside cannot but speculate as

to Benjamin's emotional state at the time he was composing his essay. We know of his suicide at the French/Spanish border in 1940, but we also learn from Sontag's essay "Under the Sign of Saturn" that Benjamin contemplated suicide more than once, beginning in 1931, the year "Short History" was published. (Later I google "Dauthendey" and find a genealogy that tells me his wife's name was Anna Olschwang, and that her suicide was the result of postpartum depression.)

I read Benjamin over and over, sometimes getting it, sometimes not. I identify mostly with his nostalgia, which seemed to ebb and flow, depending on which part of his temperament prevailed. At times it was the Marxist side that dominated, when he was under the sway of Brecht and spoke of mechanical reproduction as a liberation from aura. But Benjamin was also, as Sontag points out, a melancholic collector who sought out beauty and authenticity, and who wrote lovingly of the earliest auratic photographs, the long, drawn out exposures that preceded the mass hucksterism and popularization of the medium.

I confess to never having had a handle on Sontag's *On Photography*. It's teeming with insight and contains exhilarating passages, but I've always had trouble keeping the essays straight in my mind. William Gass, reviewing the book in the *NYT* when it came out in 1977, shed some light on her method: "Sontag's ideas are grouped more nearly like a gang of keys upon a ring than a run of onions on a string." A perfect description of *On Photography's* epigrammatic structure, where ideas, indented with dingbats, accumulate, and indeed follow one another with a sort of loose, fragmentary randomness. I never connected on an emotional level with Sontag; nonetheless I'm awed by her avant-gardism and erudition.

Sontag's book prefigured Barthes'. Sontag and Barthes were friends, and I wonder how much *On Photography*, especially its ideas

about death and the photograph as memento mori, might have been generative to his thinking in *Camera Lucida*.

### BLOCKED

Writer's block has a legitimacy. There's nothing comparable for artists, no common designation for similar stoppage, and with this symbolic deficiency comes a shame implying a failure of the will, lassitude, impotence. I may as well admit it. I'm blocked. I take pictures of the same dusty surfaces, the cherry wood bedside table with its thin coating of linen dust, a color that I know doesn't reproduce well. It will have that plummy magenta look that I always find a bit sickening. A week later I pick up the film: no transformation. My ratio these days is perhaps one usable frame for every five or ten rolls of film.

I think of Robert Frank's contact sheets for *The Americans*, his incredible ratios of productivity.

I think of filmmaker Nina Fonoroff beginning to shoot *The Accursed Mazurka* after a long hiatus, emitting a howl as the first feet of film run through her Bolex. Release, expenditure, risk, surrender.

I think of Janet Malcolm, apropos of Edward Weston: "One gets the impression he didn't enjoy himself very much. What artist does?"

### **AMPERSAND**

The ampersand in "Photography & Accident" is to remind me of Virginia Woolf, who made regular use of the symbol, writing for instance of her habit of "reading with pen & notebook." There is a flânerie of reading that can be linked to the flânerie of a certain kind of photographing. Both involve drift, but also purpose, when they become enterprises of absorption and collecting. Walter Benjamin's Arcades project was a superlative flânerie, a long, digressive list of notes and citations. It was a surrealist-inspired collection, but with

a nihilist twist, what Hannah Arendt called "a refusal of empathy." The historical quotes were intended to stand alone, a tacit protest and stark witness to Benjamin's despair over what was taking place in Europe in the late 1920s and '30s.

Benjamin and Virginia Woolf were contemporaries. They committed suicide within six months of each other in 1940-41, at the height of personal hopelessness and Nazi terror.

#### READING

Reading is a favorite activity, and I often ponder its phenomenology. As I write this essay, the reading I do for it is a mitigated pleasure. Sometimes it feels like a literal ingestion, a bulimic gobbling up of words as though they were fast food. At other times I read and take notes in a desultory, halting, profoundly unsatisfying way. And my eyes hurt.

I remember Lynne Sharon Schwartz in her book Ruined by Reading, writing of letting Cagean principles of chance and randomness

determine her reading. I've never read John Cage, but since I'm writing about accident I determine that now is the time and begin with a book I find on the shelves called *Notations*, a collection of several hundred pages of composers' musical scores, and notations on these notations. I open the book at random. Someone has

written: "I mix chance and choice somewhat scandalously." I copy this phrase into a notebook, a perfect encapsulation of my own desire for contingency within a structure. I decide to allow chance elements, the *flânerie*, as it were, of daily life, to find their way into this essay.

## NOTES

Roland Barthes spoke of his love of, his addiction almost, to note-taking. He had a system of notebooks and note cards, and Latinate names to designate different stages of note-taking: *notula* was the

single word or two quickly recorded in a slim notebook; *nota*, the later and fuller transcription of this thought onto an index card. When away from his desk he used spring-activated ballpoint pens that required no fumbling with a cap, and wore jackets with pockets that would accommodate these tools. He maintained friends who would not question his habit of stopping, mid-walk, mid-sentence, to quickly note a thought.

Barthes: "When a certain amount of time's gone by without any note-taking, without my having taken out my notebook, I notice a certain feeling of frustration and aridity. And so each time I get back to note-taking (notatio) it's like a drug, a refuge, a security. I'd say that the activity of notatio is like a mothering. I return to notatio as to a mother who protects me. Note-taking gives me a form of security" (La préparation du roman, 1979).

Reading and thinking about note-taking gives me a form of security, a thrill even, so I will indulge myself a little further and add here advice from Benjamin's list, "The Writer's Technique in Thirteen Theses":

"Item #4. Avoid haphazard writing materials. A pedantic adherence to certain papers, pens, inks is beneficial. No luxury, but an abundance of these utensils is indispensable.

"Item #5. Let no thought pass incognito, and keep your notebook as strictly as the authorities keep their register of aliens" ("One-Way Street," 1928).

Hannah Arendt on Benjamin: "Nothing was more characteristic of him in the thirties than the little notebooks with black covers which he always carried with him and in which he tirelessly entered in the form of quotations what daily living and reading netted him in the way of 'pearls' and 'coral."

## DIARIES

September 10, 2006. The *New York Times* prints excerpts from Sontag's diaries of 1958 to 1967. I marvel at the immediacy and intimacy of her notes and lists, and the quirky way formal typesetting reproduces and transforms the idiosyncrasies of her punctuation and abbreviation; at her using the word "queer" to describe herself in 1959, her talk of lovers, orgasm, depression, drinking, Rilke, writing, and her seven-year-old son. The tone of these diaries is so radically different from anything I've ever read by her. It's a revelation and makes me rethink many of my assumptions about Sontag.

A Barthes Reader, edited by Sontag, begins and ends with essays on the diary. "Deliberation," published the year before Barthes died, is a melancholic meditation on his ambivalence over that form. He finds pleasure in the spontaneity of recording an entry, but ultimately expresses irritation with the "verbless sentences" and the "pose" of the diary voice. He feels that everything he writes is merely reproducing the voice of all the diaries that have come before.

## VISION

I'm working haltingly on this essay while simultaneously undergoing treatment for optic neuritis in my left eye. My doctors are kind people who especially want to help me because I am a photographer; my ophthalmologist collects Leicas and is always eager to discuss optics and lenses and uses the terminology of f-stops and "shutting down" to describe the darkened perceptions of my affected eye. I don't tell my doctors that my production of photographs has dwindled to a trickle, that I've grown melancholic and ambivalent about photography. After all, one of the motivations for this essay has been to try to rekindle a desire to make images.

I have a resistance to engaging my true topic, "photography & accident," and instead find myself inexorably drawn to thinking about writing. As I struggle to write about photography, I remember how much easier it seemed to write about reading and writing, and how much I love to read about both these subjects. I begin to wonder if it's not just the modernist paradigm kicking in, that a metadiscourse is always more satisfying: painting about painting, photographs about photography, and writing about writing. I can always be engaged by discipline- or medium-specific metaproductions.

## WORDS, PICTURES

Sontag: "A photograph could also be described as a quotation, making a book of photographs like a book of quotations." And Barthes speculated that the haiku and the photograph have the same *noeme*, the same essence. What each reveals, unequivocally, is the "that has been."

#### LIGHT WRITING

This is the Greek origin of the word "photography," and Eduardo Cadava reminds us that Henry Fox Talbot, author of *The Pencil of* 

Nature, used the expression "words of light" to describe his first photographs. In Camera Lucida Barthes gives us a possible Latin equivalent for "photograph": "imago lucis opera expressa," an image "expressed (like the juice of a lemon) by the action of light."

#### AUTOMATIC WRITING

Sontag: "[A photograph] is a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask. . . . [A] photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation."

Barthes, invoking Sontag: "[F]rom the real body, which was there, proceed radiations, which ultimately touch me . . . like the delayed rays of a star."

As indexes or imprints, photographs constitute an unmediated transcription of the flow of the real onto a two-dimensional plane. In her essay "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism" (1981), Rosalind Krauss recast photography as a form of automatism or automatic writing.

## MARTHA ROSLER

I am immersed in reading works by and about my four authors, trying to think through this notion of accident and what it could possibly mean in relation to contemporary practices. There is an archaic ring to "accident," somehow associated with the "truth" claims of the photograph, a notion of authenticity long ago debunked by critics such as Allan Sekula and Martha Rosler. Rosler published her seminal, brutal critique of documentary photography ("in, around, and afterthoughts") in 1981, and, ironically, I think the subsequent decline in the medium can be attributed at least in part to a super-valuation, not to mention a convenient distortion, of her argument. Rosler's essay portrays documentary as an untenable practice: to look at and record the real world, unmedi-

ated, is to run the very high risk of victimizing a second time those already victimized by social injustice. This was the message that filtered down and out, widely, from that influential essay and touched a generation of artists. One possible response to Rosler's argument would have been to create instead a world of one's own. Much of the staged, directed, and patently constructed work of the '8os and after, whether it's of a critical nature or not, is underpinned by Rosler's critique.

## **WOLFGANG TILLMANS**

Wolfgang Tillmans's work is at P.S.I: a major exhibition of mostly enormous, framed photographs, very abstract and painterly, gestural. They are images of flares and lightleaks, giant swaths of color spilling across the paper like thrown paint. They are nothing if not a testament to the possibilities of accident, yet I am filled with boredom and disappointment, skeptical about Tillmans's choice to produce these works on such a massive scale, and to give up his

usual unpretentious method of tacking pictures to the wall with Scotch tape. I walk quickly through the galleries; a little later I look at the catalogue in the bookstore, in which everything is reduced to a thumbnail, little smudges of color. Without the grand scale of the originals, the images make almost no impression. I think: this is the true indictment of Tillmans's current works. Only their massiveness of scale and the technical mastery of manipulating gigantic sheets of color paper in the dark make any claim on our attention. There's accident, but it's the accident of a Pollock drip—it's not the idiom of the photograph.

## THE BOOK

Writing about William Eggleston's now legendary first showing of color photographs at MoMA in 1976, Malcolm notes how weak an impression they make on the wall. The catalogue, however, is another story: its hip design gives his work the avant-garde look of modern art "that eluded it in the museum."

Photographs have been embedded in books almost from day one, beginning with Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*, and they continue to be happy companions. I'm convinced that reproducibility in book form is part of the vocabulary of the photograph.

## REPRODUCTION & TYPE

There is a seduction to the editorial use of photographs: surround almost any image with type and it takes on an allure, an authority, provokes a desire it might otherwise not have. What is this appeal, exactly? The seduction of language, of the symbolic? Is it that, as Benjamin and Brecht speculated, photographs are more at home with, even in need of, words?

In one of the grad programs where I teach, students are required to write a thesis about their work and process. I notice that their photographs become vastly more interesting to me after I read what they've written about them; I like seeing their images shrunken and recontextualized, embedded in paragraphs of descriptive text.

Malcolm: "The dullest, most inept and inconsequential snapshot, when isolated, framed (on a wall or by the margins of a book), and paid attention to, takes on all the uncanny significance, fascination, and beauty of R. Mutt's fountain..."

## **FRAGMENTS**

I'm drawn to fragmentary forms, to lists, diaries, notebooks, and letters. Even just reading the word "diary" elicits a frisson, a touch of promise. It's the concreteness of these forms, the clarity of their address, that appeals and brings to mind Virginia Woolf's dictum about writing, that "to know whom to write for is to know how to write." I am similarly drawn to fragments of an artist's oeuvre, a single image in a magazine or brochure. I tear these out and hold onto them. No doubt I also like the miniaturization, and the possibility of possessing the thing.

Taped to the wall above my desk is a Thomas Hirschhorn print of Emma Kunz's geometric shapes, stolen for me from his last show by my friend, filmmaker Jennifer Montgomery, and beside it is a page torn out of *Afterimage*, with a Gabriel Orozco photo (*Coins in Window*) reproduced in black and white.

In a pencil jar is a six-inch nail, also pinched from the Hirschhorn show by Jennifer, and embedded between it and the pens and pencils is a tiny reproduction of an Andrea Gohl window, an image I saw in an Allen Frame show at Art in General a few years ago. Frame is an artist I discovered in Nan Goldin's curated show *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* in 1989 at Artists Space, a show that included many other loved artists, such as David Wojnarowicz and Peter Hujar. Frame made color diptychs of Kodachrome snapshots with

handwritten captions in the margins. They seemed to be images of friends and lovers, and reminded me of Larry Clark's *Tulsa*.

All of these images, the ones at hand and the ones remembered, become part of a psychic landscape; they feed a fantasy, have what Sontag calls a "talismanic" quality.

## FOUND

Sontag: "Photographs are, of course, artifacts. But their appeal is that they also seem, in a world littered with photographic relics, to have the status of found objects.

"A painting is commissioned or bought; a photograph is found (in albums and drawers), cut out (of newspapers and magazines), or easily taken oneself."

The space of reverie opened up by images I come across in a group show or in a magazine is often squelched by an encounter with the larger body of larger works from which these have been extracted. So much of what we see in galleries is responding to

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the imperative to overproduce, overenlarge, overconsume, and, for artists with ascending and funded careers, this trajectory can seem all but unavoidable. As Roberta Smith points out, the primary meaning of these works is often: "I made this because I can."

One of the rare instances where large-scale photography seems to be justified is Hannah Wilke's *Intra-Venus* series. Here there's a reason for the massive size: these pictures of Wilke's delicate body rendered monstrous and bloated by cancer treatments are meant to be an affront, in-your-face, a gutsy cry of rage and defiance. I saw some of them recently at P.S.I. They were a little warped and fraying around the edges, not precious or commercial looking, or well preserved. Probably not very saleable or collectible.

## CONSUMPTION

"The final reason for the need to photograph everything lies in the very logic of consumption itself. To consume means to burn, to use up—and, therefore, the need to be replenished. As we make images and consume them, we need still more images; and still more" (Susan Sontag).

Periodically, but infrequently enough to be surprised by what I find, I go through boxes of photographs and contact sheets made as long as twenty-eight years ago. My latest foray into the archive was sparked by a need to find specific negatives for a piece that never went beyond the contact sheet stage. In my memory the negs were 35mm color. When I finally uncovered them, they were medium format, black and white, and fewer than I imagined. Nonetheless, I was very happy to find them; I am always happy and reassured when I "find" something that has been "lost." And in the process of searching, I flipped through hundreds of contact sheets of my baby, wondering how I could possibly have taken so many pictures of him in the first few years of his life (a veritable

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compulsion is how it strikes me now). Still, these were the images I wanted to look at, pore over, scrutinize.

Dipping into the archive is always an interesting, if sometimes unsettling, proposition. It often begins with anxiety, with the fear that the thing you want won't surface. But ultimately the process is a little like tapping into the unconscious, and can bring with it the ambivalent gratification of rediscovering forgotten selves.

Rather than making new pictures, why can't I just recycle some of these old ones? Claim "found" photographs from among my boxes? And have this gesture signify "resistance to further production/consumption"?

## LOVE

In the essay "Diana and Nikon," Malcolm quotes Lisette Model on the attraction of the snapshot: "We are all so overwhelmed by culture... that it is a relief to see something which is done directly, without any intention of being good or bad, done only because one wants to do it."

And Barthes, in one of many emotive passages in *Camera Lucida*, speaking of the pathos of the photograph, and of the particular direction his investigation of its essence will take, says: "I was like that friend who had turned to Photography only because it allowed him to photograph his son."

I remember Sheryl C., a beautiful young lesbian at the University of California, San Diego, who enrolled in photography classes so that she could take pictures of all the girls she had crushes on.

Thomas Hirschhorn writes unabashedly of love in relation to his literary and artistic heroes (and I love him for this), including Emma Kunz (1892–1963), whose "healing images" he featured abundantly in his installation at Gladstone Gallery in 2005: "I want to take the beauty of her work superficially to make use of it as

pictorial energy in a three-dimensional display where questions of decoration, formalism, superficiality are confronted to pictures of war, human violence and wounds."

I love these words and I love Jennifer for her nerviness, for pinching the Kunz print I coveted but didn't have the guts to steal myself. I picture her on that cold winter day in her long coat and platform heels, like one of Robert Altman's women, moving stealthily and placidly through the frigid glass and concrete spaces of Gladstone in Chelsea.

Sitting through MFA admissions committees, looking at slides or electronic images and listening to the candidates' statements being read aloud, I am struck by these 20-to-30-year-olds' declarations of love for photography. I remember my own love of black-and-white photography at that age, the seduction of materials, the finishes and textures of special papers, the toners that could be added to further alter warmth or coolness. A simple appreciation of materials becomes taboo.

Zoe Leonard later brought a love and estimation of the old-fashioned gelatin silver print into the postmodern equation, at a time, in the early '90s, when it was thought most uncouth to do so. Her work represented a bridge between old-school photography and the concept-driven practices of the post-Pictures generation, i.e., appropriation and staged photography.

## OCTOBER 4

Page count: 23. Typeface 16-pt bold. I have been reading and writing these notes in a meandering, aleatory fashion, but it is becoming increasingly clear that I must address directly what Benjamin, Sontag, and Malcolm meant by accident and their valuation of it in relation to photography. I go back to the books to reread my opening quotes in context.

## WALTER BENJAMIN

Benjamin's essay is a love letter to the earliest practitioners, the first portraitists, and then to subsequent generations of document producers: Eugène Atget, August Sander, and Karl Blossfeld. Benjamin had an uncanny eye for everything that would prove enduring in photographic history, and famously railed against the arty and fashionable, the "creative"—in particular, Albert Renger-Patzsch, author of *The World Is Beautiful*.

For Benjamin, "the tiny spark of accident" is a little like the *punctum*, the detail that escaped the photographer's notice but reaches out to the viewer, decades or centuries later, collapsing time, making the viewer feel contemporaneous with the image. He includes in his essay, recently retranslated as "Little History of Photography," David Octavius Hill's *Newhaven Fishwife*, and writes of "an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real.' <sup>1</sup> I find this a strikingly

Barthesian remark, this way of talking about desire in relation to the photograph. And looking at the reproduction you know exactly what Benjamin is talking about: you have the uncanny sense that the photograph could be a contemporary one of a stage actress in nineteenth-century dress.

Especially moving is Benjamin's tribute to Atget, an artist all but ignored in his own lifetime, who photographed the Parisian

arcades, those architectural structures that figured so emblematically in Benjamin's thought and oeuvre in the last decade of his life. It is almost as though Benjamin sees in Atget's undervalued life and work, and in the lonely, poverty-afflicted circumstances of his death, a mirror of his own struggles and unrewarded work, his own life beset by cruel accidents of history, that would end in conditions even more fraught than his subject's.

For Benjamin accident is the tiny mark of destiny, the ability of the camera to signal a moment of historical truth. In a strong

allusion to mounting Fascist violence in Europe, to city streets becoming more and more perilous to citizens such as himself, Benjamin writes: "It is no accident that Atget's photographs have been likened to those of a crime scene. . . . Every passerby a culprit." He follows with a series of rhetorical questions, a call to photographers to make their works literate, to be eyewitnesses, to pin down meaning with inscription. But "Little History of Photography" then concludes in classic Benjaminian fashion, with a gesture away from the revolutionary engagement demanded of photographs, back to the melancholic tone that opened the essay, to "the photographs [that] emerge beautiful and unapproachable, from the darkness of our grandfathers' day."

#### **BENJAMIN & BARTHES**

Sit at glass-topped table. Copy passages from Benjamin, Barthes. Begin to see new connections.

Benjamin: "For the reader is at all times ready to become a writer.

. . . [C]onsumers into producers, readers or spectators into collaborators" ("The Author as Producer").

Barthes: "The Text decants the work from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice" ("From Work to Text").

For Benjamin the art photograph quickly became a fetish; he was interested in photographs whose aesthetic qualities were secondary, a by-product of some other intention or drive. At the end of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes declares that photography as art is worthless to him because it's not mad. Only an original, mad work will pitch the viewer right back into what he calls "the very letter of Time," the wound of Time, the sense of loss that in turn produces for Barthes a "photographic *ecstasy*." This ecstasy reminds me of the *bliss* of Barthes' *writerly* Text, which, like the *punctum*, also "cuts," "chooses," "imposes . . . loss." It is also the Text that blurs the distinction between writer and reader.

There are some remarkable affinities between Barthes' decrees in the 1970s and Benjamin's pronouncements in his trio of related works from the early-to-mid-1930s ("Author as Producer," "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," "Little History") that touch on the revolutionary power of the photographic image. In the days of escalating Fascism in Europe, Benjamin felt that what photographs urgently needed was text to ground them, and he advocated Brechtian acts of "unmasking and construction," urged writers to become photographers and readers to become writers.

Though conceived at very different historical moments, and under very different circumstances, these prescriptions from Benjamin are nonetheless very close in spirit to Barthes' own manifesto texts that call for collapsing the distinctions between writers and readers, producers and consumers.

To illustrate this collapsing of roles, both writers make analogies to models of musical production. For Benjamin it is the concert that

"eliminate[s] the antithesis between performers and listeners"; for Barthes the conflation of roles signals a period in musical history when "'playing' and 'listening' formed a scarcely differentiated activity."

## OCTOBER 7

Meet up with friends in the East Village. Walk over to St. Marks and look at enormous Annie Leibovitz coffee-table book for her show about to open at the Brooklyn Museum: shocking photographs of Susan Sontag, very ill, in hospital, and on a stretcher being transported by ambulance plane. Photographs and video stills of Sontag dead, almost unrecognizable.

Next day, read article online from Friday *Times* on the Leibovitz show and book in which Sontag is described as "a private person" and Leibovitz is quoted as saying: "If [Sontag] was alive, of course this work wouldn't be published. It's such a totally different story that she is dead. I mean, she would champion this work."

Walk the dog and think of the strangeness of this intensely voyeuristic, almost freakish book that chronicles fifteen years of Leibovitz's commercial workand her private life with Sontag. I think of Sontag's razor-sharp criticism, her withering critique of Diane Arbus; think especially of Sontag's last book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, an account of the relationship between victimization and photography, and wonder at the terrible irony of these final images of her corpse.

Dust and vacuum bedroom where I work on the bed. Within days every surface is again covered in powdery white dust.

## SONTAG & ACCIDENT

I am struck more than ever by Sontag's prescience.

She mentions accident more than once, including this passage on photography's privileged relation to surrealism: "Surrealism lies at the heart of the photographic enterprise . . . has always courted accidents, welcomed the uninvited. . . . What could be more surreal than an object which virtually produces itself, and with a minimum of effort?" (I wonder what debt Rosalind Krauss's essay on the surrealists and photography might owe to Sontag, and go back to Krauss and look over her footnotes. No mention of Sontag.)

For Sontag it is the unmanipulated photograph that is inherently surreal and comes about "through a loose co-operation (quasimagical, quasi-accidental) between photographer and subject." It does not require elaborate means or technical ingenuity; in fact the opposite is true: it is artifice that kills off what's interesting and vital in a photograph. Artiness squelches: "The less doctored, the less patently crafted, the more naïve, the better a photograph is likely to be."

## MALCOLM & AGING

For Barthes accident is the detail that wounds; the *punctum* is also the wound of Time that every photograph embodies. Janet Malcolm's

essay "Pink Roses" in *Diana & Nikon*, a review of Andrew Bush's photographs of a home inhabited by a group of aging aristocrats, is also about the wounds of time. Three quarters of the way into a fairly straightforward review, Malcolm writes:

"But [the photographs] ultimately tell a story more personal and painful (and universal) than the narrative of the 'European aristocratic lifestyle' at bay. With a precocity resembling that of Muriel Spark, who wrote her masterpiece *Memento Mori* when she was half the age of her characters, Bush delicately but with devastating accuracy probes the world of old age. Led by the camera's bland inquisitiveness, the young visitor penetrates to the heart of the matter of being at the end of one's life and getting through the day as best one can."

I find this writing "devastating," and google Malcolm to know her birth date: 1934, in Prague, which means she was 55 when she wrote her review, and was thinking about aging. Now she would be 72. I think of all the accidents of fate and history involved with these writers: Benjamin's persecution and suicide at age 48; Woolf's at 59. Barthes hit by a truck at 64, Sontag succumbing to a third bout of cancer at age 71. She railed against "quality of life" and fought for the very slim chance of a cure. Of the four, only Janet Malcolm, the daughter of a Jewish psychiatrist whose family left Czechoslovakia in 1939, the year the Germans invaded, is still alive.

Robert Louis Stevenson: "[Death] outdoes all other accidents because it is the last of them."

#### **PSYCHOANALYSIS**

Nineteen thirty-nine was also the year of Freud's suicide in London following his flight from Nazi-occupied Vienna the previous year. Unlike Benjamin, who was forced to abandon his cherished library when he left Paris, Freud had been allowed to bring his collection

of antiquities with him to England. But by then he was in unbearable pain from cancer of the jaw, and induced his own death by morphine with a physician's assistance.

Janet Malcolm has written extensively on psychoanalysis. In some ways she is at her most dazzling when she uses psychoanalysis

as a lens through which to view the world, as in this passage from the essay "Slouching Towards Bethlehem, PA," on the irascible documentarian Chauncey Hare:

"Hare takes the camera's capacity for aimless vision as his starting point and works with it somewhat the way a psychoanalyst works with free association. He enters the universe of the undesired detail and adopts an expectant attitude, waiting for the cluttered surface to crack and yield to interpretation."

Here Malcolm puts her own artful spin on Benjamin's famous allusion to the camera's ability "with its devices of slow motion and enlargement" to reveal hidden and unseen truths: "It is through

photography that we first discover the existence of [the] optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis."

## OCTOBER 10

First Interferon injection. Pictures of dust motes in sunlight after shaking out bedspread; picture of large weed growing by the West Side Highway. I've broken the ice, am taking pictures again. I risk something, but what, exactly? I am overcoming my resistance to committing further images to the world, new negatives to the archive. Think again of Nina's long howl as she took the plunge.

#### OCTOBER 13

For Sontag and Malcolm accident is the vitality of the snapshot, to which they oppose the turgidity and pretentiousness of art. For Barthes accident is wholly subjective; it is what interpolates him into any given photograph.

It's becoming clear to me that my own relation to accident is also extremely subjective, that accident is to be located outside the frame somehow, in the way we apprehend images. I shun the formal encounter via the institutions of galleries and museums, and gravitate to books and journals.

## LOST

As I'm writing I start to remember, or think I remember, reading that Benjamin (or was it Barthes?) wrote about clocks in photographs, the idea of a picture recording the exact moment of its taking. I flip through books, hoping I've made a mark. But the thing I was looking to find remains lost. I feel unlucky.

I am developing new coping mechanisms for lost words and lost negatives, as here for instance: compensate by describing the episode instead. Where something is lost, redirect energy, follow the *dérive*, the chance and flow of what life tosses us, and make something new instead.

Remember that I'm often struck by certain passages of descriptive writing, writing that is not about driving home a point but about providing detail, background, setting the scene (it's tempting to call this the *studium* of writing). It has a "something from nothing" quality: a pleasurable experience has been had, and no one has paid a price. Remember that writing does not have to be torture.

## OCTOBER 15

Read. Read something else. Go back to the first thing and see how it is changed.

## WRITING

"Every writer has to reach and is constantly aware of how basically it comes from inside; . . . whereas for the photographer, the world is

really there" (Sontag, "Photography within the Humanities").

Writing seems like the ultimate magic trick, of making something from nothing. Perhaps I still "write" like a photographer — I go out into the world of other people's writing and take snapshots. These "word-pictures," like Benjamin's "pearls" and "coral," have Sontag's "talismanic" quality, and from them I can make something.

## OCTOBER 25

Increase Interferon. Dream-filled, restless sleep. Prompted by Sontag's diary, read Rilke, who said: "Love the questions."

## TRANSFORMATION

In an interview in *Afterimage* in 1999 Jennifer Montgomery describes the initial attraction film had for her, that it was a medium that could bring together writing, performance, and the visual, all in one work. And then came the discovery of film language: "We always used to talk about whether a film had been transformed or not. You would get some footage back [from the lab], and it wouldn't be successful because it wouldn't have become something other than just the image and the text.... [It wouldn't have] gotten constructed to the point where it had a life of its own."

This "life of its own" is film language, "the thing we don't count on . . . the language of the unexpected."

Jennifer's comments remind me of Gary Winogrand's famous statement about why he took pictures. In her essay "Certainties and Possibilities," Janet Malcolm cites a longer version of the well-known quote in which Winogrand is responding to this query from a student: "What is it, say, in a picture that makes it interesting instead of dead? What makes it alive instead of dead?"

Winogrand gives the example of a Robert Frank photograph of a gas station: "[It's] the photographer's understanding of possibilities.

... When he took that photograph he couldn't possibly know—he just could not know—that it would work, that it would be a photograph. He knew he probably had a chance. In other words, he cannot know what that's going to look like as a *photograph*.... That's really what photography—still photography—is about. In the simplest sentence, I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed."

This "not knowing" has, for the better part of two centuries, been an integral part of working with celluloid and emulsions. Even with a Polaroid you had to wait a minute or two. Not to be too mystical about it, but the delay, the waiting and the anticipation, were all part of a process that embraced accident and contingency.

And this phenomenon of latency, while not exactly eliminated from digital work, has been diminished. A fundamental idiom of the photographic process has been altered by the introduction of previsualization, by the little screens that allow us to compose, rearrange, jettison. The next step is often the larger screen of the computer monitor and the tools of digital enhancement. Many of the pictures produced by this method are fundamentally no different from the gaudy mid-nineteenth-century pictorialist tableaux of Henry Peach Robinson and F. Holland Day.

#### TOD PAPAGEORGE

Tod Papageorge has been teaching at Yale for a long time—he's one of the archetypal street photographers of the '70s, and while my photography teachers all talked about him thirty years ago, I never knew his work. Now he has two books coming out, and an interview recently appeared in *Bomb*.

"Bomb: Are the mistakes that your students are prone to now the same mistakes that students were prone to when you were teaching back in the '6os?

"TP: No. I think that, in general—and this includes a lot of what I see in Chelsea even more than what I see from students at Yale—there's a failure to understand how much richer in surprise and creative possibility the world is for photographers in comparison to their imagination. This is an understanding that an earlier generation of students, and photographers, accepted as a first principle. Now ideas are paramount, and the computer and Photoshop are seen as the engines to stage and digitally coax those ideas into a physical form—typically a very large form. This process is synthetic, and the results, for me, are often emotionally synthetic too. Sure, things have to change, but photography-as-illustration, even sublime illustration, seems to me an uninteresting direction for the medium to be tracking now, particularly at such a difficult time in the general American culture."

OCTOBER 28

Insane mood swings.

#### VIRGINIA WOOLF

In 1926 Woolf wrote an essay called "The Cinema," about how primitive the art form still was, and about its clumsy attempts to poach on great works of literature such as *Anna Karenina*. Woolf contrasts the experience of reading, of knowing Anna "almost entirely by the inside of her mind" with film's rendering of an actress's "teeth, her pearls and her velvet...her [falling] into the arms of a gentleman in uniform [as] they kiss with enormous succulence." With her usual discernment, Woolf locates cinema's potential not in its parasitic relationship to the novel but in an "accidental scene [taking place in the background]—the gardener mowing the lawn."

She begins to glimpse film language in what was probably a hair in the gate of *Dr. Caligari*: "a shadow shaped like a tadpole [that]

suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity." This monstrous, hoary apparition signifies fear in a way that no facial expressions or words spoken by actors could ever approach, and Woolf speculates that it is in this sort of formal, materialist device, apprehended by accident, that the future of cinema lies.

There are some obvious parallels between Woolf's send-up of hokey film adaptations and what's going on today with photographers who work with Hollywood actors and sets. I know that photography has to evolve, and that for some artists it makes no sense to produce a photograph that is not self-acknowledging "as a construction," but I still stubbornly cling to those artists, like Francesca Woodman, who did it without dusting the hairs from the gate.

A picture like *Three Kinds of Melon in Four Kinds of Light*, from 1976, capers around the problematics, à la John Berger (*Ways of Seeing*), of objectifying the naked female body. Woodman cranked this stuff out with effortless verve and wit. Jason Simon introduced me to her work in the late '8os via a catalogue with poor-quality reproductions that he found in a secondhand-book store. I was blown away by this young artist, born the same year I was, dead at twenty-two in 1981, a suicide.

Recently I bought the new Phaidon monograph with superb plates and intoxicating smell of ink. It includes many images I'd never seen before—they take your breath away, they are as smart and captivating as the work I first saw nearly twenty years ago.

## **NOVEMBER 27**

I'd intended to go to Chelsea, but instead return to St. Mark's to look at the Annie Leibovitz book. The book has been placed on a podium with a stool in front, and this time I look at it from beginning to end. I have a different perception: I realize that there

are fewer of the celebrity portraits than I remembered, and many, many more of the black-and-white diaristic pictures of Leibovitz's aging parents, her children, her siblings, and of course Susan Sontag, looking very real, with her papers and books and notes spread out all over the bed. Clad in jeans and sneakers, she had the frumpy glamour of someone who cared very little for how she looked. I know one is not supposed to look at black-and-white documentary photographs and think "these pictures tell me what it was like to be Susan Sontag," and I know what Barthes said about our fatuous projections onto the "writer's life," but I do it anyway, and I read into the pictures all of her intelligence, her passion, and the intensity of her commitment to the "writer's life."

Leibovitz's book is not perfect by any means—it's trying a little too hard to be epic, and it's bracketed by monumental, "eternal" desert shots, but it has a tenderness and a grittiness that I missed the first time round. I'm not nearly as judgmental as I was.

## **OPENNESS**

This time I make it to Chelsea. There's nothing in particular I've come to see; mostly, I've had a pressing feeling that it's been way too long since I made the effort, that I'm out of touch, that I've neglected my responsibilities. I feel guilty for being a recluse and not participating.

Yesterday's "openness" (as witnessed by my second encounter with the Leibovitz book) is still in place. It's 5 p.m. and dark; everything closes in an hour, but actually that's plenty of time to see a lot of things. First, a group show at Murray Guy with a Matthew Buckingham video playing on a small monitor. There's almost nothing to look at: a nondescript patch of sidewalk, grass, and fence; occasionally some bread crumbs get tossed into the frame and a few birds appear to peck at them. On the wall is a slot-shaped

box containing a typeset printout with a text by Matthew. I take one of these to read later.

I linger at Paula Cooper's bookstore, then head over to Sonnabend, not knowing who's there but having a moment of recognition as I walk in and realize these are the Hiroshi Sugimoto photos of shadows on white walls I've read about somewhere. Sugimoto has an appealing statement too, about tools and making things, about devices he's had to invent and construct for his fastidious photographs of seascapes and movie screens. For these shadow pictures he had the walls of a penthouse refinished in traditional Japanese plaster to better absorb and reflect light. I like his words, and I even feel an availability to these large, dumb, marshmallow pictures, to their Zen-like quality of muteness and refusal. I think about color prints I've made and the often compelling quality of shadows on a

white wall, sometimes having the purplish hue of a bruise.

Robert Longo has massive graphite drawings of the cosmos and the moon, and a couple of sentimental photographs of beautiful blond children sleeping, all done totally straight-faced and earnest. This is the art world at its most absurd: Mount Rushmore—scale pieties, dwarfed only by the deafening ka-ching of the cash register.

A few days later I read Matthew's wonderful, vaguely Sebald-ish text (printed in two columns of Times Roman with little documentary stills at the bottom) about the cultural history of house sparrows in Brooklyn. This is one of my favorite types of artwork, where the meaning of a work is deferred and completed, often over short distances of time and place, by the reading of a handout text.

#### **ZOF LEONARD**

Head down to Dia for a lecture by Zoe Leonard on Agnes Martin. I get there just before 6, only to realize I've gotten the time wrong; the talk starts at 6:30. I can't drink much anymore, but Paula Cooper's bookstore is still open, so I spend the half hour reading a few pages of Annie Leibovitz's introduction to her book. Again, I am surprised—by the simplicity and directness of her writing. It's all about Susan, about how this doorstop of a book grew out of digging around for photos to give to friends at Sontag's memorial. The writing touches me.

I make a few notes: Leibovitz describes her method as "personal reportage," an expression I've never heard before, and she says that when she gives advice to students she tells them to "stay close to home." My own work could not be further from Leibovitz's, yet both these terms could be used to describe what I do. And while I don't want to make what she makes, I do want to look at it, and on a fundamental level I subscribe to the ideas that underpin this particular work.

But getting back to the fact of this book. What does it mean that I've softened so much in my regard of it? Is this some sort of momentary, hysterical conversion? Have I lost my critical faculties and succumbed to the schlock of pathos? On some level I've given in to a sentimental impulse—I've changed my mind about the book because on closer inspection I see that it documents a writer's life, and not just any writer, but the life of a heroine writer,

replete with world travel, committed work, beds strewn with papers and notebooks; a life devoid of possessions, with the exception of a prized library. My change of heart is bound up with ideas I've already touched on, having to do with a yearning to connect, even if only symbolically or metaphorically, photographs with words, photography and writing.

Zoe gives her lecture on Agnes Martin, but doesn't show any paintings. With her characteristic flair for storytelling, she describes photographing the paintings over and over, and the difficulty of

it: all she can see is the dust in her viewfinder. No paintings, no photographs; at the last minute Zoe substitutes a repetitive, structuralist film, the only film of any kind Martin ever made. Yet I leave the lecture with an incredibly vivid image of the absent, unseen photographs: classic, vintage, black-and-white Leonard, signature black frame line enclosing Martin's pale, gray, pencil-lined grids. Photographs of pencil marks. . . . But wait, did Agnes Martin even use pencil? I realize, rereading this, that I don't actually know, and may have invented these pencil lines, fantasizing photographs to suit my own desire.

JEFF WALL

A big survey of Jeff Wall's light boxes is at MoMA. In his astute essay "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," Wall makes the case that photography became modern and relevant (became "art") not with the f.64 school of Edward Weston and Ansel Adams (which Wall qualifies as still

in the pictorial tradition), but with the crummy little snapshots of Robert Smithson, Ed Ruscha, and Dan Graham. Yet Wall's own photographic project exists in stark contrast to the modesty of that vernacular tradition: his massive transparencies want to be understood primarily in relation to nineteenth-century painting and its history.

As one of the ur-purveyors of large pictures in the late '70s, Wall was definitely attempting something new and radical in the presentation and reception of photographs, and he's historically important for that gesture of innovation, for giving the photograph a status as "constructed object" as opposed to "window on the world." I liked his sink pictures and the anemone-filled grave when I first saw them reproduced in magazines, but at MoMA even this work seems ultraflat and sterile in its effect, and I'd argue that it's not just a problem endemic to big, ossifying museum shows, but an issue with the grandiosity and ungainliness of the silver-boxed Duratrans themselves.

Wall is a smart guy and a good writer, and I always thought that one of the things he had going for him was his progressive politics: he could perform social documentary without the victimization. But as I think of it now, Sherry Levine did pretty much the same thing with a vastly greater economy of means, i.e., appropriation and critique of the genre via her modest re-presentations of Walker Evans and Edward Weston works in black-and-white 8 x 10s.

## KERRY JAMES MARSHALL

Lest I be accused of dismissing photographs simply because they are big, I want to register my love for Kerry James Marshall and his show of large inkjet prints at the Studio Museum in Harlem: a mural-size baobab tree; a Christmas tree with black nativity and lights; inky, blue-black figures and silhouettes, barely discernible

invocations of Ellison's *Invisible Man* (Wall's version is a Macy's holidaywindow by comparison); the faces of the white women who stare out at the camera from an infamous 1930s lynching photograph. In this show there was a prodigious mixing of genres and textures: sculptural elements in the form of handmade, improvised furniture, and lounging areas mingled with photographs of all shapes and sizes, all manner of presentation. The corporate look of most museum shows was nowhere in evidence; what ruled instead was a breathtakingly inventive heterogeneity of formal invention and storytelling.

BED

Early spring, 2007. Think back to July, sudden blindness in left eye and diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (a disease of accidents, "mistakes of the immune system"), leaving hospital with prednisone taper. For a few weeks I'd wake early each morning and with push from vitamin P, bring the computer to bed, where I'd stretchout and make myself write. I'd asked some questions about photography and accident, about what it meant to my four writers; I'd laid down a gauntlet or two. And while the "decisive moment" metaphysics of accident might have been a red herring, it nonetheless pointed me to contemporary photographers whose work is compelling and vibrant. To those already mentioned (Peter Hujar, Zoe Leonard, Kerry James Marshall, David Wojnarowicz, Francesca Woodman) I'll take the opportunity to add here: Liz Deschenes, Jitka Hanslova, Hanna Liden, Claire Pentecost, James Welling. In these artists I intuit, wholly from the gut, a love for "the aged and the yellowed," what Barthes, unabashed in his essentialism about photographs, identified in a 1979 lecture as the "real photography," unlike the glossy pictures in Paris-Match.

Finally, there is the accident of words: what wells up when we

make space for such occurrence, when we lie on the bed in morning sunlight and bring laptop to lap. I've often heard it said, most recently by novelist Monica Ali, that as writers "we're not at liberty to choose the material, the material chooses us." Geoff Dyer has noted parallel statements by photographers: "It is the photo that takes you" (Henri Cartier-Bresson), "I don't press the shutter, the image does" (Arbus), and one from Paul Strand on choosing his subjects: "I don't. . . . They choose me." While I've always intuited this about pictures, I was skeptical when it came to words. But I now know it to be true, beyond any doubt, for writing as well.

## NOTES

I still haven't come across that lost reference to clocks. I did. however. begin to read Walter Benjamin's correspondence, and in a letter to Gershom Scholem dated December 20, 1931 (the same year "Little History" was published), he describes his study, a room with a panoramic view from which he can see the ice-skating rinks, as well as a clock: "as time goes by, it is especially this clock that becomes a luxury it is difficult to do without." Benjamin also tells Scholem: "I now write only while lying down." I think of Leibovitz's photograph of Sontag on her bed. I don't have the photo before me it's another absent picture—but perhaps I can conjure it from memory: Susan in jeans, white shirt, and dirty white sneakers, reclining on the left, her hair thick and wiry, black with white stripe; and, spread out over more than half the bed, a complex patchwork of ruled pads with half their bulk folded over, typescript pages crossed out and annotated, and oddly shaped scraps of paper with handwritten notes.

In the new translation, "accident" is rendered as "contingency," perhaps another indicator
of the term's downgrading in the contemporary photographic lexicon.

# Fifty Minutes

(video transcript)

## THE FRIDGE

I had a houseguest once who told me that all of his cooking was about managing his fridge. I don't remember the man's name, but I did retain from him that expression, and even though I don't cook per se... [narratorforgets her lines, begins again from the top], I think of a fridge as something that needs to be managed. A well-stocked fridge always triggers a certain atavistic, metabolic anxiety, like that of the Neanderthal after the kill, faced with the task of needing to either ingest or preserve a massive abundance of food before spoilage sets in.

I get an unmistakable pleasure out of seeing . . . [long pause; narrator again forgets her lines; off-screen voice tells her to wait five seconds and start over] the contents of the fridge diminish, out of seeing the spaces between the food items get larger and better defined. This emptying out reminds me of the carcasses being eaten away by maggots in Peter Greenaway's film A Zed and Two Noughts. He uses time-lapse photography to show an animal carcass wither

away before our eyes until all that's left is clean white bone. That is my aim with the fridge: to be able to open it and see as much of its clean, white, empty walls as possible.

Once every ten days or so the fridge fills up with food and the Sisyphean cycle of ordering and chewing our way through it all begins anew. This rodentlike behavior is my metaphor for domestic survival: digging our way out, either from the contents of the fridge, or from the dust and grit and hair that clog the place; or sloughing our way through the never-ending, proliferating piles of paper, clothing, and toys.

BOOKS

Recently I read about a writer getting rid of four thousand books and hundreds of CDs, and emptying three closets full of clothes, and it made me think of how much we pad our lives with this stuff.

## BOOKS

I feel a little towards my books as I do towards the fridge, that I have to manage these as well, prioritize, determine which book is likely to give me the thing I need most at a given moment. But unlike with the fridge, I like to be surrounded by an excess of books, and to not even have a clear idea of what I own, to feel as though there's a limitless store waiting to be tapped, and that I can be surprised by what I find.

I spend most of my time trolling through a half a dozen or so books, all the while imagining there's another one out there I should be reading instead, if I could only just put my finger on it. Often I find the spark where I least expect it, in a book I may have been reading casually, lazily, wondering why I am even bothering to read it. Sometimes I persist with a book, even just through inertia, and it can happen that the writing will suddenly open itself up to me.

[Narrator has been roaming through Pete's Barn, a giant junk store in upstate New York, speaking into the camera mike. She asks: "Do I remind you of Geraldine Chaplin in Nashville?"]

[Short interlude in which narrator is seen blowing dust from her books]

## ANALYSIS

["Shhhhh." Narrator attempts to silence others in the room, who chime in, "Shhhhh."]

I started my analysis when I lived in Brooklyn. I'd take the L train to Union Square and then the 6 to 86th Street. From there it was a

short walk tomy analyst's office on Madison Avenue. As I approached Dr. Y's building I'd scan the sidewalks for his small, compact frame, since he often arrived for my appointment just before I did. Once I spotted him in profile walking down the avenue — he was holding a paper bag just under his chin and putting food in his mouth. Another time, even more unsettling since I wasn't even in his neighborhood, we found ourselves eye to eye, a mere ten feet apart, me standing on the Uptown platform at Grand Central, and him staring out at me from the window of the express train.

But if I happened to catch sight of him anywhere near his building, rather than enter the lobby and risk having to ride up in the elevator together, I'd circle the block. These near encounters were enough to throw into question the entire analysis, and to ratchet up the level of self-consciousness to a nearly unbearable degree. I also felt conspicuous walking past his doorman five days a week at exactly the same hour.

Once I had crossed the threshold into the waiting room I would take a seat on the couch, or if someone already happened to be there I'd sit in the black-and-gold Harvard chair and wait for the moment when Dr. Y would appear to welcome me into his office. It was all very ritualistic and formal.

#### MONEY-TIME

We negotiated a fee of eight dollars a session, based on my income at the time. The fee is meant to compensate the analyst for his time, but in my case it was purely symbolic. In fact, I was paying for his time with my time by my willingness to come four—five times a week and be a control case in the final stages of his training. I knew almost nothing about my shrink, other than that he was a psychiatrist training to become a psychoanalyst at one of New York's more conservative institutes.

[Dust motes fly around a corner bookshelf.]

## VIVIAN GORNICK

Late last night, coming home on the subway, I was reading Natalia Ginzburg, but in a quite distracted way, even having trouble keeping the characters straight, when slowly, something about the writing began to dawn on me.

I had picked up Ginzburg's novel *Voices in the Evening*, subsequent to reading a short article by Vivian Gornick titled "Reading in an Age of Uncertainty," published a few months after September 11th in the *LA Times*. Gornick's essay is a brief analysis of the writing of three postwar European writers: Ginzburg, Elizabeth Bowen, and Anna Akhmatova, and why it is she finds solace in reading these authors in the weeks and months after the attacks.

As Gornick explains, all three authors lived through terrible times: war, bombings, murder, ongoing persecution, and censure.

Their writing, she notes, shares certain qualities of detachment, and a lack of sentimentality. It recounts events in a cool, matter-of-fact way. It does not emote. Gornick writes:

"What unites all these works is a severe absence of sentiment—and even of innermotion. A remarkable stillness suffuses the prose in each; a stillness beyond pain, fear or agitation. It is as though, in each case, the writer feels herself standing at the end of history—

eyes dry, sentences cold and pure—staring hard, without longing or fantasy or regret, into the is-ness of what is."

Gomick's essay then shifts from literary analysis into the present moment: the bewilderment and shock of New Yorkers in the weeks following September IIth. She recounts an anecdote, of trying to cross Broadway somewhere in the Seventies. The light changes before she can get all the way across, and from the median she does what she says all New Yorkers do: she peers down the Avenue to see

if there's a break in the traffic that will allow her to run the light. But there is no traffic. The street is virtually empty, and the thought begins to cross her mind that the scene looks like a Berenice Abbott photograph from the 1930s. But Gornick cannot allow herself to complete the thought because it is too painful and disturbing. She realizes that to even entertain that thought presupposes a temporal relationship to the city that is no longer available to her. Gornick continues:

"The light changed, and I remained standing on the island; unable to step off the sidewalk into a thought whose origin was rooted in an equanimity that now seemed lost forever: the one I used to think was my birthright. That night I realized what it is that's been draining away throughout this sad, stunned lovely season: It's nostalgia. And then I realized that it was this that was at the heart of Ginzburg, Bowen and Akhmatova. It wasn't sentiment that was missing from them, it was nostalgia."

DR.Y

After I moved from Brooklyn to Hoboken my travel time to and from Dr. Y's office increased to about an hour and fifteen minutes each way. I'd catch a four o'clock bus to the Port Authority and then either walk across on 42nd to Grand Central, or I'd take the C up the West Side and walk through the park.

Dr. Y had a nice aquiline face that reminded me of Pierre Trudeau's when Trudeau was young—well, when he was about fifty or fifty-five. I registered this visual impression of my analyst in the preliminary consultations that eventually led to the analysis proper, to lying down on the couch, at which point I ceased to look at him. Upon entering his office, I both removed my glasses and averted my gaze, and his face soon faded into an ageless abstraction, a gentle, pleasing blur.

All of his movements and gestures, from the way he stood in the hallway to signal that my time had come, to his walking ahead of me into his office so as to position himself, sentinel-like, by the doorway as I entered, to the careful shutting and locking of the door with a flimsy little hook crudely and inexpertly screwed into the molding, to his calling me Ms. Davey rather than by my first name, were choreographed and ritualized.

This highly mannered behavior suggested to me that he was performing the role of the analyst, and that he was incapable of any spontaneity or originality. What I was supposed to be doing on the couch was figuring out all the reasons his behavior made me so uncomfortable. But in fact I am not a very analytical person and over and over I balked at doing my job on the couch. I couldn't bring myself to talk about him and all the things that annoyed me—his clothes, his shoes, his thinning hair, his shortness, his priggish, by-the-book manner. I found it ridiculous and absurd that I too was expected to participate in this codified, preordained script.

## NOSTALGIA

For Vivian Gornick in post-9/II New York, daydreaming about the city stretching backwards in time is a cause for anxiety, a reminder that historical continuity and the promise of a future are no longer things we can take for granted.

In critical circles, nostalgia has a negative, even decadent connotation. But the etymology of the word uncovers other meanings. It comes from the Greek *nostos*, a return home, and *algos*, pain. According to Jane Gallop, after "homesickness" and "melancholy regret" in the dictionary there is a third definition of nostalgia, which is "unsatisfied desire." And that is what the word has always implied to me: unconsummated desire kept alive by private forays into the cultural spaces of memory.

I am told nostalgia is the intellectual's guilty pleasure. Cynthia Ozick, writing about Sebald's novel *The Emigrants*, would seem to agree: "I admit to being disconcerted by a grieving that has been made beautiful. Grief, absence, loss, longing, wandering, exile, homesickness—these have been made millennially, sadly beautiful since the Odyssey. . . . Nostalgia is itself a lovely and piercing word, and even more so is the German *Heimwey*, 'home-ache.'"

Asked in an interview in 1982 if he felt nostalgia "for the clarity of the classical age," Michel Foucault replied: "I know very well that it is our own invention. But it's quite good to have this kind of nostalgia, just as it's good to have a good relationship with your own childhood if you have children. It's a good thing to have nostalgia toward some periods on the condition that it's a way to have a thoughtful and positive relation to your own present."

[Narrator reads "pleasure" instead of "present," then corrects herself.]

In *The Future of Nostalgia* Svetlana Boym identifies two tendencies: restorative and reflective nostalgia. The first is principally linked to place, and, with its emphasis on *nostos*, home, can easily become a breeding ground for oppressive and intolerant nationalisms. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, has a "utopian dimension." It is not about "rebuilding the mythical place called home [but about] perpetually deferring the homecoming itself."

Here is a personal example of reflective nostalgia: As I write and think about this abstraction, nostalgia, a particular landscape always presents itself. It involves a summer day, a park in Montreal, '6osera architecture, my mother, and a scene from an Antonioni film. But I can't say more than that. To do so would be to kill off the memory and all the generative power it holds in my imagination. I keep it perpetually in reserve, with the fantasy that someday I may land there, in what is by now a fictional mirage of time and place.

## EAVESDROPPING

Dr. Y's office contained one floor-to-ceiling bookshelf on the far wall, and on my very first day I recognized the bright yellow dust jacket of Joel Kovel's The Age of Desire, a book I happen to own two copies of. A few years later a second set of custom-made shelves went up on the wall parallel to the couch. These remained empty for some time and then eventually began to fill up with books, the titles of which I was at pains to decipher, but could never quite make out from my nearsighted position on the couch. I read a fair amount on psychoanalysis in those days and sometimes tried to introduce ideas from my reading into the analysis. But these attempts to connect on any sort of theoretical level with my shrink invariably backfired. I would mispronounce names, and then feel embarrassed, or my queries and remarks would simply go unacknowledged. The most Dr. Y would concede was that my reading was my way of trying to get closer to him. What he wanted was the unfiltered version of events, my childhood for instance, something I did not have a good relationship with and did not relish talking about.

## LOST & FOUND

I rehearse "lost and found" almost daily. Sometimes it's an actual object but it can be a line or two I've read and only dimly recall. I rack my brain, flipping through books, magazines, newspapers, trying to retrace my steps. Often the thing I'm searching for is of dubious significance, but I persuade myself that the flow of life cannot go on until I have located the object. The search can be for something of very recent vintage, or it can cut across deep time into a twenty-year archive of negatives. The ritual is about creating a lacuna, a pocket of time into which I will disappear. When I find the object, the relief is palpable.

Lost and found is a ritual of redemption. If I find the thing, then I

am a worthy person. I have been granted a reprieve. I have relief when I find something, but it's a shallow, superficial relief. I know this ritual is a rehearsal for all the inevitable, bigger losses. I think, if I can only find X, then I am holding back the floodwaters, I am in control.

This compulsion to "lose" and find things is not so different from the drives and habits of collectors. In thinking about the cyclical nature of collecting, Baudrillard invokes the fort/da game that Freud witnessed in his young nephew and interpreted as a way to stave off anxiety over the mother's absence.

Baudrillard: "[T]he object stands for our own death, symbolically transcended. . . . [B]y integrating it within a series based on the repeated cyclical game of making it absent and then recalling it from out of that absence—we reach an accommodation with the anguish-laden fact of lack, of literal death. . . . [W]e will continue to enact this mourning for our own person through the intercession of objects, and this allows us, albeit regressively, to live out our lives."

#### NATALIA GINZBURG

On the subway, halfway into reading *Voices in the Evening*, I began to recognize the specific quality Vivian Gornick had been describing. There's no psychologizing. We have to infer the complexity of a life from a handful of very selective and superficial details. And mixed in with all of Ginzburg's appealingly idiosyncratic detail and anecdote, you'll come upon something of the utmost seriousness. But it's all treated in exactly the same artless way, with no sentimentality whatsoever about time passing, people growing old and dying, even being murdered by the Fascists. Before, during and after the war, it's all the same, recounted in the same slightly absurd, flatvoice. This is the absence of nostalgiathat Vivian Gornick is talking about.

## THE COUCH

I was constantly irritated by the look of Dr. Y's couch, a bed really, with a Mexican fabric covering it and a pillow with a small white hanky laid on top. Nailed to the wall directly over the couch was a South American fringed rug. I hated this arrangement of bed and covers and rugs because it struck me as a rather artless mock-up of Freud's couch, and served to reinforce my idea that my shrink was an amateur, someone doing a poor job of imitating an analyst. I was also convinced that I was his only analytic patient, the only person desperate and meek enough to submit to such a draconian schedule as the one he imposed.

I would lie on his couch and spend a good deal of my time thinking of ways to get up, either to sit upright on the couch, or to move to a chair, or simply to walk out. But I felt as though I'd been nailed there, stricken in this supine position a little like in a dream when you're inexplicably paralyzed and can't move your limbs.

**FEAR** 

I found myself thinking often of Natalia Ginzburg in the weeks and months after September IIth. Especially a passage from one of her essays, titled "The Son of Man," in which the image of a shattered house, a home reduced to rubble by bombs, becomes the central metaphor for a loss of wholeness, for the ability to ever trust again in the stability of material things, in the continuity of lives.

Ginzburg writes: "Behind the serene vases of flowers, behind the teapots, the rugs and the waxed floors, is the other, the true face of the house, the horrible face of the crumbled house. . . . Even if we have lamps on the table again, vases of flowers and portraits of our loved ones, we have no more faith in such things, not since we had to abandon them in haste or hunt for them in vain amid the rubble."

I would lie awake at night in my bedroom on the eleventh floor overlooking the city, listening to the roar of jet planes, and think of Ginzburg's crumbling houses and sleepy children wrenched from their beds and "frantically dressed in the dark of night." Every morning for a long time I would leap from my bed and foolishly scrutinize the skyline to see if the Empire State Building was still standing.

It's summer of 2002 and extremely hot. I am waiting on the subway platform, having glanced at the headlines on the newsstand, all bad, dire warnings about the inevitability of future attacks on the city. I board a suffocatingly hot subway car and make my way through the moving train until I reach a car that is so cold it could be a meat locker. These extremes of temperature are so excessive, so unnatural, they reinforce the sense that things are way out of whack and could crack at any moment.

I dialed my shrink's number, but it was busy and I didn't call back. Almost a year later I still found myself sitting at the kitchen table staring at his number in my address book. And I would just sit there frozen to the spot, working my way into a small fix over whether to call or not to call.

But instead of calling I told myself all the reasons I shouldn't call, and the reasons why I never wanted to see him again. Over the course of some time I talked myself out of it: I did my work, I did yoga, I got on the subway. I walked into a food store and noticed that there were plenty of things I'd like to eat.

## **PREGNANCY**

I carried on with the analysis for five and half years, going from five to four to three, [narrator forgets her lines, starts again] and then after I'd had a baby, to two days a week. In the beginning I liked going five days a week. It was a novelty, and I had the time. But more and more, as the years wore on and out of necessity I began to cut back, there was a lot of tense exchange around the issue of frequency of visits.

One such discussion took place in my ninth month of pregnancy, a few weeks before Christmas and my due date. I suggested to my analyst that wasn't it a bit unseemly, me in my state lying here like this, not to mention the treacheries of navigating icy sidewalks and blizzards to make my way to the East Side from Hoboken.

Sidestepping the issue of travel and convenience, as he nearly always did, Dr. Y came up with the idea of "arranging for [me] a

chair." Somehow the image of him hoisting furniture and rearranging his office in order to stage this thronelike commode in the middle of the room was too much, and I simply insisted that we stop and resume again after I'd had the baby. Which we did, and I managed to sustain the analysis for another couple of years, though it became increasingly difficult with a small child.

#### HOLLIS FRAMPTON

In 1971 Hollis Frampton made a film called (nostalgia). It's a sort of leave-taking of photography. Frampton burns his photographs on a hot plate, and always out of synch with the disintegrating image on the screen is a voice-over describing the circumstances of the making of each picture. The narrator recounts the motivations, and usually the shortcomings and regrets associated with each image. The tone is melancholic and self-deprecating.

On one level (nostalgia) is permeated by a sense of regret over things never said, amends not made, a sense of failure and real loss for the moments and people no longer in Frampton's life. But towards the end of the film there's a twist, and one of the chief moments of regret turns out to be a bit of a charade. Frampton's nostalgia (and he spells it with a small n) is real, but it is also wrapped in distancing irony and wit.

The film ends on a strange note of terror, with the narrator saying: "I think I shall never dare to make another photograph again."

#### VUITURE/KITE

In Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood Freud interprets an early memory of Leonardo's, of being in his cradle and having a vulture swoop down and bat its tail between his lips. I think this is where Freud concludes that Leonardo was gay. But it turns out there's been a mistranslation from the Italian, that it wasn't a vulture at all, but a kite. I remember telling Dr. Y about this mistake and saying to him that I thought it seriously discredited psychoanalysis. He was dumbfounded that I'd take such an extreme position.

Rereading the case study now, I can see it probably makes no difference to Freud's interpretation that it was a kite rather than a vulture. But at the time I was quite literal-minded and convinced it was just another nail in the coffin for psychoanalysis.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL RULE

I remember very few details of my verbal exchanges with Dr. Y. An exception was a rather stupefying moment towards the end of my analysis that had to do with Freud's Fundamental Rule, the idea that you have to say everything that comes to consciousness, every horrible, hideous thought that crosses your mind while on the couch. Ever obedient and fearful of authority, I had been endeavoring to follow this rule, with all the pain and self-loathing one can imagine might come with this burden of disclosure. One day a discussion of the basic premise of the Rule ensued and Dr. Y, in a moment of uncharacteristic straightforwardness, breezily informed me that of course I had never been obliged to follow the Rule. No one was forcing me. Rather, he suggested, my servile adherence to the Rule said something about my character. This rule had been tormenting me for over five years. Dr. Y's interjection left me feeling relieved and duped in equal measure.

## **HUBRIS**

[This section of the video is unnarrated. A radio in the background is tuned to NPR moments before Patrick Fitzgerald's much-anticipated press conference on the grand jury investigation of the leaked identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame and the indictment of White House adviser I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby: "I'm Patrick Fitzgerald, I'm the United States Attorney in Chicago...."]

#### WORK

Frampton said that the "nostalgia" of the title of his film had to do with the "wounds of returning," of reconstructing "the lumps [he] took" in those days before he'd made a name for himself as an artist. Some of the struggles Frampton talks about in (nostalgia) are uncomfortably familiar to me from the days when I was just

starting out. For instance, having an idea for a picture, but eventually feeling a kind of inertia about the whole thing, and after some time and effort, chalking it up to failure.

On the weekend I took some pictures of J's 45s in dim light. And I tried to photograph the glare on an LP on the turntable, and the dust that had collected on the needle. I take far fewer pictures

now, but it can still happen that I'll get that sense of heightened absorption and suspended time that comes with the first idea and the notion of a latent image.

## THE END

The end occurred soon after that revelatory moment about the Fundamental Rule. One early October day in the sixth year, shortly after the August break, Dr. Y imparted that he was anxious to return to the minimum four-day-a-week schedule as mandated by his

particular school of psychoanalysis. I was no longer living in Hoboken but had moved to Washington Heights, and this he surmised would make it much easier for me to resume coming again four times a week. But at that point something in me snapped. It was the realization that this man, who'd been listening to me talk about the conflicts in my life for over five years now, could also realistically expect me to show up here four days a week. That was my last day of analysis. I said goodbye and shook his hand (still not looking at his face), and walked out and bought a bar of soap on Madison Avenue.

## THE CITY

Yet, if I have any feeling of nostalgia toward New York City, it is mapped through my trajectory to and from Dr. Y's office on the East Side. My daily travel was like a circle drawn around the heart of the city. The solidity and sometimes glamour of Manhattan became

like the ballast, the reassuring counterweight for the muck that spewed forth in the confines of that small, decorous office.

And here I will add a final note: while I have few positive memories of my analysis, I have to admit to the possibility that it helped me, that it gave me something I needed. Despite all the irksome formalities, Dr. Y was generous and kind, and he still occasionally makes an appearance in my dreams in that guise.

## THE FRIDGE

I began writing this collection of thoughts in June 2003, and didn't look at it again until the fall. By then the August 14th blackout had happened on the East Coast and many of us here relived some of the apocalyptic fears of September 11th. I also spent that summer reading Peter Handke. I wanted to write this without ever saying "I feel" or "I felt," with Handke and Natalia Ginzburg as my models, but I have not succeeded. I have used those expressions, or variations of them, at least ten times.

And here's one final thing about the fridge: Had I been really honest, I would have told about how I let the milk freeze at the back so it will last longer, and about how I bark at my child if he stands too long in front with the door open, or about how my biggest fights with the man I live with have to do with his propensity to cook in large quantities and stuff the fridge with leftover food. Had I been really honest, I would have told about how proprietary and controlling is my relation to the fridge, and about how the food it contains brings out my most anxious and miserly tendencies, as though by fixating on the process of consumption and replenishment I can control my destiny. All right, there, I've said it. And I could say more, but for now that's enough.

Fifty Minutes is a work of autofiction.

4

# Reflexive impotence, immobilization and liberal communism

By contrast with their forebears in the 1960s and 1970s, British students today appear to be politically disengaged. While French students can still be found on the streets protesting against neoliberalism, British students, whose situation is incomparably worse, seem resigned to their fate. But this, I want to argue, is a matter not of apathy, nor of cynicism, but of *reflexive impotence*. They know things are bad, but more than that, they know they can't do anything about it. But that 'knowledge', that reflexivity, is not a passive observation of an already existing state of affairs. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Reflexive impotence amounts to an unstated worldview amongst the British young, and it has its correlate in widespread pathologies. Many of the teenagers I worked with had mental health problems or learning difficulties. Depression is endemic. It is the condition most dealt with by the National Health Service, and is afflicting people at increasingly younger ages. The number of students who have some variant of dyslexia is astonishing. It is not an exaggeration to say that being a teenager in late capitalist Britain is now close to being reclassified as a sickness. This pathologization already forecloses any possibility of politicization. By privatizing these problems - treating them as if they were caused only by chemical imbalances in the individual's neurology and/or by their family background - any question of social systemic causation is ruled out.

Many of the teenage students I encountered seemed to be in a state of what I would call depressive hedonia. Depression is Usually characterized as a state of anhedonia, but the condition

I'm referring to is constituted not by an inability to get pleasure so much as it by an inability to do anything else *except* pursue pleasure. There is a sense that 'something is missing' - but no appreciation that this mysterious, missing enjoyment can only be accessed *beyond* the pleasure principle. In large part this is a consequence of students' ambiguous structural position, stranded between their old role as subjects of disciplinary institutions and their new status as consumers of services. In his crucial essay 'Postscript on Societies of Control', Deleuze distinguishes between the disciplinary societies described by Foucault, which were organized around the enclosed spaces of the factory, the school and the prison, and the new control societies, in which all institutions are embedded in a dispersed corporation.

Deleuze is right to argue that Kafka is the prophet of distributed, cybernetic power that is typical of Control societies. In The Trial, Kafka importantly distinguishes between two types of acquittal available to the accused. Definite acquittal is no longer possible, if it ever was ('we have only legendary accounts of ancient cases [which] provide instances of acquittal'). The two remaining options, then, are (1) 'Ostensible acquittal', in which the accused is to all and intents and purposes acquitted, but may later, at some unspecified time, face the charges in full, or (2) 'Indefinite postponement', in which the accused engages in (what they hope is an infinitely) protracted process of legal wrangling, so that the dreaded ultimate judgment is unlikely to be forthcoming. Deleuze observes that the Control societies delineated by Kafka himself, but also by Foucault and Burroughs, operate using indefinite postponement: Education as a lifelong process . Training that persists for as long as your working life continues . Work you take home with you ... Working from home, homing from work. A consequence of this 'indefinite' mode of power is that external surveillance is succeeded by internal policing. Control only works if you are complicit with it. Hence the Burroughs figure of the 'Control Addict': the one who is addicted

to control, but also, inevitably, the one who has been taken over, possessed by Control.

Walk into almost any class at the college where I taught and you will immediately appreciate that you are in a post-disciplinary framework. Foucault painstakingly enumerated the way in which discipline was installed through the imposition of rigid body postures. During lessons at our college, however, students will be found slumped on desk, talking almost constantly, snacking incessantly (or even, on occasions, eating full meals). The old disciplinary segmentation of time is breaking down. The carceral regime of discipline is being eroded by the technologies of control, with their systems of perpetual consumption and continuous development.

The system by which the college is funded means that it literally cannot afford to exclude students, even if it wanted to. Resources are allocated to colleges on the basis of how successfully they meet targets on achievement (exam results), attendance and retention of students. This combination of market imperatives with bureaucratically-defined 'targets' is typical of the 'market Stalinist' initiatives which now regulate public services. The lack of an effective disciplinary system has not, to say the least, been compensated for by an increase in student self-motivation. Students are aware that if they don't attend for weeks on end, and/or if they don't produce any work, they will not face any meaningful sanction. They typically respond to this freedom not by pursuing projects but by falling into hedonic (or anhedonic) lassitude: the soft narcosis, the comfort food oblivion of Playstation, all-night TV and marijuana.

Ask students to read for more than a couple of sentences and many - and these are A-level students mind you - will protest that they *can't do it*. The most frequent complaint teachers hear is that *it's boring*. It is not so much the content of the written material that is at issue here; it is the act of reading itself that is deemed to be 'boring'. What we are facing here is not just time-

Capitalist Realism Reflexive impotence

honored teenage torpor, but the mismatch between a post-literate 'New Flesh' that is 'too wired to concentrate' and the confining, concentrational logics of decaying disciplinary systems. To be bored simply means to be removed from the communicative sensation-stimulus matrix of texting, YouTube and fast food; to be denied, for a moment, the constant flow of sugary gratification on demand. Some students want Nietzsche in the same way that they want a hamburger; they fail to grasp - and the logic of the consumer system encourages this misapprehension - that the indigestibility, the difficulty is Nietzsche.

An illustration: I challenged one student about why he always wore headphones in class. He replied that it didn't matter, because he wasn't actually playing any music. In another lesson, he was playing music at very low volume through the headphones, without wearing them. When I asked him to switch it off, he replied that even he couldn't hear it. Why wear the headphones without playing music or play music without wearing the headphones? Because the presence of the phones on the ears or the knowledge that the music is playing (even if he couldn't hear it) was a reassurance that the matrix was still there, within reach. Besides, in a classic example of interpassivity, if the music was still playing, even if he couldn't hear it, then the player could still enjoy it on his behalf. The use of headphones is significant here - pop is experienced not as something which could have impacts upon public space, but as a retreat into private 'OedIpod' consumer bliss, a walJing up against the social.

The consequence of being hooked into the entertainment matrix is twitchy, agitated interpassivity, an inability to concentrate or focus. Students' incapacity to connect current lack of focus with future failure, their inability to synthesize time into any coherent narrative, is symptomatic of more than mere demotivation. It is, in fact, eerily reminiscent of Jameson's analysis in 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society'. Jameson observed there that Lacan's theory of schizophrenia offered a

'suggestive aesthetic model' for understanding the fragmenting of subjectivity in the face of the emerging entertainment-industrial complex. 'With the breakdown of the signifying chain', Jameson summarized, 'the Lacanian schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time'. Jameson was writing in the late 1980s - i.e. the period in which most of my students were born. What we in the classroom are now facing is a generation born into that ahistorical, anti-mnemonic blip culture - a generation, that is to say, for whom time has always come ready-cut into digital micro-slices.

If the figure of diScipline was the worker-prisoner, the figure of control is the debtor-addict. Cyberspatial capital operates by addicting its users; William Gibson recognized that in Neuromancer when he had Case and the other cyberspace cowboys feeling insects-under-the-skin strung out when they unplugged from the matrix (Case's amphetamine habit is plainly the substitute for an addiction to a far more abstract speed). If, then, something like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a pathology, it is a pathology of late capitalism - a consequence of being wired into the entertainment-control circuits of hypermediated consumer culture. Similarly, what is called dyslexia may in many cases amount to a post-lexia. Teenagers process capital's image-dense data very effectively without any need to read \_ slogan-recognition is sufficient to navigate the net-mobilemagazine informational plane. Writing has never been capitalism's thing. Capitalism is profoundly illiterate', Deleuze and Guattari argued in Anti-Oedipus. 'Electric language does not go by way of the voice or writing: data processing does without them both'. Hence the reason that many successful business people are dyslexic (but is their post-lexical efficiency a cause or effect of their success?)

Teachers are now put under intolerable pressure to mediate between the post-literate subjectivity of the late capitalist consumer and the demands of the disciplinary regime (to pass examinations etc). This is one way in which education, far from being in some ivory tower safely inured from the 'real world', is the engine room of the reproduction of social reality, directly confronting the inconsistencies of the capitalist social field. Teachers are caught between being facilitator-entertainers and disciplinarian-authoritarians. Teachers want to help students to pass the exams; they want us to be authority figures who tell them what to do. Teachers being interpellated by students as authority figures exacerbates the 'boredom' problem, since isn't anything that comes from the place of authority a priori boring? Ironically, the role of disciplinarian is demanded of educators more than ever at precisely the time when disciplinary structures are breaking down in institutions. With families buckling under the pressure of a capitalism which requires both parents to work, teachers are now increasingly required to act as surrogate parents, instilling the most basic behavioral protocols in students and providing pastoral and emotional support for teenagers who are in some cases only minimally socialized.

It is worth stressing that none of the students I taught had any legal obligation to be at college. They could leave if they wanted to. But the lack of any meaningful employment opportunities, together with cynical encouragement from government means that college seems to be the easier, safer option. Deleuze says that Control societies are based on debt rather than enclosure; but there is a way in which the current education system both indebts and encloses students. Pay for your own exploitation, the logic insists - get into debt so you can get the same McJob you could have walked into if you'd left school at sixteen ...

Jameson observed that 'the breakdown of temporality suddenly releases [the] present of time from all the activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis'. But nostalgia for the context in which the old types of praxis operated is plainly useless. That is why French students don't in

the end constitute an alternative to British reflexive impotence. That the neoliberal *Economist* would deride French opposition to capitalism is hardly surprising, yet its mockery of French 'immobilization' had a point. 'Certainly the students who kicked off the latest protests seemed to think they were re-enacting the events of May 1968 their parents sprang on Charles de Gaulle', it wrote in its lead article of March 30, 2006.

They have borrowed its slogans ('Beneath the cobblestones, the beach!') and hijacked its symbols (the Sorbonne university). In this sense, the revolt appears to be the 'natural sequel to [2005]'s suburban riots, which prompted the government to impose a state of emergency. Then it was the jobless, ethnic underclass that rebelled against a system that excluded them. Yet the striking feature of the latest protest movement is that this time the rebellious forces are on the side of conservatism. Unlike the rioting youths in the banlieues, the objective of the students and public-sector trade unions is to prevent change, and to keep France the way it is.

It's striking how the practice of many of the immobilizers is a kind of inversion of that of another group who also count themselves heirs of 68: the so called 'liberal communists' such as George Soros and Bill Gates who combine rapacious pursuit of profit with the rhetoric of ecological concern and social responsibility. Alongside their social concern, liberal communists believe that work practices should be (post) modernized, in line with the concept of 'being smart'. As Zizek explains,

Being smart means being dynamic and nomadic, and against centralized bureaucracy; believing in dialogue and cooperation as against central authority; in flexibility as against routine; culture and knowledge as against industrial production; in spontaneous interaction and autopoiesis as against fixed hierarchy.

Taken together, the immobilizers, with their implicit concession that capitalism can only be resisted, never overcome, and the liberal communists, who maintain that the amoral excesses of capitalism must be offset by charity, give a sense of the way in which capitalist realism circumscribes current political possibilities. Whereas the immobilizers retain the form of 68-style protest but in the name of resistance to change, liberal communists energetically embrace newness. Zizek is right to argue that, far from constituting any kind of progressive corrective to official capitalist ideology, liberal communism constitutes the dominant ideology of capitalism now. 'Flexibility', 'nomadism' 'spontaneity' are the very hallmarks of management in a post-Fordist, Control society. But the problem is that any opposition to flexibility and decentralization risks being self-defeating, since calls for inflexibility and centralization are, to say the least, not likely to be very galvanizing.

In any case, resistance to the 'new' is not a cause that the left can or should rally around. Capital thought very carefully about how to break labor; yet there has still not yet been enough thought about what tactics will work against capital in conditions of post-Fordism, and what *new language* can be innovated to deal with those conditions. It is important to contest capitalism's appropriation of 'the new', but to reclaim the 'new' can't be a matter of adapting to the conditions in which we find ourselves - we've done that rather too well, and 'successful adaptation' is the strategy of managerialism par excellence.

The persistent association of neoliberalism with the term 'Restoration', favored by both Badiou and David Harvey, is an important corrective to the association of capital with novelty. For Harvey and Badiou, neoliberal politics are not about the new, but a *return* of class power and privilege. '[J]n France,' Badiou has said, "Restoration' refers to the period of the return of the King,

in 1815, after the Revolution and Napoleon. We are in such a period. Today we see liberal capitalism and its political system, parliamentarianism, as the only natural and acceptable solutions'. Harvey argues that neoliberalization is best conceived of as a 'political' project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites'. Harvey demonstrates that, in an era popularly described as 'post-political', class war has continued to be fought, but only by one side: the wealthy. 'After the implementation of neoliberal policies in the late 1970s,' Harvey reveals,

the share of national income of the top 1 per cent of income earners soared, to reach 15 per cent ... by the end of the century. The top 0.1 per cent of income earners in the US increased their share of the national income from 2 per cent in 1978 to over 6 per cent by 1999, while the ratio of the median compensation of workers to the salaries of CEOs increased from just over 30 to 1 in 1970 to nearly 500 to 1 by 2000.... The US is not alone in this: the top 1 per cent of income earners in Britain have doubled their share of the national income from 6.5 per cent to 13 per cent since 1982.

As Harvey shows, neoliberals were more Leninist than the Leninists, using think-tanks as the intellectual vanguard to create the ideological climate in which capitalist realism could flourish.

The immobilization model - which amounts to a demand to retain the Fordist/disciplinary regime - could not work in Britain or the other countries in which neoliberalism has already taken a hold. Fordism has definitively collapsed in Britain, and with it the sites around which the old politics were organized. At the end of the control essay, Deleuze wonders what new forms an anti-control politics might take:

One of the most important questions will concern the

## Capitalist Realism

ineptitude of the unions: tied to the whole of their history of struggle against the disciplines or within the spaces of enclosure, will they be able to adapt themselves or will they give way to new forms of resistance against the societies of control? Can we already grasp the rough outlines of the coming forms, capable of threatening the joys of marketing? Many young people strangely boast of being "motivated"; they re-request apprenticeships and permanent training. It's up to them to discover what they're being made to serve, just as their elders discovered, not without difficulty, the telos of the disciplines.

What must be discovered is a way out of the motivation/demotivation binary, so that disidentification from the control program registers as something other than dejected apathy. One strategy would be to shift the political terrain - to move away from the unions' traditional focus on pay and onto forms of discontent specific to post-Fordism. Before we analyse that further, we must consider in more depth what post-Fordism actually is.

## MISTER SQUISHY

The Focus Group was then reconvened in another of Reesemeyer Shannon Belt Advertising's nineteenth-floor conference rooms. Each member returned his Individual Response Profile packets to the facilitator, who thanked each in turn. The long conference table was equipped with leather executive swivel chairs; there was no assigned seating. Bottled spring water and caffeinated beverages were made available to those who thought they might want them. The exterior wall of the conference room was a thick tinted window with a broad high-altitude view of points NE, creating a spacious, attractive, and more or less natural-lit environment that was welcome after the bland fluorescent enclosure of the testing cubicles. One or two members of the Targeted Focus Group unconsciously loosened their neckties as they settled into the comfortable chairs.

There were more samples of the product arranged on a tray at the conference table's center.

This facilitator, just like the one who'd led the large Product Test and Initial Response assembly earlier that morning before all the members of the different Focus Groups had been separated into individual soundproof cubicles to complete their Individual Response Profiles, held degrees in both Descriptive Statistics and Behavioral Psychology and was employed by Team  $\Delta y$ , a cutting-edge market

research firm that Reesemeyer Shannon Belt Adv. had begun using almost exclusively in recent years. This Focus Group's facilitator was a stout, palely freckled man with an archaic haircut and a warm if somewhat nervous and complexly irreverent manner. On the wall next to the door behind him was a presentation whiteboard with several Dry Erase markers in its recessed aluminum sill.

The facilitator played idly with the edges of the IRPs forms in his folder until all the men had seated themselves and gotten comfortable. Then he said: 'Right, so thanks again for your part in this, which as I'm pretty sure Mr. Mounce told you this morning is always an important part of deciding what new products get made available to consumers versus those that don't.' He had a graceful, practiced way of panning his gaze back and forth to make sure he addressed the entire table, a skill that was slightly at odds with the bashful, somewhat fidgety presentation of his body as he spoke before the assembled men. The fourteen members of the Focus Group, all male and several with beverages before them, engaged in the slight gestures and expressions of men around a conference table who are less than 100% sure what is going to be expected of them. The conference room was very different in appearance and feel from the sterile, almost lablike auditorium in which the PT/IR had been held two hours earlier. The facilitator, who did have the customary pocket-protector with three different colored pens in it, wore a crisp striped dress shirt and wool tie and cocoa-brown slacks, but no jacket or sportcoat. His shirtsleeves were not rolled up. His smile had a slight wincing quality, several members observed, as of some vague diffuse apology. Attached to the breast pocket on the same side of his shirt as his nametag was also a large pin or button emblazoned with the familiar Mister Squishy brand icon, which was a plump and childlike cartoon face of indeterminate ethnicity with its eyes squeezed partly shut in an expression that somehow connoted delight, satiation, and rapacious desire all at the same time. The icon communicated the sort of innocuous facial affect that was almost impossible not to smile back at or feel positive about in some way, and it had been commissioned and introduced by one of Reesemeyer Shannon Belt's senior creative people over a decade ago, when the regional Mister Squishy Company had come under national corporate ownership and rapidly expanded and diversified from extra-soft sandwich breads and buns into sweet rolls and flavored doughnuts and snack cakes and soft confections of nearly every conceivable kind; and without any particular messages or associations anyone in Demographics could ever produce data to quantify or get a handle on, the crude linedrawn face had become one of the most popular, recognizable, and demonstrably successful brand icons in American advertising.

Traffic was brisk on the street far below, and also trade.

It was, however, not the Mister Squishy brand icon that concerned the carefully chosen and vetted Focus Groups on this bright cold November day in 1995. Currently in third-phase Focus Testing was a new and high-concept chocolate-intensive Mister Squishy-brand snack cake designed primarily for individual sale in convenience stores, with twelve-pack boxes to be placed in up-market food retail outlets first in the Midwest and upper East Coast and then, if the test-market data bore out Mister Squishy's parent company's hopes, nationwide.

A total 27 of the snack cakes were piled in a pyramidal display on a large rotating silver tray in the center of the conference table. Each was wrapped in an airtight transpolymer material that looked like paper but tore like thin plastic, the same retail packaging that nearly all US confections had deployed since M&M Mars pioneered the composite and used it to help launch the innovative Milky Way Dark line in the late 1980s. This new product's wrap had the familiar distinctive Mister Squishy navy-and-white design scheme, but here the Mister Squishy icon appeared with its eyes and mouth rounded in cartoon alarm behind a series of microtextured black lines that appeared to be the bars of a jail cell, around two of which lines or bars the icon's plump and dough-colored fingers were curled in the universal position of inmates everywhere. The dark and exceptionally dense and moist-looking snack cakes inside the packaging were Felonies!® — a risky and multivalent trade name meant both to connote and to parody the modern health-conscious consumer's sense of vice/indulgence/transgression/ sin vis à vis the consumption of a high-calorie corporate snack. The name's association matrix included as well the suggestion of adulthood and adult autonomy: in its real-world rejection of the highly cute, cartoonish, n- and oo-intensive names of so many other snack cakes, the product tag 'Felony!' was designed and tested primarily for its appeal to the 18–39 Male demographic, the single most prized and fictile demotarget in high-end marketing. Only two of the present Focus Group's members were over 40, and their profiles had been vetted not once but twice by Scott R. Laleman's Technical Processing team during the intensive demographic/behavioral voir dire for which Team  $\Delta y$  Focus Group data was so justly prized.

Inspired, according to agency rumor, by an R.S.B. Creative Director's epiphanic encounter with something billed as Death by Chocolate in a Near North café, Felonies! were all-chocolate, filling and icing and cake as well, and in fact all-real-or-fondant-chocolate instead of the usual hydrogenated cocoa and high-F corn syrup, Felonies! conceived thus less as a variant on rivals' Zingers, Ding Dongs, Ho Hos, and Choco-Diles than as a radical upscaling and re-visioning of same. A domed cylinder of flourless maltilol-flavored sponge cake covered entirely in 2.4mm of a high-lecithin chocolate frosting manufactured with trace amounts of butter, cocoa butter, baker's chocolate, chocolate liquor, vanilla extract, dextrose, and sorbitol (a relatively high-cost frosting, and one whose butter-redundancies alone required heroic innovations in production systems and engineering — an entire production line had had to be remachined and the lineworkers retrained and production and quality-assurance quotas recalculated more or less from scratch), which high-end frosting was then also injected by highpressure confectionery needle into the 26 × 13mm hollow ellipse in each Felony!'s center (a center which in for example Hostess Inc.'s products was packed with what amounted to a sucrotic whipped lard), resulting in double doses of an ultrarich and near-restaurant-grade frosting whose central pocket - given that the thin coat of outer frosting's exposure to the air caused it to assume traditional icing's hard-yet-deliquescent marzipan character — seemed even richer, denser, sweeter, and more felonious than the exterior icing, icing that in most rivals' Field tests' IRPs and GRDS was declared consumers' favorite part. (Hostess's lead agency Chiat/Day I.B.'s 1991-2 double-blind

Behavior series' videotapes recorded over 45% of younger consumers actually peeling off Ho Hos' matte icing in great dry jagged flakes and eating it solo, leaving the low-end cake itself to sit ossifying on their tables' Lazy Susans, film clips of which had reportedly been part of R.S.B.'s initial pitch to Mister Squishy's parent company's Subsidiary Product Development boys.)

In an unconventional move, some of this quote unquote Full-Access background information re ingredients, production innovations, and even demotargeting was being relayed to the Focus Group by the facilitator, who used a Dry Erase marker to sketch a diagram of Mister Squishy's snack cake production sequence and the complex adjustments required by Felonies! at select points along the automated line. The relevant information was relayed in a skillfully orchestrated QA period, with many of the specified questions supplied by two ostensible members of the Targeted Focus Group who were in fact not civilian consumers at all but employees of Team  $\Delta y$  assigned to help orchestrate the unconventionally informative QA, and to observe the deliberations of the other twelve men once the facilitator left the room, taking care not to influence the Focus Group's arguments or verdicts but later adding personal observations and impressions that would help round and flesh out the data provided by the Group Response Data Summary and the digital videotape supplied by what appeared to be a large smoke detector in the conference room's northwest corner, whose lens and parabolic mike, while mobile and state-of-the-art, invariably failed to catch certain subtle nuances in individual affect as well as low-volume interchanges between adjoining members. One of the UAFs,\* a slim young man with waxy blond hair and a complexion whose redness appeared more irritated than ruddy or hale, had been allowed by Team Dy's UAF Coordinator to cultivate an eccentric and (to most Focus Group members) irritating set of personal mannerisms whose very conspicuousness served to disguise his professional

<sup>\*</sup>Team  $\Delta y$ 's term for their Focus Groups' moles was *Unintroduced Assistant Facilitators*, whose identities were theoretically unknown to the facilitators in pure double-blinds, though in practice they were usually child's play to spot.

identity: he had small squeeze bottles of both contact lens lubricant and intranasal saline before him on the table, and not only took written notes on the facilitator's presentation but did so with a Magic Marker that squeaked loudly and had ink you could smell, and whenever he asked one of his preassigned questions he did not tentatively raise his hand or clear his throat as other UAFs were wont but rather simply tersely barked out, 'Question:', as in: 'Question: is it possible to be more specific about what "natural and artificial flavors" means, and is there any substantive difference between what it really means and what the average consumer is expected to understand it to mean,' without any sort of interrogative lilt or expression, his brow furrowed and rimless glasses very askew.

As any decent small-set univariable probability distribution would predict, not all members of the Targeted Focus Group were attending closely to the facilitator's explanation of what Mister Squishy and Team  $\Delta y$  hoped to achieve by leaving the Focus Group alone very shortly in camera to compare the results of their Individual Response Profiles and speak openly and without interference amongst themselves and attempt to come as close as possible to a unanimous univocal Group Response Data Summary of the product along sixteen different radial Preference and Satisfaction axes. A certain amount of this inattention was factored into the matrices of what the TFG's facilitator had been informed was the actual test underway on today's nineteenth floor. This secondary (or, 'nested') test sought quantifiable data on quote unquote Full-Access manufacturing and marketing information's effects on Targeted Focus Groups' perceptions of both the product and its corporate producer; it was a double-blind series, designed to be replicated along three different variable grids with random TFGs throughout the next two fiscal quarters, and sponsored by parties whose identities were being withheld from the facilitators as (apparently) part of the nested test's conditions.

Three of the Targeted Focus Group's members were staring absently out the large tinted window that gave on a delicately muted sepia view of the street's north side's skyscrapers and, beyond and between these, different bits of the northeast Loop and harbor and several feet of severely foreshortened lake. Two of these members were very young men at the extreme left of the demotarget's *x* axis who sat slumped in their tilted swivels in attitudes of either reverie or stylized indifference; the third was feeling absently at his upper lip's little dent.

The Focus Group facilitator, trained by the requirements of what seemed to have turned out to be his profession to behave as though he were interacting in a lively and spontaneous way while actually remaining inwardly detached and almost clinically observant, possessed also a natural eye for behavioral details that could often reveal tiny gems of statistical relevance amid the rough raw surfeit of random fact. Sometimes little things made a difference. The facilitator's name was Terry Schmidt and he was 34 years old, a Virgo. Eleven of the Focus Group's fourteen men wore wristwatches, of which roughly onethird were expensive and/or foreign. A twelfth, by far the TFG's oldest member, had the platinum fob of a quality pocketwatch running diagonally left-right across his vest and a big pink face and the permanent benevolent look in his eyes of someone older who had many grandchildren and spent so much time looking warmly at them that the expression becomes almost ingrained. Schmidt's own grandfather had lived in a north Florida retirement community where he sat with a plaid blanket on his lap and coughed constantly both times Schmidt had ever been in his presence, addressing him only as Boy. Precisely 50% of the room's men wore coats and ties or had suitcoats or blazers hanging from the back of their chairs, three of which coats were part of an actual three-piece business wardrobe; another three men wore combinations of knit shirts, slacks, and various crew- and turtleneck sweaters classifiable as Business Casual. Schmidt lived alone in a condominium he had recently refinanced. The remaining four men wore bluejeans and sweatshirts with the logo of either a university or the garment's manufacturer; one was the Nike Swoosh icon that to Schmidt always looked somewhat Arabic. Three of the four men in conspicuously casual/sloppy attire were the Focus Group's youngest members, two of whom were among the three making rather a show of not attending closely. Team  $\Delta y$  favored a loose demographic grid. Two of the three youngest men were under 21. All three of these youngest

members sat back on their tailbones with their legs uncrossed and their hands spread out over their thighs and their faces arranged in the mildly sullen expressions of consumers who have never once questioned their entitlement to satisfaction or meaning. Schmidt's initial undergraduate concentration had been in Statistical Chemistry; he still enjoyed the clinical precision of a lab. Less than 50% of the room's total footwear involved laces. One man in a knit shirt had small brass zippers up the sides of low-cut boots that were shined to a distracting gleam, another detail possessed of mnemonic associations for Schmidt. Unlike Terry Schmidt's and Ron Mounce's, Darlene Lilley's own marketing background was in computer-aided design; she'd come into Research because she said she'd discovered she was really more of a people person at heart. There were four pairs of eyeglasses in the room, although one of these pairs were sunglasses and possibly not prescription, another with heavy black frames that gave their wearer's face an earnest aspect above his dark turtleneck sweater. There were two mustaches and one probable goatee. A stocky man in his late twenties had a sort of sparse, mossy beard; it was indeterminable whether this man was just starting to grow a beard or whether he was the sort of person whose beard simply looked this way. Among the youngest men, it was obvious which were sincerely in need of a shave and which were just affecting an unshaved look. Two of the Focus Group's members had the distinctive blink patterns of men wearing contact lenses in the conference room's astringent air. Five of the men were more than 10% overweight, Terry Schmidt himself excluded. His highschool PE teacher had once referred to Terry Schmidt in front of his peers as the Crisco Kid, which he had laughingly explained meant fat in the can. Schmidt's own father, a decorated combat veteran, had recently retired from a company that sold seed, nitrogen fertilizer, and broad-spectrum herbicides in downstate Galesburg. The affectedly eccentric UAF was asking the men on either side of him, one of whom was Hispanic, whether they'd perhaps care for a chewable vitamin C tablet. The Mister Squishy icon also reappeared in the conference room as the stylized finials of two fine beige or tan ceramic lamps on side tables at either end of the windowless interior wall. There were

two African-American males in the Targeted Focus Group, one over 30, the one under 30 with a shaved head. Three of the men had hair classifiable as brown, two gray or salt/pepper, another three black (excluding the African-Americans and the Focus Group's lone oriental, whose nametag and overwhelming cheekbones suggested either Laos or the Socialist Republic of Vietnam — for complex but solid statistical reasons, Scott Laleman's team's Profile grids specified distributions for ethnicity but not national origin); three could be called blond or fair-haired. These distributions included the UAFs, and Schmidt felt he already had a good idea who this Group's other UAF was. Rarely did R.S.B. Focus Groups include representatives of the very pale or freckled red-haired physical type, though Foote, Cone & Belding and D.D.B. Needham both made regular use of such types because of certain data suggesting meaningful connections between melanin quotients and continuous probability distributions of income and preference on the US East Coast, where over 70% of upmarket products tested. Some of the trendy hypergeometric techniques on which these data were based had been called into question by more traditional demographic statisticians, however.

By industry-wide convention, Focus Group members received a per diem equal to exactly 300% of what they would receive for jury duty in the state where they resided. The reasoning behind this equation was so old and tradition-bound that no one of Terry Schmidt's generation knew its origin. It was, for senior test marketers, both an in-joke and a plausible extension of verified attitudes about civic duty and elective consumption, respectively. The Hispanic man to the off-blond UAF's left, who did not wear a wristwatch, had evidence of large tattoos on his upper arms through the fabric of his dress shirt, which fabric the natural lighting's tinted hue rendered partly translucent. He was also one of the men with mustaches, and his nametag identified him as NORBERTO, making this the first Norberto to appear in any of the over 845 Focus Groups that Schmidt had led so far in his career as a Statistical Field Researcher for Team  $\Delta y$ . Schmidt kept his own private records of correlations between product, Client agency, and certain variables in Focus Groups' constituents and procedures. These were

run through various discriminant-analysis programs on his Applebrand computer at home and the results collected in three-ring binders which he labeled and stored on a set of home-assembled gray steel shelves in the utility room of his condominium. The whole problem and project of descriptive statistics was discriminating between what made a difference and what did not. The fact that Scott R. Laleman now both vetted Focus Groups and helped design them was just one more sign that his star was ascending at Team  $\Delta y$ . The other real comer was A. Ronald Mounce, whose background was also in Technical Processing. 'Question:' 'Question:' 'Comment:' One man with a kind of long chinless face wished to know what Felonies!' retail price was going to be, and he either didn't understand or disliked Terry Schmidt's explanation that retail pricing lay outside the purview of the Group's focus today and was in fact the responsibility of a whole different R.S.B. research vendor. The reasoning behind the separation of price from consumer-satisfaction grids was technical and parametric and was not included in the putative Full-Access information Schmidt was authorized to share with the Focus Group under the terms of the study. There was one obvious hairweave in the room, as well as two victims of untreated Male Pattern Baldness, both of whom — either interestingly or by mere random chance — were among the Group's four blue-eyed members.

When Schmidt thought of Scott Laleman, with his all-season tan and sunglasses pushed musslessly up on his pale hair's crown, it was as something with the mindless malevolence of a carnivorous eel or skate, something that hunted on autopilot at extreme depths. The African-American male whose head was unshaved sat with the rigidity of someone who had back problems and understood the dignity with which he bore them to be an essential part of his character. The other wore sunglasses indoors in such a way as to make some unknown type of statement about himself; there was also no way of knowing whether it was a general statement or one specific to this context. Scott Laleman was only 27 and had come on board at Team  $\Delta y$  three years after Darlene Lilley and two and one-half years after Schmidt himself,

who had helped Darlene train Laleman to run chi-square and t distributions on raw phone-survey data and had taken surprising satisfaction in watching the boy's eyes glaze and tan go sallow under the fluorescent banklights of  $\Delta y$ 's data room, until then one day Schmidt had needed to see Alan Britton personally about something and had knocked and come in and Laleman was sitting in the office's recliner across the room and he and Britton were both smoking very large cigars and laughing.

The figure that began its free climb up the building's steadily increscent north facet just before 11:00 AM was outfitted in tight windproof Lycra leggings and a snug hooded GoreTex sweatshirt w/ fiber-lined hood up and tied tight and what appeared to be mountaineering or rock-climbing boots except that instead of crampons or spikes there were suction cups lining the instep of each boot. Attached to both palms and wrists' insides were single suction cups the size of a plumber's helper; the cups' color was the same shrill orange as hunting jackets and road crews' hardhats. The Lycra pants' color scheme was one navyblue leg and one white leg; the sweatshirt and hood were blue with white piping. The mountaineering boots were an emphatic black. The figure moved swiftly and with numerous moist popping suction-noises up the display window of the Gap, a large retail clothier. He then pulled himself up and over onto the narrow ledge at the base of the second-floor window, rose complexly to his feet, affixed his cups, and swarmed up the pane's thick glass, which gave onto the Gap's second floor but had no promotional items displayed within. The figure presented as lithe and expert. His manner of climbing appeared almost more reptilian than mammalian, you'd have to say. He was halfway up the window of a management consulting firm on the fifth floor when a small crowd of passersby began to gather on the sidewalk below. Winds at ground level were light to moderate.

In the conference room, the north window's tint made the northeastern half-cloudy sky seem raw and the froth of the waves on the distant windblown lake look dark; it brindled the sides of the other tall buildings in view, as well, which were all partly in one another's shadow. Fully seven of the Focus Group's men had small remains of Felonies! either on their shirtfront or hanging from the hairs on one side of their mustache or lodged at the inner corner of their mouth or in the small crease between the fingernail of their dominant hand and that nail's surrounding skin. Two of the men wore no socks; both these men's shoes were laceless leather; only one pair had tassels. One of the youngest men's denim bellbottoms were so terrifically oversized that even with his legs out splayed and both knees bent his sock-status was unknown. One of the older men wore black silk or rayon socks with tiny lozenges of dark rich red upon them. Another of the older men had a mean little slit of a mouth, another a face far too saggy and seamed for his demographic slot. As was often the case, the youngest men's faces appeared not quite yet fully or humanly formed, with the clean generic quality of products just off the factory floor. Terry Schmidt sometimes sketched his own face's outlines in caricature form as he spoke on the phone or waited for software programs to run. One of the group's men had a pear-shaped head, another a diamond- or kite-shaped face; the room's second-oldest consumer had cropped gray hair and an overdeveloped upper lip that lent him a simian aspect. The men's demoprofiles and initial Systat scores were in Schmidt's valise on the carpet next to the whiteboard; he also had an over-shoulder bag he kept in his cubicle. I was one of the men in this room, the only one wearing a wristwatch who never once glanced at it. What looked just like glasses were not. I was wired from stem to stern. A small LCD at the bottom of my right scope ran both Real Time and Mission Time. My brief script for the GRDS caucus had been memorized in toto but there was a backup copy on a laminated card just inside my sweater's sleeve, held in place with small tabs I could release by depressing one of the buttons on my wristwatch, which was really not a watch at all. There was also the emetic prosthesis. The cakes, of which I had already made a show of eating three, were so sweet they hurt your teeth.

Terry Schmidt himself was hypoglycemic and could eat only confections prepared with fructose, aspartame, or very small amounts of  $C_6H_8(OH)_6$ , and sometimes he felt himself looking at trays of the product with the expression of an urchin at a toystore's window.

Down the hall and past the MROP\* Division's green room, in another R.S.B. conference room whose window faced NE, Darlene Lilley was leading twelve consumers and two UAFs into the GRDS phase of Focused Response without any structured QA or ersatz Full-Access background. Neither Schmidt nor Darlene Lilley had been told which of today's TFGs represented the nested test's control group, though it was pretty obvious. You had to work on the upper floors for some time before you noticed the very slight sway with which the building's structural design accommodated winds off the lake. 'Question: just what exactly is polysorbate 80?' Schmidt was reasonably certain that none of the Focus Group felt the sway. It was not pronounced enough even to cause movement in the coffee in any of the iconized mugs on the table that Schmidt, standing and rotating the Dry Erase marker in his hand in an absent way that connoted both informality and a slight humanizing nervousness in front of groups, could see down into. The conference table was heavy pine with lemonwood inlays and a thick coat of polyurethane, and without the window's sepia tint there would be blinding pockets of reflected sun that changed angle as one's own angle with respect to the sun and table changed. Schmidt would also have had to watch dust and tiny clothing fibers swirl in columns of direct sunlight and fall very gently onto everyone's heads and upper bodies, which occurred in even the cleanest conference rooms and was one of Schmidt's least favorite things about the untinted interiors of certain other agencies' conference rooms around the Loop and metro area. Sometimes when waiting or on Hold on the phone Schmidt would put his finger inside his mouth and hold it there for no good reason he could ever ascertain. Darlene Lilley, who was married and the mother of a large-headed toddler whose photograph adorned her desk and hutch at Team  $\Delta y$ , had, three fiscal quarters past, been subjected to unwelcome sexual advances by one of the four Senior Research Directors who liaisoned between the Field and Technical Processing teams and the upper echelons of Team  $\Delta y$  under Alan Britton, advances and duress more than sufficient for legal action in Schmidt's and most of

<sup>\* =</sup> Market Research Oversight and Planning

the rest of their Field Team's opinions, which advances she had been able to deflect and defuse in an enormously skillful manner without raising any of the sort of hue and cry that could divide a firm along gender and/or political lines, and things had been allowed to cool down and blow over to such an extent that Darlene Lilley, Schmidt, and the three other members of their Field Team all now still enjoyed a productive working relationship with this dusky and pungent older Senior Research Director, who was now in fact overseeing Field research on the Mister Squishy-R.S.B. project, and Terry Schmidt was personally somewhat in awe of the self-possession and interpersonal savvy Darlene had displayed throughout the whole tense period, an awe tinged with an unwilled element of romantic attraction, and it is true that Schmidt at night in his condominium sometimes without feeling as if he could help himself masturbated to thoughts of having moist slapping intercourse with Darlene Lilley on one of the ponderous laminate conference tables of the firms they conducted statistical market research for, and this was a tertiary cause of what practicing social psychologists would call his MAM\* with the board's marker as he used a modulated tone of off-the-record confidence to tell the Focus Group about some of the more dramatic travails Reesemeyer Shannon Belt had had with establishing the product's brand-identity and coming up with the test name Felony!, all the while envisioning in a more autonomic part of his brain Darlene delivering nothing but the standard minimal pre-GRDS instructions for her own Focus Group as she stood in her dark Hanes hosiery and the burgundy high heels she kept at work in the bottom-right cabinet of her hutch and changed out of her crosstrainers into every morning the moment she sat down and rolled her chair with small pretend whimpers of effort over to the hutch's cabinets, sometimes (unlike Schmidt) pacing slightly in front of the whiteboard, sometimes planting one heel and rotating her foot slightly or crossing her sturdy ankles to lend her standing posture a carelessly demure aspect, sometimes taking her delicate oval eyeglasses off and not chewing on the arm but holding the glasses in such a way

<sup>\* =</sup> Manual Adjusting Mechanism

and in such proximity to her mouth that one got the idea she could, at any moment, put one of the frames' arm's plastic earguards just inside her mouth and nibble on it absently, an unconscious gesture of shyness and concentration at once.

The conference room's carpeting was magenta pile in which wheels left symmetrically distended impressions when one or more of the men adjusted their executive swivel chairs slightly to reposition their legs or their bodies' relation to the table itself. The ventilation system laid a pale hum over tiny distant street and city noises which the window's thickness itself cut to almost nothing. Each of the Targeted Focus Group's members wore a blue-and-white nametag with his first name inscribed thereon by hand. 42.8% of these inscriptions were cursive or script; three of the remaining eight were block capitals, with all the block-cap first names, in a remarkable but statistically meaningless coincidence, beginning with H. Sometimes, too, Schmidt would as it were take a step back inside his head and view the Focus Group as a unit, a right-angled mass of fleshtone busts; he'd observe all the faces at once, qua group, so that nothing but the very broadest commonalities passed through his filter. The faces were well-nourished, mid- to upscale, neutral, provisionally attentive, the blood-fed minds behind them occupied with their own owners' lives, jobs, problems, plans, desires, & c. None had been hungry a day in their lives — this was a core commonality, and for Schmidt this one did ramify. It was rare that the product ever truly penetrated a Focus Group's consciousness. One of the first things a Field Researcher accepts is that the product is never going to have as important a place in a TFG's minds as it did in the Client's. Advertising is not voodoo. The Client could ultimately hope only to create the impression of a connection or resonance between the brand and what was important to consumers. And what was important to consumers was, always and invariably, themselves. What they conceived themselves to be. The Focus Groups made little difference in the long run — the only true test was real sales, in Schmidt's personal opinion. Part of today's design was to go past lunch and keep the members eating only confections. Assuming a normal breakfasttime prior to arrival, one could expect their blood sugar to start heading

down sharply by 11:30. The ones who ate the most Felonies! would be hit the hardest. Among other symptoms, low blood sugar produces oscitance, irritability, lowered inhibitions — their game-faces would begin to slip a bit. Some of the TFG strategies could be extremely manipulative or even abusive in the name of data. A bleach-alternative detergent's agency had once hired Team Dy to convene primipara mothers aged 29 to 34 whose TATs had indicated insecurities at three key loci and to administer questionnaires whose items were designed to provoke and/or heighten those insecurities — Do you ever have negative or hostile feelings towards your child? How often do you feel as if you must hide or deny the fact that your parenting skills are inadequate? Have teachers or other parents ever made remarks about your child which embarrassed you? How often do you feel as if your child looks shabby or unclean in comparison to other children? Have you ever neglected to launder, bleach, mend or iron your child's clothes because of time constraints? Does your child ever seem sad or anxious for no reason you can understand? Can you think of a time when your child appeared to be frightened of you? Does your child's behavior or appearance ever provoke negative feelings in you? Have you ever said or thought negative things about your child? & c. — which, over eleven hours and six separate rounds of carefully designed questionnaires, brought the women to such an emotional state that truly invaluable data on how to pitch Cheer Xtra in terms of very deep maternal anxieties and conflicts emerged . . . data that so far as Schmidt had been able to see went wholly unexploited in the campaign the agency had finally sold P. & G. on. Darlene Lilley had later said she had felt like calling the Focus Group's women and apologizing and letting them know that they'd been totally set up and manhandled, emotionally speaking.

Some of the other products and agencies whose branding campaigns Terry Schmidt and Darlene Lilley's Field Team had also worked on for Team Δy were: Downyflake Waffles for D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles, Diet Caffeine Free Coke for Ads Infinitum US, Eucalyptamint for Pringle Dixon, Citizens Business Insurance for Krauthammer-Jaynes/SMS, the G. Heileman Brewing Co.'s Special

Export and Special Export Lite for Bayer Bess Vanderwarker, Winner International's *HelpMe* Personal Sound Alarm for Reesemeyer Shannon Belt, Isotoner Comfort-Fit Gloves for PR Cogent Partners, Northern Bathroom Tissue for Reesemeyer Shannon Belt, and Rhône-Poulenc Rorer's new Nasacort and Nasacort AQ Prescription Nasal Spray, also for R.S.B.

The only way for an observer to detect anything unusual or out of the ordinary about the two UAFs' status would be to note that the facilitator never once looked fully or directly at them, whereas on the other hand Schmidt did look at each of the other twelve men at various intervals, making brief and candid eye-contact with first one man and then another at a different place around the conference table and so on, a subtle skill (there is no term for it) that often marks those who are practiced at speaking before small groups, Schmidt neither holding any man's eye for so long as to discomfit nor simply panning automatonically back and forth and brushing only lightly against each man's gaze in such a way that the men in the Focus Group might feel as though this representative of Mister Squishy and Felonies! were talking merely at them rather than to or with them; and it would have taken a practiced small-group observer indeed to notice that there were two men in the conference room — one being the terse eccentric member surrounded by personal-care products, the other a silent earnesteyed bespectacled man who sat in blazer and turtleneck at the table's far corner, which latter Schmidt had decided was the second UAF: something a tiny bit too composed about the man's mien and blink-rate gave him up — on whose eyes the facilitator's never quite did alight all the way. Schmidt's lapse here was very subtle, and an observer would have to be both highly experienced and unusually attentive to extract any kind of meaning from it.

The exterior figure wore also a mountaineer's tool apron and a large nylon or microfiber backpack. Visually, he was both conspicuous and complex. On each slim ledge he again appeared to use the suction cups on his right hand and wrist to pull himself lithely up from a supine position to a standing position, cruciform, facing inward, hugging the glass with his arms' cups engaged in order to keep from falling backward as

he raised his left leg and turned the shoe outward to align the instep's cups with the pane's reflective surface. The suction cups appeared to be the kind whose vacuum action could be activated and deactivated by slight rotary adjustments that probably took a great deal of practice to learn to perform as deftly as the figure made them look. The backpack and boots were the same color. Most of the passersby who looked up and stopped and accreted into a small watching crowd found their attention most fully involved and compelled by the free climb's mechanics. The figure traversed each window by lifting his left leg and right arm and pulling himself smoothly up, then attaching his dangling right leg and left arm and activating their cups' suction and leaving them to hold his weight while he deactivated the left leg's and right arm's suction and moved them up and reactivated their cups. There were high degrees of both precision and economy in the way the figure orchestrated his different extremities' tasks. The day was very crisp and winds aloft were high; whatever clouds there were moved rapidly across the slim square of sky visible above the tall buildings that flanked the street. The autumn sky itself the sort of blue that seems to burn. People with hats tipped them back on their heads and people without hats shaded their eyes with their gloves as they craned to watch the figure's progress. The clabbering skies over the lake were not visible from the buildings' rifts or canyon's base. Also there was one large additional suction cup affixed to the back of the hood with a white Velcro strap. When the figure cleared another ledge and for a moment lay on his side facing out into the chasm below, those onlookers far enough back on the sidewalk to have some visual perspective could see another large orange suction cup, the hood's cup's twin, attached to his forehead by what was presumably also Velcro although this Velcro band must have run beneath the hood. And — there was general assent among the watching group — either reflective goggles or very odd and frightening eyes indeed.

Schmidt was simply giving the Focus Group a little extra background, he said, on the product's genesis and on some of the marketing challenges it had presented, but he said that in no way shape or form was he giving them anything like the whole story, that he wouldn't want to pretend he was giving them anything more than little pieces here and there. Time was tight in the pre-GRDS orientation phase. One of the men sneezed loudly. Schmidt explained that this was because Reesemeyer Shannon Belt Adv. wanted to make sure to give the Focus Group a generous interval to convene together in camera and discuss their experiences and assessments of Felonies! as a group, to compare notes if you will, on their own, qua group, without any marketing researchers yammering at them or standing there observing as if they were psychological guinea pigs or something, which meant that Terry would soon be getting out of their hair and leaving them to perpend and converse in private amongst themselves, and that he wouldn't be coming back until whatever foreman they elected pushed the large red button next to the room's lights' rheostat that in turn activated — the red button did — an amber light in the office down the hall, where Terry Schmidt said he would be twiddling his metaphorical thumbs waiting to come collect the hopefully univocal Group Response Data Summary packet, which the elected foreman here would be receiving ex post hasto. Eleven of the room's men had now consumed at least one of the products on the table's central tray; five of them had had more than one. Schmidt, who was no longer playing idly with the Dry Erase marker because some of the men's eyes had begun to follow it in his hand and he sensed it was becoming a distraction, said he now also proposed to give them just a little of the standard spiel on why after all the solo time and effort they'd all already put in on their Individual Response Profiles he was going to ask them to start all over again and consider the GRDS packet's various questions and scales as a collective. He had a trick for disposing of the Dry Erase marker where he very casually placed it in the slotted tray at the bottom of the whiteboard and gave the pen's butt a hard flick with his finger, sending it the length of the tray to stop just short of shooting out off the other end altogether, with its cap's tip almost precisely aligned with the tray's end, which he performed with TFGs about 70% of the time, and did perform now. The trick was even more impressively casual-looking if he performed it while he was speaking; it lent both what he was saying and the trick itself an air of nonchalance

that heightened the impact. Robert Awad himself — this being the Team Dy Senior Research Director who would later harass and be so artfully defused by Darlene Lilley - had casually performed this little trick in one of his orientation presentations for new Field Team researchers 27 fiscal quarters past. This, Schmidt said, was because one of Reesemeyer Shannon Belt Advertising's central tenets, one of the things that set them apart from other agencies in their bailiwick and so was of course something in which they took great pride and made much of in their pitches to clients like Mister Squishy and North American Soft Confections Inc., was that IRPs like the 20-page questionnaires the men had so kindly filled out in their separate airless cubicles were of definite but only partial research utility, since corporations whose products had national or even regional distribution depended on appealing not just to individual consumers but also of course it almost went without saying to very large groups of them, groups that were yes comprised of individuals but were nevertheless groups, larger entities or collectives. These groups as conceived and understood by market researchers were strange and protean entities, Schmidt told the Focus Group, whose tastes — referring to groups, or small-*m* markets as they were known around the industry - whose tastes and whims and predilections were not only as the men in the room were doubtless aware subtle and fickle and susceptible to influence from myriad tiny factors in each individual consumer's appetitive makeup but were also, somewhat paradoxically, functions of the members of the group's various influences upon one another, all in a set of interactions and recursively exponential responses-to-responses so complex and multifaceted that it drove statistical demographers half nuts and required a whole Sysplex series of enormously powerful low-temperature Cray-brand supercomputers even to try to model.

And if all that just sounded like a lot of marketing doubletalk, Terry Schmidt told the Focus Group with an air of someone loosening his tie after something public's end, maybe the easiest example of what R.S.B. was talking about in terms of intramarket influences was probably say for instance teenage kids and the fashions and fads that swept like wildfire through markets comprised mostly of kids, meaning high-

school and college kids and markets such as for instance popular music, clothing fashions, etcetera. If the members saw a lot of teenage kids these days wearing pants that looked way too big for them and rode low and had cuffs that dragged on the ground, for one obvious example, Schmidt said as if plucking an example at random out of the air, or if as was surely the case with some of the more senior men in the room (two, in fact) they themselves had kids who'd taken in the last couple years to suddenly wanting and wearing clothes that were far too big for them and made them look like urchins in Victorian novels even though as the men probably knew all too well, with a grim chuckle, the clothes cost a pretty penny indeed over at the Gap or Structure. And if you wondered why your kid was wearing them of course the majority of the answer was simply that other kids were wearing them, for of course kids as a demographic market today were notoriously herdlike and their individual choices in consumption were overwhelmingly influenced by other kids' consumption-choices and so on in a fadlike pattern that spread like wildfire and usually then abruptly and mysteriously vanished or changed into something else. This was the most simple and obvious example of the sort of complex system of large groups' intragroup preferences influencing one another and building exponentially on one another, much more like a nuclear chain reaction or an epidemiological transmission grid than a simple case of each individual consumer deciding privately for himself what he wanted and then going out and judiciously spending his disposable income on it. The wonks in Demographics' buzzword for this phenomenon was Metastatic Consumption Pattern or MCP, Schmidt told the Focus Group, rolling his eyes in a way that invited those who were listening to laugh with him at the statisticians' jargon. Granted, the facilitator went on, this model he was so rapidly sketching for them was overly simplistic e.g., it left out advertising and the media, which in today's hypercomplex business environment sought always to anticipate and fuel these sudden proliferating movements in group choice, aiming for a tipping point at which a product or brand achieved such ubiquitous popularity that it became like unto actual cultural news and-slash-or fodder for cultural critics and comedians, plus also a plausible placement-prop

for mass entertainment that sought to look real and in-the-now, and so thereupon a product or style that got hot at a certain ideal apex of the MCP graph ceased to require much paid advertising at all, the hot brand becoming as it were a piece of cultural information or an element of the way the market wished to see itself, which — Schmidt gave them a wistful smile — was a rare and prized phenomenon and was considered in marketing to be something like winning the World Series.

Of the 67% of the twelve true Focus Group members who were still concentrating on listening closely to Terry Schmidt, two now wore the expressions of men who were trying to decide whether to be slightly offended; both these men were over 40. Also, some of the individual adults across the conference table from one another began to exchange glances, and since (Schmidt believed) these men had no prior acquaintance or connection on which to base meaningful eye-contact, it seemed probable that the looks were in reaction to the facilitator's analogy to teen fashion fads. One of the group's members had classic peckerwood sideburns that came all the way down to his mandibles and ended in sharp points. Of the room's three youngest men, none were attending closely, and two were still established in postures and facial configurations designed to make this apparent. The third had removed his fourth Felony! from the table's display and was dismantling the wrapper as quietly as possible, looking furtively around to determine whether anyone cared that he'd exceeded his technical productshare. Schmidt, improvising slightly, was saying, 'I'm talking here about juvenile fads, of course, only because it's the simplest, most intuitive sort of example. The marketing people at Mister Squishy know full well that you gentlemen aren't kids,' with a small slight smile at the younger members, all three of whom could after all vote, purchase alcohol, and enlist in the armed forces; 'or nor that there's anything like a real herd mentality we're trying to spark here by leaving you alone to confer amongst yourselves qua group. If nothing else, keep in mind that soft-confection marketing doesn't work this way; it's much more complicated, and the group dynamics of the market are much harder to really talk about without computer modeling and all sorts of ugly math up on the board that we wouldn't even dream of trying to get you to sit still for.'

A single intrepid sporting boat was making its way right to left across the portion of the lake the large window gave out on, and once or twice an automobile horn far below on E. Huron sounded at such insistent length that it intruded on the attention of Terry Schmidt and some of the well-vetted consumers in this conference room, a couple of whom Schmidt had to admit to himself that he felt he might frankly dislike — both of them somewhat older, one the man with the hairweave, something hooded about their eyes, and the way they made little self-satisfied adjustments to parts of themselves and their wardrobes, sometimes in a very concentrated way, as if to communicate that they were men so important that their attention itself was highly prized, that they were old and experienced hands at sitting in rooms like this having earnest young men with easels and full-color charts make presentations and try to solicit favorable responses from them, and that they were well above whatever mass-consumer LCD Schmidt's clumsy mime of candid spontaneity was pitched at, that they'd taken cellular phone calls during or in fact even walked out of far more nuanced, sophisticated, assuasive pitches than this. Schmidt had had several years of psychotherapy and was not without some perspective on himself, and he knew that a certain percentage of his reaction to the way these older men coolly inspected their cuticles or pinched at the crease in the trouser of the topmost leg as they sat back on their coccyx joggling the foot of their crossed leg was his own insecurity, that he felt somewhat sullied and implicated by the whole enterprise of contemporary marketing and that this sometimes manifested via projection as the feeling that people he was just trying to talk as candidly as possible to always believed he was making a sales pitch or trying to manipulate them in some way, as if merely being employed, however ephemerally, in the great grinding US marketing machine had somehow colored his whole being and that something essentially shifty or pleading in his expression now always seemed inherently false or manipulative and turned people off, and not just in his career which was not his whole existence, unlike so many at Team  $\Delta y$ , or even

all that terribly important to him; he had a vivid and complex inner life, and introspected a great deal — but in his personal affairs as well, and that somewhere along the line his professional marketing skills had metastasized throughout his whole character so that he was now the sort of man who, if he were to screw up his courage and ask a female colleague out for drinks and over drinks open his heart up to her and reveal that he respected her enormously, that his feelings for her involved elements of both professional and highly personal regard, and that he spent a great deal more time thinking about her than she probably had any idea he did, and that if there were anything at all he could ever do to make her life happier or easier or more satisfying or fulfilling he hoped she'd just say the word, for that is all she would have to do, say the word or snap her thick fingers or even just look at him in a meaningful way, and he'd be there, instantly and with no reservations at all, he would nevertheless in all probability be viewed as probably just wanting to sleep with her or fondle or harass her, or as having some creepy obsession with her, or as maybe even having a small creepy secretive kind of almost shrine to her in one corner of the unused second bedroom of his condominium, consisting of personal items fished out of her cubicle's wastebasket or the occasional dry witty little notes she passed him during especially deadly or absurd Team  $\Delta y$  staff meetings, or that his home Apple PowerBook's screensaver was an Adobe-brand 1440-dpi blowup of a digital snapshot of the two of them with his arm over her shoulder and just part of the arm and shoulder of another Team  $\Delta y$  Field-worker with his arm over her shoulder from the other side at a Fourth of July picnic that A.C. Romney-Jaswat & Assoc. had thrown for its research subcontractors at Navy Pier two years past, Darlene holding her cup and smiling in such a way as to show almost as much upper gum as teeth, the ale's cup's red digitally enhanced to match her lipstick and the small scarlet hairbow she often wore just right of center as a sort of personal signature or statement.

The crowd on the sidewalk's growth was still inconstant. For every two or three passersby who joined the group of onlookers craning upward, someone else in the crowd suddenly looked at his watch and detached from the collective and hurried off either northward or across the street to keep some type of appointment. From a certain perspective the small crowd, then, looked like a living cell engaged in trade and exchange with the linear streetside flows that fed it. There was no evidence that the climbing figure saw the fluctuantly growing mass so far below. He certainly never made any of the motions or expressions people associate with someone at a great height looking down at them. No one in the sidewalk's group of spectators pointed or yelled; for the most part they just watched. What children there were held their guardians' hand. There were some remarks and small conversations between adjoining onlookers, but these took place out of the sides of their mouths as all parties looked up at what appeared to be a sheer and sky-high column of alternating glass and prestressed stone. The figure averaged roughly 230 seconds per story; a commuter timed him. Both his backpack and apron looked full of some kind of equipment that caused them to bulge. There were loops along his GoreTex top's shoulders and also — unless it was a trick of the building's windows' refracted light — small strange almost nipplelike protuberances at the figure's shoulders, on his knees' backs, and in the center of the odd navy-and-white bullseye design at the figure's seat. The crampons on mountaineering boots can be removed with a small square tool so that they can be sharpened or replaced, a long-haired man supporting an expensive bicycle against his hip told the people around him. He personally felt he knew what the protuberances were. New members of the crowd always asked the people around them what was going on, whether they knew anything. The costume was airtight, the guy was inflatable or designed to look that way, the long-haired man said. He appeared to be talking to his bicycle; no one acknowledged him. His pantcuffs were clipped for easy cycling. On every third or fourth floor, the figure paused for a time on his back on the narrow ledge with scrollwork at the cornices, resting. A man who had at one time driven an airport shuttlebus opined that the figure on the ledge looked to be purposely idling, timing out his ascent to conform to some schedule; the child attached to the hand of the woman he said this to looked briefly over at him with his face still upturned. Anyone looking straight down would have seen a shifting collection of several dozen

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watching faces with bodies so foreshortened as to be mere suggestions only.

'Probably only up to a certain point,' Terry Schmidt said then in response to a sort of confirmational question from the tall man with the kite-shaped face and a partly torn tag (two of the room's six cursive nametags were ripped or sectional, the result of accidents during their removal from the adhesive backing) that read FORREST, a 40ish fellow with large and hirsute hands and a slightly frayed collar, whose air of rumpled integrity — along with two separate questions that had actually helped advance the presentation's agendas - made this fellow Schmidt's personal choice for foreman. 'What it is is just that R.S.B. feels your Focus Group responses qua group instead of just as the sum of your personal individual responses is an equally important market research tool for a product like the Felony!. "GRDS as well as IRPs" as we say in the trade,' with a breeziness he did not feel. One of the younger members — age 22 according to the tiny Charleston code worked into the scrollwork at his nametag's lower border, and handsome in a generic way — wore a reversed baseball cap and a soft wool V-neck sweater with no shirt underneath, displaying a powerful upper chest and forearms (the sleeves of the sweater were carefully pushed up to reveal the forearms' musculature in a way designed to look casual, as if the sweater's arms had been thoughtlessly pushed up in the midst of his thinking hard about something other than himself), and had crossed his leg ankle-on-knee and slid so far down on his tailbone that his cocked leg was the same height as his chin, thereupon holding the salient knee with his fingers laced in such a way as to apply pressure and make his forearms bulge even more. It had occurred to Terry Schmidt that even though so many home products, from Centrum Multivitamins to Visine AC Soothing Antiallergenic Eye Drops to Nasacort AQ Prescription Nasal Spray, now came in conspicuous tamperproof packaging in the wake of the Tylenol poisonings of a decade past and Johnson & Johnson's legendarily swift and conscientious response to the crisis - pulling every bottle of every variety of Tylenol off every retail shelf in America and spending millions on

setting up overnight a smooth and hassle-free system for every Tylenol consumer to return his or her bottle for an immediate NQA refund plus an added sum for the gas and mileage or US postage involved in the return, writing off tens of millions in returns and operational costs and recouping untold exponents more in positive PR and consumer goodwill and thereby actually enhancing the brand Tylenol's association with compassion and concern for consumer wellbeing, a strategy that had made J. & J.'s CEO and their PR vendors legends in a marketing field that Terry Schmidt had only just that year begun considering getting into as a practical and potentially creative and rewarding way to use his double major in Descriptive Statistics + Bv. Psych, the young Schmidt imagining himself in plush conference rooms not unlike this one, using the sheer force of his personality and command of the facts to persuade tablesful of hard-eyed corporate officers that legitimate concern for consumer wellbeing was both emotionally and economically Good Business, that if, e.g., R. J. Reynolds elected to be forthcoming about its products' addictive qualities, and GM to be upfront in its national ads about the fact that vastly greater fuel efficiency was totally feasible if consumers would be willing to spend a couple hundred dollars more and settle for slightly fewer aesthetic amenities, and shampoo manufacturers to concede that the 'Repeat' in their product instructions was hygienically unnecessary, and Tums' parent General Brands to spend a couple million to announce candidly that Tums-brand antacid tablets should not be used regularly for more than a couple weeks at a time because after that the stomach lining automatically started secreting more HCl to compensate for all the neutralization and made the original stomach trouble worse, that the consequent gains in corporate PR and associations of the brand with integrity and trust would more than outweigh the short-term costs and stock-price repercussions, that yes it was a risk but not a wild or dicelike risk, that it had on its side both precedent cases and demographic data as well as the solid reputation for both caginess and integrity of T. E. Schmidt & Associates, to concede that yes gentlemen he supposed he was in a way asking them to gamble some of their narrow short-term margins and

equity on the humble sayso of Terence Eric Schmidt Jr., whose own character's clear marriage of virtue, pragmatism, and oracular marketing savvy were his best and final argument; he was saying to these upper-management men in their vests and Cole Haans just what he proposed to have them say to a sorry and cynical US market: Trust Me You Will Not Be Sorry — which when he thinks of the starry-eyed puerility and narcissism of these fantasies now, a rough decade later, Schmidt experiences a kind of full-frame internal wince, that type of embarrassment-before-self that makes our most mortifying memories objects of fascination and repulsion at once, though in Terry Schmidt's case a certain amount of introspection and psychotherapy (the latter the origin of the self-caricature doodling during downtime in his beige cubicle) had enabled him to understand that his professional fantasies were not in the main all that unique, that a large percentage of bright young men and women locate the impetus behind their career choice in the belief that they are fundamentally different from the common run of man, unique and in certain crucial ways superior, more as it were central, meaningful — what else could explain the fact that they themselves have been at the exact center of all they've experienced for the whole 20 years of their conscious lives? — and that they can and will make a difference in their chosen field simply by the fact of their unique and central presence in it . . . ; and but so (Schmidt also still declaiming professionally to the TFG all this while) that even though so many upmarket consumer products now were tamperproof, Mister Squishy-brand snack cakes — as well as Hostess, Little Debbie, Dolly Madison, the whole soft-confection industry with its flimsy neopolymerized wrappers and cheap thin cardboard Economy Size containers — were decidedly not tamperproof at all, that it would take nothing more than one thin-gauge hypodermic and 24 infinitesimal doses of KCN, As<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, ricin, C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>22</sub>O<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub>, acincetilcholine, botulinus, or even merely T1 or some other aqueous base-metal compound to bring almost an entire industry down on one supplicatory knee; for even if the soft-confection manufacturers survived the initial horror and managed to recover some measure of consumer trust, the relevant products' low price was an essential part of their established Market

Appeal Matrix\*, and the costs of reinforcing the Economy packaging or rendering the individual snack cakes visibly invulnerable to a thingauge hypodermic would push the products out so far right on the demand curve that mass-market snacks would become economically and emotionally untenable, corporate soft confections going thus the way of hitchhiking, unsupervised trick-or-treating, door-to-door sales, & c.

At various intervals throughout the pre-GRDS presentation the limbic portions of Schmidt's brain pursued this line of thinking while in fact a whole other part of his mind surveyed these memories and fantasies and was simultaneously fascinated and repelled at the way in which all these thoughts and feelings could be entertained in total subjective private while Schmidt ran the Focus Group through its brief and supposedly Full-Access description of Mister Squishy's place in the soft-confection industry and some of the travails of developing and marketing what these men were experiencing as Felonies! (referring offhandedly to nascent plans for bite-sized misdemeanors! [sic] if the original product established a foothold), at least half the room's men listening with what's called half an ear while pursuing their own private lines of thought, and Schmidt had a quick vision of them all in the conference room as like icebergs and/or floes, only the sharp caps showing, unknown and -knowable to one another, and he imagined that it was probably only in marriage (and a good marriage, not the decorous dance of loneliness he'd watched his mother and father do for seventeen years but rather true conjugal intimacy) that partners allowed each other to see below the berg's cap's public mask and consented to be truly known, maybe even to the extent of not only letting the partner see the repulsive nest of moles under their left arm or the way after any sort of cold or viral infection the toenails on both feet turned a weird deep yellow for several weeks but even perhaps every once in a while sobbing in each other's arms late at night and pouring out the most ghastly private fears and thoughts of failure and impotence and terrible and thoroughgoing smallness within a grinding professional machine you can't believe you once had the temerity to think

<sup>\*</sup>also, somewhat confusingly, = MAM

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you could help change or make a difference or ever be more than a tiny faceless cog in, the shame of being so hungry to make some sort of real impact on an industry that you'd fantasized over and over about finally deciding that making a dark difference with a hypo and eight cc's of castor bean distillate was better, was somehow more true to your own inner centrality and importance, than being nothing but a faceless cog and doing a job that untold thousands of other bright young men and women could do at least as well as you, or rather now even better than you because at least the younger among them still believed deep inside that they were made for something larger and more central and relevant than shepherding preoccupied men through an abstracted shamcaucus and yet at the same time still believed that they could (= the bright young men could) begin to manifest their larger potential for impact and effectiveness by being the very best darn Targeted Focus Group facilitator that Team  $\Delta y$  and R.S.B. had ever seen, better than the nested-test data they'd seen so far had shown might even be possible, establishing via manifest candor and integrity and a smooth informal rhetoric that let their own very special qualities manifest themselves and shine forth such a level of connection and intimacy with a Focus Group that the TFG's men or women felt, within the special high-voltage field of the relationship the extraordinary facilitator created, an interest in and enthusiasm for the product and for R.S.B.'s desire to bring the product out into the US market in the very most effective way that matched or even exceeded the agency's own. Or maybe that even the mere possibility of expressing any of this childish heartbreak to someone else seemed impossible except in the context of the mystery of true marriage, meaning not just a ceremony and financial merger but a true communion of souls, and Schmidt now lately felt he was coming to understand why the Church all through his childhood catechism and pre-Con referred to it as the Holy Sacrament of Marriage, for it seemed every bit as miraculous and transrational and remote from the possibilities of actual lived life as the crucifixion and resurrection and transubstantiation did, which is to say it appeared not as a goal to expect ever to really reach or achieve but as a kind of navigational star, as in in the sky, something high and untouchable and miraculously beautiful in the sort of distant way that reminded you always of how ordinary and unbeautiful and incapable of miracles you your own self were, which was another reason why Schmidt had stopped looking at the sky or going out at night or even usually ever opening the lightproof curtains of his condominium's picture window when he got home at night and instead sat with his satellite TV's channel-changer in his left hand switching rapidly from channel to channel out of fear that something better was going to come on suddenly on another of the cable provider's 220 regular and premium channels and that he was about to miss it, spending three nightly hours this way before it was time to stare with drumming heart at the telephone that wholly unbeknownst to her had Darlene Lilley's home number on Speed Dial so that it would take only one moment of the courage to risk looking prurient or creepy to use just one finger to push just one gray button to invite her for one cocktail or even just a soft drink over which he could take off his public mask and open his heart to her before quailing and deferring the call one more night and waddling into the bathroom and/or then the cream-and-tan bedroom to lay out the next day's crisp shirt and tie and say his nightly dekate and then masturbate himself to sleep again once more. Schmidt was sensitive about the way his weight and body fat percentage increased with each passing year, and imagined that there was something about the way he walked that suggested a plump or prissy fat man's waddle, when in fact his stride was 100% average and unremarkable and nobody except Terry Schmidt had any opinions about his manner of walking one way or the other. Sometimes over this last quarter, when shaving in the morning with WLS News and Talk Radio on over the intercom, he stopped — Schmidt did — and would look at his face and at the faint lines and pouches that seemed to grow a little more pronounced each quarter and would call himself, directly to his mirrored face, Mister Squishy, the name would come unbidden into his mind, and despite his attempts to ignore or resist it the large subsidiary's name and logo had become the dark part of him's latest taunt, so that when he thought of himself now it was as something he called Mister Squishy, and his own face and the plump and wholly innocuous icon's face tended to bleed in his mind into one face, crude and line-drawn and clever in a small way, a design that someone might find some small selfish use for but could never love or hate or ever care to truly even know.

Some of the shoppers inside the first-floor display window of the Gap observed the mass of people on the sidewalk craning upward and wondered, naturally, what was up. At the base of the eighth floor, the figure shifted himself carefully around so that he was seated on the ledge facing outward with his bicolored legs adangle. He was 238 feet up in the air. The square of sky directly above him a pilot-light blue. The growing crowd watching the figure's climb could not discern that there was in turn a growing collection of shoppers inside looking out at them because the building's glass, which appeared tinted on the inside, was reflective on the outside; it was One Way Glass. The figure now crossed his legs lotus-style on the ledge beneath him, paused, and then in one lithe movement drove himself upright, losing his balance slightly and windmilling his arms to keep from pitching forward off the ledge altogether. There was a brief group-exhalation from the sidewalk's crowd as the figure now snapped its hooded head back and with a tiny distant wet noise affixed the suction cup at his head's rear to the window. A couple young men in the crowd cried up at the eighth floor for the figure to jump, but their tone was self-ironic and it was plain that they were simply parodying the typical cry of jaded onlookers to a figure balanced on a slim ledge 240 feet up in a high wind and looking down at a crowd on the plaza's sidewalk far below. Still, one or two much older people shot optical daggers at the youths who'd shouted; it was unclear whether they knew what self-parody even was. Inside the window of the building's north facet's eighth floor — which space happened to comprise the circulation and subscription departments of Playboy magazine — the employees' reaction to the sight of the back of a lithe blue-and-white figure attached to the window by a large suction cup on its head can only be imagined. It was the Gap's floor manager in Accessories who first called the police, and this merely because the press of customers at the window's display clearly bespoke some kind of disturbance on the street outside; and because the nature

of that disturbance was unknown, none of the roving television vans who monitored the city's police frequencies were alerted, and the scene remained media-free for a good 1500 feet in every direction.

What Terry Schmidt sketched from memory for the all-male Focus Group was a small eddy or crosscurrent in the tide that demomarketers called an MCP — these were known as Antitrends, or sometimes Shadow Markets. In the area of corporate snacks, Schmidt pretended to explain, there were two basic ways a new product could position itself in a US market for which health, fitness, nutrition, and attendant indulgence-v.-discipline conflicts had achieved a metastatic status. A Shadow snack simply worked to define itself in opposition to the overall trend against HDL fats, refined carbs, transfatty acids, i.e. against the consumption of what some subgroups variously termed empty calories, sweets, junk food, or in other words the whole brilliantly orchestrated obsession with nutrition and exercise and stress-management that went under the demographic heading Healthy Lifestyles. Schmidt said he could tell from the Focus Group's faces — whose expressions ranged from sullen distraction in the youngest to a kind of studious anxiety in the older men, faces tinged with the slight guilt-about-guilt that Schemm Halter/Deight's legendary E. Peter Fish, the mind behind both shark cartilage and odor-free garlic supplements, had called at a high-priced seminar that both Scott Laleman and Darlene Lilley had attended '... the knife edge that Healthy Lifestyles Marketing ha[d] to walk along,' which unfortunate phrase was reproduced by a Hewlett Packard digital projector that cast Fish's key points in boldfonted outline form against one wall to facilitate effective note-taking (the whole industry seminar business was such bullshit, Terry Schmidt believed, with its leather binders and mission statements and wargame nomenclature, marketing truisms to marketers, who when all was said and done were probably the most plasticly gullible market around, although at the same time there was no disputing E. P. Fish's importance or his statements' weight) — Schmidt said he could tell from their faces that the men knew quite well what Antitrend was about, the Shadow Markets like Punk contra Disco and Cadillacs contra high-mileage compacts and Sun and Apple contra the MS juggernaut.

He said they could if the men wished talk at some length about the stresses on individual consumers caught between their natural Godgiven herd instincts and their deep fear of sacrificing their natural God-given identities as individuals, and about the way these stresses were tweaked and-slash-or soothed by skillfully engineered trends, and that but then, by sort of the Third Law of Motion of marketing, the MCP trends spawned also their Antitrend Shadows, the spin inside and against the larger spin of in this instance Reduced-Calorie and Fat-Free foods, nutritional supplements, Lowcaf and Decaf, Nutra-Sweet and Olestra, jazzercise and liposuction and kava kava, good v. bad cholesterol, free radicals v. antioxidants, time management and Quality Time and the really rather brilliantly managed stress that everyone was made to feel about staying fit and looking good and living long and squeezing the absolute maximum productivity and health and self-actuation out of every last vanishing second, Schmidt then backing off to acknowledge that but of course on the other hand he was aware that the men's time was valuable and so he'd . . . and here one or two of the older Focus Group members who had wristwatches glanced at them by reflex, and the overstylized UAF's pager went off by prearrangement, which allowed Schmidt to gesture broadly and pretend to chuckle and to concede that yes yes see their time was valuable, that they all felt it, that they all knew what he was talking about because after all they all lived in it didn't they, and to say that so in this case it would perhaps suffice just to simply for example utter the illustrative words Jolt Cola, Starbucks, Häagen-Dazs, Ericson's All Butter Fudge, premium cigars, conspicuously low-mileage urban 4WDs, Hammacher Schlemmer's all-silk boxers, whole Near North Side eateries given over to high-lipid desserts — enterprises in other words that rode the transverse Shadow, that said or sought to say to a consumer bludgeoned by herd-pressures to achieve, forbear, trim the fat, cut down, discipline, prioritize, be sensible, self-parent, that hey, you deserve it, reward yourself, brands that in essence said what's the use of living longer and healthier if there aren't those few precious moments in every day when you stopped, sat down, and took a few moments of hard-earned pleasure just for you? and various myriad other pitches

that aimed to remind the consumer that he was at root an individual, one with individual tastes and preferences and freedom of individual choice, that he was not a mere herd animal who had no choice but to go go go on US life's digital-calorie-readout treadmill, that there were still some rich and refined and harmless-if-judiciously-indulged-in pleasures out there to indulge in if the consumer'd snap out of his highfiber hypnosis and realize that life was also to be enjoyed, that the unenjoyed life was not worth living, & c. & c. That, as one example, just as Hostess Inc. was coming out with low-fat Twinkies and cholesterolfree Ding Dongs, Jolt Cola's own branders had hung its West Coast launch on the inverted All the Sugar Twice the Caffeine, and that meanwhile the stock of Ericson's All Butter Fudge and individual bite-sized Fudgees' parent company US Brands had split three times via D.D.B. Needham's series of ads that featured people in workout clothes running into each other in dim closets where they'd gone to eat Ericson's A.B.F. in secret, with all the ingenious and piquant taglines that played against the moment the characters' mutual embarrassment turned to laughter and a convolved esprit de corps. (Schmidt knew full well that Reesemeyer Shannon Belt Adv. had lost the US Brands/ Ericson account to D.D.B. Needham's spectacular pitch for a full-out Shadow strategy, and thus that the videotape of his remarks here would raise at least three eyebrows among R.S.B.'s MROP team and would force Robert Awad to behave as though he believed Schmidt hadn't known anything about the Ericson-D.D.B. Needham thing and to come lean pungently over the wall of Schmidt's cubicle and try to quote unquote 'fill in Terry' on certain facts of life of interagency politics without unduly damaging Schmidt's morale over the putative boner, and so on.)

Nor in fact was the high-altitude figure gazing down at them, the street's keener onlookers saw — what he was actually doing was looking down at himself and gingerly removing a shiny packet of what appeared to be foil or Mylar from his mountaineer's tool apron and giving it a delicate little towel-like snap to open it out and then reaching up with both hands and rolling it down over his head and hood and fixing it in place with small snaps or Velcro tabs at his shoulders

and throat's base. It was some sort of mask, the long-haired cyclist who always carried a small novelty-type spy telescope in his fannypack opined, though except for two holes for eyes and a large one for his forehead's cup the whole thing appeared too wrinkled and detumescedlooking to be able to make out who or what the shapeless arrangement of microtextured lines on the Mylar was supposed to represent, but even at this distance the mask looked frightening, baggy and hydrocephalic and cartoonishly inhuman, and there were now some louder and less self-ironic shouts and cries, and several members of the watching crowd involuntarily stepped back into the street, fouling traffic and causing a brief discordance of horns as the figure placed both hands on his head's white bag and with something like a wet kissing noise from his skull's rear suction cup performed a lithe contra face that left him now facing the window with the sagged mask's nose and lips and forehead's very orange cup pressed tight against it again provoking God only knows what reaction from the Playboy magazine corporate staff on the glass's inside — whereupon he now reached around and removed from the backpack what appeared to be a small generator or perhaps scuba-style tank with a slender hoselike attachment that was either black or dark blue and ended in a strange sort of triangular or arrowhead- or  $\Delta$ -shaped nozzle or attachment or mortise, which tank he connected with straps and a harness to the back of his GoreTex top and allowed the dark hose and nozzle to hang unfettered down over his concentricized rear and the leggings' tops, so that when he resumed his practiced-looking opposite-leg and -arm climb up the eighth-floor window he now also wore what appeared to be a deflated cranial mask or balloon, dorsal airtank, and frankly demoniclooking tail, and presented an overall sight so complex and unlike anything from any member of the (now much larger and more diffuse, some still in the street and beginning to roil) crowd's visual experience that there were several moments of dead silence as everyone's individual neocortices worked to process the visual information and to scan their memories for any thing or combination of live or animated things the figure might resemble or suggest. A small child in the crowd began to cry because someone had stepped on its foot.

Now that he appeared less conventionally human, the way the figure climbed by moving his left arm/right leg and then right arm/left leg looked even more arachnoid or saurian; in any event he was still just lithe as hell. Some of the shoppers inside the display windows of the Gap had now come out and joined the sidewalk's crowd. The figure scaled the eighth—twelfth floors with ease, then paused while attached to the thirteenth—(perhaps called the fourteenth—) floor window to apply some kind of adhesive or cleaner to his suction cups. The winds at 425 feet must have been very strong, because his caudal hose swung wildly this way and that.

It was also impossible for some people in the front portion of the street and sidewalk's crowd to resist looking at their own and the whole collective's reflection in the Gap's display window. There were no more screams or cries of Jump!', but among some of the crowd's younger and more media-savvy members there began to be speculation about whether this was a PR stunt for some product or service or whether perhaps the climbing figure was one of those renegade urban daredevils who scaled tall buildings and then parachuted to the ground below and submitted to arrest while blowing kisses to network news cameras. The well-known Sears Tower or even Hancock Center would have been a far better high-visibility site for a stunt like this if such a stunt it was, some of them opined. The first two squad cars arrived as the figure — by this time quite small, even through a novelty telescope, and obscured almost wholly from view when he negotiated ledges was hanging attached by his forehead's central cup to the fifteenthfloor window (or perhaps sixteenth, depending whether the building had a thirteenth floor; some do and some don't) and appeared to be pulling more items from his nylon pack, fitting them together and using both hands to telescope something out to arm's length and then attaching various other small things to it. It was probably the squad cars and their garish lights at the curb that caused so many other cars on Huron Ave. to slow down or even pull over to see if there'd been a death or an arrest, forcing one of the officers to spend his time trying to control traffic and keep cars moving so that the avenue remained passable. It was an older African-American woman who'd been one of 40

the very first pedestrians to stop and look up and was now using broad motions of all four limbs to report or re-create for a policeman all she had witnessed up to the present who'd paused to ask whether to the officer's knowledge the strangely costumed figure's climb could possibly be a licensed stunt for a feature film or commercial television or cable program, and this was when it occurred to some of the other spectators that the lithe figure's climb was conceivably being filmed from the upper stories of one of the other commercial skyscrapers on the street, and that there might in particular be cameras, film crews, and/or celebrities in the tall gray vertiginously flèched older building directly opposite 1101 E. Huron's north facet; and a certain percentage of the crowd's rear turned around and began craning and scanning windows on that building's south side, none of which were open, although this signified nothing because by City Ordinance 920-1247(d) no commercially zoned structure could possess, nor authorize by terms of lease or contract any lessee to possess, operable windows above the third floor. It was not clear whether this older opposite building's glass was One Way or not because the angle of the late-morning sun, now almost directly overhead in the street's slot of sky, caused blinding reflections in that older spired building's windows, some of which brilliant reflections the windows focused and cast almost like spotlights against the surface of the original building which even now the masked figure with the tank and tail and real or imitation semiautomatic weapon — for verily that is what the new item was, slung over the subject's back at a slight transverse angle so that its unfolded stock rested atop the small blue-and-white tank for what might even conceivably be a miniaturized combat-grade gas mask or even maybe Jaysus help us all if it was a flamethrower or Clancy-grade biochemical aerosol nebulizer gizmo thing, the officer with the Dept.-issue high-x binoculars reported, using a radio that was somehow attached like an epaulette to his uniform's shoulder so that he had only to cock his head and touch his left shoulder to be able to confer with other officers, whose blueand-white bored-out Montegos' sirens could be heard approaching from what sounded like Loyola U. — continued to scale, namely 1101 E. Huron, so that squares and small rectangles and parallelograms

of high-intensity light swam around him and lit up the sixteenthor seventeenth-floor window he was even then scaling with nerveless ease, the fully automatic-looking M16's barrel and folded stock inserted through several presewn loops along the left shoulder of his GoreTex top so that he retained full use of his left arm and hand's cup as he scaled the window and sat once again on the next story's ledge, the long nozzle arranged beneath him and only a couple feet of it protruding from between his legs and wobbling stiffly in the wind. Reflected light aswim all around him. A group of pigeons or doves on the ledge of the adjoining window was disturbed and took flight across the street and reassembled on a ledge at the exact same height on the opposite building. The figure appeared now to have removed some sort of radio, cellular phone, or handheld recording device from his mountaineer's apron and to be speaking into it. At no time did he look down or in any way acknowledge the sidewalk and street's crowds, their shouts and cheers as each window was traversed, or the police cruisers which by this time were parked at several different angles on the street, all emitting complex light, with two more squad cars now blocking off E. Huron at the major intersections on either side.

A C.F.D. truck arrived and firefighters in heavy slickers exited and began to mill about for no discernible reason. There were also no evident media vans or rigs or mobile cameras at any time, which struck the savvier onlookers as further evidence that the whole thing could be some sort of licensed prearranged corporate promotion or stunt or ploy. A few arguments ensued, mostly good-natured and inhibited by the number of auditors nearby. A stiff new ground-level breeze carried the smell of fried foods. A foreign couple arrived and began to hawk T-shirts whose silkscreen designs had nothing to do with what was going on. A detachment of police and firefighters entered 1101's north facet in order to establish a position on the building's roof, the firemen's axes and hats causing a small panic in the Gap and causing a jam-up at the building's revolving door that left a man in Oakley sunglasses slumped and holding his chest or side. Several people in the crowd's rear cried out and pointed at what they claimed had been

movement and/or the flash of lenses on the roof of the opposite building. There was counterspeculation in the crowd that the whole thing was maybe designed to maybe only look like a media stunt and that the weapon the figure was now sitting uncomfortably back against was genuine and that the idea was for him to look as eccentric as possible and climb high enough to draw a large crowd and then to spray automatic fire indiscriminately down into the crowd. The driverless autos along the curb at both sides of the street now had tickets under their windshield wipers. A helicopter could be heard but not seen from the canyon or crevasse the commercial structures made of the street below. One or two fingers of cirrus were now in the sky overhead. Some people were eating vendors' pretzels and brats, the wind whipping at the paper napkins tucked into their collars. One officer held a bullhorn but seemed unable to activate it. Someone had stepped backward onto the steep curb and injured his ankle or foot; a paramedic attended him as he lay on his topcoat and stared straight upward at the tiny figure, who by this time had gained his feet and was splayed beneath the seventeenth/eighteenth floor, appearing to just stay there, attached to the window and waiting.

Terry Schmidt's father had served in the US armed forces and been awarded a field commission at the age of just 21 and received both the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, and the decorated veteran's favorite civilian activity in the whole world — you could tell by his face as he did it — was polishing his shoes and the buttons on his five sportcoats, which he did every Sunday afternoon, and the placid concentration on his face as he knelt on newspaper with his tins and shoes and chamois had formed a large unanalyzable part of the young Terry Schmidt's determination to make a difference in the affairs of men someday in the future. Which was now: time had indeed slipped by, just as in popular songs, and revealed Schmidt fils to be neither special nor exempt.

In the last two years Team  $\Delta y$  had come to function as what the advertising industry called a Captured Shop: the firm occupied a contractual space somewhere between a subsidiary of Reesemeyer Shannon Belt and an outside vendor. Under Alan Britton's stewardship, Team  $\Delta y$  had joined the industry's trend toward Captured consolidation and

reinvented itself as more or less the research arm of Reesemeyer Shannon Belt Advertising. Team  $\Delta y$ 's new status was designed both to limit R.S.B.'s paper overhead and to maximize the tax advantages of Focus Group research, which now could be both billed to Client and written off as an R&D subcontracting expense. There were substantial salary and benefit advantages to Team  $\Delta y$  (which was structured as an employee-owned S corporation under U.S.T.C. §1361-1379) as well. The major disadvantage, from Terry Schmidt's perspective, was that there were no mechanisms in place by which a Captured Shop employee could make the horizontal jump to Reesemeyer Shannon Belt itself, within whose MROP division the firm's marketing research strategies were developed, thereby enabling someone like T. E. Schmidt to conceivably have at least some sort of impact on actual research design and analysis. Within Team  $\Delta y$ , Schmidt's only possible advancement was to the Senior Research Director position now occupied by the same swarthy, slick, gladhanding émigré (with college-age children and a wife who always appeared about to ululate) who had made Darlene Lilley's professional life so difficult over the past year; and of course even if the Team did vote in such a way as to pressure Alan Britton to ease Robert Awad out and then even if (as would be unlikely to say the least) the thunderingly unexceptional Terry Schmidt were picked and successfully pitched to the rest of Team  $\Delta y$ 's upper echelon as Awad's replacement, the SRD position really involved nothing more meaningful than the supervision of sixteen coglike Field Researchers just like Schmidt himself, plus conducting desultory orientations for new hires, plus of course overseeing the compression of TFGs' data into various statistically differentiated totals, all of which was done on commercially available software and entailed nothing more significant than adding four-color graphs and a great deal of acronym-heavy jargon designed to make a survey that any competent tenth-grader could have conducted appear sophisticated and meaningful. Although there were also of course the preliminary lunches and golf and gladhanding with R.S.B.'s MROPs, and the actual three-hour presentation of Field Research results in the larger and more expensively appointed conference room upstairs where Awad, his mute and spectrally thin A/V technician, and one chosen member of the relevant Field Team presented the numbers and graphs and helped facilitate R.S.B.'s MROPs and Creative and Marketing heads' brainstorming on the research's implications for an actual campaign that in truth R.S.B. was already at this stage far too heavily invested in to do anything more than modify some of the more ephemeral or decorative elements of. (Neither Schmidt nor Darlene Lilley had ever been selected to assist Bob Awad in these PCAs\*, for reasons that in Schmidt's case seemed all too clear.) Meaning, in other words, without anyone once ever saying it outright, that Team  $\Delta y$ 's real function was to present to Reesemeyer Shannon Belt test data that R.S.B. could then turn around and present to Client as confirming the soundness of the very OCC† that R.S.B. had already billed Client in the millions for and couldn't turn back from even if the actual test data turned out to be resoundingly grim or unpromising, which it was Team  $\Delta y$ 's unspoken real job to make sure never happened, a job that Team  $\Delta y$  accomplished simply by targeting so many different Focus Groups and foci and by varying the format and context of the tests so baroquely and by facilitating the different TFGs in so many different modalities that in the end it was child's play to selectively weight and rearrange the data in pretty much whatever way R.S.B.'s MROP division wanted, and so in reality Team  $\Delta y$ 's function was not to provide information or even a statistical approximation of information but rather its entropic converse, a cascade of random noise meant to so befuddle the firm and its Client that no one would feel anything but relief at the decision to proceed with an OCC which in the present case the Mister Squishy Company itself was already so heavily invested in that it couldn't possibly turn away from and would in fact have fired R.S.B. if its testing had indicated any substantive problems with, because Mister Squishy's parent company had very strict normative ratios for R&D marketing costs (= RDM) to production volume (= PV), ratios based on the Cobb-Douglas Function whereby  $\frac{\text{RDM}(x)}{\text{PV}(x)}$  must, after all the pro forma hemming and having,

<sup>\* =</sup> Presentations to Client Agency

<sup>† =</sup> Overall Campaign Concept

be  $0 < \frac{\text{RDM}(x)}{\text{PV}(x)} < 1$ , a textbook formula which any first-term MBA student had to memorize in Management Stats, which was in fact where North American Soft Confections Inc.'s CEO had almost surely learned it, and nothing inside the man or at any of the four large US corporations he had helmed since taking his degree from Wharton in 1968 had changed; no no all that ever changed were the jargon and mechanisms and gilt rococo with which everyone in the whole huge blind grinding mechanism conspired to convince each other that they could figure out how to give the paying customer what they could prove he could be persuaded to believe he wanted, without anybody once ever saying stop a second or pointing out the absurdity of calling what they were doing collecting information or ever even saying aloud — not even Team Δy's Field Researchers over drinks at Beyers' Market Pub on E. Ohio together on Fridays before going home alone to stare at the phone — what was going on or what it meant or what the simple truth was. That it made no difference. None of it. One R.S.B. Senior Creative Director with his little gray ponytail had been at one upscale café someplace and had ordered one trendy dessert on the same day he was making notes for one Creative Directors' brainstorming session on what to pitch to the Subsidiary PD boys over at North American Soft Confections, and had had one idea, and one or two dozen pistons and gears already machined and set in place in various craggy heads at R.S.B. and North American's Mister Squishy had needed only this one single spark of  $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ -inspired passion from an SCD whose whole inflated rep had been based on a concept equating toilet paper with clouds and helium-voiced teddy bears and all manner of things innocent of shit in some abstract Ur-consumer's mind in order to set in movement a machine of which no one single person now — least of all the squishy Mr. T. E. Schmidt, forgetting himself enough almost to pace a little before the conference table's men and toying dangerously with the idea of dropping the whole involved farce and simply telling them the truth — could be master.

Not surprisingly, the marketing of a conspicuously high-sugar, high-cholesterol, Shadow-class snack cake had presented substantially more challenges than the actual kitchenwork of development and production.

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As with most Antitrend products, the Felony! had to walk a fine line between a consumer's resentment of the Healthy Lifestyles trend's ascetic pressures and the guilt and unease any animal instinctively felt when it left the herd — or at least perceived itself as leaving the herd — and the successful Shadow product was one that managed to position and present itself in such a way as to resonate with both these inner drives at once, the facilitator told the Focus Group, using slight changes in intonation and facial expression to place scare quotes around herd. The perfectly proportioned mixture of shame, delight, and secret (literally: closeted) alliance in the Ericson-D.D.B.N. spots was a seminal example of this sort of multivalent pitch, Terry Schmidt said (tweaking Awad again and letting the small secret thrill of it almost make him throw a puckish wink at the smoke detector), as too was Jolt Cola's brand name's double entendre of a 'jolt' both to the individual nervous system and to the tyranny of dilute and innocuous soft drinks in an era of trendy self-denial, as well of course as Jolt's well-packaged can's iconic face with its bulging crossed eyes and electricized hair and ghastly fluorescent computer-room pallor — for Jolt had worked to position itself as a recreational beverage for digital-era phreaks and dweebs and had managed at once to acknowledge, parody, and evect the computer-dweeb as an avatar of individual rebellion.

Schmidt had also adopted one of Darlene Lilley's signature physical MAMs when addressing TFGs, which was sometimes to put one foot forward with his or her weight on its heel and to lift the remainder of that foot slightly and rotate it idly back and forth along the x axis with the planted heel serving as pivot, which in Lilley's case was slightly more effective and appealing because a burgundy high heel formed a better pivot than a cocoa-brown cordovan loafer. Sometimes Schmidt had dreams in which he was one of a Focus Group's consumers being led by Darlene Lilley as she crossed her sturdy ankles or rotated her 9DD high heel back and forth along the floor's x axis, and she had her eyeglasses off, which were small and oval with tortoiseshell-design frames, and was holding them in a MAM such that one of the glasses' delicate arms was in very close proximity to her mouth, and the whole dream was Schmidt and the rest of the Focus Group for the nameless

product hovering right on the edge of watching Darlene actually put the glasses' arm inside her mouth, which she came incrementally closer and closer to doing without ever quite seeming to be aware of what she was doing or the effect it was having, and the feeling of the dream was that if she ever did actually put the plastic arm in her mouth something very important and/or dangerous would happen, and the ambient unspoken tension of the dream's constant waiting often left Schmidt exhausted by the time he awoke and remembered again who and what he was, opening the lightproof curtains.

In the morning at the sink's mirror shaving sometimes Schmidt as Mr. S. would examine the faint lines beginning to appear and to connect the various dots of pale freckle in meaningless ways on his face, and could envision in his mind's eye the deeper lines and sags and bruised eye-circles of his face's predictable future and imagine the slight changes required to shave his 44-year-old cheeks and chin as he stood in this exact spot ten years hence and checked his moles and nails and brushed his teeth and examined his face and did precisely the same series of things in preparation for the exact same job he had been doing now for eight years, sometimes carrying the vision further all the way and seeing his ravaged lineaments and bloblike body propped upright on wheels with a blanket on its lap against some sundrenched pastel backdrop, coughing. So that even if the almost vanishingly unlikely were to happen and Schmidt did somehow get tagged to replace Robert Awad or one of the other SRDs the only substantive difference would be that he would receive a larger share of Team  $\Delta y$ 's after-tax profits and so would be able to afford a nicer and better-appointed condominium to masturbate himself to sleep in and more of the props and surface pretenses of someone truly important but really he wouldn't be important, he would make no more substantive difference in the larger scheme of things than he did now. The almost-35-yearold Terry Schmidt had very nearly nothing left anymore of the delusion that he differed from the great herd of the common run of men, not even in his despair at not making a difference or in the great hunger to have an impact that in his late twenties he'd clung to as evidence that even though he was emerging as sort of a failure the grand ambitions against which he judged himself a failure were somehow exceptional and superior to the common run's - not anymore, since now even the phrase Make a Difference had become a platitude so familiar that it was used as the mnemonic tag in low-budget Ad Council PSAs for Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the United Way, which used Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Making a Difference in Your Community respectively, with B.B./B.S. even acquiring the telephonic equivalent of DIF-FER-ENCE to serve as their Volunteer Hotline number in the metro area. And Schmidt, then just at the cusp of 30, at first had rallied himself into what he knew was a classic consumer delusion, namely that the B.B./B.S. tagline and telephone number were a meaningful coincidence and directed somehow particularly at him, and had called and volunteered to act as Big Brother for a boy age 11-15 who lacked significant male mentors and/or positive role models, and had sat through the two three-hour trainings and testimonials with what was the psychological equivalent of a rigid grin, and the first boy he was assigned to as a Big Brother had worn a tiny black leather jacket with fringe hanging from the shoulders' rear and a red handkerchief tied over his head and was on the tilted porch of his lowincome home with two other boys also in expensive little jackets, and all three boys had without a word jumped into the back seat of Schmidt's car, and the one whose photo and heartbreaking file identified him as Schmidt's mentorless Little Brother had leaned forward and tersely uttered the name of a large shopping mall in Aurora some distance west of the city proper, and after Schmidt had driven them on the nightmarish I-88 tollway all the way to this mall and been directed to pull over at the curb outside the main entrance the three boys had all jumped out without a word and run inside, and after waiting at the curb for over three hours without their returning — and after two \$40 tickets and a tow-warning from the Apex MegaMall Security officer, who was completely indifferent to Schmidt's explanation that he was here in his capacity as a Big Brother and was afraid to move the car for fear that his Little Brother would come out expecting to see Schmidt's car right where he and his friends had left it and would be traumatized

if it appeared to have vanished just like so many of the other adult male figures in his case file's history — Schmidt had driven home; and subsequent telephone calls to the Little Brother's home were not returned. The second 11–15-year-old boy he was assigned to was not at home either of the times Schmidt had come for his appointment to mentor him, and the woman who answered the apartment door — who purported to be the boy's mother although she was of a completely different race than the boy in the file's photo, and who the second time had appeared intoxicated — claimed to have no knowledge of the appointment or the boy's whereabouts or even the last time she'd seen him, after which Schmidt had finally acknowledged the delusory nature of the impact that the Ad Council's PSAs had made on him and had — being now 30 and thus older, wiser, more indurate — given up and gone on about his business.

In his spare time Terry Schmidt read, watched satellite television, collected rare and uncirculated US coins, ran discriminant analyses of TFG statistics on his Apple PowerBook, worked in the small home laboratory he'd established in his condominium's utility room, and power-walked on a treadmill in a line of eighteen identical treadmills on the mezzanine-level CardioDeck of a Bally Total Fitness franchise just east of the Prudential Center on Mies van der Rohe Way, where he sometimes also used the sauna. Favoring beige, rust, and cocoabrown in his professional wardrobe, soft and round-faced and vestigially freckled, with a helmetish haircut and a smile that always looked pained no matter how real the cheer, Terry Schmidt had been described by one of Scott R. Laleman's toadies in Technical Processing as looking like a '70s yearbook photo come to life. Agency MROPs whom Terry'd worked with for years had trouble recalling his name, and always greeted him with an exaggerated bonhomie designed to obscure this fact. Ricin and botulinus were about equally easy to cultivate. Actually they were both quite easy indeed, assuming you were comfortable in a laboratory environment and exercised due care in your procedures. Schmidt himself had personally overheard some of the other young men in Technical Processing refer to Darlene Lilley as

*Lurch* or *Herman* and make fun of her height and physical solidity, and had been outraged enough to have come very very close indeed to confronting them directly.

41.6% of what Schmidt mistakenly believed were the TFG's twelve true sample consumers were presenting with the classic dilated eyes and shiny pallor of low-grade insulin shock as Schmidt announced that he'd decided to 'privately confide' to the men that the product's original proposed trade name had actually been Devils!, a cognomen designed both to connote the snack cake's chocolate-intensive composition and to simultaneously invoke and parody associations of sin, sinful indulgence, yielding to temptation, & c., and that considerable resources had been devoted to developing, refining, and target-testing the product inside various combinations of red-and-black individual wrappers with various cartoonishly demonic incarnations of the familiar Mister Squishy icon, presented here as rubicund and heavy-browed and grinning fiendishly instead of endearingly, before negative test data scrapped the whole strategy. Both Darlene Lilley and Trudi Keener had worked some of these early Focus Groups, which apparently some inträagency political enemy of the Creative Packaging Director at Reesemeyer Shannon Belt who'd pitched the trade name Devils! had used his (meaning the CPD's enemy's) influence with R.S.B.'s MROP coordinator to stock heavily with consumers from downstate IL - a region that as Terry Schmidt knew all too well tended to be Republican and Bible-Beltish — and without going into any of the Medicean intrigues and retaliations that had ended up costing three midlevel R.S.B. executives their jobs and resulted in at least one six-figure settlement to forestall WT\* litigation (which was the only truly interesting part of the story, Schmidt himself believed, jingling a pocket's contents and watching his cordovan rotate slowly from 10:00 to 2:00 and back again as straticulate clouds in the lake's upper atmosphere began to lend the sunlight a pearly cast that the conference room's windows embrowned), the nub was that the stacked Groups' responses to taglines that included Sinfully Delicious, Demon-

<sup>\* =</sup> Wrongful Termination

ically Indulgent, and Why Do You Think It's Called [in red] Temptation?, as well as to video storyboards in which shadowed and voicedistorted figures in hoods supposedly confessed to being regular upstanding citizens and consumers who unbeknownst to anyone 'worshipped the Devil' in 'secret orgies of indulgence,' had been so uniformly extreme as to produce markedly different Taste and Overall Satisfaction aggregates for the snack cakes on IRPs and GRDSs completed before and after exposure to the lines and boards themselves, which after much midlevel headrolling and high-level caucuses had resulted in the present Felonies!®, with its milder penal and thus renegade associations designed to offend absolutely no one except maybe anticrime wackos and prison-reform fringes. With the facilitator's stated point being that please let none of those assembled here today doubt that their judgments and responses and the hard evaluative work they had already put in and would shortly plunge into again qua group in the vital GRDS phase were important or were taken very seriously indeed by the folks over at Mister Squishy.

Showing as yet no signs of polypeptide surfeit, a balding blue-eyed 30ish man whose tag's block caps read HANK was staring, from his place at the corner of the conference table nearest Schmidt and the whiteboard, either absently or intently at Schmidt's valise, which was made of a pebbled black synthetic leather material and happened to be markedly wider and squatter than your average-type briefcase or valise, resembling almost more a doctor's bag or computer technician's upscale toolcase. Among the periodicals to which Schmidt subscribed were US News & World Report, Numismatic News, Advertising Age, and the quarterly Journal of Applied Statistics, the last of which was divided into four stacks of three years each and as such supported the sanded pine plank and sodium worklamp that functioned as a laboratory table with various decanters, retorts, flasks, vacuum jars, filters, and Reese-Handey-brand alcohol burners in the small utility room that was separated from Schmidt's condominium's kitchen by a foldable door of louvered enamel composite. Ricin and its close relative abrin are powerful phytotoxins, respectively derived from castor and jequirity beans, whose attractive flowering plants can be purchased at most

commercial nurseries and require just three months of cultivation to yield mature beans, which beans are lima-shaped and either scarlet or a lustrous brown and historically were, Schmidt had gotten that eerie Big Brothers/Big Sisters-like sensation again when he discovered during his careful researches, sometimes employed as rosary beads by medieval flagellants. Castor beans' seed hulls must be removed by soaking 1-4 oz. of the beans in 12-36 oz. of distilled water with 4-6 tablespoons of NaOH or 6-8 ts. of commercial lye (the beans' natural buoyancy requiring here that they be weighted down with marbles, sterilized gravel, or low-value coins combined and tied in an ordinary Trojan condom). After one hour of soaking, the beans can be taken out of solution and dried and the hulls carefully removed by anyone wearing quality surgical gloves. (NB: Ordinary rubber household gloves are too thick and unwieldy for removing castor hulls.) Schmidt had stepby-step instructions stored on both the hard drive and backup disks of his Apple home computer, which possessed a three-hour battery capacity and could itself be set up right there on the pine worktable in order to keep a very precise and time-indexed experimental log, which is one of the absolutely basic principles of proper lab procedure. A blender set on Purée is used to grind the hulled beans plus commercial acetone in a 1:4 ratio. Discard blender after use. Pour castor-andacetone mixture into a covered sterile jar and let stand for 72-96 hours. Then attach a sturdy commercial coffee filter to an identical jar and pour mixture slowly and carefully through filter. You are not decanting; you're after what is being filtered out. Wearing two pairs of surgical gloves and at least two standard commercial filtration masks, use manual pressure to squish as much acetone as possible out of the filter's sediment. Bear down as hard as due caution permits. Weigh the remainder of the filter's contents and place them in a third sterile jar along with × 4 their weight in fresh CH<sub>3</sub>COCH<sub>3</sub>. Repeat standing, filtering, and manual squishing process 3-5 times. The residue at the procedures' terminus will be nearly pure ricin, of which 0.04 mg is lethal if injected directly (note that 9.5–12 times this dose is required for lethality through ingestion). Saline or distilled water can be used to load a 0.4 mg ricin solution in a standard fine-gauge hypodermic injector, available at better pharmacies everywhere under Diabetes Supplies. Ricin requires 24–36 hours to produce initial symptoms of severe nausea, vomiting, disorientation, and cyanosis. Terminal VF and circulatory collapse follow within twelve hours. Note that *in situ* concentrations under 1.5 mg are undetectable by standard forensic reagents.

More than a few among the crowds and police initially used the words sick, sickening, and/or nasty when the tank's deltate nozzle was affixed to the protuberance at the center of the figure's rear end's white-and-navy bullseye design. All such expressions of distaste were silenced by the subsequent inflation. First the bottom and belly and thighs ballooned, forcing the figure out from the window and contorting him slightly to keep his forehead's cup affixed. The airtight Lycra rounded and became shiny. The long-haired man on Dexedrine patted his bicycle's slim rear tire and told the young lady he'd lent the field glasses to that he'd figured all along what they (presumably meaning the little protuberances) were. One shoulder's valve inflated the left arm, the other the right arm, & c., until the figure's entire costume had become large, bulbous, and doughily cartoonish. There was no coherent response from the crowd, however, until a nearly suicidal-looking series of nozzle-to-temple motions from the figure began to fill the head's baggy mask, the crumpled white Mylar at first collapsing slightly to the left and then coming back up erect as it filled with gas, the face's array of patternless lines rounding to resolve into something that produced from 400+ ground-level US adults loud cries of recognition and an almost childlike delight.

... And that the time, Schmidt told the Focus Group, had — probably not at all to their disappointment, he said with a tiny pained smile — that the time had now arrived for them to elect a foreman and for Schmidt himself to withdraw and allow the Focus Group's constituents to take counsel together here in the darkening conference room, to compare their individual responses and opinions of the Taste, Texture, and Overall Satisfaction of *Felonies!* and to try now together to come up with agreed-upon GRDS ratings for same. In some of the fantasies in which he and Darlene Lilley were having high-impact intercourse on the firms' conference tables Schmidt kept finding himself

saying Thank you, oh thank you in rhythm to the undulatory thrusting motions of the coitus, and was unable to stop himself, and couldn't help seeing the confused and then distasteful expression that the rhythmic Oh God, thank yous produced on Darlene Lilley's face even as her glasses fogged and her crosstrainers' heels drummed thunderously on the table's surface, and sometimes it almost wrecked the whole fantasy. If, after time and a reasonable amount of discussion, the Focus Group by chance for whatever reason found that they couldn't get together on a certain specific number to express the whole group's true feelings, Schmidt told them (by this time three of the men actually had their heads down on the table, including the overeccentric UAF, who was also emitting tiny low moans, and Schmidt had decided he was going to give this fellow a very low TFG Performance Rating indeed on the evaluations all Team  $\Delta y$  facilitators had to fill out on UAFs at the end of a research cycle), what he'd ask is that the Focus Group then just go ahead and submit two separate Group Response Data Summaries, one GRDS comprising each of the numbers on which the Focus Group's two opposed camps had settled — there was no such thing as a hung jury in TFG testing, he said with a grin that he hoped wasn't rigid or pained — and that if splitting into even two such subgroups proved unfeasible because one or more of the men at the table felt that neither subgroup's number adequately captured their own individual feelings and preferences, why then if necessary three separate GRDSs should be completed, or four, and so on — but with the overall idea being please keep in mind that Team  $\Delta y$ , Reesemeyer Shannon Belt, and the Mister Squishy Co. were asking for the very lowest possible number of separate GRDS responses an intelligent group of discerning consumers could come up with today. Schmidt in fact had as many as thirteen separate GRDS packets in the manila folder he now held rather dramatically up as he mentioned the GRDS forms, though he removed only one packet from the folder, since there was no point in proactively doing anything to encourage the Focus Group to atomize and not unite. The fantasy would of course have been exponentially better if it were Darlene Lilley who gasped Thank you, thank you in rhythm to the damp lisping slapping sounds, and Schmidt was well aware of this, and of his apparent inability to enforce his preferences even in fantasy. It made him wonder if he even had what convention called a Free Will at all, deep down. Only two of the room's fifteen total males noticed that there had been no hint of distant window-muffled exterior noise in the conference room for quite some time; neither of these two were actual test subjects. Schmidt knew also that by this time — the exordial presentation had so far taken 23 minutes, but it felt, as always, much longer, and even the more upright and insulin-tolerant members' restive expressions indicated that they too were feeling hungry and tired and probably thinking this preliminary background was taking an oppressively long time (when in reality Robert Awad had explicitly told Schmidt that Alan Britton had authorized up to 32 minutes for the putatively experimental Full-Access TFG presentation, and had said that Terry's reputation for relative conciseness and smooth preemption of digressive questions and ephemera was one of the reasons he [meaning R. Awad] had selected Schmidt to facilitate the quote unquote experimental TFG's GRDS phase) - Schmidt also knew that by this time Darlene Lilley's own Focus Group was in camera and deeply into its own GRDS caucus, and that Darlene was thus back in the R.S.B. Research green room making a brisk cup of Lipton tea in the microwave, what she liked to call her grownup shoes off and resting — one perhaps on its burgundy side — with her briefcase and purse beside one of the comfortable chairs opposite the green room's four-part viewing screen, Darlene at this moment facing the microwave and with her great broad back to the door so that Schmidt would have to sigh loudly or cough or jingle his keys as he came down the hall to the green room in order to avoid making her jump and lay her palm against the flounces of her blouse's front by 'com[ing] up behind [her] like that,' as she'd accused him of doing once during the six-month period when SRD Awad really had been coming up stealthily behind her all the time and her own and everyone else's nerves were understandably strung out and on edge. Schmidt would shortly then pour a cup of R.S.B.'s strong sour coffee and join Darlene Lilley and today's so-called experimental project's other two Field Researchers and perhaps one or two silent and very intense

young R.S.B. Market Research interns in the row of cushioned chairs before the screens, Schmidt next to Lilley and somewhat in the shadow of her very tall hair, and Ron Mounce would as always produce a pack of cigarettes, and Trudi Keener would laugh at the way Mounce always made a show of clawing a cigarette desperately out of the pack and lighting it with a tremorous hand, and the fact that neither Schmidt nor Darlene Lilley smoked (Darlene had grown up in a household with heavy smokers and was now allergic) would cause a slight alliance of posture as they both leaned slightly away from the smoke. Schmidt had once swallowed hard in his chair and mentioned the whole smoking issue to Mounce, gallantly claiming the allergy as his own, but since R.S.B. equipped its green room with both ashtrays and exhaust fans and it was eighteen floors down and 100 yards out the Gap's rear service doors into a small cobbled area where people without private offices gathered on breaks to smoke, it wasn't the sort of issue that could really be pressed without appearing either like a militant crank or like someone putting on a show of patronizing chivalry for Darlene, who often crossed her legs ankle-on-knee-style and massaged her instep with both hands as she watched her Focus Group's private deliberations and Schmidt tried to focus on his own TFG. There was never much conversation; the four facilitators were still technically on, ready at any moment to return to their respective groups' conference rooms if the screen showed their foreman moving to press the button that the Groups were told activated an amber signal light.

Team  $\Delta y$  chief Alan Britton, M.S. & J.D., of whom one sensed that no one had ever even once made fun, was an immense and physically imposing man, roughly 6'1" in every direction, with a large smooth shiny oval head in the precise center of which were extremely tiny close-set features arranged in the invulnerably cheerful expression of a man who had made a difference in all he'd ever tried.

In terms of administration there was, of course, the ramified problem of taste and/or texture. Ricin, like most phytotoxins, is exceedingly bitter, which meant that the requisite 0.4 mg must present for ingestion in a highly dilute form. But the dilution seemed even more unpalatable than the ricin itself: injected through the thin wrapper into the 26 × 13 mm ellipse of fondant at the Felony.'s hollow center, the distilled water formed a soggy caustic pocket whose contrast with the deliquescent high-lipid filling itself fairly shouted adulteration. Injection into the moist flourless surrounding cake itself turned an area the size of a 1916 Flowing Liberty Quarter into maltilol-flavored sludge. A promising early alternative was to administer six to eight very small injections in different areas of the Felony! and hope that the subject got all or most of the snack cake down (like Twinkies and Choco-Diles, the Felony! was designed to be a prototypical Three-Biter but also to be sufficiently light and saliva-soluble that an ambitious consumer could get the whole thing into his mouth at once, with predictably favorable consequences for IMPCs\* and concomitant sales volume) before noticing anything amiss. The problem here was that each injection, even with a fine-gauge hypodermic, produced a puncture of .012 mm diameter (median) in the flimsy transpolymer wrapper, and in home tests of individually packaged cakes at average Midwest-New England humidity levels these punctures produced topical staleness/desiccation within 48-72 hours of shelving. (As with all Mister Squishy products, Felonies! were engineered to be palpably moist and to react with salivary ptyalin in such a way as to literally 'melt in the mouth,' qualities established in very early Field tests to be associated with both freshness and a luxe, almost sensual indulgence.†) The botulinus exotoxin,

<sup>\* =</sup> Intervals of Multiple Product Consumption

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>†</sup>The emetic prosthesis consisted of a small polyurethane bag taped under one arm and a tube of ordinary clear plastic running up the rear of the left shoulder blade to emerge from the turtleneck through a small hole just under my chin. The contents of the bag were six of the little cakes mixed with mineral water and real bile harvested by means of OTC emetic first thing this AM. The bag's power cell and vacuum were engineered for one high-volume emission and two or three smaller spurts and dribbles afterward; they were to be activated by a button on my watch. The material wouldn't actually be coming out of my mouth, but it was a safe bet that nobody would be looking closely at the point of exit; people's automatic reaction is to avert their eyes. The C.P.D.'s transmitter's clear earpiece was attached to my glasses. The scope's Mission Time said 24:31 and change, but the presentation already seemed much longer. We were all of us anxious to get down to business already.

being tasteless as well as 97% lethal at .00003 g, was thus rather more practical, though because its source is an anaerobe it must be injected into the direct center of the product's interior filling, and even the microscopic air pocket produced by evacuation of the hypodermic will begin to attack the compound, requiring ingestion within one week for any predictable result. The anaerobic saprophyte Clostridium botulinum is simple to culture, requiring only an airtight home-canning jar in which are placed 2-3 ounces of puréed Aunt Nellie-brand beets, 1-2 oz. of common cube steak, two tablespoons of fresh topsoil from beneath the noisome pine chips under the lollipop hedges flanking the pretentiously gated front entrance to Briarhaven Condominiums, and enough ordinary tap water (chlorinated OK) to fill the jar to the absolute top. This being the only exacting part: the absolute top. If the water's meniscus comes right to the absolute top of the jar's threaded mouth and the jar's lid is properly applied and screwed on very tightly w/ vise and wide-mouth Sears Craftsman pliers so as to allow 0.0% trapped O<sub>2</sub> in the jar, ten days on the top shelf of a dark utility closet will produce a moderate bulge in the jar's lid, and extremely careful double-gloved and -masked removal of the lid will reveal a small tanto-brown colony of Clostridium awash in a green-to-tan penumbra of botulinus exotoxin, which is, to put it delicately, a byproduct of the mold's digestive process, and can be removed in very small amounts with the same hypodermic used for administration. Botulinus had also the advantage of directing attention to defects in manufacturing and/ or packaging rather than product tampering, which would of course heighten the overall industry impact.

The real principle behind running Field research in which some of the TFGs completed only IRPs and some were additionally convened in juridical groups to hammer out a GRDS was to allow Team  $\Delta y$  to provide Reesemeyer Shannon Belt with two distinct and statistically complete sets of market research data, thereby allowing R.S.B. to use and evince whichever data best reinforced the research results that they believed Mister Squishy and N.A.S.C. most wanted to see. Schmidt, Darlene Lilley, and Trudi Keener had all been given tacitly

to understand that this same principle informed the experimental subdivision of today's TFG juries into so-called No-Access and Full-Access groups, which latter were to be given what the members were told was special behind-the-scenes information on the genesis, production, and marketing goals of the product — meaning that, whether retroscenic access to marketing agendas created substantive differences in the Focus Groups' mean GRDSs or not, Team  $\Delta y$  and R.S.B. clearly wanted access to different data fields from which they could pick and choose and use slippery hypergeometric statistical techniques to manipulate as they believed Client saw fit. In the green room, only A. Ronald Mounce, M.S. — who is Robert Awad's personal mentee and probable heir apparent and is also his mole among the Field Researchers, whose water cooler chitchat Mounce distills and reports via special #0302 Field Concerns and Morale forms that Awad's earnest young Administrative Asst. provides Mounce with in the same manila envelopes all the day's IRP and GRDS packets are distributed to Field Teams in — only Mounce has been told privately that the unconventional Full- and No-Access Mister Squishy TFG design is in fact part of a larger field experiment that Alan Britton and Team  $\Delta y$ 's upper management's secret inner executive circle (said circle incorporated by Britton as a §543 Personal Holding Company under the dummy name  $\Delta y^2$  Associates) is conducting for its own sub rosa research into TFGs' probable role in the ever more complex and self-conscious marketing strategies of the future. The basic idea, as Robert Awad saw fit to explain to Mounce on Awad's new catamaran one June day when they were becalmed and drifting four nautical miles off Montrose-Wilson Beach's private jetties, was that as the ever-evolving US consumer became more savvy and discerning about media and marketing and tactics of product positioning — a sudden insight into today's average individual consumer mind which Awad explained he had achieved in his health club's sauna one day after handball when the intellectual property attorney he had just decisively trounced was praising an A.C. Romney-Jaswat campaign for the new carbonated beverage Surge whose tightly demotargeted advertisements everyone had been seeing

all over the metro area that quarter, and remarked (the nude and perspiring intellectual property attorney\* had) that he probably found all these modern youth-targeted ads utilizing jagged guitar riffs and epithets like dude and the whole ideology of rebellion-via-consumption so fascinating and got such a hoot out of them because he himself was so far out of the demographic (using the actual word demographic) for a campaign like Surge's that even as an amateur he found himself disinterestedly analyzing the ads' strategies and pitches and appreciating them more like pieces of art or fine pastry than like mere ads, then had (meaning the attorney had, right there in the sauna, wearing only plastic thongs and a towel wrapped Sikh-style around his head, according to Awad) proceeded casually to deconstruct the strategies and probable objectives of the Surge campaign with such acuity that it was almost as if the fellow had somehow been right there in the room at A.C. Romney-Jaswat's MROP team's brainstorming and strategy confabs with Team  $\Delta y$ , who as Mounce was of course aware had done some first-stage Focus Group work for A.C.R.-J./Coke on Surge six quarters past before the firm's gradual emigration to R.S.B. as a Captured Shop. Awad, whose knowledge of small craft operation came entirely from a manual he was now using as a paddle, told Mounce that the idea's gist's thrust here involved what was known in the industry as a Narrative (or, 'Story') Campaign and the concept of making some new product's actual marketers' strategies and travails themselves a part of that product's essential Story — as in for historic examples that Chicago's own Keebler Inc.'s hard confections were manufactured by elves in a hollow tree, or that Pillsbury's Green Giant-brand canned and frozen vegetables were cultivated by an actual giant in his eponymous Valley — but with the added narrative twist or hook now of, say for instance, advertising Mister Squishy's new Felony! line as a disastrously costly and laborintensive ultra-gourmet snack cake which had to be marketed by beleaguered legions of nerdy admen under the thumb of, say, a tyrannical

<sup>\*(</sup>who in fact, unbeknownst to Awad, was an old friend and Limited Partnership crony of Alan Britton from way back in the previous decade's Passive-Income Tax Shelter heyday)

mullah-like CEO who was such a personal fiend for luxury-class chocolate that he was determined to push Felonies! into the US market no matter what the cost- or sales-projections, such that (in the proposed campaign's Story) Mister Squishy's advertisers had to force Team Δy to manipulate and cajole Focus Groups into producing just the sort of quote unquote 'objective' statistical data needed to greenlight the project and get Felonies! on the shelves, all in other words comprising just the sort of arch and tongue-in-cheek pseudo-behind-the-scenes Story designed to appeal to urban or younger consumers' self-imagined savvy about marketing tactics and 'objective' data and to flatter their sense that in this age of metastatic spin and trend and the complete commercialization of every last thing in their world they were unprecedentedly ad-savvy and discerning and canny and well nigh impossible to manipulate by any sort of clever multimillion-dollar marketing campaign. This was, as of the second quarter of 1995, a fairly bold and unconventional ad concept, Awad conceded modestly over Ron Mounce's cries of admiration and excitement, tossing (Mounce did) another cigarette over the catamaran's side to hiss and bob forever instead of sinking; and Awad further conceded that obviously an enormous amount of very carefully controlled research would have to be done and analyzed in all sorts of hypergeometric ways before they could even conceive of possibly jumping ship and starting their own R. Awad & Subordinates agency and pitching the idea to various farsighted companies — certain of the US Internet's new startups, with their young and self-perceivedly renegade top management, looked like a promising market — yes to various forward-looking companies that craved a fresh, edgy, cynicism-friendly corporate image, rather like Subaru's in the previous decade, or also for example FedEx and Wendy's in the era when Sedelmaier's own local crew had come out of nowhere to rule the industry. Whereas in point of fact none of what Robert Awad had brought his mentee four miles out onto the lake to whisper in Mounce's big pink ear was true or even in any sense real except as the agreed-upon cover narrative to be fed to select Team  $\Delta y$ SRDs and Field Researchers as part of the control conditions for the really true Field experiment, which Alan Britton and Scott R. Laleman

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(there was really no §543-structured  $\Delta y^2$  Associates; that little fiction was part of the cover narrative that Britton had fed to Bob Awad, who unbeknownst to him [= Awad] was already being gradually eased out in favor of Mrs. Lilley, who Laleman said was a whiz on both Systat and HTML, and on whom [= Darlene Lilley] Britton had had his eye ever since he'd sent Awad around with covert instructions to behave in such a way as to test for faultlines in Field Team morale and the girl'd shown such an extraordinary blend of personal stones and political aplomb in defusing Awad's stressors) so but yes which field experiment Britton and his mentee Laleman had been told by no less a personage than T. Cordell ('Ted') Belt himself was designed to produce data on the way(s) certain received ideas of market research's purposes affected the way Field Researchers facilitated their Targeted Focus Groups' GRDS phase and thus influenced the material outcome of the TFGs' in camera deliberations and GRDSs. This internal experiment was the second stage of a campaign, Britton had later told Laleman over nearzeppelin-sized cigars in his inner office, to finally after all this time start bringing US marketing research into line with the realities of modern hard science, which had proved long ago (science had) that the presence of an observer affects any process and thus by clear implication that even the tiniest, most ephemeral details of a Field test's setup can impact the resultant data. The ultimate objective was to eliminate all unnecessary random variables in those Field tests, and of course by your most basic managerial Ockham's Razorblade this meant doing away as much as possible with the human element, the most obvious of these elements being the TFG facilitators, namely Team  $\Delta y$ 's nerdy beleaguered Field Researchers, who now, with the coming digital era of abundant data on whole markets' preferences and patterns available via cybercommerce links, were soon going to be obsolete (the Field Researchers were) anyway, Alan Britton said. A passionate and assuasive rhetor, Britton liked to draw invisible little illustrations in the air with his cigar's glowing tip as he spoke. The mental image Scott Laleman associated with Alan Britton was of an enormous macadamia nut with a tiny little face painted on it. Laleman did unkind impersonations of Britton's speech and gestures for some

of the boys in Technical Processing when he was sure Mr. B. was nowhere around. Because the whole thing from soup to nuts could soon be done via computer network, as Britton said he was sure he didn't have to sell Laleman on. Scott Laleman didn't really even like cigars. Meaning the coming www-dot-slash-hypercybercommerce thing, which there'd already been countless professional seminars on and all of US marketing and advertising and related support industries were terribly excited about. But where most agencies still saw the coming www primarily as just a new, fifth venue\* for high-impact ads, part of your more forward-looking Reesemeyer Shannon Belt-type vision for the coming era involved finding ways to exploit cybercommerce's staggering research potential as well. Undisplayed little tracking codes could be designed to tag and follow each consumer's  $\mathbf{w}^3$  interests and spending patterns — here Laleman once again told Alan Britton what these algorithms were commonly called and averred that he personally knew how to design them; he of course did not tell Britton that he had already secretly helped design some very special little tracking algorithms for A.C. Romney-Jaswat & Assoc.'s sirenic Chloe Jaswat and that two of these quote unquote Cookies were even at that moment nested deep within Team Δy's SMTP/POP protocols. Britton said that Focus Groups and even *n*-sized test markets could be assembled abstractly via ANOVAs<sup>†</sup> on consumers' known patterns, that the TFG vetting was built right in - as in e.g. who showed an interest? who bought the product or related products and from which cybervendor via which link thing? — that not only would there be no voir dire and no archaic per diem expenses but even the unnecessary variable of consumers even knowing they were part of any sort of market test was excised, since a consumer's subjective awareness of his identity as a test subject instead of as a true desire-driven consumer had always been one

<sup>\*(</sup>venues 1–4 historically comprising TV, Radio, Print, and Outdoor [= mainly bill-boards])

 $<sup>^{\</sup>dagger}$  = ANalysis Of VAriance model, a hypergeometric multiple regression technique used by Team  $\Delta y$  to establish the statistical relations between dependent and independent variables in market tests.

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of the distortions that market research swept under the rug because they had no way of quantifying subjective-identity-awareness on any known ANOVA. Focus Groups would go the way of the dodo and bison and art deco. Alan Britton had already had versions of this conversation with Scott Laleman several times; it was part of Britton's way of pumping himself up. Laleman had a vision of himself at a very large and expensive desk, Chloe Jaswat behind him kneading his trapezius muscles, while an enormous macadamia nut sat in a low chair before the desk and pleaded for a livable severance package. Sometimes, on the rare occasions when he masturbated, Laleman's fantasy involved a view of himself, shirtless and adorned with warpaint, standing with his boot on the chest of various supine men and howling upward at what lay outside the fantasy's frame but was probably the moon. That in other words, gesturing with the great red embrous tip, the exact same wonkish technology that Laleman's boys in Technical Processing now used to run analyses on the TFG paperwork could replace the paperwork. No more small-sample testing; no more β-risks or variance-error probabilities or  $1-\alpha$  confidence intervals or human elements or entropic noise. Once, in his junior year at Cornell U., Scott R. Laleman had been in an A.C.S. Dept. lab accident and had breathed halon gas, and for several days he went around campus with a rose clamped in his teeth, and tried to tango with anyone he saw, and insisted everybody all call him The Magnificent Enriqué, until several of his fraternity brothers finally all ganged up and knocked some sense back into him, but a lot of people thought he was still never quite the same after the halon thing. For now, in Belt and Britton's forward-looking vision, the market becomes its own test. Terrain = Map. Everything encoded. And no more facilitators to muddy the waters by impacting the tests in all the infinite ephemeral unnoticeable infinite ways human beings always kept impacting each other and muddying the waters. Team  $\Delta y$ would become 100% tech-driven, abstract, its own Captured Shop. All they needed was some hard study data showing unequivocally that human facilitators made a difference, that variable elements of their appearance and manner and syntax and/or even small personal tics of individual personality or attitude affected the Focus Groups' findings.

Something on paper, with all the Systat t's crossed and i's dotted and even maybe yes a high-impact full-color graph — for these were professional statisticians, after all, the Field Researchers; they knew the numbers didn't lie; if they saw that the data entailed their own subtraction they'd go quietly, some probably even offering to resign, for the good of the Team. Plus then also Laleman pointed out that the study data'd also come in handy if some of them tried to fight it or squeeze Team  $\Delta y$  for a better severance by threatening some kind of bullshit WT suit. He could almost feel the texture of Mr. B.'s sternum under his heel. Not to mention (said Britton, who sometimes then held the cigar like a dart and jabbed it at the air when stipulating or refining a point) that not all would need to go. The Field men. That some could be kept. Transferred. Retrained to work the machines, to follow the Cookies and run the Systat codes and sit there while it all compiled. The rest would have to go. It was a rough business; Darwin's tagline still fit. Britton sometimes addressed Scott Laleman as Laddie or Boyo, but of course never once as The Magnificent Enriqué. Mr. B. had absolutely 0% knowledge of what and who Scott R. Laleman really was inside, as an individual, with a very special and above-average destiny, Laleman felt. He had practiced his smile a great deal, both with and w/o rose. Britton said that the sub rosa experiments' stressors would, as always in nature and hard science, determine survival. Fitness. As in who fit the new pattern. Versus who made too much difference, see, and where, when push came to shove there in camera. This was all artful bullshit. Britton poked glowing holes in the air above the desk. To see, he said he meant, how the facilitators reacted to unplanned stimuli, how they responded to their Focus Groups' own reactions. All they needed were the stressors. Nested, high-impact stimuli. Shake them up. Rattle the cage, he said, watch what fell out. This was all really what was known in the game as Giving Someone Enough Rope. The big man leaned back, his smile both warm and expectant. Inviting the Boyo he'd chosen to mentor to brainstorm with him on some possible stressors right here and now. As in with Britton himself, to flesh out the needed tests. No time like now. Scott Laleman felt a kind of vague latent dread as the big man made a show of putting out his Fuente. A chance to step up to the plate with the big dogs, get a taste of real frontlines creative action. Right here and now. A chance for  $\Delta y$ 's golden boy to strut his stuff. Impress the boss. Run something up the rampant pole. Anything at all. Spontaneous flow. To brainstorm. The trick was not to think or edit, just let it all fly.\* The big man counted down from five and put one hand to his ear and came down with the other hand to point at Scott Laleman as if to signal You're On the Air, his eyes now two nailheads and tiny mouth turned down. The finger had something dark's remains in the rim around its nail. Laleman sat there smiling at it, his mind a great flat blank white screen.

<sup>\*</sup>Britton knew all about Laleman trying to jew him out to A.C. Romney–Jaswat; who did the smug puppy think he was dealing with; Alan S. Britton had been contending and surviving when this kid was still playing with his little pink toes.

## UNMONUMENTAL THE OBJECT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In association with





## by Massimiliano Gioni

The century had barely begun when its foundations started to tremble. The millennium opened with the sound of rubble falling to the ground, smoke enveloping the city. This new century began in a ruin.

The Romans would knock the emperors' heads off their busts, erase their names from the inscriptions; their sculptures were taken to pieces.

The other founding image of this short century is that of a sculpture being dragged down from its plinth. All around it, a few hundred people are dancing and celebrating, ignoring that such a vision is a presage of more devastation to come.

Traditionally, sculpture has been the territory where permanence is celebrated. The history of sculpture overlaps and intersects with that of the funerary monument, where an effigy is frozen to preserve forever a person's features or memory. From Etruscan tombstones to the countless memorials celebrating the unknown soldiers of last century's wars, sculpture entertained more than a dangerous liaison with the realm of death: it was a substitute for life, a form of placebo. That's why sculptures were supposed to be solid, even indestructible. Stone, bronze, marble - the history of sculpture is that of a bet against time. Monuments remind us of our past, but they aspire to challenge the future.

The shock of modern art finds one of its strongest visual metaphors in the deposition of the sculptural object from its pedestal or, better yet, in the disappearance of the pedestal as it gets absorbed by the sculpture itself. Modernist sculpture depicts its own autonomy; the lineage that ideally links Constantin Brancusi's Endless Column to a Donald Judd cube is represented by a perfect, self-enclosed form in which sculpture and pedestal become one thing. It is certainly not a coincidence that in the opening essay of her fundamental Passages in Modern Sculpture Rosalind Krauss recalls the first scene of Sergei Eisenstein's film October in which the insurgent crowd topples the statue of Nicholas II, Czar of Russia. Revolutions have always had an antagonistic relationship to sculpture. The word "vandalism" itself dates back to 1794 when, during the French Revolution, the Republican Army defaced monuments and paintings in a resurgence of what the Romans used to call damnatio memoriae - the removal of remembrance, the erasure of any sign that



Destruction of the Vendôme Column, Paris, 1871

would refer to the powers of the status quo. Almost a hundred years later, during another revolution, the Paris Commune, a painter named Gustave Courbet demanded the elimination of the Vendôme column because it celebrated a mythology of war and conquest.

Two nearly identical pictures of Stalin. In one of the photographs Commissar Nikolai Yezhov has vanished, retouched after his fall from favor and execution in 1940.

Modernist sculpture explored the disappearance of the monument, but only to generate a new form of secular monumentality based on the same values of unity, integrity and solidity that pervaded the language of commemorative sculpture. Even when it entered the so-called "expanded field," sculpture maintained a monumental ambition. The scale of Land Art is simply colossal and measures its duration according to geological time. It competes with that ageless dimension one attributes to the archetypes of monumentality, from Stonehenge to the pyramids. While radically different in formal terms, the grammar of minimalist sculpture is complementary to the logic governing earthworks; it aims to attain a sense of timelessness. Minimalism conquers that almost immortal purity we associate with monuments, and it does so by means of an extreme, artificial look or through the obvious dullness of industrial materials. Either way, it comes across as assertive, almost inevitable, and thus monumental.

More recently, the practice of installation art has created immersive environments that pulverize any sense of unity. Still, in its interconnected openness, multiplicity of references and chaotic embrace of commodities and objects of desire, installation art creates experiences imbued with the same grandiosity associated with monumental sculpture. It is not accidental that the triumph of installation art has run parallel to that of an economy of spectacles and short attention spans. Installation art reflects the bombardment of data that shapes the mature phase of the information society. It describes the ecstasy of communication, the sublime realization of being just a knot in an ever-expanding flux of instant connections across the globe.

Instead, today's sculpture seems to describe a much more modest space, an environment that is within arm's reach, with no partitions or pedestals, a sculpture of proximity that is at the same time reassuring and threatening because it dwells in a place that is intimate, even promiscuous. If we were to follow the signals that have accompanied the opening of this new century, we might conclude that we have come to live in an age that defines itself by the disappearance of monuments and the erasure of symbols - a headless century. Thus, it should come as no surprise that this first decade of the twenty-first century produced a sculpture of fragments, a debased, precarious, trembling form that we have called unmonumental.

In fact, the emergence of this sculptural language has been rather spontaneous and disorderly, and it has only recently coalesced into a more recognizable pattern. It doesn't mark a generational turn, nor a compact movement, but it has gathered a new, stronger momentum with a group of artists who began exhibiting at the turn of this century. This aesthetic is not so much a style but rather an "attitude," as curator Anne Ellegood appropriately noted in "The Uncertainty of Objects and Ideas," her 2006 exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. It is a set of strategies and tensions, a fluid definition of sculpture that understands itself not as a self-sufficient, complete form but rather as a receptacle, an intersection of disparate materials and images. Such an impetus has resurfaced various times in the course of history, but most recently it has been invested with a new sense of urgency.

Recuperating the tradition of the assemblage and the prehensile alertness of collage, today's sculpture seems to be less engaged in interrogating its own status than it is overexcited by the idea of annexing the whole world to its own body. Even the use of the word 'sculpture" in this context is, to a certain extent, generic and almost careless, because these new objects clearly defy the traditional limits of sculptural form as they extend to incorporate found materials, artificial objects, second-hand images or, more simply, waste. They are too intricate and interconnected to be just sculptures in the traditional sense, but they are also clearly arranged around a center. They are too well put together to turn into installations or scattered forms. In their very physical appearances, today's sculptures seem to announce an almost schizophrenic division between the desire to dissolve into the world and the need to fortify their own borders. In this indecision, the sculptures of today might resemble the state of paranoia that we live in as we stand divided between carrying out a new war to conquer new territory or, instead, retreating and carefully protecting our own ground.

It might be an art of war, just like forty years ago. Mario Merz's Giap Igloo still sounds like a frightening premonition:
"If the enemy masses his forces, he loses ground; if he scatters, he loses strength."

It is an art of contingency that traces a new lineage in which the pauperism of Arte Povera is rediscovered but tuned into a society that is far from poor. The work of many sculptors at the beginning of this new century, in fact, depicts a society that is so dramatically

suffocating under the weight of toxic waste that it is now forced to turn garbage into an art form.

And yet it is not a realm of artificiality that these sculptures inhabit. It's not Claes Oldenburg's "39 cents art," nor Rem Koolhaas's "Junkspace," even though both of these visions are quite relevant. There is something slightly organic to the way these sculptures grow and expand, like twisted branches and tortured trees. The forms of this twenty-first-century sculpture evoke a kind of urban vegetation; they grow like weeds or like the strange, mutant flora that mysteriously spring up in community gardens, where the natural and the artificial slowly come to resemble one another. The botanic equivalent of today's sculpture is not only the good old rhizome, even though Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor still applies to the complex and convoluted geometries invented by many of the artists in this book. As a matter of fact, a much more accurate description might be found in the immortal lyrics of the saccharine pop song "Spanish Harlem," as this kind of sculpture does seem to be "growing in the street, right through the concrete." Too bad this new sculpture is not usually "soft sweet and dreaming," as the Spanish rose used to be, but rather quite upset and up yours.

Merz, again: "If the form disappears, its roots will be eternal."

Irony aside, the reference to Harlem is of crucial importance because it leads us straight to the work of David Hammons, whose influence is easily detectable in many works by younger artists. Today, Hammons seems to be appreciated less for his tactics of semiotic confusion and more for his incredible plastic talent, for his Midas touch that almost literally turns the cheapest expressions of street culture into gold. Besides this natural gift for finding a form even in the most degraded of materials, Hammons's sculpture has proven extremely influential for its sociability. Like the work of many younger artists, Hammons's objects always seem to carry the traces of some kind of social activity. They are never self-enclosed artifacts; instead they strongly participate in a multitude of cultural references, in a polyphony of influences and appropriations.

This kind of social sculpture — light years away from Joseph Beuys's mirage of a collective creativity — is not interested in bringing people together. It has nothing to do with relational aesthetics. On the contrary, it is fascinated by the way cultures and groups define themselves through traumas and fights. That's why some of these sculptures might resemble the shape of totems or primitive emblems. They are not monuments; they are insignia for urban conflicts and neo-tribal wars.

This kind of metropolitan hostility finds another important precedent in the work of Cady Noland, who — as with David Hammons —  $\frac{1}{2}$ 

has influenced and transformed the way we think of sculpture today. Noland's fences, junk baskets and crude assemblages describe a space where domestic violence overlaps with social unrest and class rebellion. The way Noland inserts popular icons and national symbols in her work is yet another example of the collective ghosts that agitate this kind of sculpture.

The spontaneous collage of thousands of flowers, photos, flyers, notes, letters and candles in front of Kensington Palace. Our new monuments are temporary and fragile.

Describing at the same time a site of remembrance and a space of perennial conflict, the work of Cady Noland paves the way to a new form of sculpture that, in spite of its precariousness, can be quite angry and aggressive. The works of Sarah Lucas, Urs Fischer,

Isa Genzken, Lara Schnitger, Rachel Harrison, Sam Durant, Nate Lowman and Claire Fontaine, each in their own individual way, seem to stem from a badly repressed rage that results in impromptu combinations and nearly barbaric gestures. What might look thrown together is often the result of careful planning, but still the effect is quite brutal. One comes across these works as though stumbling onto the scene of a freshly committed crime. For this is one of the many paradoxes of sculpture today: as much as it is welcoming, open and even permeable to any influence and material coming from the outside, so too is it antagonistic, dangerous and unfriendly, always in your way. At first these objects don't even seem intended for contemplation. evoking instead a sense of latent violence or the trace of some fierce action. They are actually fighting for your attention. They are obstacles and traps.

Fuck Destiny, 2000 Sarah Lucas Sofa bed, fluorescent lights, wood box, light bulbs 39.5 X 65 X 77.5 in 99 x 165 x 19% cm

Our age of asymmetrical conflicts is reflected in sculptures that look like barricades and improvised defense systems. Brought together, some of these sculptures describe a sort of wasteland, the ruins one might encounter near a checkpoint or in a home trashed by a hurricane. It is scavengers' art, or - as the Arte Povera manifesto proclaimed forty years ago - it is art for a new guerrilla warfare. Then again, the reference to the politicized work of the late 1960s is more formal than ideological, as the sculptors who are brought together in this book very rarely wear their politics on their sleeves. Even when they do, as in the case of Sam Durant's urban combines or Lara Schnitger's protest signs, the political stance is often recuperated obliquely through a system of memories and private references. Other times, as in the works of

Carol Bove, Tom Burr or Sarah Lucas, who seem to be — each in very different ways — interested in the politics of desire and gender, one has to look for an ideological position through a set of autobiographic notations. It is not an art of slogans and manifestos but rather of personal struggles.

Even the scale of many of the sculptures collected here suggests a more intimate relationship with the art object. It is a profoundly modest, radically anti-heroic art that can even take on parodistic overtones. Adopting the weapons of the grotesque, many artists dethrone any sense of authority, literally defacing the formulas of traditional sculpture, such as the pedestal, the bust or the standing figure. In the works of Urs Fischer, Rebecca Warren or Rachel Harrison,

Movie Theatre Seat in a Box. 1997 Tom Burr Wood, Perspex mirror, carpet, theater seat, chewing gum 42 x 36 x 36 in 107 x 91 x 91 cm

> for example, we witness a carnivalesque exaggeration of features that consumes from within ture with a series of figurative works in the vocabulary of monumentality, opposing any heroic temptation. It is an upside-down world in which one might hear echoes of Pantagruelian laughter. Warren's sculptures appear on the verge of explosion, as though an obscure force or a primal appetite were pressing from within. And, in a comical attack against the very idea of permanence, they often rest on precarious wheeled pedestals. Rachel Harrison's most recent exhibition

took on the theme of the commemorative sculpwhich mannequins and masks seemed caught in a danse macabre that ridiculed such famous men as Amerigo Vespucci and Johnny Depp. Urs Fischer's sculptures often deteriorate during the course of the exhibition; fruits are left to rot and walls to crumble, and live birds feed on houses made of bread. His figurative sculptures are even more troubled. His life-size female figures, for example, literally melt down and dissolve onto the

floor of the gallery; cast in wax and lit as candles, they act as monuments in reverse, celebrating our imminent disappearance. A sense of darkness envelops many of these sculptures. They don't oppose the passing of time or fight it with everlasting materials. On the contrary, these sculptures proudly proclaim their fragility. They don't commemorate immortality; at times, in fact, they even accelerate decay. As Kristen Morgin has stated, these artworks are "reminders of what it is to be mortal." Her ceramics have a spectral quality to them, like burial findings of some forgotten civilization. A cadaverous smell also seems to emanate from Matthew Monahan's sculptures. Enclosed in vitrines like some preserved species of mutant creatures, his fragmented figures are often carved in wax, like ancient death masks. Carlos Bunga is also interested in the degradation of things; both his maquettes and his largescale domestic environments are subjected to telluric forces that obliterate them, leaving behind nothing but the skeletons of houses. In his installations, Bunga constructs complex

cardboard constructions that are razed to the ground before the opening of the exhibition. It is an architecture of loss that Bunga imagines, a process of eradication that also evokes a sense of nostalgia for one's own home.

The themes of memory and remembrance are particularly important in this context because, while they do pertain to the traditional language of monuments, they are completely re-formulated in recent sculpture. Today's sculptures seem to exist in a multiplicity of different temporalities. It is neither the instant access of installation art nor the globalized "real time" of digital technology. The sense of time suggested by these sculptures is somehow more primitive and evocative, even elegiac. It is closer to the image of a palimpsest, a continuous writing and erasing of fragments, stories, private codes and reminiscences. These sculptures are about being lost in time, adrift in history. Tobias Buche's assemblages of faded photographs, magazine clippings and photocopies, for example, are composed as mnemonic tables,

Untitled, 2005
Carlos Bunga
Cardboard, adhesive
tape, matte paint,
light table, slides
Dimensions variable
Installation view at
Elba Benitez Project,
Madrid, April 2005

an atlas of memory in which Aby Warburg finds himself in strange proximity to protest posters and the décor of some underground bar. Music, politics and teenage memories overlap in the works of many other artists of today. Sam Durant and Jim Lambie, for example, look back to the 1960s. The former searches for political slogans and popular myths, while the latter gathers psychedelic motifs and lysergic patterns. Both act like younger brothers stealing records and clothes from their older siblings' closets or their parents' basements. It is not a celebration of the past but rather a form of borrowing that opens up new forms of sampling in a continuous rewriting and questioning of history.

Something similar happens in the works of many artists who reach back to the forms of modernist sculpture and formalist design. Martin Boyce, Tom Burr, Manfred Pernice and, from the younger generation, Carol Bove, Aaron Curry and Gedi Sibony, all explore the legacy of modernism, but they do so to open up new paths and possibilities. It is about viewing history not as a monolith but as a field open to interpretation. Martin Boyce is probably the most philological in this group of revisionists. To build his combines and mobiles he often takes apart objects of classic modernist design, which, in their new form, seem suddenly deprived of their original utopian optimism. The artist has called some of his sculptures "phantom limbs," suggesting an understanding of history as a series of erasures. Manfred Pernice's clumsy wood and cement sculptures similarly deal with the idea of obsolescence of both monuments and ideologies. Exploring the particularly sensitive territory of divided Germany, Pernice acts as an archeologist excavating urban space to unearth sites of contention. His sculptures often resemble pedestals with no statues, as if to imply that each new historical cycle will impose new heroes and symbols. Tom Burr, on the other hand, is fascinated by personal histories and private rituals. His work recuperates brutalist architecture and design to investigate sexuality and self-representation.

The way we fantasize about the past is the subject of works by Carol Bove, whose tableaux and book displays try to reconstruct a time and a place she is too young to have known personally. The gaze cast back to a past that was never personally experienced is another recurring element in the work of many young sculptors today. Just as Carol Bove cross-references 1960s high art classics and Playboy magazine, so Aaron Curry literally superimposes the forms of 1950s avant-garde sculpture on found posters and magazine covers that hint at a totally degraded set of wishes

and desires. A kind of modernist memory also surfaces in Gedi Sibony's sculptures, but his gentle, loveable choreography of wood scraps and carpet remnants also tells of a magical dimension that some of these new sculptors are trying to establish, a place where our quotidian environment is turned into a small theater of the extraordinary.

I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

This tendency to retreat inside, where new possible worlds and completely fictional universes can be built, might be a reaction against a time that is driven by the violent overexposure of images. It is as though in an age of hyper-visibility many artists have felt the need to define a private, at times obscure space where complexity is not suppressed and where things are free to be senseless without being forced immediately into catchy slogans. John Bock imagines a labyrinthine universe of which he is the sole demiurge. In his films and performances, Bock has even invented a new

language that is a collage in itself, a mixture of English, German, Latin and technical jargon. His mini-monuments and tiny imaginary cities describe a microcosm that might recall the hallucinations of a totalitarian urbanist

or the laboratory of some mad scientist.

Science is a recurring element in many of today's sculptures, though it is of course an absolutely surreal para-scientific knowledge in which chemistry and B-movies overlap to describe intricate imaginary worlds. Strange species of bacteria and mushrooms, for example, seem to have colonized the sculptures of Alexandra Bircken and the dissecting tables of Nobuko Tsuchiya. As different as they might be, both artists reveal

an attraction for minuscule life forms and for the accidental beauty of crystals, stones and rock formations.

A microscopic, insect-like gaze guides the work of Elliott Hundley, whose paper sculptures reverberate with hundreds of tiny images and vibrant colors. Today's sculpture celebrates the discarded, often embracing with a joyful, adolescent energy what is deemed vulgar, in bad taste or simply too loud. Artists such as Isa Genzken and Sarah Lucas have often flirted with the pornographic and the scatological, establishing themselves as the grand, fucked-up dames of contemporary sculpture. Other, younger artists, including Anselm Reyle and Eva Rothschild, have searched folkloric motifs and kitschy, vaguely rural scenarios shot through with acid colors and dissonant hues.

Jim Lambie and Elliott Hundley have concentrated on repetitions and layers, and it is quite symptomatic that their sculptures have a tendency to retract almost into two dimensions. Being truly anti-monumental also means not taking up unnecessary space.

After all, this is a form of sculpture that is concerned with its place in the world, with the amount of space it can take over in a civilization that is already overcrowded with goods, commodities and waste. It is an art of recycling that suggests a universe on the verge of being completely overtaken by refuse. The fact that this kind of sculpture is mostly practiced in Europe and in America is also a signal that this aesthetic gathers its inspiration from an affluent society that appears to be tired, almost exhausted, or possibly just decadent. While perhaps animated by an ecological preoccupation, this art turns out to be more entropic than organized, more alarmed than reassuring. The works of Abraham Cruzvillegas, Gabriel Kuri and Shinique Smith, for example, describe a world of goods caught in a system of international exchanges and globalized routes. They also hint at the voiceless dispossessed, the wasted lives that are necessary for this system of international traffic to exist. Cruzvillegas's sculptures are composed by assembling the leftovers of our cargo postmodernity. His buoys, hanging from the ceiling, refer to the travels of freighters and luxury liners across the oceans. Correspondingly, Shinique Smith's bundles speak of United Nations aid programs and economies of support and exploitation. Just as pessimistically, Kuri's protest banners carry no slogans and no words. They are nothing but blankets, transitional objects meant to comfort those who carry them. They end up being completely harmless, unable to scare those against whom they should be aimed.

It is an art that at times verges on pure solipsism, as though the urge to retreat had taken over any need to communicate. But then again, in their spaces of solitude these artists are still working hard to find new possibilities for expression. Marc André Robinson's furniture sculptures, just like Sarah Lucas's or Isa Genzken's domestic assemblages, suggest an art that can happen even in the most dismal apartment. They might be the product of a dysfunctional century, but these artists are capable of transforming the most prosaic of realities into a spectacle of spontaneous, raucous beauty. Like Claire Fontaine's passe-partout, this unmonumental kind of sculpture might be modest, paired down, at times blunt or even nearly invisible, but it can still force open some doors and get us the hell •ut of here.

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#### **CHICAGO**

Chicago's literary history truly begins around the turn of the century with Alderman Bathhouse John Coughlin, coruler (with Hinky Dink Kenna) of the First Ward, Chicago's Downtown.

From Coughlin's "Ode to a Bathtub":

Some find enjoyment in travel, others in

Kodaking views.

Some take to automobiling in order themselves
to amuse.

But for me there is only one pleasure, although
you can call me a dub—

There's nothing to my mind can equal a plunge
in a porcelain tub.

Fifty years later the ward found another champion in Richard J. Daley—he is gone but he will never be forgotten—the man who said, "The police of the City of Chicago are not there to create disorder, but to preserve the existing disorder." Let it also be noted that a previous mayor, Big Bill Thompson, once threatened to punch the King of England in the nose, an un-Chicagoan sentiment, as we have always been kind to visitors.

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Hedda Gabler had its world premiere in Chicago, as Ibsen couldn't get anybody to produce it at home. Ten blocks away and twenty years later Al Capone ruled the city from his headquarters in the Lexington Hotel.

J. J. Johnston, a Chicago actor, told me Al's wife was an Italian girl, and that she was never accepted by her husband's family until the day of his funeral. Overcome by grief she stood by the grave and proclaimed, "Al created an empire on earth, and he will build another one in heaven." After which she was accepted into the fold.

Dreiser worked on Wabash Avenue downtown, and he used to eat at the Berghof Restaurant. Every time we went from the Goodman Theater over to the Berghof for lunch, I wondered if this was the restaurant Hurstwood was managing when he met Sister Carrie. And when we rehearsed plays in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue, I wondered if the woman practicing sol-fe could have run into Lucy Gayheart (or at least Willa Cather) in the old iron elevator.

(The woman was there when I started studying piano in 1951, and she was there when we were rehearsing *Native Son* in 1980. I see no reason she shouldn't have been there trying to hit that same goddamned note in 1905.)

We have some strange local mythology.

Nobody makes gangster jokes or thinks of the city as particularly violent (which it isn't). Yet we do make police jokes and take pride in considering the force *haimishly* corrupt (which it isn't). And we take *great* pride in our excellent fire department.

Robert Quinn, fire commissioner till just lately, was an old friend and crony of Mayor Daley. Their association went back to the days of the Hamburger Athletic Club in Bridgeport—Chicago's equivalent to having been there in the Oriente Mountains. So Quinn was fire commissioner forever.

In 1978 there was a furor because Quinn, rather than purchasing efficient, van-type paramedic ambulances, was

still contracting for the old-fashioned low-slung Cadillacs. Interviewed on television news, he said, "I think when the people of the City of Chicago do go, they want to go in style." This caused something of a commotion, and the next night Quinn called a news conference to defend himself and explained, "What I meant was the People of Chicago, when they go, they want to go in style."

God bless our journalists. Carl Sandburg once wrote film reviews for the *Daily News* (Chicago's greatest newspaper—eight years now demised, and may it rest forever in peace and in our memories). Dreiser was a drama critic in town; Hecht and MacArthur worked for City News Service; Nelson Algren was a reporter, as was Vachel Lindsay, our finest poet Midwesterner.

Lindsay was writing of Bryan's campaign visit to Springfield, Illinois, but he might as well have been writing of Chicago:

She wore in her hair a brave prairie rose.

Her Gold friends cut her, for that was not the pose.

No Gibson Girl would wear it in that fresh way.

But we were fairy Democrats, and this was our day.

In our beloved Windville we curse the cold and revel in being the most senseless spot in North America to spend the winter in. But the air feels new, and all things still seem possible, as they did to Willa Cather and Sherwood Anderson and Willard Motley and Hemingway and Frank Norris and Saul Bellow and all the other Chicago writers who—when speaking of Home—finally wrote the same story. It was and is a story of possibility, because the idea in the air is that the West is beginning, and that life is capable of being both understood and enjoyed.

#### WRITING IN RESTAURANTS

Those writers exhorted us, as did their philosophical confrere Alderman Hinky Dink Kenna—Bathhouse John's partner in crime:

"Whatever the endeavor, make of it a lollapalooza."

With thanks to Chicago historians Mark Jacobs and Kenan Heise.

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same author. At least we must avoid the fiction that a person is the same, unchanging throughout time. Lemoine-Luccioni makes the difficulty patent by signing each text with a different name, all of which are 'hers.'"

- 56. See, for example, Martha Rosler's criticisms in "Notes on Quotes," 73: "Repeating the images of woman bound in the frame will, like Pop, soon be seen as a *confirmation* by the 'post-feminist' society."
  - 57. Hal Foster, "Subversive Signs," Art in America 70 (November 1982), 88.
- 58. For a statement of this position in relation to contemporary artistic production, see Mario Perniola, "Time and Time Again," Artforum 21 (April 1983), 54-55. Perniola is indebted to Baudrillard; but are we not back with Ricoeur in 1962—that is, at precisely the point at which we started?

#### The Medusa Effect, or, The Specular Ruse\*

To speak is to make words common, to create commonplaces.

— EMMANUEL LÉVINAS, Totality and Infinity

Barbara Kruger propositions us with commonplaces, stereotypes. Juxtaposing figures and figures of speech—laconic texts superimposed on found images (Kruger does not compose these photographs herself)—she works to expose what Roland Barthes called "the rhetoric of the image": those tactics whereby photographs impose their messages upon us, hammer them home. It was Barthes who first proposed to replace the ideology of literary invention with an "ideolectology" whose operative concepts would be citation, reference, stereotype; and many artists today work within the regime of the stereotype, manipulating masscultural imagery so that hidden ideological agendas are supposedly exposed. But most of these artists treat the stereotype as something arbitrarily imposed upon the social field from without, and thus as something relatively easy to depose. Kruger, however, regards it as an integral part of social processes of incorporation, exclusion, domination, and rule—that is, as a weapon, an instrument of power.

Thus, in a recent work she interposes, between the viewer and a photograph of a woman in repose, a text which alludes to the stereotypical way society disposes of woman, positioning her outside "culture," in a state of nature/nurture. "We won't play nature to your culture," Kruger declares, thereby opposing what is itself already an opposition—nature/culture—and all that it presupposes: a binary logic that divides the social body into two unequal halves in order to subject one to the other ("Your assignment," Kruger writes in an earlier work, "is to divide and conquer") or, more precisely, the Other to the One (as she writes in a third work, "You destroy what you think is difference"). In refusing

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this assignment, Kruger poses a threat; nevertheless, her work remains cool, composed. As she proposes elsewhere, "I am your reservoir of poses."

An inventory of Kruger's montage techniques—she juxtaposes, superimposes, interposes texts and images—and of the ends to which these techniques are put—she exposes, opposes, deposes stereotypes and clichés—indicates the importance of a "Rhetoric of Pose" to all her work. Most of the photographs Kruger reuses were originally staged—posed—and she crops, enlarges, and repositions them so that their theatricality is emphasized. She does not work with snapshots, in which the camera itself suspends animation, but with studio shots, in which it records an animation performed only to be suspended—a gesture, a pose. "What is a gesture?" Jacques Lacan asks in the ninth chapter (titled "What Is a Picture?") of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. "A threatening gesture, for example? It is not a blow that is interrupted. It is certainly something done in order to be arrested and suspended."

Kruger's work, then, is concerned not with action, but with gesture or, more accurately, with the stereotype's transformation of action into gesture—"prowess into pose," as she puts it in a recent work. But "pose" appears in her work in other guises as well: for instance, in the positionality inscribed in language by the personal pronouns "I/we" and "you," which do not designate objects that exist independently of discourse, but manifest the subject positions of partners in a conversation. Following Émile Benveniste's distinction between "person" and "nonperson," only the first and second persons belong to the class of personal pronouns, which rigorously excludes the third person—the "nonperson," since it does not manifest a subject position but designates an objective existence. Personal pronouns have appeared in all of Kruger's works since 1980, and she uses them to incorporate the spectator—literally, because the deictic terms "I" and "you" refer directly to the bodies of speaker and addressee; through them, Kruger's pronouncements acquire body, weight, gravity.

So Kruger appears to address me, this body, at this particular point in space. But as soon as I identify myself as the addressee of the work, it seems to withdraw from me to speak impersonally, imperiously to the world at large. For Kruger's work operates according to a principle of double address; it oscillates perpetually between the personal and the impersonal. This oscillation is perhaps most apparent in those works which employ the first-person plural, which is not really a plural at all: as Benveniste observes, "we" does not signify a "multiplication of identical objects, but a junction between the 'I' and the 'not-I.'' <sup>2</sup> This "not-I"

can be either personal ("we" = "me" + "you") or impersonal ("we" = "me" + "them"). Kruger's "we," then, forces the viewer to shift uncomfortably between inclusion and exclusion; but it also allows her to welcome a female spectator into her work, since not only are her pronouns embodied, they are also engendered.

Consequently, the place of the viewer in Kruger's work is unstable, shifting. Personal pronouns are also known as "shifters," but not, as is widely believed, because they allow speaker and addressee to shift positions; on the contrary, shifters establish a strict rule of noncommutability-"you"-must never be "I."3 Rather, they allow speakers to shift from code to message—from the abstract to the concrete, the collective to the individual or, again, the impersonal to the personal.4 Hence their frequent appearance in the messages of the mass media, which tends, as Barthes observed, "to personalize all information, to make every utterance a direct challenge, not directed at the entire mass of readers, but at each reader in particular."5 Kruger parodies this tendency in her work, exposing the contradictory construction of the viewing subject by the stereotype. As Norman Bryson, writes in Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze, "The stereotype addresses the viewer twice over, constructs him [sic] in two irreconcilable forms: as this potential donor of a vital quantum of solidarity, and as that featureless vector of political and economic energy (Worshipper, Citizen, Consumer, Producer)."6 The stereotype, in fact, confers on the individual the dream of a double postulation: dream of identity/dream of otherness. Kruger: "You are not yourself.".

Deixis is not, however, the only point of physical entry into Kruger's work, which is ultimately addressed to the struggle over the control and positioning of the body in political and ideological terms—a struggle in which the stereotype plays a decisive role. As Michel Foucault writes in Discipline and Punish, "The body . . . is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." Many of the plates in Kruger's 1982 book No Progress in Pleasure bear witness to this state of affairs: in one, the monkeyshines of a group of formally dressed businessmen solicit the indictment "You construct intricate rituals which allow you to touch the skin of other men"-alluding not, I think, to repressed homosexuality, but rather to the fact that physical contact has itself become a social ceremony; in another, Kruger speaks of the state of pleasure in the society of the stereotype: "Your moments of joy have the precision of military strategy."

For Foucault, the political investment of the body is primarily an economic investment: "It is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection." The stereotype is part of this "system of subjection": its function is to reproduce ideological subjects that can be smoothly inserted into existing institutions of government, economy, and, perhaps most crucially, sexual identity. (It is not surprising, then, that Kruger's work should deal so persistently with questions of gender.) Stereotypes treat the body as an object to be held in position, subservience, submission; they disavow agency, dismantle the body as a locus of action and reassemble it as a discontinuous series of gestures and poses—that is, as a semiotic field. The stereotype inscribes the body into the register of discourse; in it, the body is apprehended by language, taken into joint custody by politics and ideology.

A form of symbolic violence exercized upon the body in order both to assign it to a place and to keep it in place, the stereotype works less through persuasion (the goal of traditional rhetoric: ideological adherence, consent) than through deterrence—what Jean Baudrillard calls "dissuasion." It promotes passivity, receptivity, inactivity—docile bodies. This effect is achieved primarily through intimidation: the stereotype poses a threat. Kruger's subject might well be defined as the rhetoric of intimidation: for example, the words "We will undo you" appear, in one work, over a photograph of a bandaged hand. Responding to charges that this work in particular is intimidating to viewers, Kruger stressed the fact that her work does not itself pose a threat, but signifies threat. Still, signs can be potent weapons, as Lacan observes in his description of the fight scenes staged by the Peking Opera:

One fights as one has always fought since time immemorial, much more with gestures than with blows.... In these ballets, no two people ever touch one another, they move in different spaces in which are spread out whole series of gestures, which, in traditional combat, nevertheless have the value of weapons, in the sense that they may well be effective as instruments of intimidation.<sup>9</sup>

The stereotype, then, is an apotrope, a gesture executed with the express purpose of intimidating the enemy into submission. Today, even our most sophisticated technological means of physical destruction function primarily as apotropes—"nuclear threat." (Lacan: "Our most recent weapons might also be regarded as gestures. Let us hope they will remain as such!")<sup>10</sup> Thus, a photograph of a mushroom cloud finds its place in Kruger's lexicon of poses: "Your manias become science."

To be effective, stereotypes must circulate endlessly, relentlessly throughout society; as Foucault writes, "Posters, placards, signs, symbols must be distributed so that everyone may learn their significations." And it is precisely at their point of circulation throughout society that Kruger intercepts stereotypes. It has become obligatory to cite her experience, more than a decade ago, as a graphic designer as the source for her current work. But Kruger exploits the instant legibility of graphic-design techniques only to expose it too as another weapon in the stereotype's arsenal. For that legibility is engineered to produce an immediate subjection, to imprint (stereo-type) the image directly on the viewer's imagination, to eliminate the need for decoding. Kruger's juxtapositions of images and texts produce the opposite effect: they impede circulation, postpone subjection, invite us to decode the message.

While the stereotype enjoys an unlimited social mobility—it must circulate freely if it is to perform its work—it must nevertheless remain fixed, in order to procure the generalized social immobility which is its dream. (As Foucault observes, the exercise of power aims at the effective immobilization of the social body.)12 Immobility is a pervasive theme in Kruger's work: a female silhouette, literally pinned down, may appear with the injunction "We have received orders not to move"; or a patient may be held in place by a battery of dental appliances while the viewer is admonished, "You are a captive audience"; or the words "Your gaze hits the side of my face" may appear beside a female portrait head. In this last work, Kruger alludes specifically to the power attributed to vision to suspend movement and arrest life—the evil eye—identifying this power in terms of the classic polarities of vision in patriarchal culture: woman as the (passive) object of the active (i.e., masculine) gaze—a gaze which objectifies and masters. But can we be entirely certain that this woman is the victim of a male gaze? The response to this question will require a detour through classical myth and Freudian psychoanalysis, since what we have before us is a woman immobilized—turned to stone, in fact—by the power of the gaze . . . Medusa?

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Remember that it was Medusa's gaze that was endowed with the power of turning to stone all who came within its purview—with the power, that is, of creating figures, statues. Remember as well that Perseus contrived to steal this power for himself (and the appropriation of the gaze is the principal theme of the myth, beginning as it does with the theft of an eye),13 to himself become a producer of figures. This he accomplished by means of a ruse: using his shield as a mirror, he reflected the deadly gaze back upon itself, whereupon Medusa was immediately—or so the narrative proposes—petrified. Turned against itself, Medusa's power turns out to be her vulnerability, and Perseus' vulnerability, his strength.

The myth's central episode is almost proto-photographic; it seems to describe that split-second in which vision bends back upon itself to produce its own imprint. Perseus inserts Medusa into a closed system, a relation of identity between seer and seen; the immediacy of this link makes the relationship of Medusa with her image indexical (and not simply iconic). Thus Medusa is transformed into an image, inserted into the order of designation; henceforth, she will serve primarily as the support for a long chain of discursive and figural events, beginning with Perseus' own account of his triumph over Medusa (recounted by Ovid), including the famous Roman mosaic depicting Perseus with Medusa's severed head (the prototype for countless depictions of the myth in the history of Western art), and extending into our own century with Ferenczi's, Freud's, and Hélène Cixous's psychoanalytic accounts of the myth. But what each of these authors—including myself—will systematically repeat and simultaneously deny is the ruse whereby Medusa is inserted into discourse in the first place—the violence whereby she becomes an object of depiction, narration, analysis. For Medusa herself will not depict, narrate, analyze; as Cixous says, Medusa never gets a chance to tell her side of the story.

Since Freud's well-known text "Das Medusenhaupt," the meaning of the myth has itself been petrified, immobilized. Focusing on Medusa's head as an apotrope-Athena, Freud reminds us, bore this emblem on her breastplate in order to repulse (in both senses) her enemieshe interprets it as a fetish, an emblem of castration, a displaced representation of female genitalia. Given the instantaneity invoked by the myth's central episode—Medusa sees herself and is immediately turned to stone—Freud might have related it not to the boy's, but instead to the girl's realization of her own "castration," at least as he imagines this scenario: "A little girl behaves differently [from a little boy]. She makes. her judgment and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that

she is without it and wants to have it." 14 Instead, Freud makes his judgment and his decision in a flash; he has seen it and he knows "to decapitate = to castrate." 15 Thus, Hélène Cixous, in her manifesto "The Laugh of the Medusa," attacks Freud's interpretation as a masculine projection: "You have only to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing." But Cixous also treats Medusa primarily as an apotrope: "Let the priests tremble, we're going to show them our sexts!" 16 What both Freud and Cixous overlook is the importance of the myth's central episode—the specular ruse whereby Perseus was able to decapitate/"castrate" Medusa in the first place.

Psychoanalysis can, however, tell us a great deal about the significance of this episode, for there is more to the story of Perseus and Medusa than meets the eye. Medusa's is clearly an imaginary capture, a capture in the Imaginary. (Can it be that Perseus, like Kruger, had read Lacan?) For in this act of seeing that is its own sight, this instantaneous identification, what we recognize is the duality, the specularity, the symmetry and immediacy that characterize Lacan's Imaginary order. "Lacan defines the essence of the imaginary as a dual relationship, a reduplication in the mirror, an immediate opposition between consciousness and its other in which each term becomes its opposite and is lost in the play of the reflection." <sup>17</sup> Moreover, he repeatedly refers to the subject's identification with an image as its capture; it is with this capture that the ego is constituted. (In Lacan, the ego is always an imaginary construct.) And in the Discours de Rome he refers to the patient's imaginary constructions of identity as statues.

Lacanian psychoanalysis also enables us to detect, in the myth's central episode, a crucial elision; for this episode collapses what are, in fact, two distinct moments: one in which Medusa sees herself, and another in which she is petrified. These two moments must logically be distinct: how can Perseus decapitate Medusa, if she is already turned to stone? What Perseus' sword separates, then, is not only a head (or phallus) from a body, but also, in narrative terms, an initial moment of seeing from a terminal moment of arrest. In an important passage in Four Fundamental Concepts devoted to the power of the evil eye to "arrest movement and, literally, kill life," Lacan discusses precisely these two moments, referring to their "pseudo-identification" as (a) suture (a Lacanian concept which specifies the subject's relation to the chain of its own discourse):

What I noticed there [Lacan has been discussing the Peking Opera fight scenes] was the suture, the pseudo-identification that exists between what I called the time of terminal arrest and the gesture and what, in another dialectic that I called the dialectic of identificatory haste, I put as the first time, namely, the moment of seeing. The two overlap, but they are certainly not identical, since one is initial and the other is terminal.<sup>18</sup>

The psychoanalytic concept of suture (derived from surgical terminology: to join the two lips of a wound) itself seems to have an apotropaic effect; I propose therefore to rename suture—at least insofar as Lacan uses the term to designate the "pseudo-identification" of an initial moment of seeing and a terminal moment of arrest—the "Medusa Effect": specular ruse, imaginary identification of seer and seen, immediacy, capture, stereotype. Lacan's discussion of the evil eye includes not only a description of the Medusa Effect, but also a prescription against it. Significantly, this prescription inverts the temporal order of the two moments which it elides (vision, Lacan argues, reverses the logical order of speech): first, a terminal moment of arrest; then and only then, an initial act of seeing:

There, that by which the original temporality in which the relation to the other is situated as distinct is here, in the scopic dimension, that of the terminal moment. That which in the identificatory dialectic of the signifier and the spoken word will be projected forward as haste is here, on the contrary, the end, that which, at the outset of any new intelligence, will be called the moment of seeing.<sup>19</sup>

In placing the moment of arrest prior to the moment of seeing, Lacan is, of course, simply describing what happens when we look at a picture, any picture—first an arrested gesture (painting, photograph); then the act of viewing which completes the gesture. But he is simultaneously describing the mechanism of *pose*: to strike a pose is to present oneself to the gaze of the other as if one were already frozen, immobilized—that is, *already a picture*. For Lacan, then, pose has a strategic value: mimicking the immobility induced by the gaze, reflecting its power back on itself, pose forces it to surrender. Confronted with a pose, the gaze itself is immobilized, brought to a standstill (for the object does not move with the eye); a pose, then, is an apotrope. And to strike a pose is to pose a threat.

In Kruger's work, the strategic value Lacan attributes to pose is doubled and then redoubled. Doubled: To reiterate, a stereotype is an apotrope; posing as a mirror-image of social reality, its adequate, identical reflection, it is engineered to immediately immobilize the social body. Redoubled: Kruger reflects the stereotype back on itself, mimicking its techniques—its double address, its transformation of action into gesture, its instant legibility. How else to defeat an apotrope than with another apotrope?

Kruger's work, then, engages in neither social commentary nor ideological critique (the traditional activities of politically motivated artists: consciousness-raising). Her art has no moralistic or didactic ambition. Rather, she stages for the viewer the techniques whereby the stereotype produces subjection, interpellates him/her as subject. With one crucial difference: in Kruger's double inversion, the viewer is led ultimately to reject the work's address, this double postulation, this contradictory construction. There is a risk, of course, that this rejection will take the form of yet another gesture—a gesture of refusal. It can, however, be an active renunciation. Against the immobility of the pose, Kruger proposes the mobilization of the spectator.

#### NOTES

- \*This text is a revised version of an essay that appears in the catalogue of the exhibition "Barbara Kruger: 'We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture,' mounted by the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.
- 1. Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), 116.
- 2. Émile Benveniste, Problèmes de linguistique générale (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), vol. I, 233.
- 3. This principle of noncommutability is central to Lévinas's thought. As Jean-François Lyotard observes, the "supposition that governs all of Lévinas's discourse as a sort of metaprescription for otherness could be expressed by this articulation: That /'You'/must never be /'I'/!" "The Insistence of Pragmatics," Mississippi Review (Winter/Spring 1983), 91.
- 4. Roman Jakobson, Essais de linguistique générale (Paris: Minuit, 1963), 178-80.
- 5. Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. M. Ward and R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 266.
- 6. Norman Bryson, Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 155.
- 7. Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 25.
- 8. As Foucault observes, it is not primarily a question of making the body signify, but of making it into an object of signification: "One would be concerned with the 'body politic,' as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge." *Discipline and Punish*, 28.
  - 9. Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts, 116-17.
  - 10. Ibid.
  - 11. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 111.
  - 12. Foucault speaks of "the plague-stricken town, traversed throughout by

hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies—this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city." Discipline and Punish, 198.

- 13. In Ovid, the story of Perseus' capture of Medusa begins: "He told them how there lay, beneath cold Atlas,/A place protected by the bulk of the mountain/Where dwelt twin sisters, daughters, both, of Phorcys./They had one eye between them, and they shared it,/Passing it from one sister to the other,/And he contrived to steal it, being so handed,/And slipped away." Metamorphoses, trans. R. Humphries, IV.771-78. Few of the myth's commentators even mention this remarkable episode; an exception is Louis Marin, who interprets it as an allegory of monocular perspective. Détruire la peinture (Paris: Galilée, 1977), 137-48.
- 14. Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (New York: Collier, 1963), 187.
  - 15. Freud, "Medusa's Head," in ibid., 212.
- 16. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. K. and P. Cohen, in New French Feminisms, ed. E. Marks and I. de Courtivron (New York: Schocken, 1981), 255. Cixous's subject is the feminine text; hence, "sexts."
- 17. Anika Lemaire, Jacques Lacan (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1977), 60.
  - 18. Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts, 117.
  - 19. Ibid., 114.

## ON (SURPLUS) VALUE IN ART DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN

#### II Art as Commodity

What kind of commodity is the "art" commodity, and how is it produced by human labor? Who profits from it and how? And is that profit *Mehrwert*, or surplus value? I would like to shift from considering the career of certain art as opposed to other art and look instead at the economic and, if you will, "value-theoretical" side of the production of contemporary art – at least the type that is shown in galleries and sold on the market. What does the "daily life" of this artistic production look like when considered in light of the now classical Marxist categories of labor, value and price? In this chapter, I want to show how the exceptionalist economy of art is based, to a certain degree, on a rather regular economy. It is as challenging as it is appropriate to try this by using Marxist categories.

Now, we must distinguish between two different processes: (1) the everyday value of the art commodity and its price and (2) the speculative price and its relationship to value; the latter being what people mostly think of when they speak of the art commodity. Of course, there is a sense in which the two cannot be separated. Everything that has an everyday value as a commodity can theoretically also become an object of speculation. But most of the transactions made with commodities in the realm of the visual arts do not (initially) involve speculation, so that they are more comparable with the regular economy of production and consumption, buying and selling. The two values come into being in different ways. Yet these different ways have a common connection to the issue of reproduction and uniqueness (3).

(1) The value of a product is calculated on the basis of the amount of labor that is socially necessary to produce it. At first glance, it would seem to be completely preposterous to apply this Marxist definition of value to artworks. For not only in the case of modern artworks, but already in the case of classical artworks that were produced for a market, the prices of two artworks on which the same amount of time was spent by those

who painted or sculpted them could differ enormously. But that is not the point. Price is not value; on the contrary, it is the false semblance of value. As the realization of value in a given act of exchange, it expresses the notion that, while the price depends on a wide range of different variables, the logic that governs the relationship between price and value is essentially sound, so that prices may be deemed reasonable or unreasonable.

One might object, however, that it is not just absurd to derive the price of art objects from the labor that is socially necessary to produce them; it is equally absurd to derive their value in this way. The amounts of individual labor required to produce artworks are simply too disparate. But, Marx speaks of an average value. True, one might respond, but in the case of modern art, this average is based on such divergent individual data that they do not pile up in the middle and fall off toward the edges, as in the case of classical averages, but probably yield just as many extremes in any direction as they do results in the middle. However, this extreme variation is only the case when one bases one's average exclusively on current prices and the labor time currently necessary for the production of a work. But this is already a flawed approach, not only with artists, but even when considering other types of professions like dentists or engineers. The more appropriate track would be to take the investment in training and other activities that are a necessary part of becoming an artist into account and include them in the calculation of the socially necessary artistic labor as well. Then, many more results would collect in the middle, for the hours of socially necessary labor would drastically increase. The differences between the prices currently being paid would no longer seem so preposterous, because the overall return on the individual hour of artistic labor would drop precipitously.

Two quantities are particularly interesting in light of this line of reasoning: first, the amount of time *not* spent at art school that is a necessary part of becoming an artist, and second, the question of how the time that is spent at art school is financed. This is an area in which there are marked differences

between different cultures, countries, and regions, but also between different types of artists. The first quantity – time not spent at art school – has fallen substantially compared with the amount spent at art school. Fewer and fewer professional artists are "outsiders" who acquire their artistic education through romantic involvement in "life" and then go on to invest that productive power. Generally speaking, the curricula vitae of artists increasingly resemble those of other highly qualified specialized workers. Hence, it is becoming almost impossible to reinforce the exceptional status of the art object – which has often been transfigured but also irrationalized by reference to the exceptional lives of the artists as bohemians, freaks, and other homines sacri - in this way. Further, in terms of the time spent in art school, when considering how the value of artistic products is created, it is normally important to ask who financed the artist's training. In Europe, the answer is still primarily, in full or in part, the state (or, in a populist abbreviation, the taxpayers).

In the United States and other neoliberal areas of the world, financing this general component of labor that is socially necessary for the production of art has become the responsibility of the artists themselves, who take out loans to pay their way through school and, as it were, invest the income they will only receive later into their prior education. In this sense, artists are entrepreneurs who pursue their own material interest and later that of others. The alternate model (traditionally followed in Europe) effectively casts artists as civil servants or government employees and hence, at least indirectly, bound to a conception of the common good. Not only are they trained at state-funded universities, they also later take on government contracts and commissions – whether they apply for government programs like Kunst am Bau (Art in Architecture<sup>3</sup>), for municipal art projects, or become beneficiaries of a publicly financed, postmodern project culture, or whether they ultimately support themselves by

3 Editor's Note: Kunst am Bau is a federal program in Germany (with counterparts in other European countries) which stipulates

that a certain percentage of the overall funding of certain types of building be devoted to a visual art component. filling one of the many posts available to artists at state-run art schools. In this way, certain artists participate to a much greater extent in a politically defined project of socialization (via the bureaucratic interface of state institutions). Elsewhere they define themselves more strongly through their participation in the market. Ultimately, both approaches undermine the romantic exceptionalism of art as well as, in a certain sense, that of the commodities they produce.

It is interesting to note that a model of political and public involvement once existed in the United States, namely in the 1930s, when visual artists were widely included in New Deal projects. From Philip Guston to Jackson Pollock, many artists of the New York school, who would later help to establish the United States' claim to leadership as a cultural great power of the "free world" as well as New York's global leadership of the art market, spent portions of their education and early careers working on quasi-socialist projects of the New Deal administration. And, having once invested their labor in promoting the interests of the state, it was only natural that they should do so again later on, in a completely different set of political circumstances. The interests they helped to advance became those of the anticommunist, Cold War United States. The state form remained constant, although its content and institutions underwent a drastic change. These artists did not advance the national interest out of gratitude, but because they were already used to working within a framework that was not primarily market-oriented. In a dialectical twist, it was precisely when they became more individualistic that their work became especially useful to the state (with the Cold War underway and the Republicans in power, the state and the market no longer stood in each other's way).

Now, if we view artists as entrepreneurs who are acting in their own material interest, then the knowledge they have gained in bars and at art school would be their *constant capital* and their seasonal production in any given year would be their *variable capital*. They create *Mehrwert* to the extent that, as self-employed cultural workers, they are able to take unpaid extra time and often informal extra knowledge away from other

daily activities – some of which are economic and essential for survival – and invest them in the conception, development, and production of artworks. The more of this extra time is invested the better, following the rule that living labor as variable capital generates the surplus value, not the constant capital. The more they develop a type of artwork that calls for them to be present as continuously as possible, often in a performative capacity, the larger the amount of *Mehrwert* they create – even if that *Mehrwert* cannot always be automatically realized in the form of a corresponding price.

A model like this may elicit the objection that the two kinds of capital involved are merely components of a single person, so that exploiter and exploited are one and the same. In fact this situation defines the limit for the transfer of the Marxist terminology to the production of art, especially in terms of the parallel between the employer's purchase of labor power and the artist's commitment of his own labor time and extra labor time. But whether a season's production comes across as promising or idiotic often depends on the newly acquired, additional intelligence of the project and its producer, and its *Mehrwert* depends on how large a proportion of living labor was involved

Now it goes without saying that the artist who has distanced his activity from practical studio work as well as from extra work in nightlife and seminars, and who, as a purely conceptual entrepreneur, has a large number of assistants who perform these activities for him, creates an entirely different *Mehrwert*, one that is not produced through self-exploitation.

Let us imagine, then, that I decide to take my own variable capital, the commodity of artistic labor power that I have acquired from myself and my assistants, and – on the basis of the constant capital of my artistic competence, the "technology" of my artistic command of the material – I invest this in a particular manner. Like any other businessperson, I will try to do so in such a way that the proportion of additional labor power invested by me or by my assistants is as valuable as possible. My goal is to produce a value that not only can be realized in the form of the highest possible price in the everyday world

of relations of exchange with gallery owners, collectors, and museums, but one which also maximizes its rate of new labor and variable capital involved, and above all of additional unpaid Mehrarbeit (or surplus labor) in the Marxist sense. In this respect, the specific expectations that contemporary artists must fulfill if they wish to be successful coincide with Marx's formula for *Mehrwert*: they are to produce works that are as fresh and new as possible (variable capital including Mehrarbeit [or surplus labor]), but they are to do so on the basis of an already existing reputation and knowledge (constant capital). When the proportion of constant capital becomes too large, my rate of Mehrwert formation begins to fall. This is the case, for example, when too much training time must be accumulated in order to then produce something through living labor (my own or that of my employees). This is the economic disadvantage of the intellectual artist (who labors excessively at school), or the artist who acts from an especially deeply felt sense of his or her own biographical imperatives (who labors excessively at the bar). Indeed, the same model of everyday value formation can easily be applied to the presentday self-employed cultural freelancer who works outside the art industry. However, the rate of Mehrwert formation also falls when the artist in question is dead or when only old works continue to be traded. In that case (but not only in that case, since this is now happening with young living artists as well), the laws of speculation take over.

(2) For this other kind of value – speculative value – comes about through properties of the work that are distinct from the value of labor time and its use. Nonetheless, the prerequisite of speculative valuation is a first or primary value of the artwork, derived from its average socially necessary labor. In other words, there must be an everyday art market wherein such an average rationally determines the prices that are paid for a work – made by an artist who has reached a certain age and has spent specific amounts of time at art school, involved in nightlife and living out a creative, experimental existence. A work by a thirty-five-year-old artist that costs, say, twenty thousand euros,

certainly isn't cheap, but it corresponds to the average amount of labor invested in it, also if you compare it with labor by similarly specialized and educated workers in other fields. That may still be the case, albeit just barely, if the price is five thousand euros per work, and it remains the case up into the high five figures – naturally, factors such as size and the number of works that can be produced with comparable effort and expense are important variables that figure into the price.

Price fluctuations within this range are certainly also due to impact and reception outside the market narrowly defined – as recognition on the part of curators and critics, etc. – but are not yet due to speculation. Also, the commodities produced by artists at this level are not absolute exceptions vis-à-vis other commodities and practices. While it is true that artworks are absolute singularities – and this is the case, as we will see later on, even when they are reproduced and reproducible – they have this status as instances of a certain category of commodities. Artists satisfy the general desire and demand for visual artworks – understood as a demand for singular objects – by producing concrete singularities. Rather than an exception to the commodity market, this singularity is precisely the desired quality of a specific commodity type, its universal attribute.

It is worth noting that price differences between five thousand and one hundred thousand euros do not represent an especially broad range of variation. Such price variations are similar to those among mass-produced motor vehicles at different levels of quality and luxury. The fact that the labor of designers and of PR professionals who have helped to establish the symbolic value of a label (and thus added to its constant capital) plays an increasingly important role in creating the value of luxury consumer goods, and of the ubiquitous brand-name- and label-oriented products, does not mean that these values are suddenly being created by pure spirit as opposed to living labor. Activities, such as those involved in name or brand building, also constitute highly qualified types of labor (and should therefore be likened to the labor of acquiring an education). When we regard the various symbolic

values of these labors as the substrates of social distinctions (whose production is learned and practiced inside and outside cultural educational institutions and which are refined in the appropriate milieus), we can see that in these individual acts and decisions, value-defining and not only price-defining labor has gone into producing art and design commodities.

A characteristic feature of the normality of the exceptionalism that determines the everyday life of art is that it consists entirely of objects that seem to have no everyday use value and therefore consist of nothing but inflated exchange values and exchange value fetishes. But this is not the case, precisely in art's everyday life. In this arena, fetishistically inflated exchange value has been domesticated as what we might call a "secondorder of use value" It goes without saying that there is a certain use value realized in the various ways of relating to art objects – as with all commodities, that use value is dominated by exchange value. Thus, use value is every bit as present in art objects as it is in all other commodities. It cannot be reduced to a "distinctive value", "status symbol", or "symbolic value", as if there were completely unsymbolic commodities, and above all as if those designations themselves did not refer to an eminently concrete use within the sphere of social action, one that people often make no effort to disguise. One might say that the use value of a certain kind of commodity – which includes art objects – lies in its promise to appear as a pure exchange value, its ability to turn into money. It is just as important, however, that this promise goes unrealized for the time being. Its deferral corresponds to the art object's beauty. The beauty of that object lies in the dead labor that it will be capable of performing as an exhibition piece or archival object. It holds out the prospect of an eventual transformation, which - if one disregards the "prosaic" nature of that transformation - may even seem to be an experience of the sublime.

Now for speculation to be possible, it must be able to go far beyond the everyday value of the object while continuing to engage – and invest – in a discourse on reasonableness similar to that which surrounds the primary – and at least apparently normal – relationship of price and value (and the relation-

ship of labor and value embedded within these). It is necessary that, beyond this normal relationship, the distance between labor and value is enhanced by the element of a wager - and hence of another temporal dimension beyond that of labor time. All speculation, whether in art or anything else, refers to the expected realization of value at some future time – to the realization of living labor that will have "hardened" in the form of value, without the need for any additional living labor. At the same time, this wager not only attempts to call upon expert knowledge concerning a particular future expectation; it also attempts to use that knowledge to influence the future directly. However, it is completely indifferent to how value is actually created. As is well known, one can bet on the realization of value completely independently of whether the products in question are agrarian (pork sides, frozen orange juice) or the weatherbeaten products of some outdated form that mixes crafts and industrial production and is itself based on a highly developed division of labor (old apartment buildings in big cities).

In the visual arts, the rationalizing of speculation is based on the notion that this is in some sense a component of the determination of price, either as a truth (that was previously submerged and is now emerging) or simply as a perpetuation of the mixture of value creation, price formation, and reception (that was supposedly contained in the original determination of the object's price). The price of an ordinary commodity only appears as the false semblance of its value (and hence of the way in which living labor is transformed into value) because prices always appear as the prices of things and bring into the world a notion of reasonableness and unreasonableness that can only apply to things. In art, by contrast, the discourse of reasonableness is constantly searching for arguments that go beyond the objective aspects of price formation (rarity, demand, etc.) and include the artistic quality and the time and money required to accrue these - of the individual work in the justification.

In the process of speculation, this rationalizing discourse becomes doubly false. Not only is it still based on the notion that prices can adequately express value, it now insists that the

speculative price – far from having even less to do with living labor – is a particularly intimate and faithful expression of the true status and metaphysical value of living artistic labor. The price fetched at auction is meant to be the voice of history, in contrast to the price paid on the everyday art market, which is merely the voice of fashion. From the notion of ars longa, which legitimates art by pointing to its longevity and outlasts the vita brevis, to the notion of the never-ending character of aesthetic experience that is posited by modern reception theory, there is a long line of philosophical theories of belated truth. of the gradual revelation of reality, of the slow accomplishment of justice, all three of which are purposely conflated with speculation in the specific mode of false consciousness that characterizes the art market. It is also telling that, in recent decades, advanced art has not only taken duration as the subject of special genres (duration pieces); it has also made it the subject of large portions of fine art genres that were originally conceived exclusively in spatial and object-like terms (time-based installations, even time-based paintings).

But this doubly false semblance based on the rationalization of speculation, is not to be confused with the act of double negation. It merely completes the illusory character of the first or primary kind of price, making it "airtight" and impenetrable. This illusion is also causally connected with that first or primary price: Every normal, everyday act of purchase and exchange in the world of primary prices and their associated values can also be read as an act that has a bearing on speculation, even where the prices involved are list prices that are apparently the same for all.

(3) There is a widespread assumption that the commodity character of artworks is associated with their reproducibility. The view that reproduced or reproducible artworks are not really artworks at all but merely commodities is a misunderstanding that it is probably no longer necessary to correct. Of

4 At least this constitutes the elements of the elements to do something else - staging gallery shows as auctions; biennials as gallery

basic market system for art, even when today people sometimes use these classical shows, coming soon: the auction as debut

course, it was only natural that the first post-ritual artworks that is, secular artworks that were no longer made on commission and were often produced in factory-like studios by teams of workers who divided the labor among them, supervised by the master – could only become commodities by presenting themselves as originals. The aura of the original, which is the prerequisite for the artwork's commodity character, is a mystification in its own right. It functions like the mystification already embodied in the work's commodity character, but it mystifies something else. The commodity form lends to the transformation of living labor into abstract labor, use value into exchange value, an object-quality that causes the social character of the labor and its distinctive features to appear natural. Via the conceptual fetish of the "unique genius of the artist," the aura of the original causes the living artistic labor to appear as a patina, a physical index, an aspect of a work's chemical and material composition, hence as a quality connected with natural material decay, that is, as all of those things that can be fetishized under the headings of personal signature, uniqueness, originality, and artwork. Not all of these concepts, however, refer exclusively to the material quality that causes the living artistic labor to appear as an auratic object. To a certain extent, the authentic material of the original has already evaporated and the art object has turned into something like a metaphysical index.

Since the twentieth century, the artistic commodity is no longer required to be an original in the strict sense. It can take the form of a multiple, a printed work, a rare periodical, or a readymade. The artist's singularity is no longer transferred to the object via physical contact with them, but via a spiritual one. The artist *conceives* the readymade, *plans* the project. Nevertheless, the process must ultimately result in rare, singular objects: traces of production, out of print periodicals and printed works, gallery posters, invitations, certificates, or objects auraticized by other kinds of visible or less tangible efforts. What these objects display is no longer a physical index but a metaphysical one. Their reference, however, is neither iconic, nor is it symbolic. The artwork is not an image of the artist's

singularity, nor is it an arbitrary sign. Rather, it continues to be regarded as an *index* of his or her uniqueness, his or her singular individuality. The artwork is an *image* with respect to the world it represents; that world, however, is secondary to the indexed uniqueness of its deliverer or deliverers (since sometimes the focus is on unique constellations or collectives rather than singular artists). It is a *symbol* within the social relation: in the differential production of its meaning and status in relation to other works. Its value, however, is determined in connection with its aura, and therefore *indexically*.

In the case of this second, more widespread "metaphysical index", the artistic commodity not only contains the abstraction of the artist's living labor, together with all of the labor previously invested in art school, nightlife, and Bohemian existence. It also contains the additional, non-artistic living labor of the artist's employees and assistants as well as that of subsidiary firms such as printers, foundries, etc. In addition, however, it further – and above all – contains the spiritual management of all of these subordinate types of labor by a director, a person in charge. This director, then, performs intellectual labor, and a steadily growing amount of such labor, which cannot be described in detail but which acquires a metaphysical index in the mediated presence [Vermittelheit] of the artist's traces, in the mediated presence of the aura and its conversion into an "as-if aura" This is the case even when the work itself takes a critical view of, or attempts to exclude, questions of artistic subjectivity. In the art context, projects, performances or other works that do not yield objects are also auratic, provided they result in some trace that is capable of, at some point, ending up in a private collection and acquiring a value.

This new aura is thus a special kind of value that realizes managerial and intellectual labor as well as the many kinds of labor that go to make up the artist's life. Objects are better able to do this the less they continue to thematize the classical aura, with its material traces of the physicality of the artist. Nevertheless, in the end, artworks must be capable of absorbing the trace and the quasi-indexical mechanism of this new

aura, which is purely conventional but binding for all involved. These characters might be described as the specific aesthetic qualities of the object. And indeed, the logic of speculation often regards the length of the dead labor – or some other form of increased intensity, usually via exhibition – as heightening the object's auratic value in the same way that the quantity of living labor heightens its simple value. Other forms of this increase in intensity are new facts about the artist, new auction results, etc.

Of course, some may object that the construction of a metaphysical index, an aura of artistic subjectivity working in hierarchical terms, is merely another way of describing an extremely conventional model of intention and execution, or even a way of recasting the notion of expression. In actuality, it is an attempt to demystify popular notions that are related to both of these concepts and that help to establish a willingness to regard an artwork's price as the price of something that cannot actually be evaluated. The reason, then, that this attempt at demystification does not operate with other, perhaps more modern perspectives on artistic production in which there is something like an antecedence of materials, genres, and discourses and in which artists merely inscribe themselves, is that it focuses on precisely those notions of price and value – namely the speculative – that predominate in the art industry, rather than other, more academic descriptions that allude to the activities of recipients and producers. In order to do so, it makes use of the Marxist model of opposing living and abstract labor, use value and exchange value, value and price. Artworks and art projects are capable of articulating content and enabling aesthetic experience independently of their commodity form. What is important, however, is that they do this through the auratic object, which has a highly specific connection with the generation of value that differs from that of newspaper journalism and poetry - although the latter also articulate content independently of the way their commodity value is generated. In the case of artworks, the question of value is always (at least partly) thematically embedded as

content in a specifically concealed manner, since artworks offer themselves up as fetishes.

\*

This description of the commodity character of artworks is a description from a particular perspective. It has no desire to replace other perspectives, but seeks to develop a decisive picture of value, which it distinguishes from price, deriving it from the artist's living labor. In doing so, it uses an ideal device – the notion of an everyday aspect of artistic exceptionalism, the notion of a "domesticated" exceptionalism. This domesticated exceptionalism can only exist and at least become reasonably plausible if it occupies the force field between the everyday life of everyday value creation and the double exception of speculation. So far, it has been shown that speculation has developed an everyday life of its own. Within that everyday life, especially in other art forms, however, an intensification has taken place that forms the subject of this essay's third chapter, "A Crisis of Value"

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#### III A Crisis of Value

Thanks to the special object character of visual artworks, the relationship between their economic price and the living labor that has gone into producing them and that was previously invested in the artist's education is fundamentally different from that which exists in the other arts: film, music, and theater. Nevertheless, in the bourgeois era a system developed that, in addition to the exceptional returns sometimes enjoyed by living visual artists, also ensured that other artists would be able to make a living. These artists had to sell their labor in the market place in various ways and at various levels of the social hierarchy, and did not as often have the privilege of working as independent artists and entrepreneurs. In return, however, the system guaranteed them economic security. That system was based in part on the reproduction of their work and in part on their physical presence at performances. Because of the high labor costs involved, this live performancebased segment (theater, opera, symphony) is still associated with heavier financial losses. It therefore tends to be most robustly funded by the state or – in the United States, for example – supported by private, not for profit institutions that receive tax breaks in place of government funding. The reproductionbased segment - film and music - does make profits, which in the classical era of the culture industry were produced by employing industrial means of production and exploiting living artistic and other labor. In Western capitalist societies, profits generally tend to be private, while losses are more often than not assumed by the state. But the reason why the surplus value gained from reproduced cultural commodities was so high is that the latter contained a large amount of cheap living labor performed outside the artistic sector. That labor extended from literal reproduction – in record pressing plants and film duplication facilities - to packaging and printing, from shipping and freight to advertising and promotion. Digital reproduction has put an end to the possibility of creating Mehrwert by exploiting large quantities of poorly paid, untrained

labor directly involved in the physical production and distribution of the reproduced cultural commodities.

Now, however, the culture industry has entered a crisis. As reproduction continues to become massively cheaper and easier (affecting the film and music industries to differing degrees), Mehrwert formation has been forced to shift to the other sectors of production. In this reproduction-based sector, it was not enough to drive wages – or the prices paid for living artistic labor – into free fall to keep the rate of profit high (the rate of profit depends on having the largest possible proportion of living labor). Only a tiny handful of superstars, or classical musicians directly employed or subsidized by the government, are still able to make a living from their music alone. In the realm of cinema, experimental and artistic films have shrunk to a handful of government-subsidized works on the fringes of television. Thus, in the music- and film-based segments of the culture industry, the emphasis has shifted from an object-based economic form to a performance-based one, in which living actors are regarded less as a long-term investment whose status is comparable to that of the self-employed businesspeople in the world of the visual arts; instead, they tend to have the status of day laborers. The only route out of this way of life is toward the government-subsidized high art segments (theater, ballet) or the visual arts.

Meanwhile, the exodus to the auratic-object- and performance-based realms is continuing. Musicians can only support themselves by touring and taking advertising contracts, not from the sale of reproduced sound storage media, whose reproduction has become obsolete in the digital age because copies and originals have now become technically indistinguishable. Hence, experimental filmmakers and musicians are increasingly attempting to define their works as originals or as objects that are no longer originals in a technical sense, but rather carriers of a secondary aura or metaphysical index. Moreover, the culture industry is experiencing the proliferation of a wide variety of new "discount sectors" (in television, the Internet, and the CD and DVD markets). Here, performance-based formats have emerged that involve a deprofessionalized

and deregulated culture-industrial proletariat – one that helps to produce liveliness, animation, masturbation material, emotion, energy, and other varieties of pure life and sells its own self-representing labor power very cheaply, no longer as labor power but as less and less professional "life force" or vitality. Porn becomes the increasingly apt economic model. At the same time, clients and producers at the upper end of the bygone culture-industrial sector are fleeing to the object-based arts.

Possession of the secondary aura ultimately allows the visual arts to follow suit via the selling of alien products — products that were not originally art objects but were sold through reproduction and are now ennobled by the metaphysical index. These include records made of crazy colorful vinyl and produced in limited editions, CD boxes with high design value, and multiples of all kinds. However, unlike the multiples that come from sculpture, these tend to function as artist books used to, as ennobled but essentially conventional data storage media (sound and image carriers or books).

The flight towards auratic object production, on the one hand, and the proletarianization of performance, on the other, effectively usher in a situation that blends the features of precapitalist and post-bourgeois conditions. Previously, the bourgeoisie was a stable, cultural class that had its place at the center of cultural production, which it regulated by means of a mixture of free-market attitudes and subsidies, staging its own expression as both a ruling class and a life force that stood in need of legitimation. The bourgeoisie is now fragmenting into various anonymous economic profiteers who no longer constitute a single, cultural entity. For most economic processes, state and national cultural formations are no longer as crucial for the realization of economic interests as they were previously. As a result, the bourgeoisie, as a class that once fused political, economic, and cultural power, is becoming less visible. Instead, the most basic economic factors are becoming autonomous. Once these factors become autonomous, the obligation towards cultural values that even the worst forms of the culture industry kept as standards, disap-

pear. This tendency contributes to the emergence of two different cultural worlds. One rewards purely physical talent, vitality, agility, and other performative, ephemeral, erotic, and energetic attractions. In this world, the subjectivity of the performers will ultimately be reduced to an essentially interchangeable performance quality – a development that is to some extent already underway with the proliferation of DJs, rock bands, amateur actors, and reality show casts and extras. The publicly available work – a stable object that could be found in archives and on backlists and that once made it possible to establish public personalities throughout entertainment culture – is disappearing, while the number of stars is decreasing, replaced by an ephemeral and shifting population of semicelebrities. Thus, the whole thing is gradually coming to resemble a world of traveling minstrels and itinerant theater troupes from pre-bourgeois, pre-capitalist culture, albeit now operating under the conditions of the digital age.

In the other cultural world, auratic objects will continue to be introduced into circulation. In part, they will function by way of the metaphysical index – a trace of the artist's individuality, of an attractive social sphere, or of technological advancement and the ontology of the fashionable – and in part they themselves will have become a kind of common coin or legal tender. They will be associated even more forcibly with increasingly mythified artist subjects and their world. Since their central function is to bring primary and secondary value, the related value creation environments, discursive and silent and other dead labor together with living labor, new formats will arise that will have to reflect and ideologically confirm this abundance of meaning and to some extent also power.

The internally heterogeneous post-bourgeoisie, which consists of profiteers of the current world order who come from a tremendous variety of cultural backgrounds, seems to have been able to agree on the visual arts as a common ground. Within this consensus, the post-bourgeoisie will create a myth of the artist that is different from the myth created and believed in by the old bourgeoisie. Like the old myth, this new one will be based on an ideal self-image: an excessive, hedonistic,

and powerful monster who shares the old artist's enthusiasm for acts of liberation but is far removed from all political or critical commitments. Like the new performance proletarians, it will embrace restlessness and instability as a cultural value and idealize precariousness. The boundary between performance proletarians and neocharismatic artist monsters will be regarded as fluid, and now and again someone will write a heart-breaking musical about the supposed permeability of that boundary.

As a last remaining consolation, let us be glad that, here in Chapter III, I am writing in a literary tradition. Talking about a crisis is after all a classic literary genre. It usually leads to a transformation of tendencies into totalities. But tendency and totalization obey different developmental laws.

Translated from the German by James Gussen

#### Biography

Diedrich Diederichsen is one of Germany's most renowned cultural critics, whose work is seen regularly in magazines, including Texte zur Kunst, Theater heute, Jungle World, Artforum, and Die Zeit, and in newspapers such as Tagesspiegeland Tageszeitung. He was editor of the German music magazines Sounds (1979 - 1983) and Spex (1985 - 1990) as well as the books Yo! Hermeneutics: Schwarze Kulturkritik/Pop/Medien/Feminismus (1993); Loving the Alien: Science Fiction, Diaspora, Multikultur (1998); and Golden Years: Dokumente und Materialien zur gueeren Subkultur 1959-1974 (2004). His own books include: Schocker - Stile und Moden der Subkultur, with Dick Hebdige (1983); Sexbeat (1985, reissued in 2002), Freiheit macht arm 1990-1993 (1993); Politische Korrekturen (1996); Der lange Weg nach Mitte. Der Sound und die Stadt (1999), 2000 Schallplatten 1979–1999 (2000); Musikzimmer: Avantgarde und Alltag. Mit großer Diskographie (2005); the collection of his essays in Spanish translation, Personas en loop: Ensayos sobre la cultura pop (2005); and another collection of essays in French translation, Argument Son - De Britney Spears à Helmut Lachenmann: Critique électroacoustique de la société (2007), and most recently Eigenblutdoping. Künstlerromantik und Selbstverwertung: Selbstverwertung, Künstlerromantik, Partizipation (2008). He is Professor of Theory, Practice and Communication of Contemporary Art at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in Vienna.

#### Colophon Reflections 01

Series Editors

Nicolaus Schafhausen Caroline Schneider Monika Szewczyk

Author

Diedrich Diederichsen

Translation into the English

James Gussen

Translation into the Dutch Els Struiving

Foreword translations Clemens Krümmel Nathalie Houtermans

Proofreading
Zoë Gray
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Kordelia Nitsch
Ariadne Urlus

Design

Kummer & Herrman, Utrecht

Printed by

Die Keure, Belgium

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ISBN 978-90-73362-81-9 ISBN 978-1-933128-50-4

#### Distribution

Europe lexcept France, Benelux, UKI
Vice Versa Vertrieb, Berlin
T +49 30 6160 92-36
info@vice-versa-vertrieb.de
www.vice-versa-vertrieb.de

France & Benelux les presses du réel, Dijon T +33 3 80 30 75 23 info@lespressesdureel.com www.lespressesdureel.com

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Americas
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A CHARGE OR A FORCE. OUR MATERIAL & COLOR WOULD VARY AT OUR WILL. WE'D ROLL, FLOAT OR FLY.

April 17, 1969

MY SUBSTITUTE FOR TV IS THE BOOK-OF-CHANGE!

April 8, 1969

PAINTING IS THE MOST EXTREME TRANSFORMATION OF HOMELY, ORDINARY, CHEAP MATERIALS INTO AN EXTRAORDINARY EYE-AND-MIND-PLEASING VIBRATING SLAB OF "ABSTRACT" MATTER!

April 18, 1969

THE STRUCTURE OF LIGHT IS
GEOMETRICAL COMPARED TO THE
STRUCTURE OF MATTER WHICH IS
"ORGANIC." (ORGANIC = FREEFORM) BOTH MATTER AND SPACE
HAVE "DENSITY." LIGHT OPENS
PEEP-HOLE TRACKS IN THE
"DENSITY" OF SPACE, BECAUSE
OF THE STRUCTURE OF LIGHT AND
ALLOWS US TO "SEE."

May 6, 1969

AFTER SLEEPLESS NIGHT I REALIZE THAT THE IDEAS & INSIGHTS I GET WHEN STONED ON GRASS ARE JUST THE SAME AS THE IDEAS & INSIGHTS I GET WHEN I CAN'T

SLEEP DUE TO NO-GRASS. IN
OTHER WORDS WHEN MY MIND
WANTS TO DROP A LOAD IT FINDS A
WAY, WHATEVER MY "LIFE
SITUATION." BOTH GRASS & NOGRASS STATES PRODUCE FANTASY
WHICH IS THE BREEDING GROUND
FOR MORE FORMALIZED
THOUGHTS. FANTASY & MINDWANDERING SEEM INDISPENSABLE
IF YA WANNA KEEP MOVIN.

### **BOOK #2**

April 27, 1969

ONE'S BODY IS ONE'S MOTHER.
(MY FATHER IS THE BOOK-OFCHANGE.) HOW ONE TAKES CARE
OF ONE'S BODY INDICATES HOW
ONE FEELS ABOUT ONE'S MOTHER.

THE BOOK-OF-CHANGE IS "THEY"
NOT "HE." "THEY" ARE MY
ANCESTORS, WHO ARE MINE AND
EACH PERSON'S "HIS OWN"
UNIQUELY UNTIL A VERY LONG WAY
"BACK" FROM "NOW" WHEN THEY
BEGIN TO MERGE INTO THE FEW,
THEN POSSIBLY THE ONE?

April 28, 1969

FINALLY I MUST SAY SOMETHING ABOUT WHY I WRITE IN SUCH

SMALL BOOKS. IT IS TO ENCOURAGE MYSELF TO TRY TO MAINTAIN TERSENESS.

May 13, 1969

PAUL BIANCHINI LAYS A CHECK FOR \$500 ON ME FOR DRAWINGS HE HASN'T PICKED YET. AFTER HE LEAVES (WITH SIMONNE STERN) I HAVE UTTERLY EMPTY FEELING.

EMPTY FEELING IS NOT BECAUSE OF VISIT, WHICH WAS A LOT OF FUN, BUT SOMEHOW (THE EMPTINESS) IS RELATED TO GETTING MONEY.

May 14, 1969

PAINTING AS JUST ONE MORE INFORMATION SYSTEM: PAINTING GIVES COMPARATIVELY LESS INFORMATION THAN OTHER INFORMATION SYSTEMS. TWO KINDS OF INFORMATION PAINTING ALWAYS GIVES:

- 1. INFO ABT PAINTING
- 2. INFO ABT THE ARTIST(S).

SOMETIMES PAINTING GIVES A
THIRD KIND OF INFORMATION. § AM
INTERESTED IN THAT THIRD KIND
OF INFORMATION. EVEN IF I CAN
MAKE THE THIRD KIND OF
INFORMATION EXTENSIVE IT MAY
NOT BE ENOUGH.

May 16, 1969

IN 1965 (?) KASPER KÖNIG SAID TO ME:

"YOU ARE A GOOD PAINTER AND A NICE GIRL."

#### I REPLIED:

"WRONG ON BOTH COUNTS.
I'M A VERY GOOD PAINTER
AND NOT A NICE GIRL!"

May 18, 1969

I NOTICE AT PAULA COOPER
OPENING THAT MANY MANY PEOPLE
HAVE DISCOLORED, STAINED OR
ROTTING TEETH ("NEW YORK
TOOTH"). (ME TOO). MAKE INQUIRY
ABT REACTIONS TO IDEA OF
SETTING JEWELS IN TEETH,
PAINTING THEM DIFF. COLORS ETC.

May 19, 1969

IN THINKING ABT HOW THE WORK OF ARTISTS I HAVE KNOWN FOR A WHILE (MORRIS & RAINER PERFECT EXAMPLES OF THIS) GIVES LESS & LESS FEEDBACK TO ME EACH YEAR UNTIL FINALLY THIS YEAR I DIDN'T WANT TO EXPERIENCE IT ANY MORE (PART OF GENERAL STRIKE WAS "TO NOT GO ANYMORE"), ALTHOUGH I CONSIDER THESE PEOPLE IMPORTANT ARTISTS (IN FACT OLD MASTERS), I REALIZE THE FOLLOWING:

November 27, 1969

BODY GOES THROUGH SUCH VIOLENT CHANGES POSSIBLY BECAUSE: DUE TO LARGENESS & WELL-FORMEDNESS OF GENITALS (CUNT, OVARIES ETC, CLITORIS & OTHERS) (DUE TO ACCIDENT OF SCORPIO BIRTH ETC?), THE GENITALS SEND MORE INFO TO THE MIND. A QUANTITATIVE FACTOR.

RIGHT NOW CUNT IS SENDING A HUGE AMT OF INFO (OR IS IT "BAD" INFO) TO BRAIN & THE DELUGE HAS AFFECTED HEALTH, WORK & WHAT ELSE?

November 30, 1969

I'VE USED SHAFTS (COCKS), BALLS (TITS), & WATER FOR FORMS IN PAINTINGS. TRY FIRE PAINTINGS.

## **BOOK #5**

December 10, 1969

FOR THE FIRST TIME ACHIEVE A
STATE OF EUPHORIA FROM
ALONENESS, HAVING PEELED OFF
EVERYONE. THE EUPHORIA
BROUGHT ME TO A NEW WORLD I
WAS JUST ABOUT TO INVESTIGATE

WHEN THE PHONE RANG, & THAT WAS THE END OF MY JOY.

December 11, 1969

DISCOVER A PLACE TO TANGENT THE EAR WHERE THE SOUND OF THE CITY CAN BE HEARD, A "SOUND" TELESCOPE. VISUAL WINDOWS ARE NOT ENOUGH. MORE INFORMATION!

December 19, 1969

WORK OUT THE PASTE\* IN THE CRACK THEORY. [\*SMEGMA?]

WHERE SPACE MEETS THE
SURFACE OF THE EARTH: THIS
"CRACK" IS A SINGULARITY OF
NATURE SO RICH & GREASY THAT
WITH THE MOTION (FRICTION) OF
THE TWO (SPACE & EARTH)
RUBBING, RUBBING AGAINST EACH
OTHER THERE DEVELOPED A MOST
INTERESTING PASTE, LIVING
MOLECULES, WITH ITS RICHEST
PART, HUMAN FLESH. HUMAN
FLESH IS UNIQUE IN THAT IT
CONTAINS THE HIGHEST INFO
CONTENT PER SQ. INCH OF ANY
MATTER IN THE UNIVERSE.

! AM THINKING OF FLESH AS AN INTRIGUING MATERIAL WITH PERHAPS GREASE BEING THE "KEY" TO LIVING MATTER.

BODY = MACHINE.

KEEP THE MACHINE WELL GREASED TO FUNCTION SMOOTHLY.

OR

HUMAN LIFE CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS FUNGUS INFESTING A RICH SURFACE

OR

AS A CANCEROUS GROWTH

OR

FROM AFAR, HUMAN BEINGS IN
THEIR FLOW OVER SURFACE OF
EARTH SEEM ANALOGOUS TO
MOLECULES OF WATER, SPLASHING
EVERYWHERE, SEPARATING,
COMING TOGETHER AS IS THE
TENDENCY OF BOTH WATER &
PEOPLE, & RECENTLY, AN
OCCASIONAL MOLECULE OR TWO
HURLING ITSELF FURTHER OUT
THAN USUAL (TO THE MOON).

AIR FROM
WANT TO
AROUND.
WHEN TH
WHEN TH
OCCASIONAL MOLECULE OR TWO
DISTANCE

MAN SETTING FOOT ON THE MOON IS NOT FASHIONABLE, IT IS MODERN.

PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING FOR ENHANCING A HIGH. FEELING OPPRESSED TODAY I CAUGHT MYSELF INHIBITING THE COMPLETION OF MY BREATHS. AS SOON AS I STARTED DEEP

BREATHING I RELAXED, FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY.

December 20, 1969

CONFINEMENT IS NEAR THE ROOT OF MY RAGE.

I AM NOT ANGRY AT ANYONE OR ANYTHING BUT I FEEL RAGE. I HAVE ALWAYS FELT RAGE.

I WANT TO PUSH THESE WALLS OUT WITH MY ELBOWS. THIS LOFT FEELS NARROW. I WANT TO PUSH AWAY MY CONFINEMENT, FEEL BIG SPACE AROUND ME, BREATHE IN AIR FROM FAR AWAY.

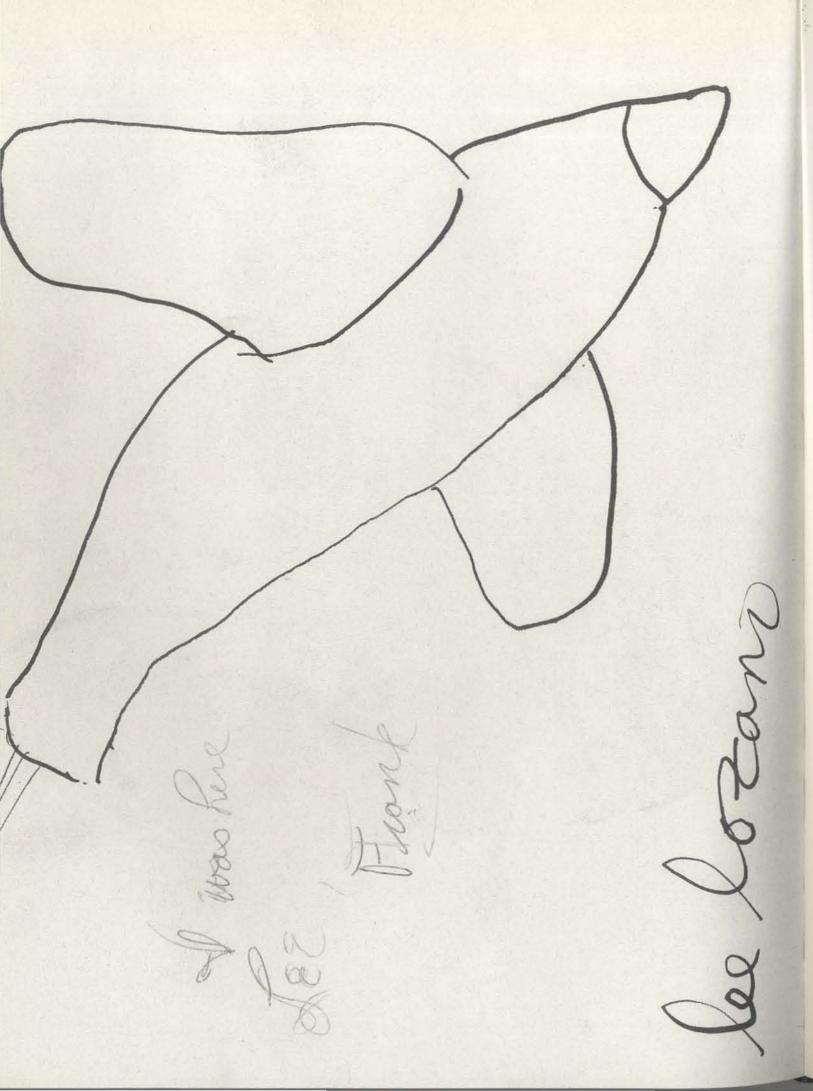
WANT TO SEE CITY LIGHTS ALL AROUND.

December 21, 1969

WHEN THERE IS NO ONE CLOSE ON WHOM TO FOCUS, ONE'S VISION SWITCHES TO THE MYSTERIOUS DISTANCE.

AS I COLLATE MORE INFO FROM MY INVESTIGATIONS (BOTH DETERMINED & ACCIDENTAL) I UNDERSTAND THE HEXAGRAMS MORE & MORE, E.G. #16 (THE RELATIONSHIP BETW REPOSE & MUSIC), #57, #14 ETC.

GIVEN: THE FINE STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSE.



# WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

SUPPOSE: WHEREVER THERE IS STRUCTURE THERE IS PROGRAMING.

SUPPOSE: WHEREVER THERE IS PROGRAMING THERE IS CONTACT WITH THE MAIN PROGRAMING. **HOWEVER "FAR AWAY"** 

(IN TERMS OF TIME? DISTANCE? OTHER?)

THE ACTIVITY IN THE FINE FINE STRUCTURE

IT WILL NOT CUT LOOSE FROM THE MAIN PROGRAMING, WHICH IS SANITY.

THE BETTER THE BODY FEELS THE MORE OF A COMPANION IT CAN BE. I THINK OF MY BODY AS MY GUEST. THIS IS A KIND OF NARCISSISM FOR WHICH THERE IS NO "BLAME." IT HAPPENS NATURALLY.

January 2, 1970

WHY DO YOU NEED ROOTS WHEN YOU HAVE GRAVITY.

PERHAPS I'M HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO MUST GIVE UP COMPETITIVE ALL YANG/YIN VIBRATIONS.

January 4, 1970

SOME T (TIME) I'LL HAVE AN ORGASM SO BIG THAT IT'LL PUSH ME OVER INTO ANOTHER WORLD AS I'LL LEAVE SPACE/MATTER TO THE

THO THRU THE NECK OF A KLEINBOTTLE.

THE ORGASM COULD BE IN ANY SYSTEM: SEX, DIALOGUE, IDEA, FANTASY, MUSIC ETC, MAYBE EVEN ART. OR FROM REBIRTH OR DEATH.

NO IT HAS TO BE SEX NOTHING **ELSE WILL DO.** 

## BOOK #9

"HAMMER OUT AN AESTHETIC"— FRED GUTZEIT. MAY 1970.

(APR 70)

May 2, 1970

NYC: A DECADE OF **COMPETITIVENESS. WHERE COMPETITION THRIVES FRIENDS** CANT EXIST.

GAME-PLAYING (GETS TO BE PREDICTABLE ANYWAY). (MOVE = EMOTE)

MY ART IS ABT t! [TIME = t]

SCULPTOR EXPERTS. I'M

INTERESTED IN SPACE/MATTER TOO BUT I AM NOT EMOTIONALLY TIED TO IT THE WAY THE SCULPTOR-SPECIALISTS ARE.

**ARE ANGELS LOVERS? ARE SAGGITARIANS CUPIDS?** 

May 24, 1970

THE TEETH MAY HOLD UP. IT'S FALSE GUMS I NEED.

June 2, 1970

NORMAN TOLD ME ON HIS FIRST **VISIT HERE THAT THE YOUNG** PEOPLE LIVING IN LOFTS (ARTISTS) ARE ALL MAKING ELECTRICAL ART. THE OLDER ARTISTS PAINTING & SCULPTURE, & THERE IS "NOTHING INBETWEEN."

July 3, 1970

FRED GUTZEIT COMPARED MY WORK METHOD TO MOVEMENT LIKE A GLACIER, & THEN HE SAID THE WORK HAD ABT THE SAME (IMPACT?) QUALITIES AS A GLACIER.

RE COLLAPSANTS: I FEEL BETTER WHEN I'M FLUFFY. MAKES SUPERCOMMUNICATION WORK.

NORMAN'S HEAD IS SHAPED FOR AIRFLIGHT.

I DON'T LIKE TO PISS AWAY MY ORALITY ON FOOD. NORMAN'S LIPS ARE RICH, FOR KISSING.

## The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer<sup>1</sup>

The sociological theory that the loss of the support of objectively established religion, the dissolution of the last remnants of precapitalism, together with technological and social differentiation or specialization, have led to cultural chaos is disproved every day; for culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system. The decorative industrial management buildings and exhibition centers in authoritarian countries are much the same as anywhere else. The huge gleaming towers that shoot up everywhere are outward signs of the ingenious planning of international concerns, toward which the unleashed entrepreneurial system (whose monuments are a mass of gloomy houses and business premises in grimy, spiritless cities) was already hastening. Even now the older houses just outside the concrete city centers look like slums, and the new bungalows on the outskirts are at one with the flimsy structures of world fairs in their praise of technical progress and their built-in demand to be discarded after a short while like empty food cans. Yet the city housing projects designed to perpetuate the individual as a supposedly independent unit in a small hygienic dwelling make him all the more subservient to his adversary—the absolute power of capitalism. Because the inhabitants, as producers and as consumers, are drawn into the center in search of work and pleasure, all the living units crystallize into well-organized complexes. The striking unity of microcosm and macrocosm presents men with a model of their culture: the false identity of the general and the particular. Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors' incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed.

Interested parties explain the culture industry in technological terms. It is alleged that because millions participate in it, certain reproduction processes are necessary that inevitably require identical needs in innumerable places to be satisfied with identical goods. The technical contrast between the few production centers and the large number of widely dispersed consumption points is said to demand organization and planning by management. Furthermore, it is claimed that standards were based in the first place on consumers' needs, and for that reason were accepted with so little resistance. The result is the circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger. No mention is made of the fact that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest. A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself. It is the coercive nature of society alienated from itself. Automobiles, bombs, and movies keep the whole thing together until their leveling element shows its strength in the very wrong which it furthered. It has made the technology of the culture industry no more than the achievement of standardization and mass production, sacrificing whatever involved a distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system. This is the result not of a law of movement in technology as such but of its function in today's economy. The need which might resist central control has already been suppressed by the control of the individual consciousness. The step from the telephone to the radio has clearly distinguished the roles. The former still allowed the subscriber to play the role of subject, and was liberal. The latter is democratic: it turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same. No machinery of rejoinder has been devised, and private broadcasters are denied any freedom. They are confined to the apocryphal<sup>2</sup> field of the "amateur," and also have to accept organization from above. But any trace of spontaneity from the public in official broadcasting is controlled and absorbed by talent scouts, studio competitions and official programs of every kind selected by professionals. Talented performers belong to the industry long before it displays them; otherwise they would not be so eager to fit in. The attitude of the public, which ostensibly and actually favors the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system and not an excuse for it. If one branch of art follows the same formula as one with a very different medium and content; if the dramatic intrigue of broadcast soap operas becomes no more than useful material for showing how to master technical problems at both ends of the scale of musical experience—real jazz or a cheap imitation; or if a movement from a Beethoven symphony is crudely "adapted" for a film sound-track in the same way as a Tolstoy novel is garbled in a film script: then the claim that this is done to satisfy the spontaneous wishes of the public is no more than hot air. We are closer to the facts if we explain these phenomena as inherent in the technical and personnel apparatus which, down to its last cog, itself forms part of the economic mechanism of selection. In addition there is the agreement—or at least the determination—of all executive authorities not to produce or sanction anything that in any way differs from their own rules, their own ideas about consumers, or above all themselves.

In our age the objective social tendency is incarnate in the hidden subjective purposes of company directors, the foremost among whom are in the most powerful sectors of industry—steel, petroleum, electricity, and chemicals. Culture monopolies are weak and dependent in comparison. They cannot afford to neglect their appearement of the real holders of power if their sphere of activity in mass society (a sphere producing a specific type of commodity which anyhow is still too closely bound up with easygoing liberalism and Jewish intellectuals) is not to undergo a series of purges. The dependence of the most powerful broadcasting company on the electrical industry, or of the motion picture industry on the banks, is characteristic of the whole sphere, whose individual branches are themselves economically interwoven. All are in such close contact that the extreme concentration of mental forces allows demarcation lines between different firms and technical branches to be ignored. The ruthless unity in the culture industry is evidence of what will happen in politics. Marked differentiations such as those of A and B films, or of stories in magazines in different price ranges, depend not so much on subject matter as on classifying, organizing, and labeling consumers. Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended. The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda.

How formalized the procedure is can be seen when the mechanically differentiated products prove to be all alike in the end. That the difference between the Chrysler range and General Motors products is basically illusory strikes every child with a keen interest in varieties. What connoisseurs discuss as good or bad points serve only to perpetuate the semblance of competition and range of choice. The same applies to the Warner Brothers and Metro Goldwyn Mayer productions. But even the differences between the more expensive and cheaper models put out by the same firm steadily diminish: for automobiles, there are such differences as the number of cylinders, cubic capacity, details of patented gadgets; and for films there are the number of stars, the extravagant use of technology, labor, and equipment, and the introduction of the latest psychological formulas. The universal criterion of merit is the amount of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Apocryphal: of doubtful authenticity: spurious Theodor Adorno and Max Horkneimer

"conspicuous production," of blatant cash investment. The varying budgets in the culture industry do not bear the slightest relation to factual values, to the meaning of the products themselves. Even the technical media are relentlessly forced into uniformity. Television aims at a synthesis of radio and film, and is held up only because the interested parties have not yet reached agreement, but its consequences will be quite enormous and promise to intensify the impoverishment of aesthetic matter so drastically, that by tomorrow the thinly veiled identity of all industrial culture products can come triumphantly out into the open, derisively fulfilling the Wagnerian dream of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the fusion of all the arts in one work. The alliance of word, image, and music is all the more perfect than in *Tristan* because the sensuous elements which all approvingly reflect the surface of social reality are in principle embodied in the same technical process, the unity of which becomes its distinctive content. This process integrates all the elements of the production, from the novel (shaped with an eye to the film) to the last sound effect. It is the triumph of invested capital, whose title as absolute master is etched deep into the hearts of the dispossessed in the employment line; it is the meaningful content of every film, whatever plot the production team may have selected.

The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him. Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function. Its prime service to the customer is to do his schematizing for him. Kant said that there was a secret mechanism in the soul which prepared direct intuitions in such a way that they could be fitted into the system of pure reason. But today that secret has been deciphered. While the mechanism is to all appearances planned by those who serve up the data of experience, that is, by the culture industry, it is in fact forced upon the latter by the power of society, which remains irrational, however we may try to rationalize it; and this inescapable force is processed by commercial agencies so that they give an artificial impression of being in command. There is nothing left for the consumer to classify. Producers have done it for him. Art for the masses has destroyed the dream but still conforms to the tenets of that dreaming idealism which critical idealism balked at. Everything derives from consciousness: for Malebranche and Berkeley, from the consciousness of God; in mass art, from the consciousness of the production team. Not only are the hit songs, stars, and soap operas cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types, but the specific content of the entertainment itself is derived from them and only appears to change. The details are interchangeable. The short interval sequence which was effective in a hit song, the hero's momentary fall from grace (which he accepts as good sport), the rough treatment which the beloved gets from the male star, the latter's rugged defiance of the spoilt heiress, are, like all the other details, ready-made clichés to be slotted in anywhere; they never do anything more than fulfill the purpose allotted them in the overall plan. Their whole raison d'être is to confirm it by being its constituent parts. As soon as the film begins, it is quite clear how it will end, and who will be rewarded, punished, or forgotten. In light music, once the trained ear has heard the first notes of the hit song, it can guess what is coming and feel flattered when it does come. The average length of the short story has to be rigidly adhered to. Even gags, effects, and jokes are calculated like the setting in which they are placed. They are the responsibility of special experts and their narrow range makes it easy for them to be apportioned in the office. The development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself—which once expressed an idea, but was liquidated together with the idea. When the detail won its freedom, it became rebellious and, in the period from Romanticism to Expressionism, asserted itself as free expression, as a vehicle of protest against the organization. In music the single harmonic effect obliterated the awareness of form as a whole; in painting the individual color was stressed at the expense of pictorial composition; and in the novel psychology became more important than structure. The totality of the culture industry has put an end to this. Though concerned exclusively with effects, it crushes their insubordination and makes Theodor Adorno and Max Horkneimer 3 The Culture Industry them subserve the formula, which replaces the work. The same fate is inflicted on whole and parts alike. The whole inevitably bears no relation to the details—just like the career of a successful man into which everything is made to fit as an illustration or a proof, whereas it is nothing more than the sum of all those idiotic events. The so-called dominant idea is like a file which ensures order but not coherence. The whole and the parts are alike; there is no antithesis and no connection. Their prearranged harmony is a mockery of what had to be striven after in the great bourgeois works of art. In Germany the graveyard stillness of the dictatorship already hung over the gayest films of the democratic era. The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer's guideline. The more intensely and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen. This purpose has been furthered by mechanical reproduction since the lightning takeover by the sound film.

Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theater of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond within the structure of the film, yet deviate from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story; hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality. The stunting of the mass-media consumer's powers of imagination and spontaneity does not have to be traced back to any psychological mechanisms; he must ascribe the loss of those attributes to the objective nature of the products themselves, especially to the most characteristic of them, the sound film. They are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are undeniably needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of facts. Even though the effort required for his response is semi-automatic, no scope is left for the imagination. Those who are so absorbed by the world of the movie—by its images, gestures, and words—that they are unable to supply what really makes it a world, do not have to dwell on particular points of its mechanics during a screening. All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically. The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds. The entertainment manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses, whether at work or at leisure—which is akin to work. From every sound film and every broadcast program the social effect can be inferred which is exclusive to none but is shared by all alike. The culture industry as a whole has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product. All the agents of this process, from the producer to the women's clubs, take good care that the simple reproduction of this mental state is not nuanced or extended in any way.

The art historians and guardians of culture who complain of the extinction in the West of a basic style-determining power are wrong. The stereotyped appropriation of everything, even the inchoate<sup>3</sup>, for the purposes of mechanical reproduction surpasses the rigor and general currency of any "real style," in the sense in which cultural *cognoscenti*<sup>4</sup> celebrate the organic precapitalist past. No Palestrina could be more of a purist in eliminating every unprepared and unresolved discord than the jazz arranger in suppressing any development which does not conform to the jargon. When jazzing up Mozart he changes him not only when he is too serious or too difficult but when he harmonizes the melody in a different way, perhaps more simply, than is customary now. No medieval builder can have scrutinized the subjects for church windows and sculptures more suspiciously than the studio hierarchy scrutinizes a work by Balzac or Hugo before finally approving it. No medieval theologian could have determined the degree of the torment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Inchoate: being only partly in existence or operation; imperfectly formed or formulated

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Cognoscenti: People especially knowledgeable in a subject: connoisseurs.

to be suffered by the damned in accordance with the *ordo* of divine love more meticulously than the producers of shoddy epics calculate the torture to be undergone by the hero or the exact point to which the leading lady's hemline shall be raised. The explicit and implicit, exoteric<sup>5</sup> and esoteric<sup>6</sup> catalog of the forbidden and tolerated is so extensive that it not only defines the area of freedom but is all-powerful inside it. Everything down to the last detail is shaped accordingly. Like its counterpart, avant-garde art, the entertainment industry determines its own language, down to its very syntax and vocabulary, by the use of anathema<sup>7</sup>. The constant pressure to produce new effects (which must conform to the old pattern) serves merely as another rule to increase the power of the conventions when any single effect threatens to slip through the net. Every detail is so firmly stamped with sameness that nothing can appear which is not marked at birth, or does not meet with approval at first sight. And the star performers, whether they produce or reproduce, use this jargon as freely and fluently and with as much gusto as if it were the very language which it silenced long ago. Such is the ideal of what is natural in this field of activity, and its influence becomes all the more powerful, the more technique is perfected and diminishes the tension between the finished product and everyday life. The paradox of this routine, which is essentially travesty, can be detected and is often predominant in everything that the culture industry turns out. A jazz musician who is playing a piece of serious music, one of Beethoven's simplest minuets, syncopates it involuntarily and will smile superciliously when asked to follow the normal divisions of the beat. This is the "nature" which, complicated by the ever-present and extravagant demands of the specific medium, constitutes the new style and is a "system of non-culture, to which one might even concede a certain 'unity of style' if it really made any sense to speak of stylized barbarity."8

The universal imposition of this stylized mode can even go beyond what is quasi-officially sanctioned or forbidden; today a hit song is more readily forgiven for not observing the 32 beats or the compass of the ninth than for containing even the most clandestine melodic or harmonic detail which does not conform to the idiom. Whenever Orson Welles offends against the tricks of the trade, he is forgiven because his departures from the norm are regarded as calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system. The constraint of the technically-conditioned idiom which stars and directors have to produce as "nature" so that the people can appropriate it, extends to such fine nuances that they almost attain the subtlety of the devices of an avant-garde work as against those of truth. The rare capacity minutely to fulfill the obligations of the natural idiom in all branches of the culture industry becomes the criterion of efficiency. What and how they say it must be measurable by everyday language, as in logical positivism. The producers are experts. The idiom demands an astounding productive power, which it absorbs and squanders. In a diabolical way it has overreached the culturally conservative distinction between genuine and artificial style. A style might be called artificial which is imposed from without on the refractory impulses of a form. But in the culture industry every element of the subject matter has its origin in the same apparatus as that jargon whose stamp it bears. The quarrels in which the artistic experts become involved with sponsor and censor about a lie going beyond the bounds of credibility are evidence not so much of an inner aesthetic tension as of a divergence of interests. The reputation of the specialist, in which a last remnant of objective independence sometimes finds refuge, conflicts with the business politics of the Church, or the concern which is manufacturing the cultural commodity. But the thing itself has been essentially objectified and made viable before the established authorities began to argue about it. Even before Zanuck acquired her, Saint Bernadette was regarded by her latter-day hagiographer<sup>9</sup> as brilliant propaganda for all interested parties. That is what became of the emotions of the character. Hence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Exoteric: belonging to the outer or less initiate circle

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Esoteric: designed for or understood by the specially initiated alone.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Anathema: someone or something intensely disliked or loathed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Nietzsche, *Unzeirgemfisse Betrachtungen*, Werke, Vol. I (Leipzig, 1917), p. 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Hagiographer: a writer of an idealizing or idolizing biography.

the style of the culture industry, which no longer has to test itself against any refractory material, is also the negation of style. The reconciliation of the general and particular, of the rule and the specific demands of the subject matter, the achievement of which alone gives essential, meaningful content to style, is futile because there has ceased to be the slightest tension between opposite poles: these concordant extremes are dismally identical; the general can replace the particular, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, this caricature of style does not amount to something beyond the genuine style of the past. In the culture industry the notion of genuine style is seen to be the aesthetic equivalent of domination. Style considered as mere aesthetic regularity is a romantic dream of the past. The unity of style not only of the Christian Middle Ages but of the Renaissance expresses in each case the different structure of social power, and not the obscure experience of the oppressed in which the general was enclosed. The great artists were never those who embodied a wholly flawless and perfect style, but those who used style as a way of hardening themselves against the chaotic expression of suffering, as a negative truth. The style of their works gave what was expressed that force without which life flows away unheard. Those very art forms which are known as classical, such as Mozart's music, contain objective trends which represent something different to the style which they incarnate. As late as Schönberg and Picasso, the great artists have retained a mistrust of style, and at crucial points have subordinated it to the logic of the matter. What Dadaists and Expressionists called the untruth of style as such triumphs today in the sung jargon of a crooner, in the carefully contrived elegance of a film star, and even in the admirable expertise of a photograph of a peasant's squalid hut. Style represents a promise in every work of art. That which is expressed is subsumed through style into the dominant forms of generality, into the language of music, painting, or words, in the hope that it will be reconciled thus with the idea of true generality. This promise held out by the work of art that it will create truth by lending new shape to the conventional social forms is as necessary as it is hypocritical. It unconditionally posits the real forms of life as it is by suggesting that fulfillment lies in their aesthetic derivatives. To this extent the claim of art is always ideology too. However, only in this confrontation with tradition of which style is the record can art express suffering. That factor in a work of art which enables it to transcend reality certainly cannot be detached from style; but it does not consist of the harmony actually realized, of any doubtful unity of form and content, within and without, of individual and society; it is to be found in those features in which discrepancy appears: in the necessary failure of the passionate striving for identity. Instead of exposing itself to this failure in which the style of the great work of art has always achieved self-negation, the inferior work has always relied on its similarity with others—on a surrogate identity.

In the culture industry this imitation finally becomes absolute. Having ceased to be anything but style, it reveals the latter's secret: obedience to the social hierarchy. Today aesthetic barbarity completes what has threatened the creations of the spirit since they were gathered together as culture and neutralized. To speak of culture was always contrary to culture. Culture as a common denominator already contains in embryo that schematization and process of cataloging and classification which bring culture within the sphere of administration. And it is precisely the industrialized, the consequent, subsumption<sup>10</sup> which entirely accords with this notion of culture. By subordinating in the same way and to the same end all areas of intellectual creation, by occupying men's senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satisfies the concept of a unified culture which the philosophers of personality contrasted with mass culture.

And so the culture industry, the most rigid of all styles, proves to be the goal of liberalism, which is reproached for its lack of style. Not only do its categories and contents derive from liberalism—domesticated naturalism as well as operetta and revue—but the modern culture monopolies form the economic area in which, together with the corresponding entrepreneurial types, for the time being some part of its sphere of operation survives, despite the process of disintegration elsewhere. It is still possible to make one's way in entertainment, if one is not too obstinate about one's own concerns, and proves appropriately pliable. Anyone who resists can only survive by fitting in. Once his particular brand of deviation from the norm has been noted by the industry, he belongs to it as does the land-reformer to capitalism. Realistic dissidence<sup>11</sup> is the trademark of anyone who has a new idea in business. In the public voice of modern society accusations are seldom audible; if they are, the perceptive can already detect signs that the dissident will soon be reconciled. The more immeasurable the gap between chorus and leaders, the more certainly there is room at the top for everybody who demonstrates his superiority by well-planned originality. Hence, in the culture industry, too, the liberal tendency to give full scope to its able men survives. To do this for the efficient today is still the function of the market, which is otherwise proficiently controlled; as for the market's freedom, in the high period of art as elsewhere, it was freedom for the stupid to starve. Significantly, the system of the culture industry comes from the more liberal industrial nations, and all its characteristic media, such as movies, radio, jazz, and magazines, flourish there. Its progress, to be sure, had its origin in the general laws of capital. Gaumont and Pathe, Ullstein and Hugenberg followed the international trend with some success; Europe's economic dependence on the United States after war and inflation was a contributory factor. The belief that the barbarity of the culture industry is a result of "cultural lag," of the fact that the American consciousness did not keep up with the growth of technology, is quite wrong. It was pre-Fascist Europe which did not keep up with the trend toward the culture monopoly. But it was this very lag which left intellect and creativity some degree of independence and enabled its last representatives to exist—however dismally. In Germany the failure of democratic control to permeate life had led to a paradoxical situation. Many things were exempt from the market mechanism which had invaded the Western countries. The German educational system, universities, theaters with artistic standards, great orchestras, and museums enjoyed protection. The political powers, state and municipalities, which had inherited such institutions from absolutism, had left them with a measure of the freedom from the forces of power which dominates the market, just as princes and feudal lords had done up to the nineteenth century. This strengthened art in this late phase against the verdict of supply and demand, and increased its resistance far beyond the actual degree of protection. In the market itself the tribute of a quality for which no use had been found was turned into purchasing power; in this way, respectable literary and music publishers could help authors who yielded little more in the way of profit than the respect of the connoisseur. But what completely fettered the artist was the pressure (and the accompanying drastic threats), always to fit into business life as an aesthetic expert. Formerly, like Kant and Hume, they signed their letters "Your most humble and obedient servant," and undermined the foundations of throne and altar. Today they address heads of government by their first names, yet in every artistic activity they are subject to their illiterate masters. The analysis Tocqueville offered a century ago has in the meantime proved wholly accurate. Under the private culture monopoly it is a fact that "tyranny leaves the body free and directs its attack at the soul. The ruler no longer says: You must think as I do or die. He says: You are free not to think as I do; your life, your property, everything shall remain yours, but from this day on you are a stranger among us." Not to conform means to be rendered powerless, economically and therefore spiritually—to be "self-employed." When the outsider is excluded from the concern, he can only too easily be accused of incompetence. Whereas today in material production the mechanism of supply and demand is disintegrating, in the superstructure it still operates as a check in the rulers' favor. The consumers are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Dissidence: dissent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Democracie en Amerique*, Vol. II (Paris, 1864), p. 151.

the workers and employees, the farmers and lower middle class. Capitalist production so confines them, body and soul, that they fall helpless victims to what is offered them. As naturally as the ruled always took the morality imposed upon them more seriously than did the rulers themselves, the deceived masses are today captivated by the myth of success even more than the successful are. Immovably, they insist on the very ideology which enslaves them. The misplaced love of the common people for the wrong which is done them is a greater force than the cunning of the authorities. It is stronger even than the rigorism of the Hays Office, just as in certain great times in history it has inflamed greater forces that were turned against it, namely, the terror of the tribunals. It calls for Mickey Rooney in preference to the tragic Garbo, for Donald Duck instead of Betty Boop. The industry submits to the vote which it has itself inspired. What is a loss for the firm which cannot fully exploit a contract with a declining star is a legitimate expense for the system as a whole. By craftily sanctioning the demand for rubbish it inaugurates total harmony. The connoisseur and the expert are despised for their pretentious claim to know better than the others, even though culture is democratic and distributes its privileges to all. In view of the ideological truce, the conformism of the buyers and the effrontery of the producers who supply them prevail. The result is a constant reproduction of the same thing.

A constant sameness governs the relationship to the past as well. What is new about the phase of mass culture compared with the late liberal stage is the exclusion of the new. The machine rotates on the same spot. While determining consumption it excludes the untried as a risk. The movie-makers distrust any manuscript which is not reassuringly backed by a bestseller. Yet for this very reason there is never-ending talk of ideas, novelty, and surprise, of what is taken for granted but has never existed. Tempo and dynamics serve this trend. Nothing remains as of old; everything has to run incessantly, to keep moving. For only the universal triumph of the rhythm of mechanical production and reproduction promises that nothing changes, and nothing unsuitable will appear. Any additions to the well-proven culture inventory are too much of a speculation. The ossified forms—such as the sketch, short story, problem film, or hit song—are the standardized average of late liberal taste, dictated with threats from above. The people at the top in the culture agencies, who work in harmony as only one manager can with another, whether he comes from the rag trade or from college, have long since reorganized and rationalized the objective spirit. One might think that an omnipresent authority had sifted the material and drawn up an official catalog of cultural commodities to provide a smooth supply of available mass-produced lines. The ideas are written in the cultural firmament where they had already been numbered by Plato—and were indeed numbers, incapable of increase and immutable.

Amusement and all the elements of the culture industry existed long before the latter came into existence. Now they are taken over from above and brought up to date. The culture industry can pride itself on having energetically executed the previously clumsy transposition of art into the sphere of consumption, on making this a principle, on divesting amusement of its obtrusive naivetes and improving the type of commodities. The more absolute it became, the more ruthless it was in forcing every outsider either into bankruptcy or into a syndicate, and became more refined and elevated—until it ended up as a synthesis of Beethoven and the Casino de Paris. It enjoys a double victory: the truth it extinguishes without it can reproduce at will as a lie within. "Light" art as such, distraction, is not a decadent form. Anyone who complains that it is a betrayal of the ideal of pure expression is under an illusion about society. The purity of bourgeois art, which hypostatized<sup>13</sup> itself as a world of freedom in contrast to what was happening in the material world, was from the beginning bought with the exclusion of the lower classes—with whose cause, the real universality, art keeps faith precisely by its freedom from the ends of the false universality. Serious art has been withheld from those for whom the hardship and oppression of life make a mockery of seriousness, and who must be glad if they can use time not spent at the production line just to keep

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Hypostatized: attributed a real identity to (a concept)

going. Light art has been the shadow of autonomous art. It is the social bad conscience of serious art. The truth which the latter necessarily lacked because of its social premises gives the other the semblance of legitimacy. The division itself is the truth: it does at least express the negativity of the culture which the different spheres constitute. Least of all can the antithesis be reconciled by absorbing light into serious art, or vice versa. But that is what the culture industry attempts. The eccentricity of the circus, peepshow, and brothel is as embarrassing to it as that of Schönberg and Karl Kraus. And so the jazz musician Benny Goodman appears with the Budapest string quartet, more pedantic rhythmically than any philharmonic clarinettist, while the style of the Budapest players is as uniform and sugary as that of Guy Lombardo. But what is significant is not vulgarity, stupidity, and lack of polish. The culture industry did away with yesterday's rubbish by its own perfection, and by forbidding and domesticating the amateurish, although it constantly allows gross blunders without which the standard of the exalted style cannot be perceived. But what is new is that the irreconcilable elements of culture, art and distraction, are subordinated to one end and subsumed under one false formula: the totality of the culture industry. It consists of repetition. That its characteristic innovations are never anything more than improvements of mass reproduction is not external to the system. It is with good reason that the interest of innumerable consumers is directed to the technique, and not to the contents—which are stubbornly repeated, outworn, and by now half-discredited. The social power which the spectators worship shows itself more effectively in the omnipresence of the stereotype imposed by technical skill than in the stale ideologies for which the ephemeral contents stand

Nevertheless the culture industry remains the entertainment business. Its influence over the consumers is established by entertainment; that will ultimately be broken not by an outright decree, but by the hostility inherent in the principle of entertainment to what is greater than itself. Since all the trends of the culture industry are profoundly embedded in the public by the whole social process, they are encouraged by the survival of the market in this area. Demand has not yet been replaced by simple obedience. As is well known, the major reorganization of the film industry shortly before World War I, the material prerequisite of its expansion, was precisely its deliberate acceptance of the public's needs as recorded at the boxoffice—a procedure which was hardly thought necessary in the pioneering days of the screen. The same opinion is held today by the captains of the film industry, who take as their criterion the more or less phenomenal song hits but wisely never have recourse to the judgment of truth, the opposite criterion. Business is their ideology. It is quite correct that the power of the culture industry resides in its identification with a manufactured need, and not in simple contrast to it, even if this contrast were one of complete power and complete powerlessness. Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work. It is sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again. But at the same time mechanization has such power over a man's leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably afterimages of the work process itself. The ostensible content is merely a faded foreground; what sinks in is the automatic succession of standardized operations. What happens at work, in the factory, or in the office can only be escaped from by approximation to it in one's leisure time. All amusement suffers from this incurable malady. Pleasure hardens into boredom because, if it is to remain pleasure, it must not demand any effort and therefore moves rigorously in the worn grooves of association. No independent thinking must be expected from the audience: the product prescribes every reaction: not by its natural structure (which collapses under reflection), but by signals. Any logical connection calling for mental effort is painstakingly avoided. As far as possible, developments must follow from the immediately preceding situation and never from the idea of the whole. For the attentive movie-goer any individual scene will give him the whole thing. Even the set pattern itself still seems dangerous, offering some meaning—wretched as it might be—where only meaninglessness is acceptable. Often the plot is maliciously deprived of the development demanded by characters and matter according to the old pattern. Instead, the next step is Theodor Adorno and Max Horkneimer The Culture Industry what the script writer takes to be the most striking effect in the particular situation. Banal though elaborate surprise interrupts the story-line. The tendency mischievously to fall back on pure nonsense, which was a legitimate part of popular art, farce and clowning, right up to Chaplin and the Marx Brothers, is most obvious in the unpretentious kinds. This tendency has completely asserted itself in the text of the novelty song, in the thriller movie, and in cartoons, although in films starring Greer Garson and Bette Davis the unity of the socio-psychological case study provides something approximating a claim to a consistent plot. The idea itself, together with the objects of comedy and terror, is massacred and fragmented. Novelty songs have always existed on a contempt for meaning which, as predecessors and successors of psychoanalysis, they reduce to the monotony of sexual symbolism. Today detective and adventure films no longer give the audience the opportunity to experience the resolution. In the non-ironic varieties of the genre, it has also to rest content with the simple horror of situations which have almost ceased to be linked in any way.

Cartoons were once exponents of fantasy as opposed to rationalism. They ensured that justice was done to the creatures and objects they electrified, by giving the maimed specimens a second life. All they do today is to confirm the victory of technological reason over truth. A few years ago they had a consistent plot which only broke up in the final moments in a crazy chase, and thus resembled the old slapstick comedy. Now, however, time relations have shifted. In the very first sequence a motive is stated so that in the course of the action destruction can get to work on it: with the audience in pursuit, the protagonist becomes the worthless object of general violence. The quantity of organized amusement changes into the quality of organized cruelty. The self-elected censors of the film industry (with whom it enjoys a close relationship) watch over the unfolding of the crime, which is as drawn-out as a hunt. Fun replaces the pleasure which the sight of an embrace would allegedly afford, and postpones satisfaction till the day of the pogrom. Insofar as cartoons do any more than accustom the senses to the new tempo, they hammer into every brain the old lesson that continuous friction, the breaking down of all individual resistance, is the condition of life in this society. Donald Duck in the cartoons and the unfortunate in real life get their thrashing so that the audience can learn to take their own punishment.

The enjoyment of the violence suffered by the movie character turns into violence against the spectator, and distraction into exertion. Nothing that the experts have devised as a stimulant must escape the weary eye; no stupidity is allowed in the face of all the trickery; one has to follow everything and even display the smart responses shown and recommended in the film. This raises the question whether the culture industry fulfills the function of diverting minds which it boasts about so loudly. If most of the radio stations and movie theaters were closed down, the consumers would probably not lose so very much. To walk from the street into the movie theater is no longer to enter a world of dream; as soon as the very existence of these institutions no longer made it obligatory to use them, there would be no great urge to do so. Such closures would not be reactionary machine wrecking. The disappointment would be felt not so much by the enthusiasts as by the slow-witted, who are the ones who suffer for everything anyhow. In spite of the films which are intended to complete her integration, the housewife finds in the darkness of the movie theater a place of refuge where she can sit for a few hours with nobody watching, just as she used to look out of the window when there were still homes and rest in the evening. The unemployed in the great cities find coolness in summer and warmth in winter in these temperature-controlled locations. Otherwise, despite its size, this bloated pleasure apparatus adds no dignity to man's lives. The idea of "fully exploiting" available technical resources and the facilities for aesthetic mass consumption is part of the economic system which refuses to exploit resources to abolish hunger.

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note<sup>14</sup> which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Promissory Note: a written promise to pay at a fixed future time a sum of money to an individual

is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu. In front of the appetite stimulated by all those brilliant names and images there is finally set no more than a commendation of the depressing everyday world it sought to escape. Of course works of art were not sexual exhibitions either. However, by representing deprivation as negative, they retracted, as it were, the prostitution of the impulse and rescued by mediation what was denied. The secret of aesthetic sublimation is its representation of fulfillment as a broken promise. The culture industry does not sublimate; it represses. By repeatedly exposing the objects of desire, breasts in a clinging sweater or the naked torso of the athletic hero, it only stimulates the unsublimated forepleasure which habitual deprivation has long since reduced to a masochistic semblance. There is no erotic situation which, while insinuating and exciting, does not fail to indicate unmistakably that things can never go that far. The Hays Office merely confirms the ritual of Tantalus that the culture industry has established anyway. Works of art are ascetic and unashamed; the culture industry is pornographic and prudish. Love is downgraded to romance. And, after the descent, much is permitted; even license as a marketable speciality has its quota bearing the trade description "daring." The mass production of the sexual automatically achieves its repression. Because of his ubiquity, the film star with whom one is meant to fall in love is from the outset a copy of himself. Every tenor voice comes to sound like a Caruso record, and the "natural" faces of Texas girls are like the successful models by whom Hollywood has typecast them. The mechanical reproduction of beauty, which reactionary cultural fanaticism wholeheartedly serves in its methodical idolization of individuality, leaves no room for that unconscious idolatry which was once essential to beauty. The triumph over beauty is celebrated by humor—the Schadenfreude that every successful deprivation calls forth. There is laughter because there is nothing to laugh at. Laughter, whether conciliatory or terrible, always occurs when some fear passes. It indicates liberation either from physical danger or from the grip of logic. Conciliatory laughter is heard as the echo of an escape from power; the wrong kind overcomes fear by capitulating to the forces which are to be feared. It is the echo of power as something inescapable. Fun is a medicinal bath. The pleasure industry never fails to prescribe it. It makes laughter the instrument of the fraud practised on happiness. Moments of happiness are without laughter; only operettas and films portray sex to the accompaniment of resounding laughter. But Baudelaire is as devoid of humour as Holderlin. In the false society laughter is a disease which has attacked happiness and is drawing it into its worthless totality. To laugh at something is always to deride it, and the life which, according to Bergson, in laughter breaks through the barrier, is actually an invading barbaric life, self-assertion prepared to parade its liberation from any scruple when the social occasion arises. Such a laughing audience is a parody of humanity. Its members are monads, all dedicated to the pleasure of being ready for anything at the expense of everyone else. Their harmony is a caricature of solidarity. What is fiendish about this false laughter is that it is a compelling parody of the best, which is conciliatory. Delight is austere: res severa verum gaudium<sup>15</sup>. The monastic theory that not asceticism but the sexual act denotes the renunciation of attainable bliss receives negative confirmation in the gravity of the lover who with foreboding commits his life to the fleeting moment. In the culture industry, jovial denial takes the place of the pain found in ecstasy and in asceticism. The supreme law is that they shall not satisfy their desires at any price; they must laugh and be content with laughter. In every product of the culture industry, the permanent denial imposed by civilization is once again unmistakably demonstrated and inflicted on its victims. To offer and to deprive them of something is one and the same. This is what happens in erotic films. Precisely because it must never take place, everything centers upon copulation. In films it is more strictly forbidden for an illegitimate relationship to be admitted without the parties being punished than for a millionaire's future son-in-law to be active in the labor movement. In contrast to the liberal era, industrialized as well as popular culture may wax indignant at capitalism, but it cannot renounce the threat of castration. This is fundamental. It outlasts the organized acceptance of the uniformed seen in the films which are produced to that end, and in reality. What is decisive today is no longer puritanism, although it still asserts itself in the form of women's organizations, but the necessity inherent in the system not to leave the customer alone, not for a moment to allow him any suspicion that resistance is possible. The principle dictates that he should be shown all his needs as capable of-fulfillment, but that those needs should be so predetermined that he feels himself to be the eternal consumer, the object of the culture industry. Not only does it make him believe that the deception it practices is satisfaction, but it goes further and implies that, whatever the state of affairs, he must put up with what is offered. The escape from everyday drudgery which the whole culture industry promises may be compared to the daughter's abduction in the cartoon: the father is holding the ladder in the dark. The paradise offered by the culture industry is the same old drudgery. Both escape and elopement are pre-designed to lead back to the starting point. Pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help to forget.

Amusement, if released from every restraint, would not only be the antithesis of art but its extreme role. The Mark Twain absurdity with which the American culture industry flirts at times might be a corrective of art. The more seriously the latter regards the incompatibility with life, the more it resembles the seriousness of life, its antithesis; the more effort it devotes to developing wholly from its own formal law, the more effort it demands from the intelligence to neutralize its burden. In some revue films, and especially in the grotesque and the funnies, the possibility of this negation does glimmer for a few moments. But of course it cannot happen. Pure amusement in its consequence, relaxed self-surrender to all kinds of associations and happy nonsense, is cut short by the amusement on the market: instead, it is interrupted by a surrogate overall meaning which the culture industry insists on giving to its products, and yet misuses as a mere pretext for bringing in the stars. Biographies and other simple stories patch the fragments of nonsense into an idiotic plot. We do not have the cap and bells of the jester but the bunch of keys of capitalist reason, which even screens the pleasure of achieving success. Every kiss in the revue film has to contribute to the career of the boxer, or some hit song expert or other whose rise to fame is being glorified. The deception is not that the culture industry supplies amusement but that it ruins the fun by allowing business considerations to involve it in the ideological cliches of a culture in the process of selfliquidation. Ethics and taste cut short unrestrained amusement as "naïve"—naïveté is thought to be as bad as intellectualism—and even restrict technical possibilities. The culture industry is corrupt; not because it is a sinful Babylon but because it is a cathedral dedicated to elevated pleasure. On all levels, from Hemingway to Emil Ludwig, from Mrs. Miniver<sup>16</sup> to The Lone Ranger, from Toscanini to Guy Lombardo, there is untruth in the intellectual content taken ready-made from art and science. The culture industry does retain a trace of something better in those features which bring it close to the circus, in the self-justifying and nonsensical skill of riders, acrobats and clowns, in the "defense and justification of physical as against intellectual art." But the refuges of a mindless artistry which represents what is human as opposed to the social mechanism are being relentlessly hunted down by a schematic reason which compels everything to prove its significance and effect. The consequence is that the nonsensical at the bottom disappears as utterly as the sense in works of art at the top.

The fusion of culture and entertainment that is taking place today leads not only to a depravation of culture, but inevitably to an intellectualization of amusement. This is evident from the fact that only the copy appears: in the movie theater, the photograph; on the radio, the recording. In the age of liberal expansion, amusement lived on the unshaken belief in the future: things would remain as they were and even improve. Today this belief is once more intellectualized; it becomes so faint that it loses sight of any goal and is little more than a magic-lantern show for those with their backs to reality. It consists of the meaningful emphases which, parallel to life itself, the screen play puts on the smart fellow, the engineer, the capable

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Mrs. Miniver: A novel by Jan Struther (Joyce Maxtone Graham, 1901–1953), made into a film starring Greer Garson.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Frank Wedekind, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. IX (Munich, 1921), p. 426.

girl, ruthlessness disguised as character, interest in sport, and finally automobiles and cigarettes, even where the entertainment is not put down to the advertising account of the immediate producers but to that of the system as a whole. Amusement itself becomes an ideal, taking the place of the higher things of which it completely deprives the masses by repeating them in a manner even more stereotyped than the slogans paid for by advertising interests. Inwardness, the subjectively restricted form of truth, was always more at the mercy of the outwardly powerful than they imagined. The culture industry turns it into an open lie. It has now become mere twaddle which is acceptable in religious best-sellers, psychological films, and women's serials as an embarrassingly agreeable garnish, so that genuine personal emotion in real life can be all the more reliably controlled. In this sense amusement carries out that purgation of the emotions which Aristotle once attributed to tragedy and Mortimer Adler now allows to movies. The culture industry reveals the truth about catharsis as it did about style.

The stronger the positions of the culture industry become, the more summarily it can deal with consumers' needs, producing them, controlling them, disciplining them, and even withdrawing amusement: no limits are set to cultural progress of this kind. But the tendency is immanent in the principle of amusement itself, which is enlightened in a bourgeois sense. If the need for amusement was in large measure the creation of industry, which used the subject as a means of recommending the work to the masses—the oleograph<sup>18</sup> by the dainty morsel it depicted, or the cake mix by a picture of a cake—amusement always reveals the influence of business, the sales talk, the quack's spiel. But the original affinity of business and amusement is shown in the latter's specific significance: to defend society. To be pleased means to say Yes. It is possible only by insulation from the totality of the social process, by desensitization and, from the first, by senselessly sacrificing the inescapable claim of every work, however inane, within its limits to reflect the whole. Pleasure always means not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown. Basically it is helplessness. It is flight; not, as is asserted, flight from a wretched reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance. The liberation which amusement promises is freedom from thought and from negation. The effrontery of the rhetorical question, "What do people want?" lies in the fact that it is addressed—as if to reflective individuals—to those very people who are deliberately to be deprived of this individuality. Even when the public does—exceptionally—rebel against the pleasure industry, all it can muster is that feeble resistance which that very industry has inculcated in it. Nevertheless, it has become increasingly difficult to keep people in this condition. The rate at which they are reduced to stupidity must not fall behind the rate at which their intelligence is increasing. In this age of statistics the masses are too sharp to identify themselves with the millionaire on the screen, and too slow-witted to ignore the law of the largest number. Ideology conceals itself in the calculation of probabilities. Not everyone will be lucky one day—but the person who draws the winning ticket, or rather the one who is marked out to do so by a higher power—usually by the pleasure industry itself, which is represented as unceasingly in search of talent. Those discovered by talent scouts and then publicized on a vast scale by the studio are ideal types of the new dependent average. Of course, the starlet is meant to symbolize the typist in such a way that the splendid evening dress seems meant for the actress as distinct from the real girl. The girls in the audience not only feel that they could be on the screen, but realize the great gulf separating them from it. Only one girl can draw the lucky ticket, only one man can win the prize, and if, mathematically, all have the same chance, yet this is so infinitesimal for each one that he or she will do best to write it off and rejoice in the other's success, which might just as well have been his or hers, and somehow never is. Whenever the culture industry still issues an invitation naively to identify, it is immediately withdrawn. No one can escape from himself any more. Once a member of the audience could see his own wedding in the one shown in the film. Now the lucky actors on the screen are copies of the same category as every member of the public, but such equality only demonstrates the insurmountable separation of the human elements. The perfect similarity is the absolute difference. The identity of the category forbids that of the individual cases. Ironically, man as a member of a species has been made a reality by the culture industry. Now any person signifies only those attributes by which he can replace everybody else: he is interchangeable, a copy. As an individual he is completely expendable and utterly insignificant, and this is just what he finds out when time deprives him of this similarity. This changes the inner structure of the religion of success—otherwise strictly maintained. Increasing emphasis is laid not on the path per aspera ad astra<sup>19</sup> (which presupposes hardship and effort), but on winning a prize. The element of blind chance in the routine decision about which song deserves to be a hit and which extra a heroine is stressed by the ideology. Movies emphasize chance. By stopping at nothing to ensure that all the characters are essentially alike, with the exception of the villain, and by excluding non-conforming faces (for example, those which, like Garbo's, do not look as if you could say "Hello sister!" to them), life is made easier for movie-goers at first. They are assured that they are all right as they are, that they could do just as well and that nothing beyond their powers will be asked of them. But at the same time they are given a hint that any effort would be useless because even bourgeois luck no longer has any connection with the calculable effect of their own work. They take the hint. Fundamentally they all recognize chance (by which one occasionally makes his fortune) as the other side of planning. Precisely because the forces of society are so deployed in the direction of rationality that anyone might become an engineer or manager, it has ceased entirely to be a rational matter who the one will be in whom society will invest training or confidence for such functions. Chance and planning become one and the same thing, because, given men's equality, individual success and failure—right up to the top—lose any economic meaning. Chance itself is planned, not because it affects any particular individual but precisely because it is believed to play a vital part. It serves the planners as an alibi, and makes it seem that the complex of transactions and measures into which life has been transformed leaves scope for spontaneous and direct relations between man. This freedom is symbolized in the various media of the culture industry by the arbitrary selection of average individuals. In a magazine's detailed accounts of the modestly magnificent pleasure-trips it has arranged for the lucky person, preferably a stenotypist (who has probably won the competition because of her contacts with local bigwigs), the powerlessness of all is reflected. They are mere matter—so much so that those in control can take someone up into their heaven and throw him out again: his rights and his work count for nothing. Industry is interested in people merely as customers and employees, and has in fact reduced mankind as a whole and each of its elements to this all-embracing formula. According to the ruling aspect at the time, ideology emphasizes plan or chance, technology or life, civilization or nature. As employees, men are reminded of the rational organization and urged to fit in like sensible people. As customers, the freedom of choice, the charm of novelty, is demonstrated to them on the screen or in the press by means of the human and personal anecdote. In either case they remain objects.

The less the culture industry has to promise, the less it can offer a meaningful explanation of life, and the emptier is the ideology it disseminates. Even the abstract ideals of the harmony and beneficence of society are too concrete in this age of universal publicity. We have even learned how to identify abstract concepts as sales propaganda. Language based entirely on truth simply arouses impatience to get on with the business deal it is probably advancing. The words that are not means appear senseless; the others seem to be fiction, untrue. Value judgments are taken either as advertising or as empty talk. Accordingly ideology has been made vague and noncommittal, and thus neither clearer nor weaker. Its very vagueness, its almost scientific aversion from committing itself to anything which cannot be verified, acts as an instrument of domination. It becomes a vigorous and prearranged promulgation of the status quo. The culture industry tends to make itself the embodiment of authoritative pronouncements, and thus the irrefutable prophet of the prevailing order. It skillfully steers a winding course between the cliffs of demonstrable misinformation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Per aspera ad astra: From dust to the stars.

and manifest truth, faithfully reproducing the phenomenon whose opaqueness blocks any insight and installs the ubiquitous and intact phenomenon as ideal. Ideology is split into the photograph of stubborn life and the naked lie about its meaning—which is not expressed but suggested and yet drummed in. To demonstrate its divine nature, reality is always repeated in a purely cynical way. Such a photological proof is of course not stringent, but it is overpowering. Anyone who doubts the power of monotony is a fool. The culture industry refutes the objection made against it just as well as that against the world which it impartially duplicates. The only choice is either to join in or to be left behind: those provincials who have recourse to eternal beauty and the amateur stage in preference to the cinema and the radio are already—politically—at the point to which mass culture drives its supporters. It is sufficiently hardened to deride as ideology, if need be, the old wish-fulfillments, the father-ideal and absolute feeling. The new ideology has as its objects the world as such. It makes use of the worship of facts by no more than elevating a disagreeable existence into the world of facts in representing it meticulously. This transference makes existence itself a substitute for meaning and right. Whatever the camera reproduces is beautiful. The disappointment of the prospect that one might be the typist who wins the world trip is matched by the disappointing appearance of the accurately photographed areas which the voyage might include. Not Italy is offered, but evidence that it exists. A film can even go so far as to show the Paris in which the American girl thinks she will still her desire as a hopelessly desolate place, thus driving her the more inexorably into the arms of the smart American boy she could have met at home anyhow. That this goes on, that, in its most recent phase, the system itself reproduces the life of those of whom it consists instead of immediately doing away with them, is even put down to its credit as giving it meaning and worth. Continuing and continuing to join in are given as justification for the blind persistence of the system and even for its immutability. What repeats itself is healthy, like the natural or industrial cycle. The same babies grin eternally out of the magazines; the jazz machine will pound away for ever. In spite of all the progress in reproduction techniques, in controls and the specialities, and in spite of all the restless industry, the bread which the culture industry offers man is the stone of the stereotype. It draws on the life cycle, on the well-founded amazement that mothers, in spite of everything, still go on bearing children and that the wheels still do not grind to a halt. This serves to confirm the immutability of circumstances. The ears of corn blowing in the wind at the end of Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* give the lie to the anti-Fascist plea for freedom. They are like the blond hair of the German girl whose camp life is photographed by the Nazi film company in the summer breeze. Nature is viewed by the mechanism of social domination as a healthy contrast to society, and is therefore denatured. Pictures showing green trees, a blue sky, and moving clouds make these aspects of nature into so many cryptograms for factory chimneys and service stations. On the other hand, wheels and machine components must seem expressive, having been degraded to the status of agents of the spirit of trees and clouds. Nature and technology are mobilized against all opposition; and we have a falsified memento of liberal society, in which people supposedly wallowed in erotic plush-lined bedrooms instead of taking open-air baths as in the case today, or experiencing breakdowns in prehistoric Benz models instead of shooting off with the speed of a rocket from A (where one is anyhow) to B (where everything is just the same). The triumph of the gigantic concern over the initiative of the entrepreneur is praised by the culture industry as the persistence of entrepreneurial initiative. The enemy who is already defeated, the thinking individual, is the enemy fought. The resurrection in Germany of the anti-bourgeois "Haus Sonnenstösser," and the pleasure felt when watching Life with Father, have one and the same meaning.

**In one respect, admittedly,** this hollow ideology is in deadly earnest: everyone is provided for. "No one must go hungry or thirsty; if anyone does, he's for the concentration camp!" This joke from Hitler's Germany might shine forth as a maxim from above all the portals of the culture industry. With sly naivete, it presupposes the most recent characteristic of society: that it can easily find out who its supporters are. Everybody is guaranteed formal freedom. No one is officially responsible for what he thinks. Instead everyone is enclosed at an early age in a system of churches, clubs, professional associations, and other such concerns, which constitute the most sensitive instrument of social control. Anyone who wants to avoid ruin must see that he is not found wanting when weighed in the scales of this apparatus. Otherwise he will lag behind in life, and finally perish. In every career, and especially in the liberal professions, expert knowledge is linked with prescribed standards of conduct; this can easily lead to the illusion that expert knowledge is the only thing that counts. In fact, it is part of the irrational planning of this society that it reproduces to a certain degree only the lives of its faithful members. The standard of life enjoyed corresponds very closely to the degree to which classes and individuals are essentially bound up with the system. The manager can be relied upon, as can the lesser employee Dagwood—as he is in the comic pages or in real life. Anyone who goes cold and hungry, even if his prospects were once good, is branded. He is an outsider; and, apart from certain capital crimes, the most mortal of sins is to be an outsider. In films he sometimes, and as an exception, becomes an original, the object of maliciously indulgent humor; but usually he is the villain, and is identified as such at first appearance, long before the action really gets going: hence avoiding any suspicion that society would turn on those of good will. Higher up the scale, in fact, a kind of welfare state is coming into being today. In order to keep their own positions, men in top posts maintain the economy in which a highly-developed technology has in principle made the masses redundant as producers. The workers, the real bread-winners, are fed (if we are to believe the ideology) by the managers of the economy, the fed. Hence the individual's position becomes precarious. Under liberalism the poor were thought to be lazy; now they are automatically objects of suspicion. Anybody who is not provided for outside should be in a concentration camp, or at any rate in the hell of the most degrading work and the slums. The culture industry, however, reflects positive and negative welfare for those under the administrators' control as direct human solidarity of men in a world of the efficient. No one is forgotten; everywhere there are neighbors and welfare workers, Dr. Gillespies and parlor philosophers whose hearts are in the right place and who, by their kind intervention as of man to man, cure individual cases of socially-perpetuated distress—always provided that there is no obstacle in the personal depravity of the unfortunate. The promotion of a friendly atmosphere as advised by management experts and adopted by every factory to increase output, brings even the last private impulse under social control precisely because it seems to relate men's circumstances directly to production, and to reprivatize them. Such spiritual charity casts a conciliatory shadow onto the products of the culture industry long before it emerges from the factory to invade society as a whole. Yet the great benefactors of mankind, whose scientific achievements have to be written up as acts of sympathy to give them an artificial human interest, are substitutes for the national leaders, who finally decree the abolition of sympathy and think they can prevent any recurrence when the last invalid has been exterminated.

By emphasizing the "heart of gold," society admits the suffering it has created: everyone knows that he is now helpless in the system, and ideology has to take this into account. Far from concealing suffering under the cloak of improvised fellowship, the culture industry takes pride in looking it in the face like a man, however great the strain on self-control. The pathos of composure justifies the world which makes it necessary. That is life—very hard, but just because of that so wonderful and so healthy. This lie does not shrink from tragedy. Mass culture deals with it, in the same way as centralized society does not abolish the suffering of its members but records and plans it. That it is why it borrows so persistently from art. This provides the tragic substance which pure amusement cannot itself supply, but which it needs if it is somehow to remain faithful to the principle of the exact reproduction of phenomena. Tragedy Theodor Adorno and Max Horkneimer

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The Culture Industry

made into a carefully calculated and accepted aspect of the world is a blessing. It is a safeguard against the reproach that truth is not respected, whereas it is really being adopted with cynical regret. To the consumer who—culturally—has seen better days it offers a substitute for long-discarded profundities. It provides the regular movie-goer with the scraps of culture he must have for prestige. It comforts all with the thought that a tough, genuine human fate is still possible, and that it must at all costs be represented uncompromisingly. Life in all the aspects which ideology today sets out to duplicate shows up all the more gloriously, powerfully and magnificently, the more it is redolent of necessary suffering. It begins to resemble fate. Tragedy is reduced to the threat to destroy anyone who does not cooperate, whereas its paradoxical significance once lay in a hopeless resistance to mythic destiny. Tragic fate becomes just punishment, which is what bourgeois aesthetics always tried to turn it into. The morality of mass culture is the cheap form of yesterday's children's books. In a first-class production, for example, the villainous character appears as a hysterical woman who (with presumed clinical accuracy) tries to ruin the happiness of her opposite number, who is truer to reality, and herself suffers a quite untheatrical death. So much learning is of course found only at the top. Lower down less trouble is taken. Tragedy is made harmless without recourse to social psychology. Just as every Viennese operetta worthy of the name had to have its tragic finale in the second act, which left nothing for the third except to clear up misunderstandings, the culture industry assigns tragedy a fixed place in the routine. The well-known existence of the recipe is enough to allay any fear that there is no restraint on tragedy. The description of the dramatic formula by the housewife as "getting into trouble and out again" embraces the whole of mass culture from the idiotic women's serial to the top production. Even the worst ending which began with good intentions confirms the order of things and corrupts the tragic force, either because the woman whose love runs counter to the laws of the game plays with her death for a brief spell of happiness, or because the sad ending in the film all the more clearly stresses the indestructibility of actual life. The tragic film becomes an institution for moral improvement. The masses, demoralized by their life under the pressure of the system, and who show signs of civilization only in modes of behavior which have been forced on them and through which fury and recalcitrance show everywhere, are to be kept in order by the sight of an inexorable life and exemplary behavior. Culture has always played its part in taming revolutionary and barbaric instincts. Industrial culture adds its contribution. It shows the condition under which this merciless life can be lived at all. The individual who is thoroughly weary must use his weariness as energy for his surrender to the collective power which wears him out. In films, those permanently desperate situations which crush the spectator in ordinary life somehow become a promise that one can go on living. One has only to become aware of one's own nothingness, only to recognize defeat and one is one with it all. Society is full of desperate people and therefore prey to rackets. In some of the most significant German novels of the pre-Fascist era such as Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz and Fallada's Kleiner Mann, Was Nun, this trend was as obvious as in the average film and in the devices of jazz. What all these things have in common is the self-derision of man. The possibility of becoming a subject in the economy, an entrepreneur or a proprietor, has been completely liquidated. Right down to the humblest shop, the independent enterprise, on the management and inheritance of which the bourgeois family and the position of its head had rested, became hopelessly dependent. Everybody became an employee; and in this civilization of employees the dignity of the father (questionable anyhow) vanishes. The attitude of the individual to the racket, business, profession or party, before or after admission, the Führer's gesticulations before the masses, or the suitor's before his sweetheart, assume specifically masochistic traits. The attitude into which everybody is forced in order to give repeated proof of his moral suitability for this society reminds one of the boys who, during tribal initiation, go round in a circle with a stereotyped smile on their faces while the priest strikes them. Life in the late capitalist era is a constant initiation rite. Everyone must show that he wholly identifies himself with the power which is belaboring him. This occurs in the principle of jazz syncopation, which simultaneously derides stumbling and makes it a rule. The eunuch-like voice of the crooner on the radio, the heiress's smooth suitor, who falls into the swimming pool in his dinner jacket, are models for those who must become whatever the system wants. Everyone can be like this omnipotent society; everyone can be happy, if only he will capitulate fully and sacrifice his claim to happiness. In his weakness society recognizes its strength, and gives him some of it. His defenselessness makes him reliable. Hence tragedy is discarded. Once the opposition of the individual to society was its substance. It glorified "the bravery and freedom of emotion before a powerful enemy, an exalted affliction, a dreadful problem." Today tragedy has melted away into the nothingness of that false identity of society and individual, whose terror still shows for a moment in the empty semblance of the tragic. But the miracle of integration, the permanent act of grace by the authority who receives the defenseless person—once he has swallowed his rebelliousness—signifies Fascism. This can be seen in the humanitarianism which Doblin uses to let his Biberkopf find refuge, and again in socially-slanted films. The capacity to find refuge, to survive one's own ruin, by which tragedy is defeated, is found in the new generation; they can do any work because the work process does not let them become attached to any. This is reminiscent of the sad lack of conviction of the homecoming soldier with no interest in the war, or of the casual laborer who ends up by joining a paramilitary organization. This liquidation of tragedy confirms the abolition of the individual.

In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned. Pseudo individuality is rife: from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality. What is individual is no more than the generality's power to stamp the accidental detail so firmly that it is accepted as such. The defiant reserve or elegant appearance of the individual on show is mass-produced like Yale locks, whose only difference can be measured in fractions of millimeters. The peculiarity of the self is a monopoly commodity determined by society; it is falsely represented as natural. It is no more than the mustache, the French accent, the deep voice of the woman of the world, the Lubitsch touch: finger prints on identity cards which are otherwise exactly the same, and into which the lives and faces of every single person are transformed by the power of the generality. Pseudo individuality is the prerequisite for comprehending tragedy and removing its poison: only because individuals have ceased to be themselves and are now merely centers where the general tendencies meet, is it possible to receive them again, whole and entire, into the generality. In this way mass culture discloses the fictitious character of the "individual" in the bourgeois era, and is merely unjust in boasting on account of this dreary harmony of general and particular. The principle of individuality was always full of contradiction. Individuation has never really been achieved. Selfpreservation in the shape of class has kept everyone at the stage of a mere species being. Every bourgeois characteristic, in spite of its deviation and indeed because of it, expressed the same thing: the harshness of the competitive society. The individual who supported society bore its disfiguring mark; seemingly free, he was actually the product of its economic and social apparatus. Power based itself on the prevailing conditions of power when it sought the approval of persons affected by it. As it progressed, bourgeois society did also develop the individual. Against the will of its leaders, technology has changed human beings from children into persons. However, every advance in individuation of this kind took place at the expense of the individuality in whose name it occurred, so that nothing was left but the resolve to pursue one's own particular purpose. The bourgeois whose existence is split into a business and a private life, whose private life is split into keeping up his public image and intimacy, whose intimacy is split into the surly partnership of marriage and the bitter comfort of being quite alone, at odds with himself and everybody else, is already virtually a Nazi, replete both with enthusiasm and abuse; or a modern citydweller who can now only imagine friendship as a "social contact": that is, as being in social contact with others with whom he has no inward contact. The only reason why the culture industry can deal so successfully with individuality is that the latter has always reproduced the fragility of society. On the faces of private individuals and movie heroes put together according to the patterns on magazine covers vanishes a pretense in which no one now believes; the popularity of the hero models comes partly from a secret satisfaction that the effort to achieve individuation has at last been replaced by the effort to imitate, which is admittedly more breathless. It is idle to hope that this self-contradictory, disintegrating "person" will not last for generations, that the system must collapse because of such a psychological split, or that the deceitful substitution of the stereotype for the individual will of itself become unbearable for mankind. Since Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the unity of the personality has been seen through as a pretense. Synthetically produced physiognomies show that the people of today have already forgotten that there was ever a notion of what human life was. For centuries society has been preparing for Victor Mature and Mickey Rooney. By destroying they come to fulfill.

The idolization of the cheap involves making the average the heroic. The highest-paid stars resemble pictures advertising unspecified proprietary articles. Not without good purpose are they often selected from the host of commercial models. The prevailing taste takes its ideal from advertising, the beauty in consumption. Hence the Socratic saying that the beautiful is the useful has now been fulfilled—ironically. The cinema makes propaganda for the culture combine as a whole; on radio, goods for whose sake the cultural commodity exists are also recommended individually. For a few coins one can see the film which cost millions, for even less one can buy the chewing gum whose manufacture involved immense riches a hoard increased still further by sales. *In absentia*, but by universal suffrage, the treasure of armies is revealed, but prostitution is not allowed inside the country. The best orchestras in the world—clearly not so—are brought into your living room free of charge. It is all a parody of the never-never land, just as the national society is a parody of the human society. You name it, we supply it. A man up from the country remarked at the old Berlin Metropol theater that it was astonishing what they could do for the money; his comment has long since been adopted by the culture industry and made the very substance of production. This is always coupled with the triumph that it is possible; but this, in large measure, is the very triumph. Putting on a show means showing everybody what there is, and what can be achieved. Even today it is still a fair, but incurably sick with culture. Just as the people who had been attracted by the fairground barkers overcame their disappointment in the booths with a brave smile, because they really knew in advance what would happen, so the movie-goer sticks knowingly to the institution. With the cheapness of mass-produced luxury goods and its complement, the universal swindle, a change in the character of the art commodity itself is coming about. What is new is not that it is a commodity, but that today it deliberately admits it is one; that art renounces its own autonomy and proudly takes its place among consumption goods constitutes the charm of novelty. Art as a separate sphere was always possible only in a bourgeois society. Even as a negation of that social purposiveness which is spreading through the market, its freedom remains essentially bound up with the premise of a commodity economy. Pure works of art which deny the commodity society by the very fact that they obey their own law were always wares all the same. In so far as, until the eighteenth century, the buyer's patronage shielded the artist from the market, they were dependent on the buyer and his objectives. The purposelessness of the great modern work of art depends on the anonymity of the market. Its demands pass through so many intermediaries that the artist is exempt from any definite requirements—though admittedly only to a certain degree, for throughout the whole history of the bourgeoisie his autonomy was only tolerated, and thus contained an element of untruth which ultimately led to the social liquidation of art. When mortally sick, Beethoven hurled away a novel by Sir Walter Scott with the cry: "Why, the fellow writes for money," and yet proved a most experienced and stubborn businessman in disposing of the last quartets, which were a most extreme renunciation of the market; he is the most outstanding example of the unity of those opposites, market and independence, in bourgeois art. Those who succumb to the ideology are precisely those who cover up the contradiction instead of taking it into the consciousness of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkneimer The Culture Industry their own production as Beethoven did: he went on to express in music his anger at losing a few pence, and derived the metaphysical Es Muss Sein<sup>21</sup> (which attempts an aesthetic banishment of the pressure of the world by taking it into itself) from the housekeeper's demand for her monthly wages. The principle of idealistic aesthetics—purposefulness without a purpose—reverses the scheme of things to which bourgeois art conforms socially: purposelessness for the purposes declared by the market. At last, in the demand for entertainment and relaxation, purpose has absorbed the realm of purposelessness. But as the insistence that art should be disposable in terms of money becomes absolute, a shift in the internal structure of cultural commodities begins to show itself. The use which men in this antagonistic society promise themselves from the work of art is itself, to a great extent, that very existence of the useless which is abolished by complete inclusion under use. The work of art, by completely assimilating itself to need, deceitfully deprives men of precisely that liberation from the principle of utility which it should inaugurate. What might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value; in place of enjoyment there are gallery-visiting and factual knowledge: the prestige seeker replaces the connoisseur. The consumer becomes the ideology of the pleasure industry, whose institutions he cannot escape. One simply "has to" have seen Mrs. Miniver, just as one "has to" subscribe to Life and Time. Everything is looked at from only one aspect: that it can be used for something else, however vague the notion of this use may be. No object has an inherent value; it is valuable only to the extent that it can be exchanged. The use value of art, its mode of being, is treated as a fetish; and the fetish, the work's social rating (misinterpreted as its artistic status) becomes its use value—the only quality which is enjoyed. The commodity function of art disappears only to be wholly realized when art becomes a species of commodity instead, marketable and interchangeable like an industrial product. But art as a type of product which existed to be sold and yet to be unsaleable is wholly and hypocritically converted into "unsaleability" as soon as the transaction ceases to be the mere intention and becomes its sole principle. No tickets could be bought when Toscanini conducted over the radio; he was heard without charge, and every sound of the symphony was accompanied, as it were, by the sublime puff that the symphony was not interrupted by any advertising: "This concert is brought to you as a public service." The illusion was made possible by the profits of the united automobile and soap manufacturers, whose payments keep the radio stations going—and, of course, by the increased sales of the electrical industry, which manufactures the radio sets. Radio, the progressive latecomer of mass culture, draws all the consequences at present denied the film by its pseudomarket. The technical structure of the commercial radio system makes it immune from liberal deviations such as those the movie industrialists can still permit themselves in their own sphere. It is a private enterprise which really does represent the sovereign whole and is therefore some distance ahead of the other individual combines. Chesterfield is merely the nation's cigarette, but the radio is the voice of the nation. In bringing cultural products wholly into the sphere of commodities, radio does not try to dispose of its culture goods themselves as commodities straight to the consumer. In America it collects no fees from the public, and so has acquired the illusory form of disinterested, unbiased authority which suits Fascism admirably. The radio becomes the universal mouthpiece of the Führer; his voice rises from street loud-speakers to resemble the howling of sirens announcing panic—from which modern propaganda can scarcely be distinguished anyway. The National Socialists knew that the wireless gave shape to their cause just as the printing press did to the Reformation. The metaphysical charisma of the Führer invented by the sociology of religion has finally turned out to be no more than the omnipresence of his speeches on the radio, which are a demoniacal parody of the omnipresence of the divine spirit. The gigantic fact that the speech penetrates everywhere replaces its content, just as the benefaction of the Toscanini broadcast takes the place of the symphony. No listener can grasp its true meaning any longer, while the Führer's speech is lies anyway. The inherent tendency of radio is to make the speaker's word, the false commandment,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Es Muss Sein: "It must be!" (A reference to Beethoven's last string quartet, in which the last movement begins with the musical motto Es muss sein!.)

absolute. A recommendation becomes an order. The recommendation of the same commodities under different proprietary names, the scientifically based praise of the laxative in the announcer's smooth voice between the overture from *La Traviata* and that from *Rienzi*<sup>22</sup> is the only thing that no longer works, because of its silliness. One day the edict of production, the actual advertisement (whose actuality is at present concealed by the pretense of a choice) can turn into the open command of the Führer. In a society of huge Fascist rackets which agree among themselves what part of the social product should be allotted to the nation's needs, it would eventually seem anachronistic to recommend the use of a particular soap powder. The Führer is more up-to-date in unceremoniously giving direct orders for both the holocaust and the supply of rubbish.

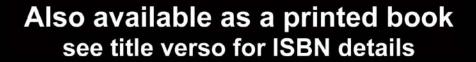
Even today the culture industry dresses works of art like political slogans and forces them upon a resistant public at reduced prices; they are as accessible for public enjoyment as a park. But the disappearance of their genuine commodity character does not mean that they have been abolished in the life of a free society, but that the last defense against their reduction to culture goods has fallen. The abolition of educational privilege by the device of clearance sales does not open for the masses the spheres from which they were formerly excluded, but, given existing social conditions, contributes directly to the decay of education and the progress of barbaric meaninglessness. Those who spent their money in the nineteenth or the early twentieth century to see a play or to go to a concert respected the performance as much as the money they spent. The bourgeois who wanted to get something out of it tried occasionally to establish some rapport with the work. Evidence for this is to be found in the literary "introductions" to works, or in the commentaries on Faust. These were the first steps toward the biographical coating and other practices to which a work of art is subjected today. Even in the early, prosperous days of business, exchange-value did carry use value as a mere appendix but had developed it as a prerequisite for its own existence; this was socially helpful for works of art. Art exercised some restraint on the bourgeois as long as it cost money. That is now a thing of the past. Now that it has lost every restraint and there is no need to pay any money, the proximity of art to those who are exposed to it completes the alienation and assimilates one to the other under the banner of triumphant objectivity. Criticism and respect disappear in the culture industry; the former becomes a mechanical expertise, the latter is succeeded by a shallow cult of leading personalities. Consumers now find nothing expensive. Nevertheless, they suspect that the less anything costs, the less it is being given them. The double mistrust of traditional culture as ideology is combined with mistrust of industrialized culture as a swindle. When thrown in free, the now debased works of art, together with the rubbish to which the medium assimilates them, are secretly rejected by the fortunate recipients, who are supposed to be satisfied by the mere fact that there is so much to be seen and heard. Everything can be obtained. The screenos and vaudevilles in the movie theater, the competitions for guessing music, the free books, rewards and gifts offered on certain radio programs, are not mere accidents but a continuation of the practice obtaining with culture products. The symphony becomes a reward for listening to the radio, and—if technology had its way—the film would be delivered to people's homes as happens with the radio. It is moving toward the commercial system. Television points the way to a development which might easily enough force the Warner Brothers into what would certainly be the unwelcome position of serious musicians and cultural conservatives. But the gift system has already taken hold among consumers. As culture is represented as a bonus with undoubted private and social advantages, they have to seize the chance. They rush in lest they miss something. Exactly what, is not clear, but in any case the only ones with a chance are the participants. Fascism, however, hopes to use the training the culture industry has given these recipients of gifts, in order to organize them into its own forced battalions.

Culture is a paradoxical commodity. So completely is it subject to the law of exchange that it is no longer exchanged; it is so blindly consumed in use that it can no longer be used. Therefore it amalgamates with advertising. The more meaningless the latter seems to be under a monopoly, the more omnipotent it becomes. The motives are markedly economic. One could certainly live without the culture industry, therefore it necessarily creates too much satiation and apathy. In itself, it has few resources itself to correct this. Advertising is its elixir of life. But as its product never fails to reduce to a mere promise the enjoyment which it promises as a commodity, it eventually coincides with publicity, which it needs because it cannot be enjoyed. In a competitive society, advertising performed the social service of informing the buyer about the market; it made choice easier and helped the unknown but more efficient supplier to dispose of his goods. Far from costing time, it saved it. Today, when the free market is coming to an end, those who control the system are entrenching themselves in it. It strengthens the firm bond between the consumers and the big combines. Only those who can pay the exorbitant rates charged by the advertising agencies, chief of which are the radio networks themselves; that is, only those who are already in a position to do so, or are co-opted by the decision of the banks and industrial capital, can enter the pseudo-market as sellers. The costs of advertising, which finally flow back into the pockets of the combines, make it unnecessary to defeat unwelcome outsiders by laborious competition. They guarantee that power will remain in the same hands—not unlike those economic decisions by which the establishment and running of undertakings is controlled in a totalitarian state. Advertising today is a negative principle, a blocking device: everything that does not bear its stamp is economically suspect. Universal publicity is in no way necessary for people to get to know the kinds of goods—whose supply is restricted anyway. It helps sales only indirectly. For a particular firm, to phase out a current advertising practice constitutes a loss of prestige, and a breach of the discipline imposed by the influential clique on its members. In wartime, goods which are unobtainable are still advertised, merely to keep industrial power in view. Subsidizing ideological media is more important than the repetition of the name. Because the system obliges every product to use advertising, it has permeated the idiom—the "style"—of the culture industry. Its victory is so complete that it is no longer evident in the key positions: the huge buildings of the top men, floodlit stone advertisements, are free of advertising; at most they exhibit on the rooftops, in monumental brilliance and without any self-glorification, the firm's initials. But, in contrast, the nineteenth-century houses, whose architecture still shamefully indicates that they can be used as a consumption commodity and are intended to be lived in, are covered with posters and inscriptions from the ground right up to and beyond the roof: until they become no more than backgrounds for bills and sign-boards. Advertising becomes art and nothing else, just as Goebbels—with foresight—combines them: l'art pour l'art, advertising for its own sake, a pure representation of social power. In the most influential American magazines, Life and Fortune, a quick glance can now scarcely distinguish advertising from editorial picture and text. The latter features an enthusiastic and gratuitous account of the great man (with illustrations of his life and grooming habits) which will bring him new fans, while the advertisement pages use so many factual photographs and details that they represent the ideal of information which the editorial part has only begun to try to achieve. The assembly-line character of the culture industry, the synthetic, planned method of turning out its products (factory-like not only in the studio but, more or less, in the compilation of cheap biographies, pseudo-documentary novels, and hit songs) is very suited to advertising: the important individual points, by becoming detachable, interchangeable, and even technically alienated from any connected meaning, lend themselves to ends external to the work. The effect, the trick, the isolated repeatable device, have always been used to exhibit goods for advertising purposes, and today every monster close-up of a star is an advertisement for her name, and every hit song a plug for its tune. Advertising and the culture industry merge technically as well as economically. In both cases the same thing can be seen in innumerable places, and the mechanical repetition of the same culture product has come to be the same as that of the propaganda slogan. In both cases the insistent demand for effectiveness makes technology into psychotechnology, into a procedure for manipulating men. In both cases the standards are the striking yet familiar, the easy yet catchy, the skillful yet simple; the object is to overpower the customer, who is conceived as absent-minded or resistant.

By the language he speaks, he makes his own contribution to culture as publicity. The more completely language is lost in the announcement, the more words are debased as substantial vehicles of meaning and become signs devoid of quality; the more purely and transparently words communicate what is intended, the more impenetrable they become. The demythologization of language, taken as an element of the whole process of enlightenment, is a relapse into magic. Word and essential content were distinct yet inseparable from one another. Concepts like melancholy and history, even life, were recognized in the word, which separated them out and preserved them. Its form simultaneously constituted and reflected them. The absolute separation, which makes the moving accidental and its relation to the object arbitrary, puts an end to the superstitious fusion of word and thing. Anything in a determined literal sequence which goes beyond the correlation to the event is rejected as unclear and as verbal metaphysics. But the result is that the word, which can now be only a sign without any meaning, becomes so fixed to the thing that it is just a petrified formula. This affects language and object alike. Instead of making the object experiential, the purified word treats it as an abstract instance, and everything else (now excluded by the demand for ruthless clarity from expression—itself now banished) fades away in reality. A left-half at football, a black-shirt, a member of the Hitler Youth, and so on, are no more than names. If before its rationalization the word had given rise to lies as well as to longing, now, after its rationalization, it is a straitjacket for longing more even than for lies. The blindness and dumbness of the data to which positivism reduces the world pass over into language itself, which restricts itself to recording those data. Terms themselves become impenetrable; they obtain a striking force, a power of adhesion and repulsion which makes them like their extreme opposite, incantations. They come to be a kind of trick, because the name of the prima donna is cooked up in the studio on a statistical basis, or because a welfare state is anothematized by using taboo terms such as "bureaucrats" or "intellectuals," or because base practice uses the name of the country as a charm. In general, the name—to which magic most easily attaches—is undergoing a chemical change: a metamorphosis into capricious, manipulable designations, whose effect is admittedly now calculable, but which for that very reason is just as despotic as that of the archaic name. First names, those archaic remnants, have been brought up to date either by stylization as advertising trade-marks (film stars' surnames have become first names), or by collective standardization. In comparison, the bourgeois family name which, instead of being a trade-mark, once individualized its bearer by relating him to his own past history, seems antiquated. It arouses a strange embarrassment in Americans. In order to hide the awkward distance between individuals, they call one another "Bob" and "Harry," as interchangeable team members. This practice reduces relations between human beings to the good fellowship of the sporting community and is a defense against the true kind of relationship. Signification, which is the only function of a word admitted by semantics, reaches perfection in the sign. Whether folksongs were rightly or wrongly called upper-class culture in decay, their elements have only acquired their popular form through a long process of repeated transmission. The spread of popular songs, on the other hand, takes place at lightning speed. The American expression "fad," used for fashions which appear like epidemics—that is, inflamed by highly-concentrated economic forces—designated this phenomenon long before totalitarian advertising bosses enforced the general lines of culture. When the German Fascists decide one day to launch a word—say, "intolerable"—over the loudspeakers the next day the whole nation is saying "intolerable." By the same pattern, the nations against whom the weight of the German "blitzkrieg" was thrown took the word into their own jargon. The general repetition of names for measures to be taken by the authorities makes them, so to speak, familiar, just as the brand name on everybody's lips increased sales in the era of the free market. The blind and rapidly spreading repetition of words with special designations links Theodor Adorno and Max Horkneimer 23 The Culture Industry advertising with the totalitarian watchword. The layer of experience which created the words for their speakers has been removed; in this swift appropriation language acquires the coldness which until now it had only on billboards and in the advertisement columns of newspapers. Innumerable people use words and expressions which they have either ceased to understand or employ only because they trigger off conditioned reflexes; in this sense, words are trade-marks which are finally all the more firmly linked to the things they denote, the less their linguistic sense is grasped. The minister for mass education talks incomprehendingly of "dynamic forces," and the hit songs unceasingly celebrate "reverie" and "rhapsody," yet base their popularity precisely on the magic of the unintelligible as creating the thrill of a more exalted life. Other stereo-types, such as memory, are still partly comprehended, but escape from the experience which might allow them content. They appear like enclaves in the spoken language. On the radio of Flesch and Hitler they may be recognized from the affected pronunciation of the announcer when he says to the nation, "Good night, everybody!" or "This is the Hitler Youth," and even intones "the Führer" in a way imitated by millions. In such cliches the last bond between sedimentary experience and language is severed which still had a reconciling effect in dialect in the nineteenth century. But in the prose of the journalist whose adaptable attitude led to his appointment as an all-German editor, the German words become petrified, alien terms. Every word shows how far it has been debased by the Fascist pseudo-folk community. By now, of course, this kind of language is already universal, totalitarian. All the violence done to words is so vile that one can hardly bear to hear them any longer. The announcer does not need to speak pompously; he would indeed be impossible if his inflection were different from that of his particular audience. But, as against that, the language and gestures of the audience and spectators are colored more strongly than ever before by the culture industry, even in fine nuances which cannot yet be explained experimentally. Today the culture industry has taken over the civilizing inheritance of the entrepreneurial and frontier democracy—whose appreciation of intellectual deviations was never very finely attuned. All are free to dance and enjoy themselves, just as they have been free, since the historical neutralization of religion, to join any of the innumerable sects. But freedom to choose an ideology—since ideology always reflects economic coercion—everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same. The way in which a girl accepts and keeps the obligatory date, the inflection on the telephone or in the most intimate situation, the choice of words in conversation, and the whole inner life as classified by the now somewhat devalued depth psychology, bear witness to man's attempt to make himself a proficient apparatus, similar (even in emotions) to the model served up by the culture industry. The most intimate reactions of human beings have been so thoroughly reified that the idea of anything specific to themselves now persists only as an utterly abstract notion: personality scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odor and emotions. The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.

# N.Y Adorno

The Culture Industry



# The Culture Industry

'Adorno expounds what may be called a new philosophy of consciousness. His philosophy lives, dangerously but also fruitfully, in proximity to an ascetic puritanical moral rage, an attachment to some items in the structure and vocabulary of Marxism, and a feeling that human suffering is the only important thing and makes nonsense of everything else. . . . Adorno is a political thinker who wishes to bring about radical change. He is also a philosopher, with a zest for metaphysics, who is at home in the western philosophical tradition.'

Iris Murdoch

'This collection of Adorno's provocative and disturbing essays on *The Culture Industry* will introduce his thinking to a wide readership. The introduction by J. M. Bernstein shows that Adorno's voice is potentially the greatest challenge to the debate over postmodernity, exposing its social and political collusions.'

Gillian Rose, author of Love's Work

# Adorno

# The Culture Industry

Selected essays on mass culture

Edited and with an introduction by J. M. Bernstein



London and New York

First published 1991 by Routledge

First published in Routledge Classics 2001 by Routledge 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2005.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been applied for

ISBN 0-203-99606-2 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-25534-1 (hbk) ISBN 0-415-25380-2 (pbk)

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# 9

## RESIGNATION

We older representatives of that for which the name Frankfurt School has established itself have recently had the reproach of resignation levelled against us. We had, it is stated, developed elements of a critical theory of society, but we were not prepared to draw the practical consequences from this theory. We neither designed programmes for action nor did we support the actions of those who felt themselves inspired by critical theory. I shall sidestep the question whether this demand can be made at all upon theoretical thinkers who always remain to a certain degree sensitive and by no means unshakable instruments. The task assigned such individuals within a society characterized by the division of labour might indeed be questionable; they themselves might well be deformed by it. But they have also been formed by it. And there is no way in which they can repeal that which they have become merely through an act of their own will. I should not want to deny the impulse of subjective weakness inherent in the confinement to theory. The objection raised against us can be stated approximately in these words; a person who in the present hour doubts the possibility of radical change in society and who for that reason neither takes part in nor recommends spectacular, violent action is guilty of resignation. He does not consider the vision of change which he once held capable of realization; indeed, he actually had no true

desire to see it realized in the first place. In leaving conditions as they are, he offers his tacit approval of them.

Distance from praxis is disreputable in the eyes of everyone. Anyone who does not take immediate action and who is not willing to get his hands dirty is the subject of suspicion; it is felt that his antipathy toward such action was not legitimate, and further that his view has even been distorted by the privileges he enjoys. Distrust of those who distrust praxis extends from those on the opposite side, who repeat the old slogan, 'We've had enough of talking' all the way to the objective spirit of advertising, which propagates the picture – it's called Leitbild or 'image as motif' - of the actively involved human being, no matter whether his activity lies in the realm of economics or athletics. One should take part. Whoever restricts himself to thinking but does not get involved is weak, cowardly and virtually a traitor. This hostile cliché on the intellectual is to be encountered with deep roots within that branch of the opposition that is in turn reviled as intellectual without any awareness thereof on their part. Thinking activists answer; among the things to be changed is that very separation of theory and praxis. Praxis is essential if we are ever to be liberated from the domination of practical people and practical ideals. The trouble with this view is that it results in the prohibition of thinking. Very little is needed to turn the resistance against repression repressively against those who - little as they might wish to glorify their state of being - do not desert the standpoint that they have come to occupy. The often-evoked unity of theory and praxis has a tendency to give way to the predominance of praxis. Numerous views define theory itself as a form of repression – as though praxis did not stand in a far more direct relationship to repression. For Marx, the dogma of this unity was animated by the immanent possibility of action which even then was not to be realized. Today it is rather the opposite situation that prevails. One clings to action because of the impossibility of action. But Marx himself reveals a concealed wound in this regard. He no doubt delivered the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach in such an authoritarian fashion because he was not at all sure of it himself. In his youth he had demanded the 'ruthless criticism of everything that exists'. Now he mocked criticism. But his famous joke about the Young Hegelians, his coinage 'critical criticism', was a dud and went up in smoke as nothing but a tautology. The forced

precedence of praxis brought the criticism which Marx himself practised to an irrational halt. In Russia and in the orthodoxy of other countries, the malicious mockery of critical criticism became the instrument that permitted the status quo to establish itself in such horrifying fashion. The only meaning that praxis retained was this: increased production of the means of production. The only criticism still tolerated was that people still were not working hard enough. This demonstrates how easily the subordination of theory to praxis results in the support of renewed repression.

Repressive intolerance toward a thought not immediately accompanied by instructions for action is founded in fear. Unmanipulated thought and the position that allows nothing to be deduced from this thought must be feared because that which cannot be admitted is perfectly clear: this thought is right. An aged bourgeois mechanism with which the men of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century were very familiar displays itself anew but unchanged: suffering caused by a negative condition - in this case by obstructed reality - turns into anger toward the person who expresses it. Thought, enlightenment conscious of itself, threatens to disenchant pseudo-reality within which, according to Habermas' formulation, activism moves. This activism is tolerated only because it is viewed as pseudo-activity. Pseudo-activity is allied with pseudo-reality in the design of a subjective position; an activity that overplays itself and fires itself up for the sake of its own publicity without admitting to what degree it serves as a substitute for satisfaction, thus elevating itself to an end in itself. All those behind bars are despondent in their desire to be released. In such situations one no longer thinks or thinks only in fictive postulates. Within absolutized praxis, only reaction is possible and for this reason the reaction is false. Only thinking could offer an escape, and then only that thinking, the results of which are not prescribed - as is so frequently the case in those discussions in which it is predetermined who is right and which therefore do not advance the cause - but rather degenerate without fail into tactics. When the doors are barricaded, it is doubly important that thought not be interrupted. It is rather the task of thought to analyse the reasons behind this situation and to draw the consequences from these reasons. It is the responsibility of thought not to accept the situation as finite. If there is any chance of changing the

situation, it is only through undiminished insight. The leap into praxis will not cure thought from resignation as long as it is paid for with the secret knowledge that this course is simply not the right one.

Generally speaking, pseudo-activity is the attempt to preserve enclaves of immediacy in the midst of a thoroughly mediated and obdurate society. This process is rationalized through the acceptance of any small change as one step on the long way toward total change. The unfortunate model for pseudo-activity is the 'do-it-yourself' syndrome - activities that do that which has long been done better through the means of industrial production and which arouse in unfree individuals, hampered in their spontaneity, the confident feeling that they are of central concern. The nonsense of the 'do-ityourself' approach to the production of material goods and in the making of many repairs is equally obvious. However, it is not total. In view of the reduction of so-called services – sometimes superfluous in terms of technical standards - measures taken by a private person fulfil a semi-rational purpose. In politics, however, the 'do-it-yourself' attitude is not of quite the same character. The society that confronts human beings in such an impenetrable manner is these humans themselves. Confidence in the limited action of small groups is reminiscent of the spontaneity which atrophies beneath the encrusted totality and without which this totality cannot be transformed into something different. The administered world has a tendency to strangle all spontaneity or at least to channel it into pseudo-activity. This, however, is not achieved so totally without difficulty as the agents of the administered world would like to imagine. Nonetheless, spontaneity is not to be absolutized - just as little as it is to be separated from the objective situation and idolized in the same manner as is the administered world itself. Otherwise the axe will break down the next door in the house - a process which never spares the carpenter - and the riot squad will appear on the spot. Political acts of violence can also sink to the level of pseudo-activity, resulting in mere theatre. It is hardly a wonder that the ideal of direct action and propaganda glorifying the deed have been resurrected, upon the heels of the willing integration of formerly progressive organizations that, in all lands of the earth, manifest the character of that against which they were once directed. This process, however, has not weakened the criticism of anarchism, the return of which is the return of a ghost. The impatience toward theory manifested in this return does nothing to advance thought beyond itself. Theory falls behind the thought which it forgets.

For the individual, life is made easier through capitulation to the collective with which he identifies. He is spared the cognition of his impotence; within the circle of their own company, the few become many. It is this act – not unconfused thinking – which is resignation. No transparent relation prevails between the interests of the ego and the collective to which it assigns itself. The ego must abrogate itself, if it is to share in the predestination of the collective. Explicitly a remnant of the Kantian categorical imperative manifests itself: your signature is required. The feeling of a new security is purchased with the sacrifice of autonomous thinking. The consolation that thought within the context of collective action is an improvement proves deceptive: thinking, employed only as the instrument of action, is blunted in the same manner as all instrumental reason. At the present moment, no higher form of society is concretely visible: for that reason, anything that seems in easy reach is regressive. According to Freud, however, whoever regresses has not achieved the goal of his drives. Objectively viewed, reformation is renunciation, even if it considers itself the opposite and innocently propagates the pleasure principle.

In contrast, the uncompromisingly critical thinker, who neither superscribes his conscience nor permits himself to be terrorized into action, is in truth the one who does not give up. Furthermore, thinking is not the spiritual reproduction of that which exists. As long as thinking is not interrupted, it has a firm grasp upon possibility. Its insatiable quality, the resistance against petty satiety, rejects the foolish wisdom of resignation. The Utopian impulse in thinking is all the stronger, the less it objectifies itself as Utopia - a further form of regression whereby it sabotages its own realization. Open thinking points beyond itself. For its part, such thinking takes a position as a figuration of praxis which is more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than in a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis. Beyond all specialized and particular content, thinking is actually and above all the force of resistance, alienated from resistance only with great effort. This emphatic concept of thinking is by no means secure; no security is granted it by existing conditions nor by the ends yet to be attained nor

by any type of organized force. Whatever was once thought, however, can be suppressed; it can be forgotten and can even vanish. But it cannot be denied that something of it survives. For thinking has the momentum of the general. What has been cogently thought must be thought in some other place and by other people. This confidence accompanies even the loneliest and most impotent thought. Whoever thinks is without anger in all criticism:1 thinking sublimates anger. Because the thinking person does not have to inflict anger upon himself, he furthermore has no desire to inflict it upon others. The happiness visible to the eye of a thinker is the happiness of mankind. The universal tendency toward suppression goes against thought as such. Such thought is happiness, even where unhappiness prevails; thought achieves happiness in the expression of unhappiness. Whoever refuses to permit this thought to be taken from him has not resigned.

#### NOTE

1 This sentence was recently used in Der Spiegel (1977, 43: 214) as the headline for a brief article on the relationship of the Frankfurt School to terror as recently manifested in the German Federal Republic.



# THE HAPPY END OF KIPPENBERGER'S AMERIKA AS TOLD TO GREGORY WILLIAMS

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## MARTIN KIPPENBERGER SPAWNED A WEALTH OF ART-WORLD

legends in his truncated career. His practice seemed specifically designed to maintain a steady buildup of anecdotes, many of which continue to circulate today, six years after his death. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Kippenberger's birth, this month sees the opening of a major retrospective of his entire career at the Museum für Neue Kunst ZKM in Karlsruhe, with additional stops in Vienna and Eindhoven. Though his influence in Europe will be debated and discussed for a long time to come, there is no question that he is one of the most significant German artists of his generation.

Given the reach of his reputation in Europe, it is somewhat surprising that there are no plans for the exhibition to travel to the United States. Kippenberger had a one-man show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1991, and his massive *Happy End of Franz Kafka's "Amerika"* (first shown in 1994 in Rotterdam) was included in the 1999 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh and mounted a year later at the Renaissance Society in Chicago. But his numerous gallery appearances at Metro Pictures, Nolan/Eckman, and David Zwirner in New York, as well as at the former Luhring Augustine Hetzler in Santa Monica, have never been augmented here by a museum-scale overview of his

# ANDREA FRASER Performance Anxiety

I was probably introduced to Martin at my first one-woman gallery show, which was at Galerie Christian Nagel in Cologne in 1990. He bought a copy of one of my museum-tour videos and a group of aluminum smiley and frowny faces I made to be installed next to other artworks. One of the interesting things about Kippenberger is how supportive he was of women artists, even though he performed, in a perfectly excessive way, the role of the macho German painter. Such support really challenged that '80s opposition between painting, particularly German painting, and the postmodernist, neo-Conceptualist feminist positions that I identified with. Unfortunately, at the time I was too informed by that opposition to get past the drunken macho persona.

When I began developing work about the position of the artist a couple of years ago, I began thinking seriously about Kippenberger's projects again. John Miller has written that Kippenberger played at pathos rather than embodied it. What I began to appreciate is that he performed his position as an artist and embodied it at the very same time. Kippenberger's drunken, impromptu dinner speech that I performed as Art Must Hang, 2001, for example, is full of what from an American perspective are misogynous, homophobic, and xenophobic elements. Now, it may be that misogyny, homophobia, and xenophobia were attributes of a certain position in the German art world and society that Kippenberger consciously took up and performed. It may also be that he was, in fact, misogynistic, homophobic, and xenophobic on some level. Maybe he knew that he was and maybe some of the

self-loathing in his work sprang from such recognition. But rather than simply disavow such attitudes, he performed them in extraordinary acts of self-objectification that were at once comic, violent, pathetic, and grotesque.

For me, this self-objectification is the most profound aspect of Kippenberger's work. I would never describe him as ironic. I think of the grotesque as what's beyond irony. It's what happens when you eliminate ironic distance by collapsing, for example, the performance and embodiment. Nor would I ever describe Kippenberger as cynical. There was obviously an enormous amount at stake for

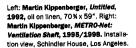
# I WOULD NEVER DESCRIBE Kippenberger as cynical. There was obviously an enormous amount at stake for him, perhaps more than he could bear.

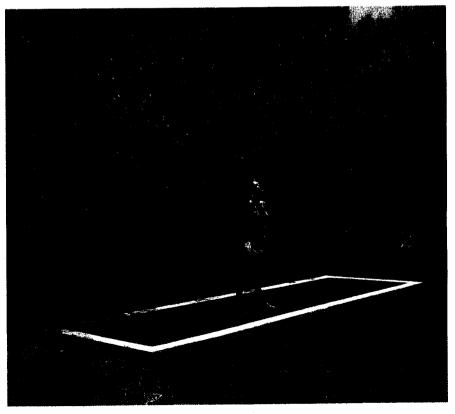
him, perhaps more than he could bear.

As artists, we represent and enjoy certain kinds of freedoms in our transgressions, our critiques, and our subversions. And yet, if we're not naive, we also know that even in those freedoms our roles are largely determined by the social institutions in which we exist. We can't escape those determinations no matter how conscious we are of them. That's why the most difficult thing to do as an artist is to perform the inseparability of freedom and determination: to perform that contradiction without distancing it in facile irony or collapsing it in cynicism, and without forgetting that you can't escape it through an act of will or reflection or a gesture of transgression. It's what I'm always trying to do but fear I'm failing. But I do think Kippenberger succeeded.

Andrea Fraser is a New York-based artist.







# Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles

Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles Edited by Benjamin Noys

ISBN 978-1-57027-231-8

Released by Minor Compositions, Wivenhoe / New York / Port Watson

Minor Compositions is a series of interventions & provocations drawing from autonomous politics, avant-garde aesthetics, and the revolutions of everyday life.

Minor Compositions is an imprint of Autonomedia www.minorcompositions.info | minorcompositions@gmail.com

Distributed by Autonomedia PO Box 568 Williamsburgh Station Brooklyn, NY 11211

Phone/fax: 718-963-0568 www.autonomedia.org info@autonomedia.org

Cover and layout by mark@alphabetthreat.co.uk

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# Work, Work Your Thoughts, and Therein See a Siege Anthony Iles and Marina Vishmidt

Art's double character as both autonomous and fait social is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy.

Theodor Adorno

If you take hold of a samovar by its stubby legs, you can use it to pound nails, but that is not its primary function.

\*Viktor Shklovsky\*\*

#### Introduction

Recent moves in political aesthetics have posited a communist moment in so-called 'relational art' through which experiments in collectivity and conviviality outline a potential post-capitalist praxis to come. <sup>95</sup> The recent uptake of the post-autonomist immaterial labor thesis draws cultural practitioners closer to the critical self-recognition of their own labor (waged and otherwise) as alienated, as well its formal commonality with other kinds of affective labor at large. Art finds itself in a new relation with contemporary forms of value production. This applies also to the structural re-composition of work in the image of the 'creative' and self-propelled exploitation

#### Communization and its Discontents

typical of financialized capitalism. In an unprecedented way, art not only reflects but revises the productive forces, shading into forces of 'non-production' and devalorization in an era of debt-financed austerity. However, as art expands to include more and more fields of social action within its imaginative and institutional remit (political activity, work, education), the paradox remains that the social effectiveness of art is guaranteed by its separation from capitalist work. Thus, art's estrangement from labor continues apace, but, at this historical juncture, coincides with labor's estrangement from labor: laboring subjects who do not identify with themselves as labor. On the one hand all labor becomes in some sense aesthetic self-creation, on the other, formerly unalienated activities are subsumed by capitalist social relations as never before.

In this text, we will discuss the complex through which art and culture register and inscribe social relations of production as they develop from the struggles between capital and labor, examining points of convergence and divergence with the communization thesis.

#### Communization

Central to communization theory is the premise that the chief product of the capitalist mode of production is the class relation between capital and labor. This social relation is evidently breaking down in the West as de-valorization and debt replaces expansion in financialized economies. At the same time, it can be argued that the spread of market relations in China and Southeast Asia is eclipsed by the global growth of populations that are surplus to the requirements of accumulation. Observing capital's victories through thirty years of neoliberal restructuring, communization theory contends that the self-affirmation of the working class is not only defunct as a political strategy, but was historically at the core of its defeat. This stemmed from a failure to attack the category of value. Value, with its twin poles of use-value and exchange-value, is the real abstraction that mediates all social relations through the commodity. Communization would

### Frames of Struggle

be the realisation of the human community through the destruction of the value-form, not a mere takeover of existing means of production.<sup>97</sup>

Revolution previously, [...] was either a question of workers seizing the productive apparatus from this parasitic class and of destroying its State in order to rebuild another, led by the party as the bearer of consciousness, or else of undermining the power of the bourgeois State by organising production themselves from the bottom up, through the organ of the trade unions or councils. But there was never a question or an attempt of abolishing the law of value...<sup>98</sup>

By contrast to this tradition, described by Théorie Communiste (TC) as 'programmatism', communization poses the question of why and how communism is possible now when the class relation which reproduces capital is breaking down. The development of capital progressively empties work of content as it strives toward real subsumption. <sup>99</sup> Class and labor are experienced as an 'external constraint', they can provide neither perspective nor legitimacy to current struggles, which encounter them as a limit. Endnotes discuss the redundancy of the wage in today's capitalism: 'As the wage form loses its centrality in mediating social reproduction, capitalist production itself appears increasingly superfluous to the proletariat: it is that which makes us proletarians, and then abandons us here.' <sup>100</sup>

It is possible to draw a link between the critique of labor as a ground for human emancipation (communism) in the communization account and the critique of labor found in critical aesthetics, from Schiller onwards, which proposes a genuinely human community bonded together by play rather than production; collective self-determination as a work of art. The idea of an immediate appropriation of the world, of determinate negation of what is, in some ways evokes an aesthetic rather than a political view of the content of revolution. The affirmation of direct social relations unmediated by the alienating abstractions of money, state or labor is an

#### Communization and its Discontents

invariant across Romantic aesthetics and is reflected in utopian socialist theory preceding Marx's work. Thus, we can begin to see an aesthetic dimension to communization.

#### The Utopia of Exact Living

Our departure point is that there is both an analogy and a disjunction between the premise of ultra-left communism, specifically communization, and the premise of many radical art practices. The project of the dissolution of art into life – expressed variously in surrealism, the situationists, Dadaism, constructivism, productivism, futurism, conceptual and performance art – has drawn life into art's orbit but also bound art closely to the potential transformation of general social life. The analogy is that communism argues for the generalization of creativity through the overcoming of the social domination of abstract labor and the value-form, which also means the dissolution of the boundary between a reified creativity and a rarefied uselessness – art – and the production of use-values – work.

The disjunction, on the other hand, comes from the tradition of critical Marxist aesthetics, which argues that it is precisely the other way around – art must maintain its difference from capitalist life in order to exert a critical purchase on it. It is the degree to which the separation between art and life, between art and work, is viewed as a problem which can be overcome in the here and now or the symptom of a problem which only social revolution can address that marks the difference between these two traditions. Fundamentally, they are premised upon different ideas of art's role in capitalist subsumption. Would art disappear in communism or would everything become art? The same question can be asked about work – would communism entail a generalization or the abolition of work? After 500 years of capitalism, are we any longer in a position to distinguish the capitalist forms from the unadulterated contents, i.e. work and capitalist work, art and commodity art, life and capitalist life?

## Artists on the Assembly Line

If art's emancipatory qualities are founded upon the tensions between self-directed activity and productive labor then attempts to close the distance between them are of paramount importance. The early 20th century avant-garde saw many such attempts. The artist going into industry has always had an element of dressing up, just as communist intellectuals in Weimar Germany competed, both in their lives and their works, to 'look' more proletarian. Rodchenko dressed in a 'production suit' continues to haunt left historians and artists. The most radical Soviet constructivist and productivist artists appear to be participating in a dress rehearsal for a putative revolutionary role curtailed by Stalinism. The irony is that if artists had completely dissolved themselves into the figure of the worker we would know no more of them.

Yet, this narrative, of a true avant-garde defeated by Stalinism and the NEP (New Economic Policy), has been transformed in recent years. Maria Gough's research on the factory placement of constructivist Karl Ioganson shows that interventions by constructivist artists in industrial production did in fact take place during the NEP.<sup>101</sup> The debates between constructivist and productivist tendencies within INKhUK (the Soviet 'Institute of Artistic Culture', 1920-26) about how to close the gap between productive and aesthetic labor are also instructive. From these, John Roberts isolates three potential roles for the artist intervening directly in the production process: the artist as an engineer contributing to the improvement of industrial technique, the artist as designer establishing new product lines, and lastly the artist as a catalyst or spiritual engineer seeking 'to transform the consciousness of production itself in order to contribute to labor's emancipation'. <sup>102</sup>

The practical experiments in the production process by constructivist artists fulfilled only the first and second of these roles. With the adoption of rationalising Taylorism as Bolshevik policy in the rapid industrialisation during NEP, Soviet production did not depart from, but

rather aped value-production (albeit in a dysfunctional form). Progress was regression. Effectively artists worked to discipline and police workers in the work place and outside it. Yet, if for Roberts the third position remains a utopian horizon then this leads to many questions. In a collaboration between artists and workers, what makes the artist the catalyst in transforming the production process? And, more importantly, is this 'emancipation' *from* labor or *as* labor?

A proponent of 'left' productivism, Boris Arvatov, made a contribution to this debate which was overlooked at the time and only recently recovered. His theoretical output attempts to close the distinction between production and consumption enforced by capital and reproduced intact in most Marxist theory. Arvatov foregrounds the status of *things* as central to the communist transformation of everyday life: 'If the significance of the human relation to the Thing has not been understood, or has been only partially understood as a relation to the means of production, this is because until now Marxists have known only the bourgeois world of things.' Arvatov insists that the polarities which organize bourgeois life would be completely dissolved under communist social relations. Freed from possession as private property, things are also freed from the subject-object relations through which capitalism subordinates human life to the demands of the production process and thus capital's own valorization process.

Arvatov hardly mentions art in this important essay, but remains primarily a theorist of the artistic trends associated with constructivism. His prefiguration of a 'communist object' and new materialist social relations sits uneasily with art and labor's instrumentalization under Bolshevism. Notwithstanding a technocratic outlook and a problematic affirmation of labor (albeit labor redefined under socialist conditions), Arvatov's ideas hold out significant opportunity for development. He allows us to jettison the crude Marxian idea that science and technology are neutral means to be appropriated by the proletariat and enables us to pose the problem of

communism as not only a change in ownership, but a total departure from the capitalist mode of production and its 'scientific' foundation. A transformation of ontological oppositions: production and consumption, everyday life and labor, subject and object, active and passive, exchange-value and use-value. Drawing upon the insights of Walter Benjamin on collecting, we can speculate that it is only things liberated from use which cease to be commodities. The socialist object is not just one that's been taken out of commodity exchange and put to good use in a new society; if it was really socialist, it would never be put to use as we know it. <sup>104</sup>

## The Communist Imaginary

In his writing on relational aesthetics and socially-engaged art practices John Roberts notes a disconnect between such practices and a critique of work. Roberts sees in this activity a valuable 'holding operation' which 'keeps open the ideal horizon of egalitarianism, equality and free exchange.' Stewart Martin disagrees: The dissolution of art into life not only presents new content for commodification, but a new form of it in so far as art or culture has become a key medium through which commodification has been extended to what previously seemed beyond the economy'. Recent accounts of the relation between productive labor and artistic labor refer to post-autonomist ideas of the socialisation of work in advanced capitalism. Central to these accounts is Maurizio Lazzarato's concept of 'immaterial labor' – the notion that all work is becoming increasingly technologized, dependent upon and productive of communication and cooperation rather than a finished product.

However, almost immediately after its formulation Lazzarato abandoned the term:

But the concept of immaterial labor was filled with ambiguities. Shortly after writing those articles I decided to abandon the idea and haven't used it since. One of the ambiguities it created had to

do with the concept of immateriality. Distinguishing between the material and the immaterial was a theoretical complication we were never able to resolve.<sup>107</sup>

In the early 21st century claims for the hegemony of a class of immaterial laborers could be disputed by pointing out the drive of capital towards absolute surplus-value extraction in the global south. After the 2008 financial crisis, the dramatic shake out of overinflated values and optimism about the agency of this new class brought to new light the relation between the material and the immaterial. Furthermore viewing contemporary labor through the lens of immaterial labor tended to reproduce rather than disassemble the dominant division of mental and manual labor in capitalism. Art as such can be seen as the fetishization of the division of mental and manual labor, which is refined and generalised in the 'creativization' of 'post-Fordist' work.

An interesting way out of the sterility of such debates, is identified by Stewart Martin in his essay 'The Pedagogy of Human Capital', in which he discusses how terminology such as immaterial labor and self-valorization both operate with a problematic concept of autonomy. Autonomy can be said to have been thoroughly internalised by capital in its attempts to collapse the subjectivity of living labor as its own and through its moves to commodify previously non-capitalised areas of life. The move to aesthetics is then seen as a way of dissolving the autonomy/heteronomy distinction, reliant ultimately on domination (even and especially when it's the 'self-legislating' kind), through the agency of play and the invention of 'forms-of-life' resistant to an autonomy thinkable only through capital's laws. 108

#### What is There in Uselessness to Cause You Distress?

In art from the 1960s onwards late capitalist modernity offered some exits for practitioners who saw the division of labor between art work and

regular work as a political issue. There was a 'refusal of work' within art, rejecting art making and socialisation as an artist by exiting the art world and becoming invisible or imperceptible on its terms. There was also the emulation of work in the art domain, from proletarian stylistics to managerial protocols, marking the shift to the 'post-industrial' era in the West. Feminism's influence was seen in practices which problematized the division of art work from domestic labor. Conceptual art itself was premised on an expansion of art's competence via the dissolution of its borders. The paradoxical identification with extra-artistic labor while rejecting artistic labor entered another phase with artists such as Gustav Metzger (leader of an art strike and proponent of auto-destructive art) and the Artist Placement Group.

The Artist Placement Group, operating in the UK and Europe from 1966–1989, was started by John Latham, Barbara Steveni and others. Their central concept was 'placing' artists in organizations, a forerunner to artist residencies. The main differences with the artist residency as it exists now was that the artist was re-defined as an Incidental Person, a kind of disinterested and de-specialised agent who might prompt a shift in the context into which he or she was inserted, promising no specific outcome beyond that. The maneuvers of repudiation of art, whether it was negative, e.g. withdrawal from art, or positive, e.g. expansion of art's remit, were subjected to a 'knight's move' by APG, whose idea of the Incidental Person (IP) managed to at once de-value art and de-value work. It bracketed both 'art' and 'work' in the emergent concept of the 'professional' as a neutral and unmarked social being. It also re-constituted artistic subjectivity at what can be viewed as a higher level of mystification: a valorization of the artist as the place holder for human freedom elsewhere cancelled in capitalist society. This conception is linked to the Romantic aesthetic tradition, and can be found across 19th century philosophers such as Friedrich Schiller and William Hazlitt, as well as authors working in the Marxist critical aesthetics vein, such as Theodor Adorno, pointing to their shared reference to art as unalienated labor.

To give a specifically Marxist valence to the idea of an artistic avant-garde, in her book *Marx's Lost Aesthetic*, Margaret A. Rose speculates that Marx not only developed a Saint-Simonian critique of the feudal nature of industrial capitalism but was also influenced by the Comte de Saint-Simon's ideas about artists in society: 'Artists should also be considered as industrialists, as they are producers in many respects and among them they contribute greatly to the prosperity of our manufacturers by the designs and models with which they furnish the artisans.'109 In his utopian plan for a future society based upon transformed industrial relations Saint-Simon made room for artists in his "Chambre d'Invention" at the head of his administrative pyramid with engineers and architects.'110 As Rose points out, since for Saint-Simon politics was a 'science of production', the role of artists was itself a political role, bound up with the multivalent aspects of art, use and poiesis.'111

Here we can see prefigured the deployment of artists in industry as promoted and practised by APG. The significance of this precursor is not only that from a certain perspective APG reproduce the role of the artist as part of a problematic managerial vanguard of a new system. Saint-Simon's 'prosperity' is not productive in the capitalist sense but emancipates workers from work to pursue 'enjoyments'. It is this which connects APG back to Marx's 'lost aesthetic' and prompts us to reassess their efforts in line with a critique of the organization of activity and of the senses under the capitalist mode of production.

Traditionally, capitalist modernity excluded art from instrumentality because it was seen as an exception, a free creative practice which was pursued for ends different to economic activity, and untainted by politics. But this can also be re-framed as placing art in service of a 'higher' instrumentality, that of displacing and reconciling bourgeois contradictions. The Adornian complex of art as the absolute commodity captures this. The concept of the IP then could be read as a subversive affirmation of this: putting purposeless purpose to work.

Whereas APG's placements were guided by a characteristically obtuse notion of 'use', artists are inserted into social contexts now precisely because they are deemed useful for executing vague state or corporate goals. Such an outcome is already evident in the history of APG trying to 'sell situations' to UK culture bureaucracies in the 1970s, as they alternately embrace and back off from the entrepreneurial and employment potential occasionally glimpsed by the Arts Council in the 'placements'. APG asserted the aim to 'provide a service to Art, not a service to artists', while the notion of the IP is predicated on a loss of self-evidence of what Art is or even its right to exist, as Adorno put it. The opacity of any benefit in the presence of the IP in organizations is framed by APG as economically productive in the visionary sense today's business climate needs. By the early 1980s, the concept of 'human capital' had begun to circulate in policy circles, and APG's proposals started to make more sense.

The presence of the IP in an organization was meant to overcome the antagonism between workers and management, much as the idea of human capital does. It was a process of making real oppositions ideally obsolete through the mediation of this 'third term'. APG's 'non-technical non-solution' thus exposed them to accusations of having social-democratic illusions. A few implications arise here. One is the IP's repudiation of the productivist legacy of sending artists into the factories and improving the labor process: the IP brief was totally undetermined – APG took artistic alienation from productive life seriously. For the APG, however, if art did have a social use, it was not a use recognisable to anyone, but it did have the power to reveal the contingency of social uses, and propose other ones, albeit within the broadly-defined language game of art. Yet this challenge to use-value and useful labor was beholden to a vision of artistic neutrality which can be seen as readily morphing into the non-specialised but omniadaptable 'creative' of today.

A powerful retort to APG's attempts to expose commodity production to transformative non-instrumental ends can be derived from the

case of one of the companies they targeted for placements: Lucas Aerospace. While APG were unsuccessfully approaching management at the company, the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Steward's Committee was countering management-imposed restructuring with their own alternative corporate plan. The plan proposed the reorganization of the company around 'socially useful products and human-centered technologies' developed by the workers themselves. Setting out to address 'the exponential change in the organic composition of capital and the resultant growth of massive structural unemployment' directly, the Committee rejected in practice the division of manual and intellectual work. The plan was developed on company time and in the context of sit-ins and demonstrations to contest restructuring. The 'creativity' of labor was matched by, and in fact conditioned by, the negativity of labor – stopping or slowing-down production.

It is important here to note that by no means was the Lucas Corporate Plan simply an experiment in self-management. The plan posed the problem of the emancipation of labor as a struggle over the content of work and the use-values it produces. Yet this approach strategically included both a rejection of and a compromise with the market.

## Something about between nothing and money

The conception of use-value as separable from the commodity is questionable in itself. Yet, this separation is also primary to the debate about whether art does or does not have use-value. The answer to this is decisive for art's critical status in capitalism, as much as for debates about the content of communism.

Karl Marx, in his Appendix to the 1st German edition of *Capital*, Volume 1, 'The Value-Form', makes several statements which clarify what is elsewhere an ambiguous relationship between exchange-value and use-value.

The analysis of the *commodity* has shown that it is something *two-fold*, use-value *and* value. Hence in order for a thing to possess *commodity-form*, it must possess a *twofold form*, the form of a use-value and the form of value ... Relative value-form and equivalent form are moments of the *same expression of value*, which belong to one another and are reciprocally conditioning and inseparable.<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, 'use-value and exchange-value, are distributed *in a polar manner* among the commodities'.<sup>115</sup>

Marx discusses use-values always and already in the context of the commodity. Use-value refers to the natural properties of a commodity. Use-values are realised only in consumption, not exchange. A commodity is the crystallisation of social labor, which is performed in a certain configuration of social relations of production. Therefore, we can say that use-value is always mediated by those social relations: 'Use-value is the immediate physical entity in which a definite economic relationship – exchange-value – is expressed'. <sup>116</sup>

While it is accurate to say that use-value exists outside its particular social form, it is the division of commodities into a use-value and an exchange-value that bespeaks the operation of the social form of value. Because all capitalist commodities are products of abstract labor, the dimension of use-value supposedly unrelated to social form is subsumed in this homogeneity and abstraction insofar as use-value is part of the commodity. Use-value bears the same relation to exchange-value as concrete labor does to abstract labor; it is its opposite (particular, individual), but subsumed into the general form of value which hollows out particularity. The fact that (most) art is not produced directly under the law of value does not put it outside the value-form. As such, it might perhaps be more relevant to discuss art in its tenuous link to abstract social labor than simply as anomalous to use-value.

Moishe Postone identifies 'labor' as a capitalist category and thus a reified one. <sup>117</sup> This is relevant also to the de-socialised or idealised positioning of use-value, and ultimately testifies that the art into life versus critical autonomy paradox for art cannot be resolved so long as the social form of its production is determined by value. The form of social labor in capitalism is nowhere the same thing as concrete labor, or even the ahistorical 'metabolic interaction with nature':

'Labor' by its very nature is unfree, unhuman, unsocial activity, determined by private property and creating private property. Hence the abolition of private property will become a reality only when it is conceived as the abolition of 'labor' (an abolition which, of course, has become possible only as a result of labor itself, that is to say, has become possible as a result of the material activity of society and which should on no account be conceived as the replacement of one category by another).<sup>118</sup>

This political point is central, i.e. labor cannot serve as a ground for emancipation, which is where Postone crosses over with communization theory in their shared emphasis on value-critique.

Until recently, communist thought posed the problem of production as one of separating use-value from exchange-value, yet these insights suggest that destruction of the capital-labor relationship must also destroy use-value as a constitutive category presupposed by value.

The questions raised by the Lucas Plan are revisited by Bruno Astarian with regard to what he calls 'crisis activity':

The question is how production can resume without work, or productivity, or exchange. The principle of 'production' without productivity is that people's activity and their relationship come first and output second. To develop production without productivity is

#### to abolish value in both its forms.<sup>119</sup>

Seen in this light, the Lucas Plan enacts the isolation of a general, and therefore abstract, need (a market as such) and offers production to satisfy it, rather than each producer cooperating to immediately satisfy particular needs. Astarian invokes communization as a form of production inseparable from the particular needs of individuals and in total rejection of measurement and accounting. Particularity and rejection of measurement evokes the aesthetic, here envisioned as not just in reaction to but exceeding the abstraction and value-measure which have prepared the ground for it.

#### Financialization: Form Follows Finance

We can outline other relationships that bind artworks to the political economy of their times. Theodor Adorno conceives of 'aesthetic forces of production' that inescapably imprint the artwork: 'the artist works as social agent, indifferent to society's own consciousness. He embodies the social forces of production without necessarily being bound by the censorship dictated by the relations of production.' Those relations are legible in art, but encrypted in such a way as to underline their contingency. Jean–Joseph Goux relates Marx's schema of the development of a general equivalent to the invention of forms of representation; of art, literature and language. This system presents modes of signification and modes of exchange as imbricated.

Goux describes capitalist exchange's tendency towards abstraction and the tendency to 'dematerialisation' in art as two sides of a general crisis of representation punctuated by historically locatable crises in the value form (1919, 1929 and 1971). Each crisis marks a limit to the existing system's ability to represent real world goods through money, and in each case resolution of the crisis is by way of an expansion, or further abstraction, of the money-form. Put crudely, the drives towards abstraction

in both art and money are entwined.

Art is both an innovator in the forms of representation extending the limit of what can be represented - and, at times, its antagonist - eschewing equivalence and disrupting orders of measure. Art as a special commodity rebels against its commodity status, seeking a transvaluation of all values. 'Great 20th-century avant-garde art - and poetry in particular - from Celan to Brecht and Montale, has demonstrated the crisis of experiential units of measure.... This emphasis on immoderation, disproportion [...] is where [avant-garde art] edges up to communism.'122 Arguably in the movement towards financialization art has tracked capital's proclivity to escape from engagement with labor and into the self-reflexive abstraction of value. As gold became paper and then electronic, money increasingly became autonomous from productive labor. The movement of self-expanding value, appearing as money making money on financial markets, dissolves all prior values and relationships into abstract wealth. Similarly in art, expansion of its claims upon material previously alien to it tends towards the hollowing out of this material's substance. One notable aspect of dematerialisation in art is its temporal coincidence with deindustrialisation in the late 60s and early 70s. This period saw a re-engagement with industrial materials and (vacant) industrial spaces by artists. Another was the move towards information systems and new technologies. In this sense, the conditions set by the movements of finance provide the material and conceptual parameters for art. Art operates in these conditions but also upon them to transform their terms. Both speculative commodities, art is backed by the credibility of the artist and money by the credibility of the state. Yet art is engaged in an endless testing of its own condition which anticipates negations of the determinations of the value form from inside, rather than beyond, its tensions.

If this complicity between money and art has led to unseemly games with both, the strain of this relationship has also ushered in forms of

critical reflexivity. 123 Throughout art's development in the face of advanced capitalism, tension with commodification gravitates towards uselessness and negation. If, in art we find the outline of an emancipatory practice to come then it is important to bear in mind that this remains a model and not a programme; it is 'a model *of* emancipated labor, not the model through which the emancipation of labor will be accomplished'. 124

## Don't Worry, Mate, It's Only Art, It's Not Worth it, or, the Labor of the Negative

Increasingly, artistic labor apes service work in its performance of affect and civic virtue, whilst capital (at least in the West) appears to be going through an anti-productivist, if not outright destructive turn. Capital's attempts to bind more closely to the market sectors not previously organized according to the law of value – art, but also education – testify to its current problems of valorization, which are affecting the relationship of capital and labor as well as that between art and labor.

The integration of expanses of social experience which used to provide capital with a dialectical contrast and a 'standing reserve' makes itself felt as uselessness and negation in art, in work and in radical politics. It may be ventured that a common tendency of all progressive social movements at the time Goux was writing (1969) was a rejection of labor, even in the labor movements, which fought hard to wrench more money and more life, not more work, from capitalists and the State. Lyotard was writing his famous 'evil' book, *Libidinal Economy* (1974) several years later, arguing that alienated labor is a source of self-destructive jouissance and can never be affirmed as a productive praxis once freed of its value-form integuments. This accords with the communization position – labor, and its class politics, emerge as a hated situation enforced by capital which has nothing to do with emancipation. Given the preceding, it may be said that communization theory, as seen in the texts we have examined by TC, Bruno Astarian or Endnotes, revisits the dialectic between reform or revolution which

transfixed the Left in previous eras both as troubled and as seemingly quiescent as this one. However, it transposes that dialectic onto the 'revolution' side to put forward the claim that all previous revolutionary movements were reformist, as they were content to affirm the working class as it is in capital. The necessity of doing otherwise now stems largely from capital's initiative: not only work, but working-class politics, have been made so degraded and irrelevant that no one identifies with them anymore. At the same time, this dis-identification, regardless of the new political articulations that come in its wake, could also be seen as an atomising and decomposing one. The ongoing reproduction of the social relations of capital, with the politics of its class relations shattered, means that competitive individualism becomes the only credible form of human autonomy – and the community of capital the only credible form of the human community. This situation registered quite early in the stronghold of competitive creative individualism that can be said to have prototyped it, that is, art.

This struggle over the wage and struggle against waged work has not been entirely alien to artists who have agitated around the issue of artists' fees. Groups such as W.A.G.E. (Working Artists in the General Economy) demand reimbursement for 'critical value' in 'capitalist value'. This is certainly a materialist critique of the non-reproduction artists are tasked with advancing for everyone – at least they should be paid for it. The barrier to this provocation, which is also implicit to it, is, as Paolo Virno puts it, 'Nowadays artistic labor is turning into wage labor while the problem is, of course, how to liberate human activity in general from the form of wage labor.' This question of liberating human activity is bracketed in the question of artistic labor, which, in its post-object phase, appears as labor which cannot find value on the market, and is thus useless labor, and can only model liberated human activity for free. This shows that art has a problematic relationship to the commodity not only at the level of the artwork, but at the level of labor.

This problem whether applied to labor or a temporality which

ultimately comes down to labor-time under the form of value, is not neglected in communization theory, as writers like Bruno Astarian show:

There is a paradox here: the economic crisis is at its deepest, the proletariat's needs are immense, and the solution is to reject productivism. Indeed, 'production' without productivity is not a production function. It is a form of socialization of people which entails production, but without measuring time or anything else (inputs, number of people, output).<sup>126</sup>

There is a strong temptation to make an analogy between Astarian's 'production without productivity' or 'consumption without necessity' and art's output of 'a product identical with something not produced'. Art stands between a conscious process and an unconscious one, closely tied to the development of individuality and difference. Not only do artworks pass through a moment which bypasses use value, and cannot be subsumed under exchange value, they also connect with a form of activity which presages non-objective relations between subjects, activity which dismantles 'the subject as congealed technology'. Viewed thus communization would be a generalization of art and individuality *different* to that which we live through today.

#### Conclusion

Marx's ambiguity on use-value can be linked to the ambivalence of the historical artistic avant-garde and left-communism in relation to work. For Adorno, the criticality of art lay in the paradox of autonomy: art was autonomous (free, giving itself its own law) at the same time as it was heteronomous (unfree, imprinted by commodity relations). Presently, we can re-frame this as the tension between a readily-exploited 'creativity' and a withdrawing 'negativity' as the poles, and the pathos, of current art practice. The problem of the historic avant-garde, especially the Soviet

example of Productivism, is also the problem of communism – does work need to be valorized or negated, and under what conditions? There has been an ongoing dialectic of art into life versus art against capitalist life. It seems there is a convergence between a certain sort of negationist attitude toward production in art and in certain strands of Marxism. But should the negativity of capitalist value be recognized as well as the negativity of labor-power lest we reify negativity as the simple absence of productivity, anti-politics, futility? Or even a dynamic counter-form – rupture – to the stagnant value-form? To avoid such an easy totalization, the link from art to finance – to self-expanding value, to recursivity and abstraction – has to be maintained. Art's relation to the value-form and role in socialising value-relations emerges in the forming of a speculative subjectivity suited to a speculative economy.

The figure of the Incidental Person denotes a transformation common to both art and labor as social forms. As the artist becomes a template for a generic subjectivity adaptable to all forms of authority and abstraction, work becomes a form lacking identity or outcome. It is the apotheosis of the romantic figure of the artist: 'Art is now the absolute freedom that seeks its end and its foundation in itself, and does not need, substantially, any content, because it can only measure itself against the vertigo caused by its own abyss." This is the generic subjectivity of the artist, key to Western liberal discourse since the Enlightenment, whether as civic model or as exception that proves the law of capitalist social relations, and it has less relation to the negativity of labor-power than to the negativity of the ever-mutating form of value. Contra to the thesis that the dissolution of the borders between art and productive labor (or art and politics) heralds emancipation, this may be read instead as an index of the real subsumption of generic human capacities into the self-valorization process of a capital which is no longer sure about where value comes from or how to capture it; a process as self-referential and totalising as the expanded field of art.

## Work, Work Your Thoughts, and Therein see a Siege

- <sup>95</sup> The two primary accounts we are referring to are: John Roberts, 'Introduction: Art, "Enclave Theory" and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text* 23:4 (2009): 353-367, and Stewart Martin, 'Artistic Communism –a sketch', *Third Text*, 23: 4(2009): 481-494.
- <sup>96</sup> Endnotes, 'Misery and Debt', *Endnotes* 2 (2010): 20-51, http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/1.
- <sup>97</sup> Endnotes, 'Communization and Value-form Theory', *Endnotes* 2 (2010): 68-105, http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/4, p.88.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.103.
- 99 Karl Marx, *Capital Vol.1*, Trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), p.548.
- <sup>100</sup> Endnotes, 'Crisis in the Class Relation', *Endnotes* 2 (2010): 2-19, http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/2, p.19.
- <sup>101</sup> Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 2005).
- <sup>102</sup> John Roberts, 'Productivism and Its Contradictions', *Third Text* 23.5 (September 2009), p.528.

- <sup>103</sup> Boris Arvatov, 'Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question)', trans. Christina Kiaer, in *October* 81 (Summer 1997), p.121.
- <sup>104</sup> We are indebted here to Nicholas Thoburn's research on the 'communist object' which brings Arvatov and Benjamin into dialogue. Nicholas Thoburn, Communist Objects and the Values of Printed Matter (London: Objectile Press, 2010), reprinted from *Social Text* 28.2 (Summer 2010).
- <sup>105</sup> Roberts, 2009.
- <sup>106</sup> Martin, 2009, p.482.
- <sup>107</sup> 'Conversation with Maurizio Lazzarato June 23, 2010 Public Editing Session #3, in Exhausting Immaterial Labor in Performance Joint issue of *Le Journal des Laboratoires* and *TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory* 17 (October 2010).
- <sup>108</sup> Stewart Martin, 'The Pedagogy of Human Capital', *Mute*, 2.8 (April 2008), http://www.metamute.org/en/Pedagogy-of-Human-Capital. This discussion clarifies the importance of keeping the two principal concepts of 'autonomy' that of art's autonomy in capitalism which was developed by Theodor Adorno, and the autonomy of the working class as developed by the 'workerist' communism of 1970s Italy analytically and practically distinct.
- <sup>109</sup> Comte de Saint-Simon, La Politique quoted in Margaret A. Rose, *Marx's Lost Aesthetic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.12.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid., p.12.
- <sup>111</sup> Comte de Saint-Simon, On Social Organization quoted in Margaret A. Rose, Ibid., p.13.
- <sup>112</sup> Diedrich Diedrichsen, 'Audio Poverty', http://e-flux.com/journal/view/143.
- <sup>113</sup> Mike Cooley, *Architect or Bee?: the human / technology relationship* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), p.65.
- <sup>114</sup> Karl Marx, 'The Value-Form', Appendix to the 1st German edition of *Capital, Volume 1*, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/appendix.htm.

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- <sup>116</sup> Karl Marx, *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch01.htm.
- <sup>117</sup> Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: a reinterpretation of Marx's critical theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- <sup>118</sup> Karl Marx, 'Draft of an Article on Friedrich List's book: Das Nationale System der Politischen Oekonomie I' (1845) http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/03/list.htm.
- <sup>119</sup> Bruno Astarian, 'Crisis Activity & Communization', *Mute Magazine* (2011), http://www.metamute.org/en/news\_and\_analysis/crisis\_activity\_communisation.
- <sup>120</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2007), p.55.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>122</sup> Paulo Virno, 'The Dismeasure of Art. An Interview with Paolo Virno' http://classic.skor.nl/article-4178-nl.html?lang=en.
- <sup>123</sup> This specific relationship between financialization and art is explored in detail in Melanie Gilligan, *Notes on Art, Finance and the Un-Productive Forces* (Glasgow: Transmission Gallery, 2008), http://www.transmissiongallery.org/files/Publication/GI\_2008.pdf.
- <sup>124</sup> John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), p.209.
- <sup>125</sup> Virno, 'The Dismeasure of Art'.
- <sup>126</sup> Astarian, 2011.
- <sup>127</sup> Adorno, 2007, p.53.
- <sup>128</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1999), p.35.

Communiqué from from an an Absent Future

preselected for our bemusement: a shimmering menu of illusions. Both the full-filled life and our own imaginations have been systematically replaced by a set of images more lavish and inhumane than anything We live as a dead civilization. We can no longer imagine the good life except as a series of spectacles we ourselves would conceive, and equally beyond reach. No one believes in such outcomes any more.

strangers: the hustle for a lower-management position that will last (with luck) for a couple years rifted with anxiety, fear, and increasing exploitation — until the firm crumbles and we mutter about "plan B." But The truth of life after the university is mean and petty competition for resources with our friends and this is an exact description of university life today; that mean and petty life has already arrived.

and the actuality on offer. Some take a naïve romantic stance toward education for its own sake, telling themselves they expect nothing further. Some proceed with iron cynicism and scorn, racing through the ludicrous charade toward the last wad of cash in the airless vault of the future. And some remain committed to the antique faith that their ascendingly hard labor will surely be rewarded some day if they just act as Just to survive, we are compelled to adopt various attitudes toward this fissure between bankrupt promises one who believes, just show up, take on more degrees and more debt, work harder.

on our boredom, more likely not. There will be no 77 virgins, not even a plasma monitor on which to watch every manner of crassness and cruelty is actively encouraged in the unending meantime. We live as a dead Time, the actual material of our being, disappears: the hours of our daily life. The future is seized from us in advance, given over to the servicing of debt and to beggaring our neighbors. Maybe we will earn the rent the death throes of the United States as a global power. Capitalism has finally become a true religion, wherein the riches of heaven are everywhere promised and nowhere delivered. The only difference is that civilization, the last residents of Pompeii.

# , Against Pompeii

Romantic naïvete, iron cynicism, scorn, commitment. The university and the life it reproduces have depended on these things. They have counted on our human capacities to endure, and to prop up that has rotted itself from the inside: the "human capital" of staff, teachers, and students would now no more But why not hasten its collapse? The university world's catastrophic failure for just a few more years. defend it than they would defend a city of the dead.

us to learn them as tools; they will return as weapons. The university that makes us mute and dull instruments of its own reproduction must be destroyed so that we can produce our own lives. Romantic naïvete about possibilities; iron cynicism about methods; scorn for the university's humiliating lies about of our own lives. This is the beginning of imagination's return. We must begin to move again, release Romantic naïvete, iron cynicism, scorn, commitment: these need not be abandoned. The university forced its situation and its good intentions; commitment to absolute transformation — not of the university, but ourselves from frozen history, from the igneous frieze of this buried life. We must live our own time, our own possibilities. These are the only true justifications for the university's existence, though it has never fulfilled them. On its side: bureaucracy, inertia, incompetence. On our side: everything else.

deep bonds, and if there is a lesson to be learned from them it is that we must build dense networks of solidarity based upon the recognition of a shared enemy. These networks not only make us resistant to recuperation and neutralization, but also allow us to establish new kinds of collective bonds. These bonds are the real basis of our struggle.

We'll see you at the barricades.

Like the society to which it has played the faithful servant, the university is bankrupt.

Research and Destroy

2009

of goods from place to place. Within months this tactic spread across the country without any formal coordination between groups. In the same way repetition can establish occupation as an instinctive and immediate method of revolt taken up both inside and outside the university. We have seen a new wave of takeovers in the U.S. over the last year, both at universities and workplaces: New School and NYU, as well as the workers at Republic Windows Factory in Chicago, who fought the closure of their factory by taking it over. Now it is our turn.

To accomplish our goals we cannot rely on those groups which position themselves as our representatives. We are willing to work with unions and student associations when we find it useful, but we do not recognize their authority. We must act on our own behalf directly, without mediation. We must break with any groups that seek to limit the struggle by telling us to go back to work or class, to negotiate, to reconcile. This was also the case in France. The original calls for protest were made by the national high school and university student associations and by some of the trade unions. Eventually, as the representative groups urged calm, others forged ahead. And in Greece the unions revealed their counter-revolutionary character by cancelling strikes and calling for restraint.

As an alternative to being herded by representatives, we call on students and workers to organize themselves across trade lines. We urge undergraduates, teaching assistants, lecturers, faculty, service workers, and staff to begin meeting together to discuss their situation. The more we begin talking to one another and finding our common interests, the more difficult it becomes for the administration to pit us against each other in a hopeless competition for dwindling resources. The recent struggles at NYU and the New School suffered from the absence of these

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**Like the society** to which it has played the faithful servant, the university is bankrupt. This bankruptcy is not only financial. It is the index of a more fundamental insolvency, one both political and economic, which has been a long time in the making. No one knows what the university is *for* anymore. We feel this intuitively. Gone is the old project of creating a cultured and educated citizenry; gone, too, the special advantage the degree-holder once held on the job market. These are now fantasies, spectral residues that cling to the poorly maintained halls.

Incongruous architecture, the ghosts of vanished ideals, the vista of a dead future: these are the remains of the university. Among these remains, most of us are little more than a collection of querulous habits and duties. We go through the motions of our tests and assignments with a kind of thoughtless and immutable obedience propped up by subvocalized resentments. Nothing is interesting, nothing can make itself felt. The world-historical with its pageant of catastrophe is no more real than the windows in which it appears.

For those whose adolescence was poisoned by the nationalist hysteria following September 11<sup>th</sup>, public speech is nothing but a series of lies and public space a place where things might explode (though they never

do). Afflicted by the vague desire for *something to happen*—without ever imagining we could make it happen ourselves—we were rescued by the bland homogeneity of the internet, finding refuge among friends we never see, whose entire existence is a series of exclamations and silly pictures, whose only discourse is the gossip of commodities. Safety, then, and comfort have been our watchwords. We slide through the flesh world without being touched or moved. We shepherd our emptiness from place to place.

But we can be grateful for our destitution: demystification is now a condition, not a project. University life finally *appears* as just what it has always *been*: a machine for producing compliant producers and consumers. Even leisure is a form of job training. The idiot crew of the frat houses drink themselves into a stupor with all the dedication of lawyers working late at the office. Kids who smoked weed and cut class in high-school now pop Adderall and get to work. We power the diploma factory on the treadmills in the gym. We run tirelessly in elliptical circles.

It makes little sense, then, to think of the university as an ivory tower in Arcadia, as either idyllic or idle. "Work hard, play hard" has been the over-eager motto of a generation in training for...what?—drawing hearts in cappuccino foam or plugging names and numbers into databases. The gleaming techno-future of American capitalism was long ago packed up and sold to China for a few more years of borrowed junk. A university diploma is now worth no more than a share in General Motors.

We work and we borrow in order to work and to borrow. And the jobs we work toward are the jobs we already have. Close to three quarters

or to elect those who will screw us over? We must leave behind the culture of student activism, with its moralistic mantras of non-violence and its fixation on single-issue causes. The only success with which we can be content is the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the certain immiseration and death which it promises for the 21st century. All of our actions must push us towards communization; that is, the reorganization of society according to a logic of free giving and receiving, and the immediate abolition of the wage, the value-form, compulsory labor, and exchange.

Occupation will be a critical tactic in our struggle, but we must resist the tendency to use it in a reformist way. The different strategic uses of occupation became clear this past January when students occupied a building at the New School in New York. A group of friends, mostly graduate students, decided to take over the Student Center and claim it as a liberated space for students and the public. Soon others joined in, but many of them preferred to use the action as leverage to win reforms, in particular to oust the school's president. These differences came to a head as the occupation unfolded. While the student reformers were focused on leaving the building with a tangible concession from the administration, others shunned demands entirely. They saw the point of occupation as the creation of a momentary opening in capitalist time and space, a rearrangement that sketched the contours of a new society. We side with this anti-reformist position. While we know these free zones will be partial and transitory, the tensions they expose between the real and the possible can push the struggle in a more radical direction.

We intend to employ this tactic until it becomes generalized. In 2001 the first Argentine piqueteros suggested the form the people's struggle there should take: road blockades which brought to a halt the circulation

specific government policies, in general they asked for nothing at all from the government, the university, the workplaces, or the police. Not because they considered this a better strategy, but because they wanted nothing that any of these institutions could offer. Here content aligned with form; whereas the optimistic slogans that appeared everywhere in French demonstrations jarred with the images of burning cars and broken glass, in Greece the rioting was the obvious means to begin to enact the destruction of an entire political and economic system.

Ultimately the dynamics that created the uprising also established its limit. It was made possible by the existence of a sizeable radical infrastructure in urban areas, in particular the Exarchia neighborhood in Athens. The squats, bars, cafes, and social centers, frequented by students and immigrant youth, created the milieu out of which the uprising emerged. However, this milieu was alien to most middleaged wage workers, who did not see the struggle as their own. Though many expressed solidarity with the rioting youth, they perceived it as a movement of entrants - that is, of that portion of the proletariat that sought entrance to the labor market but was not formally employed in full-time jobs. The uprising, strong in the schools and the immigrant suburbs, did not spread to the workplaces.

Our task in the current struggle will be to make clear the contradiction between form and content and to create the conditions for the transcendence of reformist demands and the implementation of a truly communist content. As the unions and student and faculty groups push their various "issues," we must increase the tension until it is clear that we want something else entirely. We must constantly expose the incoherence of demands for democratization and transparency. What good is it to have the right to see how intolerable things are,

of students work while in school, many full-time; for most, the level of employment we obtain while students is the same that awaits after graduation. Meanwhile, what we acquire isn't education; it's debt. We work to make money we have already spent, and our future labor has already been sold on the worst market around. Average student loan debt rose 20 percent in the first five years of the twenty-first century—80-100 percent for students of color. Student loan volume—a figure inversely proportional to state funding for education—rose by nearly 800 percent from 1977 to 2003. What our borrowed tuition buys is the privilege of making monthly payments for the rest of our lives. What we learn is the choreography of credit: you can't walk to class without being offered another piece of plastic charging 20 percent interest. Yesterday's finance majors buy their summer homes with the bleak futures of today's humanities majors.

This is the prospect for which we have been preparing since grade-school. Those of us who came here to have our privilege notarized surrendered our youth to a barrage of tutors, a battery of psychological tests, obligatory public service ops—the cynical compilation of half-truths toward a well-rounded application profile. No wonder we set about destroying ourselves the second we escape the cattle prod of parental admonition. On the other hand, those of us who came here to transcend the economic and social disadvantages of our families know that for every one of us who "makes it," ten more take our place—that the logic here is zero-sum. And anyway, socioeconomic status remains the best predictor of student achievement. Those of us the demographics call "immigrants," "minorities," and "people of color" have been told to believe in the aristocracy of merit. But we know we are hated not despite our achievements, but precisely because of them.

And we know that the circuits through which we might free ourselves from the violence of our origins only reproduce the misery of the past in the present *for others*, elsewhere.

If the university teaches us primarily how to be in debt, how to waste our labor power, how to fall prey to petty anxieties, it thereby teaches us how to be consumers. Education is a commodity like everything else that we want without caring for. It is a thing, and it makes its purchasers into things. One's future position in the system, one's relation to others, is purchased first with money and then with the demonstration of obedience. First we pay, then we "work hard." And there is the split: one is both the commander and the commanded, consumer and consumed. It is the system itself which one obeys, the cold buildings that enforce subservience. Those who teach are treated with all the respect of an automated messaging system. Only the logic of customer satisfaction obtains here: was the course easy? Was the teacher hot? Could any stupid asshole get an A? What's the point of acquiring knowledge when it can be called up with a few keystokes? Who needs memory when we have the internet? A training in thought? You can't be serious. A moral preparation? There are anti-depressants for that.

Meanwhile the graduate students, supposedly the most politically enlightened among us, are also the *most* obedient. The "vocation" for which they labor is nothing other than a fantasy of falling off the grid, or out of the labor market. Every grad student is a would be Robinson Crusoe, dreaming of an island economy subtracted from the exigencies of the market. But this fantasy is itself sustained through an unremitting submission to the market. There is no longer the least

As the movement developed it manifested a growing tension between revolution and reform. Its form was more radical than its content. While the rhetoric of the student leaders focused merely on a return to the status quo, the actions of the youth – the riots, the cars overturned and set on fire, the blockades of roads and railways, and the waves of occupations that shut down high schools and universities - announced the extent of the new generation's disillusionment and rage. Despite all of this, however, the movement quickly disintegrated when the CPE law was eventually dropped. While the most radical segment of the movement sought to expand the rebellion into a general revolt against capitalism, they could not secure significant support and the demonstrations, occupations, and blockades dwindled and soon died. Ultimately the movement was unable to transcend the limitations of reformism.

The Greek uprising of December 2008 broke through many of these limitations and marked the beginning of a new cycle of class struggle. Initiated by students in response to the murder of an Athens youth by police, the uprising consisted of weeks of rioting, looting, and occupations of universities, union offices, and television stations. Entire financial and shopping districts burned, and what the movement lacked in numbers it made up in its geographical breadth, spreading from city to city to encompass the whole of Greece. As in France it was an uprising of youth, for whom the economic crisis represented a total negation of the future. Students, precarious workers, and immigrants were the protagonists, and they were able to achieve a level of unity that far surpassed the fragile solidarities of the anti-CPE movement.

Just as significantly, they made almost no demands. While of course some demonstrators sought to reform the police system or to critique

neighborhoods, and slums. All of our futures are linked, and so our movement will have to join with these others, breeching the walls of the university compounds and spilling into the streets. In recent weeks Bay Area public school teachers, BART employees, and unemployed have threatened demonstrations and strikes. Each of these movements responds to a different facet of capitalism's reinvigorated attack on the working class in a moment of crisis. Viewed separately, each appears small, near-sighted, without hope of success. Taken together, however, they suggest the possibility of widespread refusal and resistance. Our task is to make plain the common conditions that, like a hidden water table, feed each struggle.

We have seen this kind of upsurge in the recent past, a rebellion that starts in the classrooms and radiates outward to encompass the whole of society. Just two years ago the anti-CPE movement in France, combating a new law that enabled employers to fire young workers without cause, brought huge numbers into the streets. High school and university students, teachers, parents, rank and file union members, and unemployed youth from the banlieues found themselves together on the same side of the barricades. (This solidarity was often fragile, however. The riots of immigrant youth in the suburbs and university students in the city centers never merged, and at times tensions flared between the two groups.) French students saw through the illusion of the university as a place of refuge and enlightenment and acknowledged that they were merely being trained to work. They took to the streets as workers, protesting their precarious futures. Their position tore down the partitions between the schools and the workplaces and immediately elicited the support of many wage workers and unemployed people in a mass gesture of proletarian refusal.

felt contradiction in teaching a totalizing critique of capitalism by day and polishing one's job talk by night. That our pleasure is our labor only makes our symptoms more manageable. Aesthetics and politics collapse courtesy of the substitution of ideology for history: booze and beaux arts and another seminar on the question of being, the steady blur of typeface, each pixel paid for by somebody somewhere, some not-me, not-here, where all that appears is good and all goods appear attainable by credit.

Graduate school is simply the faded remnant of a feudal system adapted to the logic of capitalism—from the commanding heights of the star professors to the serried ranks of teaching assistants and adjuncts paid mostly in bad faith. A kind of monasticism predominates here, with all the Gothic rituals of a Benedictine abbey, and all the strange theological claims for the nobility of this work, its essential altruism. The underlings are only too happy to play apprentice to the masters, unable to do the math indicating that nine-tenths of us will teach 4 courses every semester to pad the paychecks of the one-tenth who sustain the fiction that we can all be *the one*. Of course *I* will be the star, *I* will get the tenure-track job in a large city and move into a newly gentrified neighborhood.

We end up *interpreting* Marx's 11<sup>th</sup> thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." At best, we learn the phoenix-like skill of coming to the very limits of critique and perishing there, only to begin again at the seemingly ineradicable root. We admire the first part of this performance: it lights our way. But we want the tools to break through that point of suicidal thought, its hinge in practice.

The same people who practice "critique" are also the most susceptible to cynicism. But if cynicism is simply the inverted form of enthusiasm, then beneath every frustrated leftist academic is a latent radical. The shoulder shrug, the dulled face, the squirm of embarrassment when discussing the fact that the US murdered a million Iraqis between 2003 and 2006, that every last dime squeezed from America's poorest citizens is fed to the banking industry, that the seas will rise, billions will die and there's *nothing* we can do about it—this discomfited posture comes from feeling oneself pulled between the *is* and the *ought* of current left thought. One feels that there is no alternative, and yet, on the other hand, that another world is possible.

We will not be so petulant. The synthesis of these positions is right in front of us: another world is *not* possible; it is necessary. The *ought* and the *is* are one. The collapse of the global economy is here and now.

Ш

**We seek to** push the university struggle to its limits.

Though we denounce the privatization of the university and its authoritarian system of governance, we do not seek structural reforms. We demand not a free university but a free society. A free university in the midst of a capitalist society is like a reading room in a prison; it serves only as a distraction from the misery of daily life. Instead we seek to channel the anger of the dispossessed students and workers into a declaration of war.

We must begin by preventing the university from functioning. We must interrupt the normal flow of bodies and things and bring work and class to a halt. We will blockade, occupy, and take what's ours. Rather than viewing such disruptions as obstacles to dialogue and mutual understanding, we see them as what we have to say, as how we are to be understood. This is the only meaningful position to take when crises lay bare the opposing interests at the foundation of society. Calls for unity are fundamentally empty. There is no common ground between those who uphold the status quo and those who seek to destroy it.

The university struggle is one among many, one sector where a new cycle of refusal and insurrection has begun – in workplaces,

We seek to push the university struggle to its limits.

The modern university has no history of its own; its history is the history of capital.

proletarianized by debt and a devastated labor market.

That is why our struggle is fundamentally different. The poverty of student life has become terminal: there is no promised exit. If the economic crisis of the 1970s emerged to break the back of the political crisis of the 1960s, the fact that today the economic crisis precedes the coming political uprising means we may finally supersede the cooptation and neutralization of those past struggles. There will be no return to normal.

Ш

The modern university has no history of its own; its history is the history of capital. Its essential function is the reproduction of the relationship between capital and labor. Though not a proper corporation that can be bought and sold, that pays revenue to its investors, the public university nonetheless carries out this function as efficiently as possible by approximating ever more closely the corporate form of its bedfellows. What we are witnessing now is the endgame of this process, whereby the façade of the educational institution gives way altogether to corporate streamlining.

Even in the golden age of capitalism that followed after World War II and lasted until the late 1960s, the liberal university was already subordinated to capital. At the apex of public funding for higher education, in the 1950s, the university was already being redesigned to produce technocrats with the skill-sets necessary to defeat "communism" and sustain US hegemony. Its role during the Cold War was to legitimate liberal democracy and to reproduce an imaginary society of free and equal citizens—precisely because no one was free and no one was equal.

But if this ideological function of the public university was at least well-

funded after the Second World War, that situation changed irreversibly in the 1960s, and no amount of social-democratic heel-clicking will bring back the dead world of the post-war boom. Between 1965 and 1980 profit rates began to fall, first in the US, then in the rest of the industrializing world. Capitalism, it turned out, could not sustain the good life it made possible. For capital, abundance appears as overproduction, freedom from work as unemployment. Beginning in the 1970s, capitalism entered into a terminal downturn in which permanent work was casualized and working-class wages stagnated, while those at the top were temporarily rewarded for their obscure financial necromancy, which has itself proved unsustainable.

For public education, the long downturn meant the decline of tax revenues due to both declining rates of economic growth and the prioritization of tax-breaks for beleaguered corporations. The raiding of the public purse struck California and the rest of the nation in the 1970s. It has continued to strike with each downward declension of the business cycle. Though it is not directly beholden to the market, the university and its corollaries are subject to the same cost-cutting logic as other industries: declining tax revenues have made inevitable the casualization of work. Retiring professors make way not for tenure-track jobs but for precariously employed teaching assistants, adjuncts, and lecturers who do the same work for much less pay. Tuition increases compensate for cuts while the jobs students pay to be trained for evaporate.

In the midst of the current crisis, which will be long and protracted, many on the left want to return to the golden age of public education. They naïvely imagine that the crisis of the present is an opportunity to demand the return of the past. But social programs that depended upon

high profit rates and vigorous economic growth are gone. We cannot be tempted to make futile grabs at the irretrievable while ignoring the obvious fact that there can be no autonomous "public university" in a capitalist society. The university is *subject* to the real crisis of capitalism, and capital does not require liberal education programs. The function of the university has always been to reproduce the working class by training future workers according to the changing needs of capital. *The crisis of the university today is the crisis of the reproduction of the working class, the crisis of a period in which capital no longer needs us as workers.* We cannot free the university from the exigencies of the market by calling for the return of the public education system. We live out the terminus of the very market logic upon which that system was founded. The only autonomy we can hope to attain exists *beyond capitalism*.

What this means for our struggle is that we can't go backward. The old student struggles are the relics of a vanished world. In the 1960s, as the post-war boom was just beginning to unravel, radicals within the confines of the university understood that another world was possible. Fed up with technocratic management, wanting to break the chains of a conformist society, and rejecting alienated work as unnecessary in an age of abundance, students tried to align themselves with radical sections of the working class. But their mode of radicalization, too tenuously connected to the economic logic of capitalism, prevented that alignment from taking hold. Because their resistance to the Vietnam war focalized critique upon capitalism as a colonial war-machine, but insufficiently upon its exploitation of domestic labor, students were easily split off from a working class facing different problems. In the twilight era of the post-war boom, the university was not subsumed by capital to the degree that it is now, and students were not as intensively

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## Communiqué from an Absent Future — Further Discussion (Round One) | Anarchist news dot org

So, here's how the discussion will happen:

*Round One*, below, will be three sets of responses to the questions we came up with: one a collective response from Research and Destroy, one a collective response from Dead Labor (the aforementioned New School occupiers), and an individual response from Brian Holmes (who is one of the organizers of the "Continental Drift Seminar").

*Round Two*, which will be posted in a week or two, will be everyone's responses to the first round of responses.

These are the three questions folks were asked to answer:

- 1) Whaddya mean the management class is being proletarianized!?! Isn't this somehow an insult/misrecognition regarding the REAL proletariat?
- 2) Does addressing the university student as the potential revolutionary subject get us closer to revolution? How? How not?
- 3) What would a non-reformist goal for a university be, if one exists?

Let the games begin! [Oh, by the way, it's a long post. If you prefer a printable PDF, click here.]

Best,

charles

#### RESEARCH & DESTROY RESPONSE

1) Whaddya mean the management class is being proletarianized!?! Isn't this somehow an insult/misrecognition regarding the REAL proletariat?

The R&D communiqué seems to have provoked skepticism with the brief passage, "The crisis of the university today is the crisis of the reproduction of the working class, the crisis of a period in which capital no longer needs us as workers." Against misreading, perhaps we should say that the crisis of the university is the crisis of the reproduction of the capital-labor relationship. Classes are a relation; when we talk about capital and labor we mean the poles of this relation in motion, not a series of rigid sociological categories with, say, the right amount or right kind of immiseration. The current crisis of profitability, for example, is not just a crisis of and for capitalists; it goes to every point in the social grid.

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Whether or not one thinks of the places traditionally reserved for university graduates—the professional, the technician, the manager—as middle-class or some privileged fraction of the working-class, the university has no existence save by relationship to work and future work prospects. Even if one thinks narrowly of the true proletariat as unskilled manual laborers, such a group still remains the other of the university: the truth of class society from which university entrants seek immunity or escape. By serving as a real or imagined sorting system, the university (and like organs of class reproduction) assists in the perpetuation not only of the working-class but all classes.

This is precisely what has begun to decompose. Close to half of university graduates work in unskilled and service-sector occupations for which their degrees are entirely unnecessary. Those who do find employment in the technical, professional, and managerial occupation discover that decades of routinization and labor-market oversupply have nullified the advantage of these positions. Computer programming becomes data-entry, so-called "middle"-management positions nothing more than routinized clerical work. As manufacturing jobs departed with the high industrial era, it was precisely these other positions to which capital shifted its attention, attempting, rather desperately, to save on labor costs in a local-global competition—managing the managers so that they, in turn, might hector and superexploit the inferiors they were made to fear becoming. No doubt the university continues to reproduce a (shrinking) class of elites. The broad lines, however, are clear: a university degree is now as mythical a form of security as the value of a home in 2006. This myth forms, in part, the object of our researches, of our destructions.

There's no need to overread "capital no longer needs us as workers." We understand that there is no capital without the extraction of surplus-value from workers: capitalism is nothing but this extraction in motion. But capital now casts about wildly in its attempts to find new pools of accumulation: it cannot valorize itself to the degree it would like, and many workers find themselves without the dubious but nonetheless necessary benefits of such exploitation. The annihilation visited on the manufacturing sectors has leapt to the fields of work that can't be compressed through labor-saving mechanization. There is nowhere for capital to turn but to the intensification of labor, the harrying of workers, managerial mechanics. Yes, capital will find use for some of us; many will find little or no employment. This is not to say that the college graduates inhabit the same place in the structure as the most immiserated workers—in both objective and subjective terms the composition of the working-class exhibits great variety. Solidarity means recognizing these differences in relation; it means a revolutionary program with the will to destroy them. . .

2) Does addressing the university student as the potential revolutionary subject get us closer to revolution? How? How not?

It remains opaque to us why one would not address the student as a potential revolutionary subject. The exploitation on which the current relations of production depend is immanent: it passes through walls and hours. If there is some idea, within or without the porous borders of the university, that life there is in some way exempt from the logic of capital, that the university is not indeed a forcing house for that logic, well, this is an illusion that should be directly confronted. That's likely the best reason to address the university student—as recognition of capital's true success in the recent epoch, which is to have successfully insinuated itself into every minute, every conversation and every dream.

The university with its ceremonial robes still holds on to something of the medieval—a distant whiff

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of the guild, with its masters, apprentices, stock boys. It is no doubt a challenge to persuade professors, graduate and undergraduate students to identify themselves as part of a larger class of labor. No doubt this is in part because each occupies a visibly different place in the matrix of the exploited, and some are more rewarded than others for their participation. This failure of class consciousness, this blindness to base material conditions, is a description of the problem that exists at all strata—not a reason to look elsewhere for problems.

Do students have a peculiar or novel position in this problem of consciousness, of self-identification within the matrix of capital and its possible overcoming? Yes and no—an answer that goes for almost every group among the exploited. Let us imagine the student who indeed goes four years entirely free from wage labor: that nearly extinct case, the pure student, who exists largely in the idealizations of the idiot bourgeois, and in the resentment of some few representatives of the immiserated industrial proletariat of North America whom, having failed to realize themselves as a revolutionary class, now would bar the doors of their historic defeat.

The novel role of these "pure students" (as representatives of the problem at hand) is not that they are free from wage exploitation for four idyllic years. It is that they are the subject of an epochal historical bargain. No mass of surplus value will be extracted for these four years—on promise that the training received therein will allow correspondingly greater value extraction over the following fifty. They are, in short, a personification (complete with skateboard and laptop) of capital's widespread wager on relative as against absolute surplus value. Allowing greater historical specificity, they are the burgeoning subclass conjured by late capital's increasing dependence on technologies of management—including managerial bodies—to defer its own crisis.

So what is not novel, not peculiar? That, en route to refusal and insurrection, students are easily bought off. Less easily than unions, in some formal sense of negotiation (if there is one lesson to learn from 1968, it is this); more easily, in that it is easier to purchase a student with an abstraction like democracy or peace. Everyone has their price. Correspondingly, everyone is a potential subject of the logic of price, and of its undoing —

## 3) What would a non-reformist goal for a university be, if one exists?

This question is hard to answer, because we can't extract universities from the world around them. We can't take individual universities and re-make them along communist lines, as though they could function as oases in the desert. This is a bit like trying to "free" workers by re-making individual workplaces into workers' cooperatives. While businesses that are co-managed on a democratic basis by workers, who also divide the profits, may have certain advantages for those who work there, they are in no meaningful way moving beyond capitalism—they must make a profit in order to survive, they must pay for rent and equipment, and all the workers must make a wage that allows them to pay for all of the costs of survival. In a society in which the vast majority of people must spend most of their lives selling their labor for a wage, educational institutions will necessarily be places of social reproduction, places that train people to work. None of the possibilities for transforming the university within capitalism are able to overcome this problem.

The most commonly heard goal on the left for the university is the goal of accessibility—that is, making higher education free and available to all people. While we certainly agree that this kind of

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transformation would allow people from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds to compete more easily against wealthier people in the job market, it does not change the basic fact that people would still be forced to compete for the ability to work. In fact as more people get bachelors' degrees, what we find is not a decrease in wealth inequality but a decrease in the worth of the degree, to the point where now to compete for many jobs degree holders must go back to school for more training.

The other goal for the university sometimes discussed in radical circles is the goal of a space where "real" learning can take place, in a mode that is either explicitly radical or at least in opposition to the values of a society based on wage labor. Those who take this position usually cite the importance of the Arts and Humanities as disciplines that play a central role in fostering human creativity, teaching critical thinking, and transmitting knowledge about the world. They point out that these disciplines are under attack and sometimes call for the creation of an autonomous "people's" university operated by teachers and students, where learning will trump profit as a guiding principle. Of course we agree about the value of creativity and critical thought. However, any university that operated along these lines would quickly become irrelevant to the vast majority of people who need an education that provides them with a better chance of finding work. It would be useful only to those who aim to translate the cultural capital acquired through training in the Arts and Humanities into jobs in the culture industry or to those who are independently wealthy.

The honest answer to the question about a non-reformist goal for a university is that our world is structured in such a way as to make radical change within one sphere impossible. Only by dismantling the whole can we hope to produce institutions that actually provide for people's needs in a meaningful way. In other words, focusing on the university as a site of radical transformation is a mistake. The real value of university struggles is not their ability to transform the university, but their potential to draw attention to the interrelations between the reproductive and productive spheres. As students begin to articulate themselves as workers and future workers, the mythology around the university starts to dissipate and the separation between students and workers begins to disappear.

A non-reformist approach to the university must expose what universities really are: institutions that reproduce the workforce, that is, that train and educate people to become workers, depending upon the particular needs of the economy at any given moment; and workplaces in their own right, employing teachers, staff, and service workers. We must also demonstrate that movements for university reform take the wrong position at a critical historical moment, a moment of capitalist crisis. Hearkening back to a time of generous government spending on public needs is the wrong strategy when the public purse is shrinking rapidly. Instead of trying desperately to show how the government can meet our needs, we should use the opportunity to show how it can't meet our needs—to demonstrate capitalism's inherent instability and its inability to provide for people. The system is faltering, and instead of trying to get it working smoothly again we need to aid its demise.

Instead of thinking of the university as our goal, we should see it as the means to an end: a useful place that can help us in our struggle against capitalism by exposing many of the contradictions inherent in the system as a whole. The university is simply one of many sites where these contradictions become concentrated—like workplaces, schools, prisons, and neighborhoods. We analyze a part to shed light on the whole. The most important thing is to demonstrate the university's relationship to all of these other sites. Once these connections are made then university struggles blend more easily into other struggles in workplaces and communities. Strikes and expropriations

(such as occupations) can be ways of demonstrating these connections. Taking over a university is really just taking over private property and collectivizing it—just like any property anywhere else in society. The point is to show that the university doesn't belong just to the students who attend classes there or the individual workers who are employed there, but to all of the working class.

As for the role of universities in a free society, I think most of us at R&D agree that they will not exist. Learning and teaching will take place in very different modes, based on people's varied needs and desires. But we think these modes will emerge through the process of communisation, as people begin to experiment with new social forms, and can't be prescribed now.

## **BRIAN HOLMES RESPONSE**

I want to take these questions in a different order, or all at once. To address students as revolutionaries is to address them as equals, right now not later. It's the best way of recognizing the long implosion of middle-class status that the financial crisis has suddenly thrust in our faces: "We are all going bankrupt," says the communiqué from the second Santa Cruz occupation. Addressing students as revolutionaries asks the question, it possible to depose the people who run things this way?

Bankruptcy is a powerful word. It drains the belief from an institution the way news of an accident drains the blood from your face. At last, some disbelief. With tuition practically doubling, job markets plunging, health care non-existent for huge amounts of people, and flexible contracts getting more coercive by the day, it's right to say that proletarianization is haunting the student population, and that's what comes off clearest in the Communiqué from an Absent Future. I especially like the cynical realism: it hits people where they are, it's perfect. But words like "proletarian" or "working class" will never catch the aspirations of people going to school, they have a lot more to lose than their chains. What they have to lose are the potentials, the life chances, offered by the social state. Face it, people want something from the state! The budget cuts break the promise, that's what hurts, that's what makes people angry. "Occupy everything" is a great response, not because it's the total appropriation of everyday life here and now—that's overblown and it's an illusion—but because occupation is a political "No!" that draws a line and proves that a fight is essential. What's needed is to stop the neoliberal machine from privatizing everything, which can only be done by a break, a frontal opposition that wrenches everyone out of their ruts and opens up new chances, puts the whole social deal back on the table. The bankruptcy of the system reveals its potential value, and at the same time, its actual ruin by the elites who are creating a society that no one else wants to live in.

The question is, how to make the break? The radical point of the Communiqué is to avoid useless negotiation that only delays the inevitable. And it's effective. But you better also avoid empty radicalism that only touches a small and easily neutralizable group. Here's the paradox: passion is essential, the rhetoric of insurrection is good for sparking it, the experience of revolt is fundamental and it changes your life—but the riot never lasts for more than a few days. And the problems are immensely bigger than the rhetoric can encompass. No one should forget that the management plans that are being imposed, and the financial engineering behind them, are typical products of the university itself, which is the laboratory of neoliberalism and one of its most powerful institutions, it's hardly slated to disappear in some catastrophic collapse. To oppose those techniques and to depose the people behind them is going to require, not the abandonment of the institution, but its complete refashioning, which would have to be done by strong currents of internal and external subversion. The

aim is rational and affective reshaping, changing the feel and the very logic of the place. It's not about reform, it's about transforming the institution that fabricates social beings, with their subjectivity and their knowledge and their technical skills. If we don't transform it, the current brand of dominant subjectivity is gonna stay in power and set up lots more police. But the question is how to get people to make the change, when in fact, so many interest groups are profiting from the situation as it is, while others are trying to hang on to their status quo, and still others are too scared or just too dazed to mobilize. Invocations of early twentieth-century struggles are not going to do the trick. Marx did not live through the 1930s and there is no analysis in Capital of the class structure produced by the social state, let alone the perverse twists that neoliberalism has given it. '68 already failed on outdated schemas and slogans. With the same starting points, this time will be no different. You have to begin with all the complexity of real life, and get the people living it to push it much further.

The specter of bankruptcy has shocked the ones who thought they could hang on to their current positions, the professors I mean. What they need to do—and to be forced to do—is publicly recognize that that they are losing their old liberal dream of the university, even while the students are slipping massively towards a precarious existence that has nothing to do with the subjects they came to study. I would say, the revolutionary strategy is getting a fraction of the profs to radicalize. That will send a lot more students over the line, don't you think? It will take a three-sector alliance—the precarious students and contract faculty, the service workers of the university, and the full professors threatened in both their pocketbook and their sense of mission—to stand up to all the other interest groups who, so far, have been the winners. The Communiqué pushes mainly towards the affects of fear and refusal of exclusion, it doesn't show how knowledge and cooperation become a weapon. I'd say, go for critique in action, occupy everything you can, but start opening up perspectives for a more complex resistance.

After the RNC protests in St Paul in '08 and similar paramilitary abuses at the recent G20 meeting in Pittsburgh, what's missing are ideas about how to develop a radical struggle in a country that's set up such an extreme repressive apparatus. We need non-violent techniques for direct action, fresh arguments for the right to dissent by professors and political figures, a mobilization of legal support, and, at the same time as all that, a refusal of the procedural limits that make the repressive system into its own tautology, allowing only the kinds of debates that insure its own reproduction. Movements are strong when they have lots of openings. In France these days, small coteries of people whisper about what's happening in the countryside, in Tarnac, the coming insurrection. But the huge social movements of which those people form one interesting part require cooperation among many different levels of society. They are based in a continuous analysis of legislative, legal, and economic changes, along with a cultural production of counter-values and ways of reimagining the common, the public sphere, solidarity and social rights. In America we lack outbursts of revolt and sustained movements in order to overcome the enforced paralysis that has kept such ideas from getting anywhere near the mainstream over the last thirty years. For that we have to radicalize the universities, which is why I think this movement is so important.

Nothing is gonna happen in a day, or in one single social situation either. The rot in the system is deep and the neoliberal rationality is still convincing for large numbers of people. If we are lucky and some initial battles are won at UC, still there is going to be a need for longer-term strategies that can give intellectuals—read: revolutionaries—a role in society again. That also requires forming serious groups off campus, and outside the career fixation that sucks away most of the time and energy of

people getting their degrees, publishing their papers, and looking at their navels in the complicated and submissive ways that people are trained for in the universities, and particularly in the humanities. It's amazing how effective that training is, to the point where nobody seems to have any materialist curiosity anymore. Few intellectuals today have much of a grasp of how society functions in its deadly complexity. Neither outdated Marxist categories nor even brilliant riffs on Situationist insurrectionalism are gonna give anyone that understanding, the knowledge of how to subvert the system. How does a revolutionary go about changing the wills of engineers, scientists, accountants, doctors, entertainers, politicians—or at least, of young people who aspire to become those things, but also see the dead-ends of society as it is?

Some answers to that question were already learned in the counter-globalization movements, and the existence of free-software networks is proof of the possibility to transform the technical basis of life in the overdeveloped societies. Now the reality of climate change is making larger numbers of people aspire to that kind of transformation. By studying how things work, by going out to other groups in society and getting their perspectives, by finding out their economic and technical problems as well as their cultural and affective ones, we could build a capacity to bring new agendas into the university system and also out into the population at large. This process points a way out of the bubble, a way to live outside the incredible complacency that has been the inflexible rule in America in these past years and decades. Continental Drift and the other groups I am collaborating with are made to do that, it's an anti-zombification strategy, a way to prolong the autonomy of thought and emotion that's gained in struggles and street demonstrations. The point is to create social sites where that kind of autonomy can root and ramify and gain resistance over time, to form a real common sense in the face of decay and deepening problems. That's why I came back to America from Europe, because there seems to be some possibility to do that here, now that the major swindles of the last thirty years are finally bankrupt. So anyway, there's my two bits on the three questions, hope there was something useful.

## **DEAD LABOR RESPONSE**

1) Whaddya mean the management class is being proletarianized!?! Isn't this somehow an insult/misrecognition regarding the REAL proletariat?"

To speak of a distinct class of managers, whose function may arguably be facilitating the integration of the proletariat in response to its periodic intensified contradictions, is to run the risk of reducing the dynamic processes of proletarianization and mediation into fixed, sociological categories. Undoubetdly, this obscures the historical development, qualitative diffusion and generalization of the compulsion to sell one's labor power.

What cannot be ignored however is the fact that the great bureaucracies of the 20th century have had their final gasps of air, both with the lucidity of their illusions, as well as their prominence in neutralizing and circumscribing class struggle. Their only recourse has been to recede into an image of themselves for the vultures of empirical analysis.

Thus, what is lost in such a point of departure is the understanding that the process of proletarianization is precisely that of mediation; the mediation between subject and object, individual and social, thought and practice, all of which become mangled and reconfigured through the intermediate of capital.

The superior question would be to inquire into the methods by which the proletariat itself produces generalized self-management as the object of capital. It is here that the proletariat emerges strictly as a form, the drive to sell labor power, with varying content, to the ultimate evasion of the metaphysician. Immediately, the notion of a more authentic or "real" proletariat dissolves upon an abstract equalization in which its only "real" expression derives from the contradiction between self-valorizing value and labor power. Archaic questions and inquiries into the "real" proletariat only divert analysis of proletarianization into a petrified and glorified object, finding refuge in its preservation that aims for an emancipation without self-abolition, ultimately deepening class society.

However, in order for the proletariat to combat its own existence as a class, and thus dissolve existing conditions in general, its only recourse is to proceed from its particular relation to both the productive and reproductive processes, and from the social categories to which these processes provide expression. This entails calling into question all fractions of proletarian existence, from the circuits of both the production and reproduction of capital. The latter, defined with a particular relation to the production process whereby capital is not necessarily generated, but rather provided social lubrication and logical adherence for global production processes, still demonstrates the qualities of the productive proletariat merely in the exchange of their labor power with a capital engaged in the sphere of production. Thus, the notion of the proletariat is not limited to those who toil strictly within the productive process or exist as a uniform assemblage without its own specified mediums, features, or echelons. Instead, the proletariat resides precisely in the contradictions of productive labor that structure society as a whole.

This perspective further renders the proletariat as an a priori socioeconomic category stale and useful only to the extent that its specified categorical forms are utilized for its further integration with capital. If one were to pay recognition to the proletarianization of what may vulgarly be identified as a "management class," it is only in the hope of elucidating the contradictions between labor and capital as diffuse and without regard to traditional class narratives, instead constituting various modes and dynamics of exploitation both within the productive and reproductive spheres. Anything less perpetuates the notion of class as an exterior constraint to the proletariat's self-abolition.

2) Does addressing the university student as the potential revolutionary subject get us closer to revolution? How? How not?

No. The only revolutionary subject we acknowledge in the present is capital. Capital constantly revolutionizes our activities, our wants, our needs. The revolution within and against the revolution of capital will be done by its objects. The name given to that particular object of capital which produces value through its living labor has historically been called the proletariat. This object, because its activity is the most direct expression of capital, has the potential to negate it. Why? Because the proletariat is a function of capital, and hence, in interrupting itself, it interrupts the function of capital as well. This does not produce revolution or communism, only insurrection, the gap in which the possibility of nonalienated life can be asked meaningfully, truthfully. Insurrection, the horizon and limit of our potential antagonistic activity today, poses the material possibilities in which communism can be achieved. But from insurrection to communism, there is no common term. We do not impose our view of how that rupture between the two will take place, we can only narrate the history of its attempted failures.

In the present moment, the question of the proletariat wanders aimlessly amongst the population. Neither here nor there, its nominal absence reveals its material omnipresence. Only that which can no longer be identified has been fully diffused. The great potential to valorize all activities is the common project of humanity today; it is our collective identity, our global home. From the standpoint of capital, there is no longer any difference between making a television show and watching a television show. They are both congealed modes of dead labor which offer up statistics to be interpreted for the further intensification of capital into life. In other words, objective proletarian functions have been extended to the population at large, and along with it, subjective proletarian conditions attach themselves. The former case means we are always working, and the latter means we are always alienated. From the proletariat to proletarianized life, this is the history of our present.

Granted such a situation, the university student is in no way outside the circuits of exploitation and alienation. But neither is the video artist, the drug dealer, the internet addict, the zine maker, the dumpster diver, the guerrilla gardener, the social critic, the radical publisher, the anti-capitalist organizer, the train hopper, the bank robber, the co-op manager. All these jobs of modern life are exactly that, jobs. A job is no longer what is done in return for a wage, it is rather what is done to acquire the means of existence, and this is exactly what capital seeks to incorporate into its accounting books.

The need of a constantly emerging revolutionary subject for its theories chases the Marxist ideologue over the entire surface of the globe: the French communards, the German industrial working class, the Russian soviets, the white American machinist, the black American urbanite, the nationalist revolutionary in the third world, the postcolonial subaltern, the unwaged female, ad infinitum.

Never has addressing any of these as the potential revolutionary subject gotten us any closer to revolution. In fact, by ignoring the totalizing nature of capitalism as a social system, attempts to concentrate on particular social actors have served only to fracture the coherency of revolutionary critique and impede its negative function.

The university student does not exist in isolation. What is higher education if not training for a life of wage labor? Gone are the days when attendance at university was an ascetic phase for the sons of the ruling class, an initiation into the upper echelons of capitalist society. Nowadays, students often work before and during their college years. After school they will be ejected into the "free market" for labor power to toil their lives away, gifted with a hefty debt burden. Even the process of learning, such as it exists today, is steeped in neoliberal ideology and geared towards fostering docility and compliance.

To separate the university student from the worker is to separate the what-is-becoming from the what-will-be. This wholly ignores the ways in which capitalist social relations are reproduced. In this era, our enemy has subsumed the greater parts of our lives. The prevailing mode of production requires a social factory where all sectors of society are enlisted (often unpaid) in reproducing capitalist social relations. The university student is no exception.

When workers withdraw their labor, when students block their universities, when the unemployed loot their stores, when the youth burn their neighborhoods—and when this is done all in relation to each other—we call them the proletariat. Nothing unites them but a collective disgust with their lives under capital, a disgust expressed not in political terms, but in practical refusal. The proletariat is the

anti-political subject that knows itself by destroying itself. Destroying itself, it clears away all the shit of a society built on its labor and consumption.

This name, proletariat, must be divorced from its usual, narrow definition. How can we talk seriously of revolutionary potential without including unions of the unemployed in revolutionary Spain, militant communist women's groups during Italy's Hot Autumn, or the revolutionary students of May 1968? It is not up to us to address them. It is the entirety of the expropriated, inside and outside the workplace, that must address itself.

The university student is not the potential revolutionary subject. It is but a reflection of its own future and, like the whole of the proletariat, it is a subject that can only reach its potential through self-abolition. This is our goal, this is our struggle.

#3: What is a non-reformist goal for a University?

There is no non-reformist goal for a university. Until capital ends, all our goals become means of furthering its value. This does not, however, make the process of achieving them less worthwhile.

An alternative to having reformist or non-reformist goals is to have revolution. But if 1) revolution is understood as a violent resolution of the historic contradictions in a given society, 2) the revolution of the global proletariat entails the final struggle of humans against themselves as alienated beings, then a struggle which aims at overcoming reformism must seek to reveal the conditions in which the contradictions of history culminate such that any further goal is impossible outside of ending alienated life in its totality. In this explosive situation any reformist goal of détente is impossible. This situation sets up the ultimate "goal", though we have surely been forced down this path more so than we would like to admit.

Furthermore, universities are not revolutionary subjects. Universities are ancient hierarchical institutions which are symptomatic of class society and have preserved themselves with great success for centuries. The university is so entrenched in the past and separated from the outside world that it is only in the past 60 years or so that it has taken on the aspects of a bourgeois revolution. Only recently have universities, at least in the most advanced sectors of capitalist society, been open to workers; the privatization process is a part of this revolution, the turn towards training and craft and the proletarianization of professors and students alike are mature products of this historic change. Any revolutionary path at this stage must lead outside of the university.

As we mentioned in our response to question #2, only the totality of the proletariat, the vast majority of humanity, has revolutionary potential, certainly not an alienated institution like a university. University students however can initiate the expansion of struggle and help proliferate the revolutionary condition.

The ultimate "goal," if we must assume a normative stance, or better, the result which can lead from this particular decadent historical situation of the proletariat's university students is best characterized as the will of living labor to abolish itself in the struggle for a liberated social totality.

Talk of reformist and non-reformist goals are uninteresting and blind to the fluidity of resistance. The question is not of this binary, but of the tactical and strategic moves which may bring us closer to the

abolition of the university, the destruction of that which divides us, and the integration of all that remains.

Given our "goal," it is simple to presume that the authorities, ipso facto, have zero legitimacy. What will be won in the final analysis must be taken. Taken with a combination of force and cunning.

Yes, our ultimate "goal" is presupposed in this conversation. For reasons of tactics and strategy, what may crudely be termed as reformist positions may be taken up—indeed, even with great enthusiasm—for reasons of delay and relationship-building. But instead of the old Leftist strategy of winning reforms so as to strengthen ourselves, we know that the most advanced struggles today are those in which we win without winning anything commensurable within the system; we win but realize there really are no victors in this game. So long as the final "aim" is neither cast aside nor given secondary status, this method is acceptable.

What is interesting is how this can be done. A singularity of unflinching force is beyond our present means and conditions, so standing toe-to-toe with those against whom we are positioned is not the immediate solution. While passion and honesty would have us occupy everything right now without a single demand to authorities, the generalized situation of immanent crisis is not as urgent among all our fellow proletarians, so this cannot be our only move.

Delay: in both New School occupations, negotiations, issue-driven banners and liberalisms were embraced in order to feign cooperation and moderation while more endgoal-appropriate methods were explored. This delay led to the realization of the situation as unsustainable without the expansion of our occupation or the intensification of social conflict.

Coordination: resistance is nothing if not fluid. Those who begin the fight as liberals today may become, through struggle, comrades against the commodity tomorrow. There is no classroom like the field of social antagonism. Indeed, many at The New School were radicalized by the first occupation—the limitless possibilities breaching what was previously off-limits to the individual's purview. Understanding the capacity for change within an individual in the context of an antagonistic moment, it may be wise to stand by the hoisting of the reformist banner in order to grow with potential comrades.

There will be no rest until the social sleep is broken. How we wake is the only relevant interrogation.





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## GROUP-WORK 2.8 [Removed from Publication]

#### Compiled by grupa o.k.

"A SINGLE PRODUCT": SOME PASSAGES"

NORMAN L. RICE, 100 YEARS 100 ARTISTS, 1979

In the end, an art school has a single product—its students.

#### JORDAN KANTOR, "BACK TO SCHOOL," ARTFORUM, MARCH 2007

...Although art schools inevitably come with their own administrative baggage, the built-in criticality of context and the curricular nimbleness that an educational situation provides seems both well adapted to a burgeoning generation of artists and exciting for those interested in helping facilitate the newest art. As sites where creation, argumentation, production, and, increasingly, even display all come together, art schools provide conditions for risk-taking and research that museums, catering to ever-broader constituencies, have difficulty matching... As [Okwui] Enwezor gushed, even if tongue in cheek, "If there is such a thing as utopia, education may well be the last utopia."

Of course, only time will tell if this "utopia" is sustainable and if those going there will find what they seek. Surely art schools are susceptible to most of the same pressures that have transformed museum culture. Indeed, many art schools are already migrating toward a model in which they have to demonstrate tangible benefits for spiraling tuition costs...

#### DIEDERICH DIEDERICHSEN, ON (SURPLUS) VALUE IN ART, 2009

In the United States and other neoliberal areas of the world, financing this general component of labor that is socially necessary for the production of art had become the responsibility of artists themselves, who take out loans to pay their way through school and, as it were, invest the income they will only receive later into their prior education. In this sense, artists are entrepreneurs who pursue their own material interest and later that of others.

[...]

[Artists create surplus value] to the extent that, as self-employed cultural workers, they are able to take unpaid extra time and often informal extra knowledge away from other daily activities—some of which are economic and essential for survival—and invest them in the conception, development, and production of artworks. The more of this extra time is invested the better... The more they develop a type of artwork that calls for them to be present as continuously as possible, often in a performance capacity, the larger amount of [surplus value] they create—even if that value cannot always be automatically realized in the form of a corresponding price. A model like this may elicit the objection that the two kinds of capital involved are merely components of a single person, so that the exploiter and exploited are one and the same...

#### JASPER BERNES, "GLOSSARY," WE HAVE AS MUCH TIME AS IT TAKES, 2010

EXHIBITION: It has to do with lighting, or clearing, or conductive materials. Between the remainders and the places, an arrangement of excitations and inhibitions, roadblocks and accelerators, checkpoints and exceptions. You get people to see stuff by quieting everything else. In this sense, it might be more fitting to call each exhibition an inhibition—of dailiness, of need, of the mercenary relationship to matter and memory and friendship. We often like it when the background overruns the foreground.

SCHOOL: Learning can take place anywhere, but school is sort of special. School is a righteous geometry of chairs, bodies, hallways. School is a serialization; a dispersal of the crowd into first, second, third. It's mostly involuntary, this knowledge, habit, instinct, above which the philosophical imaginary makes little clicking noises that turn out to be a problem with your bones like having to go to work forever. You eat what you are.

#### ART & LANGUAGE, HOSTAGES XXIV & XXV, 1989

There might be a picture of a place where a certain confusion is systematically suppressed; a place where a minor pragmatic violence is sustained by a trivial mechanism of fear. It is a place where Humpty Dumpty has the power of small adjustments in his métier. It is a place of contrivance and factitiousness, an unimportant enemy of public safety. For some reason it is an important place of celebration and display. It is also a place where inundation is ruled out by protocol.

There might be a scripture of a space in which a certain contusion is symptomatically compressed; a face where a minute prophylactic valance is ordained by a tribal mercantilism of fear. It is a place where Humpty Dumpty has the flower of small adjournments in his entrée. It is a grace of connivance and facetiousness, an omnipotent enemy of polemic safety. For some season it is an impotent face of acceleration and dismay. It is also a chase where commendation is ruled out by parasol.

# RESEARCH AND DESTROY, "COMMUNIQUÉ FROM AN ABSENT FUTURE," PAMPHLET, 2009

We [students] work and borrow in order to work and to borrow. And the jobs we work toward are the jobs we already have. Close to three-quarters of students work while in school, many full-time; for most, the level of employment we obtain as students is the same that awaits after graduation. Meanwhile what we acquire isn't education; it's debt. We work to make money we've already spent, and our future labor has been sold on the worst market around. [Average student loan debt rose 20 percent in the first five years of the twenty-first century—80 to 100 percent for students of color. Student loan volume—a figure inversely proportional to state funding for education—rose by nearly 800 percent from 1977 to 2003.] What our borrowed tuition buys is the privilege of making monthly payments for the rest of our lives. What we learn is the choreography of credit: you can't walk to class without being offered another piece of plastic charging 20 percent interest...

#### [...]

Education is a commodity like everything else we want without caring for. It is a thing and it makes its purchasers into things. One's future position in the system, one's relation to others, is purchased first with money and then with the demonstration of obedience. First we pay, then we "work hard." And there is the split: one is both the commander and the commanded, consumer and the consumed.

#### ART & LANGUAGE, "PENNY CAPITALISTS," 1976

The careless purveyors of high culture are presented with clear alternatives. One of them is finally to be fixed as the harmless class, the dangerous harmless class, the social and historical scum; for the most part the bribed flunkey (tool) of reactionary intrigue, the worst of all possible allies, absolutely venal and absolutely cunning, a wholly indefinite disintegrated mass thrown here and there, rich and poor, offal, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, mountebanks... the helpless dregs who turn circles between suicide and a tedious madness, incapable of the uncritical violence which is their true heritage; a plague zone that can't be cleansed by the plague.

Or they can realize they are incapable of 'governing' themselves, struggle to reach, and to restore to themselves a social and historical base, recognize that they can seldom find their way around the countryside, recognize that they are a non-working, not-working class—penny capitalists—and ask themselves what this means: become people in process.

# DANA DEGIULIO, SYLLABUS FOR "SOPHOMORE SEMINAR: WHAT IS CALLED THINKING?" SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, SPRING 2012

Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.

You have enrolled in this seminar. Heidegger abandoned philosophy for thinking, for methodos (the path), he makes a distinction between "the one-sided view, which nowhere pays attention any longer to the essence of things, (that) has puffed itself up into an all-sidedness which is in turn masked so as to look harmless and natural," and affective examined demanding strategies for inquiry (:an examined life governed by an apparatus of testing, of exuberance, of joy). By this latter mechanism, we will examine our historical moment, and our circumstances as artists, as participants in the institution. We will ask questions about expression, about the gift and the demand, about political and metaphysical will. We will examine the joke to try and figure out why we are laughing. We will retain our intellectual flexibility. We acknowledge fundamentally that the body is an intelligent apparatus. We're talking Dasein here, plus coping strategy: the task of painting and its attendant discourses as preoccupied with this, as in, "siege laid again to the impregnable without. Eye and hand fevering after the unself. By the hand it unceasingly changes the eye unceasingly changed. Back and forth the gaze beating against unseeable and unmakeable. Truce for a space and the marks of what it is to be and be in face of" (Beckett). The point of understanding what's happening is so that you are not complicit in your own subjugation without understanding the terms. We will talk about language and gesture and how to give what you want. I will use all resources at my disposal—intellectual, psychological, emotional, etc.—to get us somewhere, and I expect you to do the same. This class is about what you need, what we think you need. All done in the spirit of inquiry.

BRIAN HOLMES, RESPONSE TO ANARCHISTNEWS.ORG'S "COMMUNIQUÉ FROM AN ABSENT FUTURE: FURTHER DISCUSSION," 2009

To address students as revolutionaries is to address them as equals, right now not later.

# Ana Mendieta, 'Art and Politics,' 1982

The following text was read by Mendieta at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, on 18 February 1982. It is printed in *Ana Mendieta*, Ediciones Poligrapha Barcelona, 1996, pp. 167-8, from which our version is taken.

[...] The question of integrity in aesthetics is rather a mind-boggling question for me, because I am an artist who feels that art is first of all a matter of vocation. Now vocation is a limiting factor, which extends even to the kind of art an artist is able to make. In other words, I believe an artist is even limited to what he or she can give life to. I make the art I make because it's the only kind I can make. I have no choice. The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset said: "To be a hero, to be heroic, is to be oneself." I think the statement is particularly significant to the attitude an artist must have in society. Being endowed with thought, how can a person go through life without questioning himself? And being endowed with feeling, how can he or she remain indifferent?

To know oneself is to know the world, and it is also paradoxically a form of exile from the world. I know that it is this presence of myself, this self-knowledge which causes me to dialogue with the world around me by making art. I would like to make some general statements about culture. I like to think of culture as the memory of history. However, according to Levi-Strauss, culture is the combination of customs, beliefs, habits, and aptitudes acquired by man as a member of society. I believe that art, although it is a material part of culture, its greatest value is its spiritual role and the influence that in society, because art is the result of spiritual activity of man and its greatest contribution is to the intellectual and moral development of man. Culture is a historical phenomenon that evolves at the same level as society, and that is the problem we are facing today. To establish its empire over nature, it has been necessary for man to dominate other men, and to treat part of humanity like objects. Western civilization's most pervasive task has been the spread of technology and its claim to culture seems to be devoted to the assimilation of technology. I'd like to ask a question. Who speaks for the US today? And I'd like to answer the question. The advertising agencies.

I think that we all know that there are two cultures within this culture. One is the culture in which the ruling class,

the reactionary class, pushes to paralyze the social development of man in an effort to have all identify with, and serve their own interests. They banalize, mix, distort, and simplify life. They have no use for anything pure or real. They call this stylizing. In this way, they create a product, a style, which dominates mass communications, and now also the arts, in all manifestations. Thev call this cosmopolitan and international style. Believe me, friends, imperialism is not a problem of extension, but of reproduction. This is an old technique; it was not invented here. It was used in ancient times by the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. And so, authentic cultural traditions and manifestations in the arts denounce the falsehood of the civilizing mission of the ruling class. So, to mention what I said in my opening remarks, that to me art is a matter of vocation, must seem ridiculous to the bourgeois. The risk that real running today is that if the is institutions are 2 governed by people who are part of the ruling class, then art can become invisible becausese they will refuse to assimilate it.

I feel that the very fact that you are here today is proof that there is another culture aside from ruling class culture. You know, the greatest comfort that great works of art give to me is not only my experience of them, but also the fact that they were created and that they exist. Now I'm sure that a lot of them were created in as adverse conditions as what we have today. And so that's proof, you that we will survive. And 50 the question of integrity in aesthetics is coming up again historically. It is a personal question, which each artist faces. It is a constant struggle. Hard times are coming, but I believe we who are artists will continue making our work. We will be ignored but we will be here. Thank you.

#### **GROUP-WORK 2.0**

# grupa o.k. (Julian Myers and Joanna Szupinska)

# INTRODUCTION: ON THE IDEOLOGIES OF GRADUATE EXHIBITION

In her 2011 essay, "On the Socio-Economic Role of the Art Exhibition," art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann contends that the exhibition of art "marks a decisive point in the history of individualization." Artist, artwork, and audience alike enact an "increasing valorization of the individual," which binds them to the processes of production and consumption that form their lives.<sup>2</sup>

For our contribution to the 2012 Graduate Thesis Exhibition at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, *grupa o.k.* set out to test her premise. How and why we decided to carry out this project here, in the context of an institution and exhibition committed (as so many are) to the production of individuals, is the task of the following pages to describe.

Titled <u>GROUP-WORK</u>, our section includes twenty-eight artists, each graduating this year, in seven self-selected and self-organizing groups. Formed by students here at SAIC, these seven groups have different interests and social structures. Some came together on the basis of shared theoretical interests; some derive from the camaraderie of artists working in a single discipline or medium; others were based in friendships that have grown into generative conversations, if not shared opinion or form. Still others are new alliances: students who joined forces hoping they might preserve some autonomy by working together.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Dorothea von Hantelmann, "On the Socio-Economic Role of the Art Exhibition," in Juan Gaitán, Nicolaus Schafhausen, and Monika Szewczyk, eds. *Cornerstones*. Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and Sternberg Press, 2011: 270.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> von Hantelmann, 268.

When Mary Jane Jacob and her team at SAIC invited us to contribute to this exhibition, visions of past student shows, juried exhibitions, and crowded art fairs flashed before our eyes. These disorienting scenes, over- and underwhelming at once, were what we sought to avoid reproducing here. But was it possible (we asked ourselves) to curate such an exhibition—the result of so many competing interests and ideas, hopes and cynicisms—without replicating the troubles of those past exhibitions? What room was there to work differently? We accepted the challenge in order to find out.

We began from the idea that angling for themes amongst the productions of the graduating students was more or less a doomed proposition. Gone are the days of the Bauhaus, where every student pursued the same principles, seen to be universal, amongst a well-defined range of mediums. The contemporary art school, and MFA graduate programs in particular, tend instead towards the highly specialized or individuated artist—and this is no less true of SAIC than any other art school. Any theme, especially one imported by people only slowly coming to know the works at hand, was bound to be specious in such environs. Instead we focused our attention on what the artists with whom we would work inarguably shared: they were students, at this institution, graduating in this moment, and each participating in this graduate exhibition and no other. These were no small likenesses.

What was clear to us from the start was that no valid effort toward achieving such a project could be made without considering first, historically and critically, the particular character of graduate education and graduate thesis exhibitions, and especially how those things have played out over the decades at SAIC. From what complex of conditions had we (all of us invested in the project of arts education) arrived at this spectacular, and yet so often incoherent, format of display? What were the criteria of its success or failure? And how might the decision at SAIC to include outside curators in this process potentially open that format to new possibilities and new realizations—not only for graduate exhibitions alone, but about the project of arts education in general?

Attending to those histories confirmed our intuition that dominant styles of (dis)organization and display in graduate exhibitions were not necessary but contingent. The form was historical, and not in the nature of things. Encouraged not infrequently by colleagues to recall that, "This is a graduate exhibition" (we hadn't forgotten), we found ourselves thinking, in response, "Yes, but what's *that*?" Absent a stable ontology of graduate exhibitions, we were left with a pure reproduction of their habitual forms, which is to say, ideology; this will come clearer in the second section.

Our research—which took the form of reading and digging through boxes, but also many conversations with students and professors at the school—also formed our curatorial approach, which aimed to assemble an exhibition against the grain of individualism (about which we will have more to say below), emphasizing instead group, collective, or collaborative work. A peculiar twist to this emphasis is that it meant hunting amongst the graduating students for complex images of our own collaboration and conditions of employment—we are two people, a curator and an art historian, working and producing as one for this undertaking.

The words that follow derive, with only a few changes, from a presentation we made at the school on December 8, 2011, in which we aimed to present our initial findings and ideas. After setting out a critical history of graduate exhibitions, we will summarize the exhibitionary proposals that resulted, as well as some consecutive thoughts on how those ideas have played out in practice over the last few months, in the studios and meeting rooms, if not yet in the grand space of the Sullivan galleries.

# THE GRADUATE EXHIBITION

Postgraduate degrees in general belong to the long history of education: to studies in Law, Medicine, and Theology at medieval European universities, when it sometimes took twelve years to accomplish a Masters' degree. The Masters of Fine Arts is by comparison quite young. The first MFAs were granted in 1940 at the University of Iowa

and at SAIC <sup>3</sup>—though schools like SAIC had provided informal credentials for exceptional students for years—and they spread quickly throughout the United States and elsewhere. The main significance of the postgraduate degree at that time was that they licensed the holder to teach, and this was the case at SAIC around the time of its accreditation by North Central Association (NCA) in 1936, and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) in 1944. Over the decades that followed the degree became, if not universal for working artists, at least the dominant path. In his momentous book *On (Surplus) Value In Art*, German critic Diederich Diederichsen writes, "Fewer and fewer professional artists are 'outsiders' who acquire their artistic education through romantic involvement in 'life' and then go on to invest that productive power ... Generally speaking, the curriculum vitae of artists increasingly resemble those of other highly qualified knowledge workers."<sup>4</sup>

The graduate exhibition at SAIC is a more recent development than the degree. In the 1981-82 NCA/NASAD Joint Critique, the committee chided the school for its lack of exhibition space for graduates, and the absence of an exhibition requirement as part of degree qualification. They wrote, The lack of exhibition space for the graduate program is a serious shortcoming. Master of Fine Arts Degree programs typically require a thesis exhibition in lieu of a written thesis in other disciplines. A suitable permanent facility should be found to allow for ongoing exhibitions of graduate portfolios. In its 1991 Self-Study Report, the school responded: A master of fine arts inaugural exhibition was held in 1984, and the thesis requirement was established in 1985. The exhibition is held each spring off-campus in a donated facility. Ongoing exhibitions of graduate work are held in Gallery 2 established in 1984-85. However, the lack of a permanent exhibition space sufficient to accommodate the annual MFA thesis

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Annual Report, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1940: 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Diedrich Diederichsen, *On (Surplus) Value In Art*. Rotterdam: Witte de With and Sternberg Press, 2009: 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Self-Study Report, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1991.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Quoted in ibid., 23.

exhibition and the final BFA exhibition, and the expectation that the School will be able to annually secure a donated space for the year-end exhibitions, remains a concern."

And in a section titled "Exhibitions and Events," the School asserted, "With the inauguration six years ago of the MFA Thesis exhibition, the School began to address the need for a final assessment of student work at graduation as well as the need for students to experience exhibition procedures." If such thesis exhibitions are typical amongst MFA programs, their import remains ambiguous—how does such a final assessment function pedagogically? Is it possible to fail one's thesis exhibition? How does critique work at this late stage? And what about the queer overlay of educational aims and public display—do these things fit comfortably together?

Those were the questions on Julian's mind in 2009, when, after seeing the graduate exhibitions at California College of the Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute, he reflected on the form on the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *Open Space* blog,

The end of the spring term at art schools is marked by multiple convocations—symposia, commencements, barbecues, brunches, et cetera—none more charged and peculiar than the graduate exhibition. A vast amount of effort, skilled thought, time and energy is expended on these events, by students, faculty and event organizers. And yet the exhibitions are as a rule ambiguous: grand, chaotic marketplaces where uneven intentions, practices and audiences converge upon one another.

What is a graduate exhibition anyways? Who is it for, and what status achieved by the artworks it includes? Its origin would seem to run very deep into the history of art education, to the moment when art study became the province of academies, rather than craft or guild apprenticeships.

It seems grad exhibitions reach back at least to the origins of the Salon, which began when the professors of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris hauled out the paintings of recent graduates of the Êcole for a semi-public comparison at the Salon Carré in 1673. Such salons would become a vital staging-ground for public judgment in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> ibid., 301.

the 18th century, as well as an important counter-force to the museums and noble collections. (The very idea of a public sphere emerges from precisely these situations.) Compare the contemporary grad show to the engraving of this Salon of 1699—a grad show of sorts, after all—and a number of differences immediately appear.

Rather than a dense and cacophonous visual field, the contemporary grad exhibitions often hive their students into corners, zones or stalls, not unlike those of art fairs. This organization removes comparison from the visual field, and therefore obviates any possible, meaningful relationships among works by different artists. Artists too have increasingly insisted on determining the conditions of their exhibition, arranging works into constellations that aim to defy or compensate for their status as mere objects. An effect of this is that each artist is individuated, and exhibition is foiled as a frame for critical judgment; each artwork is defined by its intention to stand alone.

So too is critique assumed largely to happen anterior to exhibition, amongst the adepts in the studios. Public debate, such as it occurs, is baffled by the spaces of exhibition, funneled down hallways and scattered amongst cubicles. Charles Baudelaire cut his teeth in his twenties writing about the Salons critically. In contrast these modern Salon-like events—MFA shows—are largely ceremonial culminations, secular bar mitzvahs.

On the other hand, a curious visitor will discover that curators and gallerists do sometimes use grad shows to prowl for new artists. The demands of pedagogy dovetail too harmoniously at times with the logic of the market. Which is not to say that many succeed in getting shows or gallery representation from the event—but to say that this is the deceptive promise of the grad exhibition's fair-like form.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with the prospect of curating in this context, we revisited this piece with renewed seriousness. To summarize our criticisms: It is not the market as such that is the problem, or not the market alone, but rather what the market demands of art and exhibition alike: that is *individuation*, individualism. As Dorothea von Hantelmann has suggested, the exhibition of art as such is the machine for the production of the bourgeois individual, <sup>10</sup> and perhaps (we might argue) the graduate exhibition has been this above all. Moreover, the descriptions above suggest that this individuation has

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Julian Myers, "On Graduate Exhibitions," *SFMOMA* | *Open Space*, May 20, 2009 [http://blog.sfmoma.org/2009/05/on-graduate-exhibitions/]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> von Hantelmann, 266-277.

historically created a politics of space and territory: each individual is accorded their studio at school and their plot of land in the thesis show; each in turn is "made an artist" by their possession and habitation of those spaces.

The apportionment of space is never far from the issue of money. The history of the school in the last five decades is the story of the real estate market—the changing exhibition spaces, studios, and student housing that form the life of the school and the experience of the students that inhabit them, decade after decade. So too does art education hinge on the issue of money. The birth and growth of the MFA follows closely along with the development of a culture of consumer debt and finance in the United States. Witness for instance the example of Fannie Mae: an agency created by the US Government during the New Deal to fund mortgages and student loans in 1968 became a publicly traded company, before playing their central role in the collapse of the housing market in 2008. The nature of graduate study follows this privatization of student debt.

Diedrichsen summarizes this history as a shift away from the idea, established in the American New Deal, of artists as civil servants or government employees. (This model still applies in much of Europe, he avers, though in the current atmosphere of austerity even this is changing rapidly, to one where students become defined by their participation in the market, as creditors.) In a market where many students have taken loans—essentially a wager against one's potential future earnings—the issue of the value of an education is emblematized, among other things, by the apportionment of territory, in the forms of graduate studios and graduate thesis exhibition alike.

## PROPOSALS AND CONTRADICTIONS

These circumstances have shaped the form and ontology of the graduate exhibition. It seems to us an open question whether SAIC's drive to innovate this form, by developing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Rob Alford, "What are the Origins of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae?" *George Mason University's History News Network*, September 18, 2008. http://hnn.us/articles/1849.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Diederichsen, 34-5.

it into a curated exhibition, holds the potential of resisting this politics of exhibitionary space, or if it will just reorganize its operations of speculation, individuation, and territory in a different way. It's probably the latter, of course—and even if our project were completely successful, the episodic nature of the guest curator position limits the value of any achievement to a single instance, whereas any substantial reorganization of these dynamics would require persistence and elaboration over years. Still, we aimed to work against certain reflexes and assumptions, with the idea that, at the very least, it might serve the artists and practices better.

Our response to our understanding of the situation took three principal forms: 1) we aimed to pressure individualism by creating frames for collaborative, group, or collective articulation; 2) we endeavored to work against the hiving off of territories to individuals in favor of creating shared spaces, with the added benefit of the comparative visual fields so valuable to the Salon; and 3) we aimed (both for ourselves and the "curatorial fellows" with whom we'd work) to resist the habitual positions of curators as auteurs, or managers organizing from above, or (on the opposite end of the spectrum) as the facilitators for artists' hallowed impulses, organizing from below.

The first proposal concerned the organization of the MFA students with whom we would work. Our selections—which drew on ongoing conversations in the studios, in addition to the students' applications—focused on those who articulated themselves in relation to other students, and purposefully not on our own taste, or any perceived content, theme, or aesthetic. We emerged from the process of selection with seven groups that had more or less advanced their own candidacy for our section of the exhibition. These groups were then offered a certain collective autonomy within their bounds, with the conditions that individual decisions would be submitted to group discourse and critique. We also (following our second proposal) suggested that each group imagine its space as common and relational, rather than simply subdividing their territories according to the individualizing logic of the exhibition at large.

As we may well have expected from the argument we advanced above, the greatest struggles in the last months have concerned the prizes of space and territory. Wanting to preserve the integrity and self-organization of our groups, we frequently found ourselves in the unlikely position of needing to defend their territory from external incursions. In a confounding turn, the territorialization of graduate exhibition had indeed been recast at a different level; a softening of boundaries amongst individual students in the groups demanded a fierce hardening of those territories at the level of curatorial practice and negotiation. Yet we found ourselves bound in process to traverse the contradiction: we yielded the purity of our critical position to preserve (what we saw as) our students' democracy.

We defined our curatorial position (and here we move to our third proposal) in this process as equals, critics and co-conspirators; the curatorial fellows with whom we worked, Ionit Behar, Natalie Clark, Michaela Hansen, and Laura-Caroline Johnson, enacted a somewhat different role (which in December we conceptualized, in a way that now seems to us somewhat comically over-determined, from the anarchist anthropology of Pierre Clastres). Allied with particular groups, they acted both inside and outside their discursive operations, as both advocates for the groups' proposals in the greater exhibition, and as narrators of their process. The texts included in this volume portray this activity from their perspective. It has been no easy task in the last months to prevent this structure from slipping back by reflex into a sort of hierarchical and bureaucratic format, with the curators enacting the unhappy consciousness of middle management. But enacting some different curatorial position was our scheme, and we've stuck with it as best we've been able.

The research we conducted at the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection and Ryerson & Burnham Libraries is brought to bear in the exhibition in a few different ways, each intended to build connections among contemporary forms of group-work, and those from the institution's past. Two micro-exhibitions, curated by Michaela Hansen with *grupa o.k.*, draw inspiration and materials from the Flasch collection (see her descriptions on page ##). And interleaved throughout our groups' spaces will be

photographs drawn from the institutional archives at the Ryerson, documenting exhibitions, studios, pageants, parties, club activities, and protests from the school's last century, thereby binding group activity in the present to its past forms. In this way, we hope to make visible the elaborations of social life at the school as a rich and persistent counter-thread to the individuations demanded by the systems of art education and graduate exhibition alike.

In the pages that follow, the curatorial fellows' introductions to each group are followed by pages contributed by the artists themselves. For the last sections, we have compiled a set of excerpts from texts that drove this project and our thinking, and (though as we write the gallery installations have yet to manifest) we will include installation photographs that document how these groups have ultimately resolved the project of group-work in exhibition.