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▸ **Still from *Tearoom*, 2006. Video, color, silent, 56 minutes. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles**

The Contagious Documentary

"The dance is an art in space and time. The
object of the dancer is to obliterate that."
Merce Cunningham, *Space, Time and Dance*

The recent death of Merce Cunningham
(1919–2009) deprives us of yet another major
artist, whose work straddled the divide between
the legacy of modernism and the emergence
of something new, for which the word "post-
modern" has imposed itself. Reworking the
vocabulary of traditional ballet into a language
of movement and space that discarded inherited
ideas of psychology and narration, Cunningham
explored, often together with John Cage, the
possibilities of chance and aleatory combinations
of music, movement, and images. In her obitu-
ary, Camilla Damkjaer poses the question wheth-
er dance, or even art in general, can approach
that which simply *is*, beyond representation,
which for Cunningham became the question of
movement — and whether movement itself can
become a way of thinking.

The "postmodern" has a highly diverse ge-
nealogy, although the reference to the work
of Jean-François Lyotard seems inevitable.
Thirty years ago, in 1979, his *La condition post-
moderne* triggered a debate that has remained
confusing and inconclusive up to the present.
Re-reading this book today, Sven-Olov Wallen-
stein argues in his essay, should mean to
acknowledge the stratifications of his oeuvre,
above all the extent to which modernist art —
and precisely the question that haunted Cun-
ningham: how we can approach that which
is, and touches us before representation —
remained his overarching theme.

An alternative to the divide between the mod-
ern and postmodern has recently been proposed
by Nicolas Bourriaud. In an interview with
Fredrik Svensk, he discusses his recent book,
The Radicant, the need to approach globalization

from an aesthetic point of view, and to develop
new forms of resistance within the current mode
of production and circulation of commodities.

Sinziana Ravini reviews a recent exhibition,
"The Space on the Side of the Road", at Röda
Sten in Gothenburg, which takes its point of de-
parture in the "Right to Roam", a law guarantee-
ing public access to certain publicly or privately
owned spaces. Locating an attempt to transgress
the limit between socially engaged art and a
romantic tradition based in nature, Ravini looks
into the idea of the contract or agreement —
fictitious, staged, real, imaginary — as an artistic
strategy to provoke social change.

The thematic section of this issue, "The
Contagious Documentary", interrogates the
documentary as a proliferating form and
method, which incorporates many media and
genres. Karl Lydén opens by discussing the
documentary as defined by its narrative rather
than by its production techniques, truthfulness,
or use of certain materials. Emphasizing the
documentary as style, his essay itself incorpo-
rates a documentary mode that both confirms
and contradicts the narrative.

Luigi Fassi examines the work of William E.
Jones, who uses found films and photographs to
generate a certain documentary effect. Taking
his cues from the work *Tearoom*, a found film
originally produced by the police department
in Mansfield, Ohio, as evidence in trials against
homosexual men in the American sixties, Fassi
particularly investigates the crucial role played
by time in Jones' work.

In her text on Vladimir Shevchenko's film
Chernobyl: Chronicle of Difficult Weeks, Susan
Schuppli unearths the specific quality of a film

that stretches the definition of photographic
representation. Not only capturing the catas-
trophe of Chernobyl by showing us aerial views
of the city, but itself imprinted with visual
traces of radiation and contaminated by lethal
radioactivity, the film renders representation
and event inseparable.

Jakob Nilsson discusses the French banker
Albert Kahn's vertiginous project *Les Archives de
la planète*, whose aim was to document the world
of the early 20th century. His essay highlights
a film recorded in Ethiopia, and addresses the
representation of a country that did not fit the
colonial picture, first and foremost by being the
only political actor to successfully resist Euro-
pean colonization in the first Italo-Ethiopian
war of 1895–96. Nilsson's essay thus underscores
the ambivalence of universalization at a time
of colonial transition, and how Kahn's project,
while depending on the colonial ethnographic
discourses of the time, also offers a possibility to
break with them.

By recounting certain conditions of the
Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem 1961, Rebecka Thor
demonstrates how Eyal Sivan's film *The Specialist*
produces a breach in the representation of the
Holocaust. She investigates how the trial and its
documentation — an obsolete kind of videotap-
ing, disseminated for daily broadcasting around
the world — played a major role in creating a
Holocaust narrative based on the testimonies of
survivors. ●

THE EDITORS

In Memory of Merce

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Camilla Damkjaer

"Plato, in the *Timaeus*, says, 'Time is the moving image of eternity'. Time, the very essence of our daily lives, can give to dancing one of the qualities that make it, at its most beautiful, a moving image of life at its highest."

Merce Cunningham,
The Function of a Technique for Dance (1951)[1]

When I was writing my thesis on Merce Cunningham's work I had one persistent fear: that he could disappear. I had never met him. The closest I had come was seeing him from far away, up there on the stage, his body bearing the marks of work and time, but all the more expressive and dignified for it. Still, I developed a particular relation to him, perhaps not the private person — whom I did not know — but as a person of ideas. From the expressive marks of his work I assembled a new person of ideas, painstakingly reconstructed in order to express something that I believed his work carried. I almost feel tempted to say that Cunningham became something like a conceptual friend.[2] I cannot know if Cunningham would have approved of this distant yet intimate friendship, but it seems to me now that at least this Cunningham-of-ideas will not leave my way of thinking. We have lost the Cunningham who emitted all these expressive marks. Now we can only look to his work — and let it generate.

Impossibility
He enacted the Tabula Rasa of modern dance, or even of Western dance history as such. He stripped movement bare of everything it had been asked to carry: narration, meaning, feeling, we might even say representation. To Cunningham movement did not represent anything but itself.

Just as the philosopher Henri Bergson showed that consciousness is not consciousness *of* something, but that consciousness *is*, Cunningham showed us that movement simply *is*. In doing so he made a statement that will continue to affect us for a long time. Through his movement that *is*, he faces us with the simplest and most complicated of all paradoxes: how can we — art historians, critics, philosophers, dance audiences — interpret that which does not *mean*, how can we speak of that which simply *is*?

It is this very paradox that the complex bodily movement of his choreographies presents us with: our inability to think movement, or perhaps even the impossibility of thinking movement. However, we can think *in* movement, and Cunningham has definitely affected us by setting our thinking in movement.

Noise
The program has been turned off. The old television is flickering static while emitting that particular white noise of a non-existing TV-channel. After working intensively with the work of Merce Cunningham and his partner John Cage, I almost cannot watch television. Not that they were against the technological development; on the contrary, they were always working with the latest technological equipment. Cunningham was one of the first choreographers to work with video and later computer-generated movement and this made their critique of the direction of media society all the more powerful. Their work showed — by way of contrast — the extent to which our feelings are regularly manipulated by media products, and even art.

In the beginning of Cunningham and Cage's international career they were accused of producing noise — and compared to the habits of hearing and seeing at the time and even today, they did. They wanted to let all movements and sounds be of equal value: to create a democracy of sound and movement. They did this with an extreme clarity and rigorousness of method. Now that they are both gone, does the hierarchical noise that we perceive as meaning, beauty, or harmony threaten to come back?

Movement
Cunningham showed us in the clearest manner possible that movement is a way of thinking. He did not express his ideas in movement; his ideas were movement. Considering the fact that he had such a long career — producing movement for more than five decades — he said comparatively little about this movement, but what he did say has functioned as riddles to direct our attention back to the movement itself. For a long time, he almost silenced all scholarship about his work. He developed an extreme, minute, and analytical way of generating movement in order to transgress even our ideas about what dance is.

Emergence
The techniques Cunningham developed to generate movement are constructed in order to bring about an emergence: emergence of the unknown, that which we cannot imagine, nor plan, that which can only come about in a combination of system and chance. "Chance methods" — an apparently contradictory term that he and Cage used to determine their techniques of emergence. To Cunningham creation was not a question of inspiration, but of rigorous hard work. One has to work for emergence. Cunningham was of course not the only artist to know this, but he was able to continue to get movement to emerge until his very last moments. Let us create new emergences from his work.

Memory
Cunningham as an artist revealed very little about his private life, and the memories and desires that became his driving forces. From what he did say, his driving force was an interest in movement. If he did work with personal aspects such as memory — as some of his dancers have claimed — it only became visible as energy, intensities.

However, his work shows us something else about memory, or rather time: namely the simultaneity of several times, and the non-coincidence of time with an epoch. His work combines elements of the early avant-garde of the 20th century, the modernist strive to make each art independent, as well as a postmodernist critique of harmony, the construction of the organism, and coherence. Some aspects of his work are still provocative today.

Oddness
With time and fame the sharp edge of Cunningham's work may have been blunted. It has become or has been rendered classical. A fundamental quality in Cunningham's dances, however, is oddness.

Cunningham looked to create oddness — that which surprises us and challenges our ideas of harmony and beauty — but it was even a bodily quality in his own dancing, a quality that never disappeared. Late in his career when he still went on stage, he no longer danced in the conventional sense of the word, but he created oddness and odd movement by using his face and hands. In these gestures he was capable of an incredible variation and a change of nuances and details.

In an early article about dance, Cage spoke of grace and clarity. Cunningham was capable of this, but also of creating a sort of lucid oddness and difference.

Representation
The question of representation has probably been one of the most contested questions in all the arts of the 20th century. In dance, Cunningham has been the one who has carried this critique to the most extreme, showing the difficulties and paradoxes included in the curious phenomenon of representation.

Representation, however, is also a complex phenomenon and Cunningham's work contains experiments with different levels of representation as well. His fight was one for the liberty of the artist, the dance, and the audience — but not a fight in blindness. In some of his works he even deliberately works with our capacity to create associations, as in his animal pieces. His fight against representation was first and foremost against the limiting effects representation has on the possibilities of creating movements. In his animal pieces he shows that some levels of representation can also produce nuanced movement, and yet, the point is not to represent the animal in question, but to create other kinds of movement through the non-coincidence of the animal and the human body.

Cunningham's principles were consistent and have been repeated time and time again. Although Cunningham's work is rigorous, it is not dogmatic.

You
Cunningham's work can be considered abstract and might seem hermetic, but in fact it is meant to open up to the audience, the individual, you. Through deliberately not manipulating your ideas of stories, narratives, feelings, it gives you space. A space that we, as interpreting individuals, are not used to and that we do not necessarily know how to fill — less and less so perhaps, despite all the efforts of artists such as Cunningham and Cage.

By challenging your perception of movement and bodies, it gives you space to expand your idea of what the moving human body is. By leaving you all to yourself, it paradoxically just lets you be, just as the movement simply is.

Cunningham never let go of this principle and used it as late as a few years ago when he equipped his audience with iPods to choose their own music, or not — they could even choose silence (*eyeSpace*, 2006).

Obstacles
There are two kinds of obstacles: those that others set up for you and those that you set up for yourself. Although Cunningham and Cage are almost classical today, they met a lot of obstacles (including flying objects) in the beginning of their careers. By setting up their own obstacles, creatively, playfully and stubbornly, they managed to overcome the initial ones. They played with obstacles such as dice, numbers, *I Ching* (the Chinese book of divination), machines, directions, angles, and space. Anything can be turned into a challenging obstacle.

Friendship
Thinking and creating is an activity that involves friendship: friendship either with texts, works and people of the past, or with people, ideas and work around you. Cunningham had the luck of finding such company around him. Though the gay community found it to be a form of closeting when he and Cage described their relationship as a friendship, I think we can also understand friendship as a way of designating that intimate communication of ideas that goes simultaneously as far as and beyond a relationship. At the same time, Cunningham and Cage — though they worked closely with each other — often included their friends in their creations. Though Cunningham's work might seem as that of a solitary giant, it is also the work of a collective — the collective of dancers and of the artists involved in the creations.

Merce
It was of course not My idea
          MErely a
               Repetition of
               Cage's
          MEsostics

Emotion
Emotion is a disputed term in Cunningham's work. Cunningham does not deal with emotion. He does not try to render it or represent it, or to manipulate it, but he nevertheless affects it. He shows how movement and e-motion are closely related, and how movement in itself affects our bodies and by that our affects.

E-motion, then, is not a state of mind that can be easily characterized as different types of moods, but a finely tuned relation between movement and the way it affects our bodies. To each tiny nuance corresponds a difference in affect that can hardly be described, but which can nevertheless be experienced. Through expanding his movement vocabulary he also expands our capacities of affect.

Repetition
Many musicians and choreographers of his generation experimented with repetition, and repetition is also one of the tools Cunningham has used, but in such a complex way that it is often impossible to establish whether there is actually repetition or not. When watching a choreography such as *Torse* (1976) for instance, the ordinary movement memory that most of us are equipped with does not suffice to say if there is repetition or not and in which way. We can only determine that there is and is not at the same time: that there are constantly minute differences that escape our comprehension — repetition of difference.

Cage
It is impossible to say Cunningham without saying Cage. Their relationship and cooperation is incredible, as is their sharing of ideas and their incessant need to create. They also had their differences, however. Cage wrote a lot, used written language as a material for expression and experimentation. He was a master of anecdotes. Cunningham has written very little. Their story would make a fantastic film, but they would not have wanted it to be made. Their story is their work.

Event

Notes
1. David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham — Fifty Years* (New York: Aperture, 1997), 61.
2 . Please allow me to freely blend two of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's ideas — the philosophical friend and the conceptual persona. See Gilles Deleuze, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1991).

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Camilla Damkjaer is a research fellow at the Department of Musicology and Performance Studies at Stockholm University. This homage is loosely based on her dissertation *The Aesthetics of Movement — Variations on Gilles Deleuze and Merce Cunningham* (Stockholm: STUTS, 2005).

Re-reading 'The Postmodern Condition'

Sven-Olov Wallenstein

I. The moment of re-reading

In the autumn of 1979, a book was published that at the time must have seemed marginal within the author's body of work, but which would soon acquire a tremendous significance: Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.[1] The somewhat pale subtitle, "A Report on Knowledge", indicates the origin of the text in a commission from the university council in Québec, as well as its style and scope: in some 100 pages it surveys the transformations that had occurred within the sciences and politics since the 1960s, but also situates them within a framework that takes us back to Kant, Hegel, and the inception of a certain discourse of the university. For those who were familiar with the highly personal philosophical style developed in Lyotard's earlier works, moving between phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and Marxism, and attempting to invest the affective body, desire, and the unconscious with a revolutionary potential, particularly through readings of the visual art of early modernism, the book must have appeared like a strange exercise, destined to gather dust in some Canadian library. But the term "postmodernism", which Lyotard picks up from an already established debate in American sociology and cultural theory, and develops into a vast historical scheme, would soon become the object of an explosive debate, whose echoes are still with us today, although the term has been watered down to such an extent that any use of it immediately drags along a swarm of embarrassed and uneasy quotation marks.

Lyotard himself would later have many problems with this text, referring to it as "horrible" or as his "worst book",[2] and maybe there is some truth in this. To some extent its sheer popularity and the immediate inflation of the term "postmodernism" may have been the reasons for this retraction, but arguably also the fact that it tends to disfigure Lyotard's own fundamental philosophical stakes, above all by drawing up a large-scale historico-sociological narrative that declares such narratives to be a thing of the past, in a blatant performative contradiction that his critics were not slow in pointing out. It is true that the claims of the book itself, seen on the level of a historical and sociological reflection on the transformed status of intellectual production in late capitalism, were by no means outlandish or exaggerated — in fact, today many of them have become part of the standard picture of the sociology of science — but perhaps they were not truly Lyotard's own claims, or at least something that may lead us to overlook what his true intentions were. Re-reading this text today, thirty years afterwards, when most of the dust from the postmodern debate has settled, the question of its place within Lyotard's own philosophical trajectory thus seems urgent to pose. What was the significance and even necessity of the "postmodern" turn in his own oeuvre, what questions did it respond to within a philosophical trajectory that surely did neither begin nor end with the "postmodern", and whose fecundity may be seriously reduced if we seal it within the parameters of this debate? In this way, the moment of re-reading — for which the 30th anniversary of this particular book, be it Lyotard's "worst" or not, might provide us with an occasion as good as any — should prevent us from allowing his oeuvre, broken off by the author's untimely death in 1998, from being sealed in a petrified image. Such petrification is a risk that Lyotard faces in particular, given the immense success of the term "postmodern" and its various cognates. This is in itself somewhat ironic, if we bear in mind that the idea of re-reading and re-writing (*re-écriture*) — as an act of memory, an anamnesis that ought to resist any pre-determined image of what thinking "means", and instead open us up for thinking as an incalculable "event" that touches us while always remaining withdrawn and inexhaustible — although it only emerges in his later texts, may be taken as the one unifying motif of his work.

II. From phenomenology to the philosophy of desire

Lyotard's first book, *La phénoménologie* (1954) is on the surface little but a short academic introduction to Husserl, but in hindsight we can see that it situates itself within a complex gambit at a moment in French philosophy when the limits of phenomenological discourse were being staked out, both from the inside and the outside. The year before another small introductory volume had been published by PUF, Deleuze's book on Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*; Derrida had defended his *doctorat du troisième cycle*, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology*; and it was of course also the year of Lacan's Rome Discourse, which opened up a new phase in philosophy's relation to psychoanalysis. Coincidental as this constellation obviously is, it may nevertheless serve as a framework for situating Lyotard's beginnings. With Deleuze he shares the project of accounting for the genesis of subjectivity from out of a non-egological, non-personal field of intensities and affects; with Derrida the idea of developing the unthought in phenomenology from within (and in fact, the term "deconstruction" appears in a loose and non-thematic way in several crucial passages in his work from the early 1970s); with Lacan, the idea that it is via a "return to Freud" that the foundational strata of experience can be analyzed. Tying these threads together into a highly complicated knot would be task of his first major work, the dissertation *Discours, figure* (supervised by Deleuze), which strangely enough still remains untranslated, although it holds the key to many of his later developments.
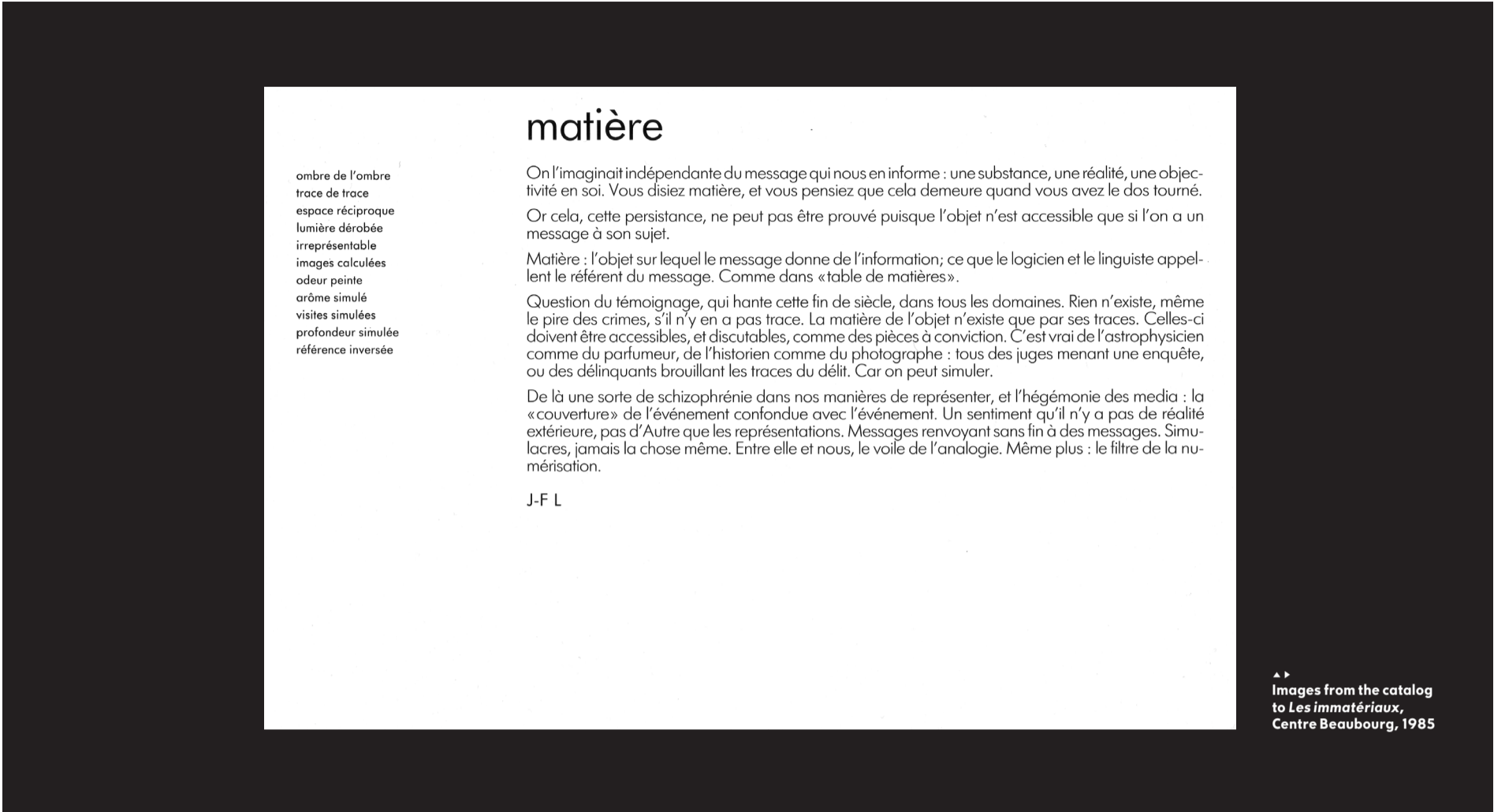
In 1954, Husserl is first situated in opposition to Hegelian phenomenology: against a world of universal mediation, Husserl poses "the originary world of life", a stratum that precedes language and predication, and although "all predication and speech certainly implies it", it "also passes over it, and in the proper sense nothing can be said about it". For Lyotard, phenomenology thus becomes a "struggle of language with itself in order to reach the originary", which at the same time must acknowledge that "the originary is no longer the originary in so far as it is described". This contradiction is however not simply a fault, but provides phenomenology with its very power as a line of resistance against the appropriating power of the linguistic turn that followed in the wake of structuralism. The insistence of the ante-predicative remains irreducible to every verbal translation. It provokes forth the linguistic act while hollowing it out from within.

These introductory claims are then expanded in *Discours, figure* (1971), where the pre-linguistic sphere acquires a more developed depth and presence of its own, instead of being just an obscure and evanescent obverse side of reflexive discourse. The direction of the argument is established straightforwardly at the outset: "This book protests: the given is not a text, it has in itself a constitutive depth, or rather a difference, which should not be read, but seen; this difference, and the immobile mobility which reveals it, is what is constantly forgotten in signifying". And Lyotard continues by establishing a direct link to visual art, which breaks with the ubiquity of the textual and semiotic model: "One does not read — does not understand — a painting. Sitting at a table one identifies and recognizes linguistic unities; standing within representation one seeks plastic, libidinal events".

For Lyotard any conception (structuralist or otherwise) of an autonomous discourse is bound to fail, and he now proposes the *figure* as an irreducible reference to a visibility and spatiality that will always resist language, as an "over-against" that fractures any discursive closure. At first hand this may seem like a mere dualism that would pit language *against* the visible, but as the argument unfolds, Lyotard attempts to show how the figure and the discursive must be understood as mutually intertwined. The figure is both outside and inside of discourse: language is traversed by indexical and other elements that point to its outside, just as much as the visible can never be a self-sufficient plenitude, but is shot through with gaps and lacunae that refer to the differential order of language. That which prevents both of these orders from resting within themselves is *difference itself*, which does not pass simply between the sensible and the intelligible, or between perception and language, but traverses both of them as their inner fault line.

This interlacing notwithstanding we can from the above statements see that there is still a strategic priority accorded to *perception*: the book, Lyotard says, is written "in defense of the eye", and it insists on the autonomy of the sensible vis-à-vis the discursive in a way that pursues a phenomenological task. Lyotard connects his project closely to what Merleau-Ponty called "over-reflection" (*surréflexion*), a "second-order reflection" that wants to uncover the dimension of that which is withdrawn from a first-order reflection that remains within consciousness. This, Lyotard argues, is also what brings the phenomenologist close to certain types of poetry and art: "Over-reflection", he writes, "shows how the negation in showing can step into the negation of saying, how the text can become a figure. It is hardly surprising that philosophy here too arrives too late, and that it has everything to learn from the poets". It is just as little surprising, we might add, that for Lyotard, the exemplary poet and poem — and in this they occupy the same paradigmatic position as Cézanne and his late renderings of the Sainte Victoire hold in Merleau-Ponty — proves to be Mallarmé and his late poem on the dice-throw, whose words and phrases, dispersed in a stellar constellation over the pages, foreground *les blancs*, the intervals and the diacritical work in poetry in a wholly new fashion. With *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, Lyotard suggests, "Mallarmé radically deprives the articulated language of its prosaic and communicative function; it shows inside this language a capacity that surpasses it, the capacity to become 'visible', and not just read and understood; the capacity to figure and not just to signify".[3] Mallarmé creates a "spacing" (*espacement*) in the text that no longer is related to any originary order of our perceptions, but is a "radicalization of the spacing of reference, defined in terms of the irrevocable distance that separates words from things". This archaeology of the senses does not lead us back towards the earth and the ground, but to a caesura between the visible and language that leaves its traces on both of them, fragments their respective totalities, and shows that even if discourse and figure are mutually implicative, they can never be assembled in one whole Logos.

If the first part of *Discours, figure* relies on certain phenomenological motifs, in the second part a fundamental shift occurs, where the *figure* is brought back into a libidinal space that Lyotard calls the *figural*, which means that Freud and psychoanalysis is pitted against *both* structural linguistics and the phenomenology of perception. The *figural* comes to be opposed to the *figure*, which is but one of its manifestations, and aesthetics as a theory of the sensible, of *aisthesis* — which still is the topic of the first part of the book — is displaced by *energetics*. "The dream-work does not think" is the title of one of

matière

ombre de l'ombre
trace de trace
espace réciproque
lumière dérobée
irreprésentable
images calculées
odeur peinte
arôme simulé
visites simulées
profondeur simulée
référence inversée

On l'imaginait indépendant du message qui nous en informe : une substance, une réalité, une objectivité en soi. Vous disiez matière, et vous pensiez que cela demeure quand vous avez le dos tourné.

Or cela, cette persistance, ne peut pas être prouvé puisque l'objet n'est accessible que si l'on a un message à son sujet.

Matière : l'objet sur lequel le message donne de l'information ; ce que le logicien et le linguiste appellent le référent du message. Comme dans «table de matières».

Question du témoignage, qui hante cette fin de siècle, dans tous les domaines. Rien n'existe, même le pire des crimes, s'il n'y en a pas trace. La matière de l'objet n'existe que par ses traces. Celles-ci doivent être accessibles, et discutables, comme des pièces à conviction. C'est vrai de l'astrophysicien comme du parfumeur, de l'historien comme du photographe : tous des juges menant une enquête, ou des délinquants brouillant les traces du délit. Car on peut simuler.

De là une sorte de schizophrénie dans nos manières de représenter, et l'hégémonie des media : la «couverture» de l'événement confondue avec l'événement. Un sentiment qu'il n'y a pas de réalité extérieure, pas d'Autre que les représentations. Messages renvoyant sans fin à des messages. Simulacres, jamais la chose même. Entre elle et nous, le voile de l'analogie. Même plus : le filtre de la numérisation.

J-F L

▲ ▶
Images from the catalog to *Les immatériaux*, Centre Beaubourg, 1985

the most important chapters and here Lyotard's return to Freud also places him in opposition to Lacan: the dream-work does not think, because it does not consist in an ordering and structuring of significations, but rather is a *work*, a violent formation-deformation of the linguistic and visual data that make up the raw material of the dream.[4] From the *image-figure*, based on recognition and identification, we must proceed to the *form-figure*, which forms and animates the image from within, and finally to what Lyotard calls the *matrix-figure*, which is strictly invisible and no longer belongs to the domain of consciousness and perception.

The matrix is as such neither visible nor readable, neither plastic nor textual: it is "difference itself", and to this extent, Lyotard claims, "discourse, image, and form all remain outside of it, since it exists in all three spaces simultaneously". If the matrix resembles anything, we should rather think of Freud's originary repression, that which is furthest away from our understanding and disappears as soon as it becomes either sensible or intelligible. The matrix *forms* only by *deforming*, it founds by withdrawing, and it makes discourse and signifying, *Gestaltung* and the image, possible by leaving in them an ineradicable trace of the invisible.

In *Discours, figure*, concepts and themes drawn from phenomenology, structural linguistics, and psychoanalysis were maintained in a certain delicate, perhaps enforced, balance, which on the one hand is what makes the work into a great source for everything that was to come. On the other hand, this balance had to be shifted, and the works of "libidinal economy" that followed opted for a Nietzschean solution (which, it must be added, is only one of the many versions of "Nietzsche" available in French philosophy at the time) that resolutely disconnects from phenomenology and the philosophy of language, and understands theory as direct political intervention, where the only criteria becomes a monistic concept of intensity. In *Économie libidinale* (1974) and other works from the period, Lyotard attempts to think the "libidinal band" and a whole set of other more or less para-philosophical concepts as tools for breaking away from traditional forms of philosophical discourse, which he now rejects as based on representation, piety, and theatricality. The answer, he suggests, must be an impious thought that reclaims "pagan" infidelity (which can be taken as the extreme opposite of the "piety of thought" in Heidegger, but also in many others), that only recognizes intensities, and can only use the resources of the tradition (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud) in a willfully mischievous way, unmasking their pretensions to truth while still continuing to play the philosophical game in a perverse fashion.

These works have a fascinating quality, in the aggressive and consciously self-defeating quality of their writing, and in the many painstaking analyses of philosophical and artistic works that they undertake in order to prove the futility of such analyses, both of which come together in the relentlessness with which they constantly unmask their own pretensions. If *Économie libidinale* was his "evil book", as Lyotard says, "the book on evilness that everyone writing and thinking is tempted to do", [5] it was also an evil inflicted on the author himself. But out of evil came a despair that demanded a new start, and this is what would become Lyotard's postmodern turn, which addresses precisely those questions that were deemed reactive and nihilist from the point of view of the philosophy of desire.

III. The postmodern turn
The above remarks are undoubtedly superficial, and much remains to be excavated from the ruins of the early work, but at least they have the advantage of corresponding to how Lyotard himself presents his trajectory in hindsight, beginning with the book of conversations with Jean-Loup Thébaud, *Au juste* (1979, but drawing on interviews done in 1977). Here, the project of libidinal economy appears as a dead end precisely because of its inability to address questions of ethics, justice, and politics in a differentiated fashion (the issue was in fact raised two years earlier in *Instructions païennes*, in terms of a possible "pagan justice" that would not be pious but still *just*). These questions were then developed systematically a few years later in *Le Différend* (1983). In this perspective, it is obvious that the reading of Lyotard's postmodernism as based on some vague French "Nietzscheanism" that one often encounters among his detractors, could not be more misguided. In fact, the postmodern work explicitly rejects the "monism" of the will to power, desire, and intensity,[6] in favor of a systematic philosophy that draws on Kant and Wittgenstein, and begins from a new appreciation of language (or "phrases" as Lyotard prefers to say, in order to point to the diversity of ways in which language must be understood, so as to include actions, events, gestures, colors, sounds, even silence — all of which was surely there already in Wittgenstein).

The concept of the postmodern undergoes several shifts in Lyotard, although the main displacement seems to occur from a more straightforward "epochal" conception that ties in to a particular period, which is the basic assumption in *The Postmodern Condition*, to a "modal" version where it increasingly comes to denote a certain attitude or style of thought detached from all historical specificity.[7] This undoubtedly tends to render the idea of the "post" bewildering, as when he sometimes says that the postmodern exists *within* the modern, or even that it *precedes* the modern, as the shock or "touch" of an event that only afterwards can be understood and incorporated. Much of the

confusion in the discussion of Lyotard's theory of the postmodern probably has to do with his stubborn preservation of a term, no doubt forced upon him by the endless series of conferences and talks where he had to defend it, that must have appeared increasingly useless and misleading.

The epochal conception launched in 1979 is based on a sociological and historico-philosophical analysis of various discourses of *legitimation* that have unfolded roughly since Kant and the French Revolution, up to "the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies", as he says in the introduction, and in this sense it can be read as a riposte to Habermas' *Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus* (1973), were the latter investigates how economical problems re-appear as contradictions in the cultural sphere. For Lyotard, the inherited forms of legitimation have today, after the modern era, entered into a state of crisis, partly due to the development of the sciences, but also of those institutions that stabilized the social bond. In the modern period, these sciences and institutions were legitimized by the "grand narratives", for instance "the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth". These narratives have today lost their power to convince, Lyotard argues, and have been dispersed into local and particular language games that no longer allow for a totalizing description.

The two major legitimizing narratives of modernity that Lyotard examines are, first, the story of the University and of the unfolding of a unified knowledge, initiated with the foundation of the Berlin university and the advent of a speculative idealism that attempts to deduce the whole of societal and scientific development from a single principle, and second, the story of emancipation, within which knowledge liberates the individual from the fetters of an non-reflected tradition. The first is the story of the thinker, the second that of the active citizen, and legitimation is either played out in the sphere of science/philosophy or politics.

These stories lose their grip on us in postmodernity due to many shifts: the sciences no longer promise a unity of knowledge, technological developments and economic changes have fostered an increasing atomization, but above all, the development of technologies and theories of communication has shown the social bond to be made of "moves" (*coups*) within language. What the latter shows is that the crisis was inherent in these stories already from the outset, since they can be understood as attempts to cover over the disunity of language, either in form of a discourse on/of Spirit, or in terms of a political subject that realizes itself (between which we of course find innumerable intermediate forms, with Hegel as the first grand synthesis of absolute knowledge and the state-form). To a

certain extent, as Lyotard will develop in many later texts, this disunity was already suggested in Kant's critique of reason, which distinguishes the true from the good and the beautiful, indeed within an overarching unity, although one that can only be given in a *problematic* fashion (the Architectonic of Reason, which Kant sometimes refers to as merely a *focus imaginarius*), which indicates that the critique of Lyotard as a simple opponent of the Enlightenment is misleading. Lyotard in fact wants to extend and radicalize the program set out in Kantian criticism, as can be seen in the many references to critical philosophy in *Le Différend*, or his retrieval of Kant's political philosophy in *L'enthousiasme: La critique kantienne de l'histoire* (1986). The idea is not to reject reason as such, which would be a counter-Hegelian move remaining entirely on a Hegelian terrain, but to develop a more differentiated analysis of it, which respects the irreducible plurality of ways of being "reasonable" without dismissing the question of justice that exists at their horizon, precisely as an idea in the Kantian sense. It might indeed be argued that the systematic philosophy of phrases developed in a book like *Le Différend* fails to provide a coherent program, for instance that it overvalues the motif of diversity of language games and faculties in Wittgenstein and Kant, that it misconstrues modern science, or that the differentiation of the "phrase regimes" proposed in the book is incoherent or insufficient; but to claim that it is "against reason" in any simplistic sense, is to be either malevolent or incapable of reading, possibly both.

This legitimation crisis opened up in postmodernity can be countered in three different ways, Lyotard suggests, all of which exist within science: by a recourse to the idea of *performativity*, where the production of truth is evaluated according to criteria of input and output (which today continues in the increasing dependency on citation indexes, bibliometrical tools, etc.); by *consensus*, which is the model proposed by Habermas, on the basis of a quasi-transcendental theory of communicative action; and by *paralogy*, which is Lyotard's option, and which purports to bring us closer to the actual practices of the sciences as well as of the arts. Both Habermas and Lyotard oppose the first option, which is the common discourse of capitalism and modern techno-science, although their respective solutions differ. Habermas identifies the problem correctly, Lyotard claims, but his solution is in effect too much part of the problem. As we have noted, Lyotard's idea of a legitimation by paralogy draws on Wittgenstein's understanding of language games as necessarily multiple, incommensurable, and without any ultimate foundation in a theory of Language as such, all of which is said to constitute a "pragmatics" that, however, is rather distant from the claims of the pragmatism a là Rorty, under which he is occasionally subsumed.

monnaie du temps

Que vaut un franc ? Non pas ce qu'il recèle de métal précieux, mais la fraction de telle ou telle monnaie étrangère contre laquelle il peut s'échanger. Et le taux des changes ne cesse de fluctuer. Le pouvoir d'achat de la monnaie est comme du temps potentiel : en empruntant, je puis acquérir à l'instant ce que je ne pouvais avoir qu'en attendant. Mais ce temps gagné s'achète lui aussi (intérêts). Et l'on peut spéculer sur lui (options). Vraie maternité de la valeur : le temps.

matériau	«Infra-Mince»
matrice	
matériel	
matière	
maternité	**monnaie du temps**

Transmission en direct sur écrans, du cours des options et de données économiques de différents points du monde : vitesse et codage de l'information. En contrepoint, en vestiges du passé, un empilement de faux lingots d'or et un titre boursier avant sa «dématérialisation» bancaire. En arrière-plan, projection d'horloges rythmant le temps.

Ambiance boursière à Francfort.

For Lyotard, to speak is to engage in an exchange or even a battle, an *agon* of phrases understood as "moves" in a shifting game where the rules themselves are at stake, and this is valid just as much for the sciences and philosophy as it is for the arts and our everyday exchanges (which is why the subtitle of *The Postmodern Condition* speaks of the more general *savoir* rather than *connaissance*, which implies a more technical and specialized competence). This *agon* is however not violence, but a requisite for freedom and openness, which in turn are ultimately rooted in how being and time are given to us: as fracture, gap, unhinging, and here Lyotard's conception of the "event" is both close to and far from Heidegger's *Ereignis*.

Another important aspect of the delegitimation process is the development of information technologies (which undoubtedly has intensified exponentially since 1979). For Lyotard they present us with a highly ambiguous phenomenon, which can also be said to characterize his own description of the postmodern in its first version: on the one hand they encourage a critical experimenting, which has been decisive for the becoming obsolete of the old narratives; on the other hand they tend to generate a new narrative based precisely on "performativity", which renders everything equal and exchangeable in a way that in the end may even be infinitely *more* powerful than the previous stories of knowledge and emancipation (above all because the discourse of performativity is able to include, or at least allude to them in a twisted form). Lyotard predicts that academic knowledge production will be vitalized by this informatization of society, while the idea of free research, with its root in the Humboldtian ideal of the autonomous university, will appear as increasingly useless, since knowledge is subjected to demands from the corporate worlds and various political bureaucracies. Today these predictions seem entirely true, even to an extent that could hardly have been imagined in 1979.

In fact, almost immediately after these first statements, Lyotard begins to understand the production of paralogies as the task of *resisting* modern communication technologies, and once more, just as in the earlier phase, he points to the legacy of 20th century modernist literature and art as the model for this activity.[8] The act of anamnesis, of retrieving the potential of a "postmodern" moment that would precede inscription into institutionalized knowledge and communicative discourse, belongs to a philosophy and an art that remain attentive to the challenge of their impossible yet unavoidable dialogue.

IV. The (an)aesthetics of the sublime and the idea of experimentation

Thus, in spite of all these shifts and discontinuities, there is a thread that runs through all of Lyotard's writing, and this is the proximity between philosophical reflection and the arts, espe-cially the visual arts. This even led him to become a curator, in the case of the 1985 exhibition at the Beabourg, "Les immatériaux", which thematized the ubiquity of "immaterials", not only in contemporary art, but also in the substructures of everyday life and the sciences. The exhibition was to a large extent part of the postmodern turn toward language and communication theory, which provided the basic concepts around which it was organized,[9] but it also had profound roots in the earlier attempts to save the spatial and visual domain from the reign of the signifier, all of which is still insufficiently explored, both in relation to philosophy and aesthetics, as well as to the idea of the "curator".[10]

In fact, *Discours, figure* and many of the texts that would follow throughout the 1970s can be read as drafts for a systematic aesthetic theory — somewhere in an interview Lyotard even says that the attempt was to produce something on the order of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*; the failure to achieve this, we must note, need however not be due to the shortcomings of the author, but has more do with the subject matter itself, which poses a formidable resistance to the kind of historicizing analysis that at least on one level was Adorno's great achievement. Lyotard's writings on the visual arts, but also on literature and music, are numerous. To name but a few: the monograph on Jacques Monory (*L'assassinat de l'expérience par la peinture, Monory*, 1984: in comprising two parts, written in 1972 and 1981 respectively, the first from the point of view of libidinal economy, the second from that of a theory of the sublime, it allows us to see the same themes developed before and after the postmodern "turn"); the delightful book on the great inventor and transformer Duchamp (*Les transformateurs Duchamp*, 1977); the various essays on Daniel Buren, Cézanne, Cage, Renaissance perspective, Luciano Berio, Michel Butor, political posters and "plastic space", "acinema", etc, collected in *Des dispositifs pulsionels* (1973/1980), *Rudiments païens* (1977), and *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud* (1974;) the book on Albert Aymé, *La constitution du temps dans les oeuvres récentes d'Albert Aymé* (1980), where the debate between phenomenology and a semi-Wittgensteinian philosophy of phrases is articulated in relation to the experience of color; the discussion of Gianfranco Baruchello's work as a form of resistance to information technology (published in Italian as *La pittura del segreto nell'epoca postmoderna, Baruchello*, 1982); and most systematically, *Que peindre?* (1987), which discusses Shusaku Arakawa, Buren once again, and Valerio Adami, and comes back to the questions of *sense* and *presence* in a way that echoes the early texts. In all of these writings Lyotard develops his philosophical ideas by exposing them to the experience of art, or more precisely to *that in art which questions our forms of experience*, and he attempts to locate a zone of *experimentation* that would belong neither to the artist nor to the thinker, but constitutes their common "underground".[11]

Today, in aesthetic theory, Lyotard is probably most known for his many attempts to restore the "sublime" as a central aesthetic category of the avantgarde — or as he himself sometimes says, "anaesthetic", since it resists and does violence to the senses, to *aisthesis*. In this he has often been misunderstood by his critics: despite some infelicitous statements in the first essays on the topic, the aim is not to restore the dimension of infinite magnitude and power that underlies the tradition from Kant to Barnett Newman (the idea of infinite power belongs to the discourse of techno-science and performativity), but rather to stress an imperceptible violence done to the senses by that which comes *before* their constitution as a unity, an ungraspable "touching" that eludes consciousness and can only be grasped in retrospect, through an act of anamnesis of that which always is forgotten in thought. Freud's idea of *Nachträglichkeit* and the position of affectivity in psychoanalysis is here staged as a "reading of childhood" or a "childhood of reading", as is the title of a collection of essays from 1991, *Lectures d'enfance*, and the artistic sublime is one way of dealing with it that is closely akin to philosophy.[12]

Once more we find the idea of a descent into the ante-predicative that was there already in the 1954 book on phenomenology, although now deflected through more than four decades of intense philosophical work. In this way, the end brings us back to the beginning, in a movement of anamnesis, within which the moment of the "postmodern" — if we choose to read Lyotard carefully, and there is absolutely no reason not to — was only a minor and perhaps unfortunate incident. ●

Notes

1. *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Minuit, 1979); *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*; trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press; 1984), re-ed. in 1994 on University of Minnesota Press.
2. See, for instance, "Resisting a Discourse of Mastery: A Conversation with Jean-François Lyotard", interview with Gary A. Olson, in *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory* 15 (1995).
3. In the preface to the poem, Mallarmé famously writes: "The 'blanks' indeed take on importance, at first glance; the versification demands them, as a surrounding silence, to the extent that a fragment, lyrical or of a few beats, occupies, in its midst, a third of the space of paper". Lyotard's analysis of "spacing" could be compared to Derrida's reading of the same figure as a fundamentally *textual* operation, in "La double séance", first published in *Tel Quel* 1970, rpr. in *La dissemination* 1972. The two readings indeed sometime come so close as to appear indistinguishable, yet they approach the same problem from opposite angles, as it were.
4. For an interesting take on this conflict of interpretation, see Andrea Bachner, "Anagrams in Psychoanalysis: Retroping Concepts by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Jean-François Lyotard", *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2003).
5. Lyotard, *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 13.
6. See, as one among many examples, the comments in "L'interêt du sublime", in Jean-François Courtine, Michel Déguy et al., *Du Sublime* (Paris: Belin, 1988). It is true that there are continuities as well, most notably with respect to the idea of the "event", as has been suggested by Geoffrey Bennington, in *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); it would however be unfair to *criticize* Lyotard's later work on the basis of the earlier texts (which is of course not Bennington's proposal).
7. For a clear discussion of this divide (which contains several intermediary positions), see Niels Brügger, "What about the Postmodern? The Concept of the Postmodern in the Work of Lyotard", *Yale French Studies*, no. 99 (2001).
8. See for instance "Apppendice svelte à la question postmoderne", in *Babylone*. No. 1 (Winter 1982–83), rpr. in *Le tombeau de l'intellectuel et autres papiers* (Paris: Galilée, 1984).
9. The idea of "immaterials" intended to point to the transformation of all entities, from everyday objects to works of art, real estate, and institutions, into bits of information. In this sense the exhibition was inscribed in a long lineage of cybernetics and information theory, and one of its basic strategies was the inclusion and reworking of the classical schema derived from communication theory: sender-message-receiver, with the message part structured according to code and reference. The exhibition treated this whole complex by associating it to the Sanskrit root "mat-", whose ramifications provided the founding parameters: *matériau, matériel, maternité, matière*, and *matrice*, which could be roughly translated as 1) physical materiality; 2) materials or equipment; 3) maternity; 4) matter; 5) matrix. In the catalog Lyotard defines them as: 1) the *support* of the message; 2) that which assures the *grasp* (*saisie*), *transmission*, and *interception* of the message; 3) the function of the *sender*; 4) its *subject matter* as "the matter" or "content" (as in the French *table des matières*, table of contents); 5) the *code* used. All of them, Lyotard suggests, have entered into a state of insecurity, above all since the dimension of the "support", in the arts as well as industrial production, is becoming liquefied.
10. Together with Daniel Birnbaum I will examine this theme in a forthcoming book, provisionally entitled *Spacing Philosophy: Jean-François Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition*.
11. For a discussion of this idea, see the lucid essay by John Rachman, "Jean-François Lyotard's Underground Aesthetics", *October*, vol. 86 (Autumn 1998).
12. See for instance Lyotard's essay on "Emma", *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 39 (Spring 1994). For an analysis of these connections, see Anne Tomiche, "Rephrasing the Freudian Unconscious: Lyotard's Affect-Phrase", *Diacritics* 24 (Spring 1994). This conception of anamnesis and deferred time is also the basis for Lyotard's reading of Heidegger; see *Heidegger et "les juifs"* (Paris: Galilée, 1988).

Radicals and Radicants: An Interview with Nicolas Bourriaud

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Fredrik Svensk

Nicolas Bourriaud's new book, *The Radicant*, starts with a question: "Why is it that globalization has so often been discussed from sociological, political, and economic points of view but almost never from an aesthetic perspective? How does this phenomenon affect the life of *forms*?". The result is an essay full of notes and statements on issues of multiculturalism, postmodernism and cultural globalization, aiming to get away from the postmodern "impotent cacophony" and rethink the relationship of contemporary works to power and politics, and claiming that we must free ourselves from the mental framework of Enlightenment philosophy vocabulary of "emancipation, resistance and alienation, reproduced in the language of anti-colonial struggles and then by postcolonial studies."

FREDRIK SVENSK: In *The Radicant* you raise the question of globalization from what you call an "aesthetic perspective". Could you please say something about how you understand the specificity of this perspective?
NICOLAS BOURRIAUD: The use of texts in a discursive context differs obviously from the use of a preexisting form in an artwork... But we could even enlarge the question: I am practicing theory according to similar principles as the ones used by contemporary artists — let's say as a "semionaut", connecting concepts to each other and experimenting with their functioning, their delocalization, their trajectories into different contexts, rather than following formal academic procedures. The writing process is, to a certain extent, connected to the subject. When artists are inventing ways of processing the materials they are exploiting, why should theoreticians stick to pre-formatted frames? This is the reason why *The Radicant* is structured as a kind of PowerPoint presentation, or a cluster of ideas... And I must say that my main influences comes from Seth Price or Ryan Gander, more than Rosalind Krauss or Hal Foster. I was always interested in importation and displacements in the history of thought — how it is sometimes necessary to adapt concepts from a different discipline in order to seize those new objects that cannot be grasped by the "legitimate" ones. Psychoanalysis, for example, had to import its original concepts from biology, and Lacan pursued Freud's enterprise by bringing together theology and topology.
FS: When I read your works, I often find an attitude that goes against an often-quoted statement by Adorno in his first draft to the introduction to *Aesthetic Theory*, where he says that the very term aesthetic theory is something that has an outmoded feeling to it. Many commentaries have come to the conclusion that this kind of idealistic approach represented by Adorno is impossible in a world impregnated in what some

like to call Capital and others just Empire. You on the other hand, are always insisting that the ideas you present in your writing arise from contact with the artists you are writing about and "assiduous observation of their work". You are writing that you are looking "at the world through that optical tool that is art, in order to sketch a worldly and worldwide art criticism in which works are in dialogue with the contexts in which they are produced." The cynics would call this idealistic, or at least naïve, in a time when the grand collectors are said to be the new *auteurs*. So, my questions would be, how do you relate to the powers that regulate and produce this "optical tool" called art today and how would you describe this attitude and method in relation to the contemporary global state of capitalism?
NB: I hear what you're hinting at: my description of a "culture of using and sharing forms, postures and images" — which is the central theme of my previous book, *Postproduction* — has been criticized as going in the same direction as the global economy, which supposedly desires such behaviors. That criticism could be summed up in three words: kill the messenger. Even if you don't like it, the facts are here. My concern is not to produce a certificate of critical correctness, but to elaborate reading grids for the understanding of today's art and designate precisely the battleground, the front, and the lines of resistance. This huge "shareware" described in *Postproduction* is the contemporary equivalent of what Karl Marx called "commodity fetishism", i.e., a determined type of social relations takes the phantasmic shape of relations between things. In both *Relational Aesthetics* and *Postproduction*, my ambition was to analyze the links between the general production system and the production of artworks. The latter tried to theorize artistic practices that use already existing art pieces or social structures. "Use" and not "quote" — the same way that "relation" differs from "participation". The whole book is articulated around the opposition between passiveness and activity, consumption and production, exchange value and use value, whose distribution is a major political stake today — and, by the way, the leading idea of the Situationist International. It is interesting to see how capitalism has swallowed some of the most subversive and radical notions of the 20th century avant-gardes, and to examine how the artists are re-envisaging and re-folding them in order to maintain their critical capacity.
The Radicant pulls a thread from *Postproduction*, mainly in the chapter devoted to precariousness, which develops an idea included in the former essay. The main function of the capitalist communication device is to repeat a single message: we live in a finite, immovable political

framework whose decor must change at high speed in order to maintain the status quo. The artists I am discussing in my books, from Pierre Huyghe to Santiago Sierra, from Philippe Parreno to Liam Gillick, describe the world we live in as a pure artifact, a mise-en-scène, a montage, and the political task of art is to analyze, re-narrate and re-edit it. In other words, today's art is maintaining the world in a precarious state, de-programming reality if I can say so, by mapping the bio-powers or infiltrating its mechanisms. From Felix Gonzalez-Torrés to Gardar Eide Einarsson, the artworks that are the most subversive are the ones who elaborate their content from forms and procedures — not the ones that repeat messages.
    I am sticking to one of Adorno's fundamental statements: form is sedimented content. I could make my position more precise by applying to art what Alain Badiou writes about philosophy: art can only intervene into reality by producing effects in itself first, it has an effect on its outside by the action it produces on its inside. What sounds idealistic, according to me, is a vague critical position consisting in criticizing the world as if you were observing it from outside, from the position of god in other words... Capitalism proceeds through de-realization, it leads to a purely abstract world. Postmodern times have showed us how the simulacrum inscribes the image at the very place of reality. I insist on the multiple contexts of the production of forms, as much as on their modes of circulation: this is more of a political gesture than pretending to fight this de-realization with images that seem to fall from the sky, exactly as the ones they are supposed to challenge, or discourses that are supposed to be immediately (and even magically) "subversive" because they allude to a particular political situation. In short, most of the so-called "political art" is idealistic and harmless, despite the rhetoric of their authors. It is also naive to think that refusing to be "sold" is a considerable act of resistance, when the main enemy is not the free market but capital.
    By the way, this new idea that private collectors are be the new *auteurs* sounds quite weird: François Pinault's collection needs to be curated to acquire any meaning. Otherwise, it only is a mass (capital) of artworks. Authorship is not an accumulation of words, but their organization into a sentence. Unfortunately, the art world seems to experience some difficulties in acknowledging the difference, which is a quite worrying symptom. For me, one of the most important ethical gestures is interpretation. Interpreting a score, an image, a form... Nothing can access the dimension of meaning if not interpreted, counter-interpreted, and so on. If I build an optical tool, then somebody else will correct it:

reality is a multilayered field of interpretations. I noticed that most of my writings come from this obsession with movement — never letting the ball stop, but pass it, and observe the trajectories rather than the object itself. Art criticism as ballistics. Relations, and postproduction, are "in between", always interhuman. For me, this field is a very material and concrete object of knowledge. In opposition, idealism is the denial of its materiality, its description as a void or a "natural" frame for so-called contents. Any discourse implying a dichotomy between "objects" and the "immaterial" is highly idealistic. Pushing this idea further, I could say that life is also a "work", and the separation between life, labor and their representation is nothing but an artificial construction, maintained for political reasons.
FS: In the short essay "Instable Connections", you talk about your two earlier books, *Relational Aesthetics* and *Postproduction*, as works in which you tried to construct optical tools, and possible reading models that would restore visibility to the works of the artists of the period you are describing, rather than inspiring others and explaining the ideology behind their practice. In *The Radicant*, on the other hand, it is hard for me to understand it as anything but an intervention into many different fields. One of the terms that you use in your new essay is "altermodern", which is also a manifesto you've written and the title for the Tate Triennial in 2009. Alterglobalization often refers to the so-called global justice movement. How do you understand the relationship between this movement and the artistic practices and attitudes that you associate with altermodernity?
NB: You are right saying that *The Radicant* is a leap into a broader context, actually beyond the art scene itself. Rather than trying to describe and analyze specific artistic practices, I tried here to open a space that did not previously exist in the artistic field. This periodization tool, this historical marker that I name "altermodern" does not refer to any preexisting situation, it is a pure construction, whereas relational art or post-productive practices existed prior to my observation. The concept of the "altermodern" is a gesture, a performative speech act.
    Yes, it does refer to this global movement, also called "alterglobalization". I was interested in the way a political movement can present itself, not as a totalizing dogma, but as a cluster of local struggles against the dominant ideology, a theoretical "umbrella" sheltering various singularities. This archipelagic form, even kaleidoscopic, leads us out of the binary system that has been perpetuated by postmodern theory: local/global, center/periphery, West/rest of the world, colonizers/colonized, etc. Postmodernism appears to be a truly binary mode of thinking, under the

▸ *Radicant* Taking root on, or above, the ground; rooting from the stem, as the trumpet creeper and the ivy. Illustration from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Elements of Structural and Systematic Botany*, by Douglas Houghton Campbell
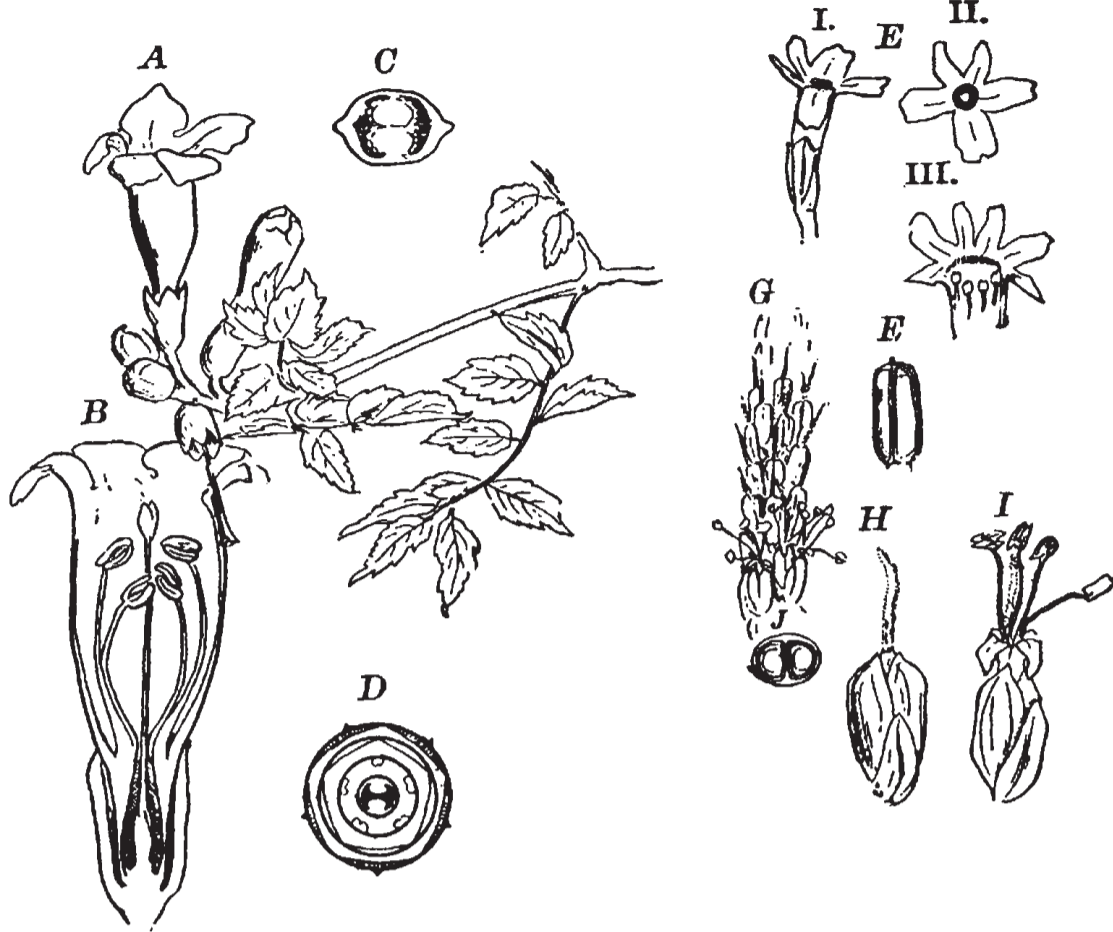
cover of denouncing this binary as a modernist specificity. Pretending to criticize this scheme, it actually prolongs, reifies, and naturalizes it negatively, so to speak. The altermodern takes into account what Bruno Latour calls "relativist relativism", as opposed to the postmodern "symmetrical relativism": a space with no arbiter, in other words, a horizontal space of negotiations.
FS: You have mentioned some of the artists that you say work with translation and negotiation in an altermodern way. Would you also say that the critical judgment you are formulating about their work is also based on the same kind of act of translation and negotiation? To be able to negotiate, don't you need something to negotiate with?
NB: When one negotiates or trades, the other is not the enemy, but a partner at a variable degree, friend or not. And one has to articulate a negotiation on a common ground, around a shared interest. For instance, you can translate a text you really loathe, only out of the necessity of making it available in a particular language. Since *Relational Aesthetics*, I am developing a critical work based on the interhuman sphere: artists inventing forms out of exchanges and social grounds, responding to cultural forms invented or emitted by former or contemporary producers by using them (*Postproduction*) or, in *The Radicant*, negotiating the global data through translations and migrations. As a critic, I am obviously immersed in this field of negotiation, but the specific notion that is raised by my work would be the notion of jurisprudence. There are no aesthetic laws anymore, but aesthetic facts that ought to be judged, according to the evaluation of the forms themselves, but also the specific contexts of their production and their diffusion. If poetic justice is rooted in a few principles and a set of personal values that you may want to defend, it is mainly comparative and based on a perpetual negotiation with the artists and the other critics and curators. I am a *passeur*: I point out objects and I try to bring you to see them and discuss them. Finally, I really think that this simple gesture (watching, then showing and commentating) is the core of culture: when it disappears, there is no more culture, just communication and entertainment. Let's stress this statement: our desire as individuals, transformed into words and acts of showing, stands against the machinery that produces a plethora of undesired, formatted, calibrated objects aimed at raising money, fill program grids and feed the trading industry. Our main enemies are the forms that were not desired by someone, an individual or a group of people, but conceived, programmed by and distributed into abstract machineries. As Serge Daney wrote, "Form is desire; the content is nothing more than the background, deprived of our presence."

FS: You write that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the unification of the world economy have led automatically to a striking standardization of cultures. The art world has generally responded to this with a vague ideology of sorts — multiculturalism. If we consider that multiculturalism as an ideology was developed in the British Empire, and now surely reflected in the way the Anglo-Saxon states work with questions of difference and integration, where as for example the French colonial project civilized "the other" in another way. Would you say that your argument in *The Radicant* in any sense relates to these different kinds of colonial projects? Or do you see the contemporary globalization of the economy as something totally separated for the colonial projects?
NB: This opposition sounds a little too Manichean for me: having been immerged for some years in the Indian reality, I am not certain that the British empire tried to colonize India with such a respect for difference and integration in mind — this seems to be slightly anachronistic, a retroactive propaganda attempting to legitimize the multicultural ideology of our times. On the other hand, the return of the French colonists from Algeria in the sixties has shown how "Algerianized" they had been, at least as much as the inverse. So, there is no black and white situation, but a grayish zone deformed by the respective ideologies we are referring to (French universalism on one side, British multiculturalism on the other). I am actually rejecting both. As an official ideology, multiculturalism despises the vernacular cultures it pretends to "preserve": the more it claims to "respect" the specificity of the Other, the more it imposes the master's language through a subtle network of hierarchies and values. Economic globalization is an accepted form of colonialism, the farce that follows the tragedy. Today's oppressive system introduces itself as a self-service device: you can choose between all the available objects, but you have to pay, and you can only get products — even experience has become a product. By the way, colonialism has become a theoretical Swiss knife: in too many people's minds, it plays the role of a universal explainer, as class struggle used to. I am quite suspicious about those "massive" concepts, when they are utilized as a *vademecum*. At this point, allow me to read a passage from *The Radicant*: "In postmodern discourse, 'recognition of the other' too often amounts to pasting the other's image into a catalogue of differences. Animal humanism? This so-called 'respect for the Other', at any rate, generates a kind of reverse colonialism, as courteous and seemingly benevolent, as its predecessor was brutal and nullifying. In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Slavoj Žižek cites an interview with Alain Badiou in which

the latter recalls that the concept of 'respect for the Other' would be meaningless, for example, to a resister engaged in the struggle against the Nazis in 1942, or even 'when one must judge the works of a mediocre artist'. Thus, this notion of respect or 'recognition of the Other' in no way represents 'the most basic of ethical principles', as one might be led to believe from reading Charles Taylor. We must move beyond the peaceful and sterile coexistence of reified cultures (multiculturalism) to a state of cooperation among cultures that are equally critical of their own identity — that is to say, we must reach the stage of translation".

Translation is a true act of respect, as opposed to the various processes of fetishization of the Other displayed by multiculturalism, and it is based on interpretation, not on this basic and vague notion of "recognition". Postmodernism has failed to invent an alternative to modernist universalism because it endlessly recreates cultural anchorages and ethnic rootedness. Explaining an artwork by the "condition," "status," or "origin" of its author is a denial of her capacity of self-invention.
FS: You write about the necessity of dismissing "both the bad solution of re-enrooting in identities as well as the standardization of imaginations decreed by economic globalization." But why are you hoping that our own century's modernity will be invented "precisely in opposition to all radicalism"? The term "opposition" seems to reproduce the same kind of dialectical rhetoric that you are avoiding everywhere else?
NB: The term "opposition" is not radical in itself, nor does it imply a dialectical form of thought. Radical means "belonging to the root", hence the different forms of reduction, subtraction or elimination that correspond to the desire for *tabula rasa* which is specifically attached to 20th century modernism. If we get rid of the ghost of radicalism, we will be able to elaborate a new modernity from the "evental site" (to speak like Alain Badiou) constituted by the process of cultural globalization, without feeling the need to look backwards to 20th century modernism, considered as a frozen model. The invention of a non-radical opposition is one of the stakes of the altermodern, which continues questioning the ideological subtractions undermining critical discourses. How can art oppose itself without subtracting, an operation that is ontologically linked to radical modernism, but proceeding through multiplications? This is the core of the concept of "radicant": radicant plants develop their roots as they advance, unlike the radicals, whose development is determined by their anchoring in a single batch of soil. The radicant develops in accord with its host soil. It conforms to the latter's twists and turns and adapts to its

surfaces and geological features. It translates itself into the terms of the space in which it moves. At once dynamic and dialogical, the adjective radicant describes a subject caught between the need for a connection with its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the Other. In other words, it defines the subject as an object of negotiation — which includes the figure of opposition.
FS: Your term altermodern describes "a new cultural precipitate, the formation of a mobile population of artists and thinkers choosing to go in the same direction. A start-up, an exodus." If population became a biopolitical issue for the nation-states and empires during the 19th century, does the altermodern "mobile population" reference anything else but its common "choice" or desire to go in the same direction?
NB: First, I did not want to make any distinction in the book between chosen mobility on one side, and the various range of unwanted migrations on the other: both belong to the logics of the same economic structure. Stressing this difference or drawing a typology of global human displacements would be the task of a sociologist, and my aim consisted in analyzing this situation through the lens of form.

I even heard critics denying that the phenomenon of global nomadism affects the regime of forms, because taking a plane is the privilege of an elite. This is as stupid as saying that one cannot admit pop art for the only reason that not everybody can buy all the products depicted by Claes Oldenburg or Andy Warhol. I am not focusing on artists traveling and jumping from city to city, but on a new visual and intellectual frame based on the multiple figures of contemporary mobility. When I describe this "exodus" as a condition for the formation of a new modernity, I refer to what appears to me as the key pattern of modernity — departure. Departure from cultural boundaries, local determinations, habits, traditions. This is precisely the opposite of the postmodern tendency towards the "origin" and the "identity". Altermodern stands for designating a mental space beyond the dead ends of the "Post" culture. When the whole world is threatened by the double menace of capitalist standardization and fundamentalist/essentialist regressions, it seems to be quite urgent to react. •

Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*
(New York: Sternberg Press , 2009).

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The Last Temptations of Socio-Romanticism

Sinziana Ravini

A lot of things are not completely what they ought be in the art world. One of them is the conviction that socially engaged artists and those who have a romantic yearning for nature live in diametrically opposed worlds. The former are expected to storm the barricades armed with political banners, the latter to escape into nature. Inventing alternative spaces in the social sphere, however, is just as romantic as inventing them in nature, and nature is indeed a space for social engagement and change.

To find another way of looking at these alternative spaces is the objective of the summer exhibition at Röda Sten in Gothenburg, "A Space on the Side of the Road", curated by artists Henrik Andersson and Kajsa Dahlberg. The exhibition takes its point of departure in the "freedom to roam", or the right of public access to wilderness, called *Allemansrätten* — a Swedish utopia that secures a free space between nomads and proprietors. On the website of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, it is stated that: "*Allemansrätten* is a unique possibility for us to move freely in nature." What would happen if this utopia were to be translated into the social sphere: "*Allemansrätten* as a unique possibility for us to move freely in culture"? Is it possible to talk of a social outdoor life? Can people move as freely as they wish in the social sphere? Yes, but only as long as they are not homeless people, political activists, or street vendors — i.e., as long as their activities do not disturb the established order. This exhibition is one of very few to have succeeded in problematizing the relation between escapism and engagement, nature and culture, ecosophy and sociology, private and public, and, most importantly, to have succeeded in this without sacrificing aesthetics.

As Claire Bishop stated in her text "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents" (*Artforum*, February 2006), there are many socially engaged artists who sacrifice aesthetics on the altar of social change, who seek consensus rather than dissensus, and who exclude their participants with their so-called open forms of art. But this dissensus-seeking art can easily end up contributing to a vanguard logic of spectacle, which Bishop does not seem to mind, if we consider her discussion with Boris Groys in the journal *Tate Etc*. In this discussion she brings up the cabarets of Futurism and Dadaism as examples of radical participatory art that involves the viewers in the spectacle by subjecting them to various pranks and physical ordeals. As contemporary forms of this kind of participatory art, she points to Oleg Kulik, Santiago Sierra, and Maurizio Cattelan, but the shock of their works rarely has an afterlife. The bourgeoisie may choke on the wine for a moment during the reception, but then everything falls neatly back into place. True radical art, on the other hand, is the art that succeeds in overturning the social orders not just momentarily, but in the long run. For this to be possible, art must be able to change according to its context, or, in other words, to produce both consensus and dissensus, depending on the audience.

In examining the Röda Sten exhibition on the "freedom to roam", one notices a relatively new form of social interaction: the social contract. For Rousseau, the social contract meant the transition from a natural state to a social state, where all parts assemble to create a contract profitable for everyone. This contract has never ceased proving itself as an enduring conception of utopia, and today it is realized by certain forms of staging that belong to the theater. If reality does not look entirely the way we would like it to look, then one only has to "stage" a utopia that never seems to arrive.

This is what The YES! Association successfully performs in the exhibition. The objective of this separatist and intersectionalist association is nothing less than to "overthrow the patriarchal, racist, and capitalist orders". The association is run by artists Line S. Karlström, Johanna Gustavsson, Malin Arnell, Anna Linder, Åsa Elzén, and Fia-Stina Sandlund, and quickly rose to fame with the exhibition Art Feminism (2005-2007), in which a performance/action attempted to encourage several Swedish art institutions to sign a contract stipulating equality. The contract was however never signed, and when The YES! Association was invited to participate in "A Space on the Side of the Road" they decided to try again, this time mixing reality and fiction by staging the preceding negotiations. In this work, entitled *When Hell Froze Over*, curators, project managers, and artists were invited to a table to "play themselves", thus reaching a new agreement to be signed — however still fictively — by all parties. The fictive contract states: "This agreement is reached within the frame of the staging of *When Hell Froze Over*, on July 27, and can extend into REALITY!!" This method originates in Augusto Boal's Forum Theater — in which people were trained to overcome the social oppression to which they were subjected by staging the social transformations they wanted to achieve — but it is also influenced by grassroots movements and actionist groups like GAG, No Person Is Illegal, or Guerrilla Girls, who worked against institutions in a more antagonistic fashion.

What is interesting about The YES! Association is that the rules of the game allow for more ideological courage, since everything remains within the limits of fiction. The fictional quality protects, and this is precisely where the power as well as powerlessness of art lie. By staging political gestures art inevitably becomes part of "what is", but also of "what could be".

But there are other ways to work with the form of the social contract. In her video installation *You Must Not Do That/You Have To Do That — a film and contract concerning the production of a film about the women's camp on the island of Femø*, Kajsa Dahlberg shows that activist art has a lot to gain, both ethically and aesthetically, from using the form of the contract. The contract works both as a script and as a contract determining the visual distribution of the sensible. The women chose to be filmed at a distance, and their conversation cannot be heard. We see them carrying and dismantling things, and we see them acting as a homogenous group with a single will, rather than presented as the individuals addressed in the contract/script.

Dahlberg has always moved between closed and open spaces. In *Female Fist* (2005) she tried to escape classical documentary representation by leaving the lens cap on while filming a member of a feminist action group. In the work *A Room of One's Own/A Thousand Libraries* (2006) she collected the scribbled notes from hundreds of library copies of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, and succeeded in creating a collective reading room, enlarging the traditionally closed space of reading. These reading rooms were to some extent already contained in the library as a transitory space between private and public, but here they were subjected to a new visual principle. Dahlberg showed that participatory and relational works need a strong artistic sender, as well as an addressee that may both initiate and end the project. In Dahlberg's film of the women camp at Femø, we can also see how the women dismantle the camp, ending the process themselves.

So, what do the works of The YES! Association

▲
Installation shot, *A Space on the Side of the Road* **curated by Henrik Andersson and Kajsa Dahlberg. Photo: Erik Betshammar**

and Kajsa Dahlberg say about socially engaged art? Perhaps they demonstrate that all revolutions need the make-believe mechanisms of film and theater, which is just as true of the theatrical poetics of the French Revolution as of the televised aesthetics of the Romanian Revolution, or that socially engaged art needs to use theatrical forms in order to reach its destination. It also shows that working in public space does not preclude working in the hidden domains of private life, and that activist engagement does not have to contradict a strong, almost taboo-like quest for beauty.

Throughout large parts of the 20th century, artists felt they had to negate aesthetics, or even escape the realm of art altogether, in order to produce political change — a view reminiscent of Heinrich Heine's iconoclastic declaration: "To consider the revolution from an aesthetic point of view, is to insult the greatness of the people, and to profane the very idea in whose name revolution is made." I for one am convinced that any political revolution must converge with its aesthetic counterpart. As Marcuse once said: "The true revolution is an aesthetic revolution, for all revolutions are based on the laws of aesthetics, and all aesthetics can be revolutionary in the right context." But the revolution is not only to be found within specific forms of art, but also in what is produced between these forms of art, in the space that is activated after the curatorial choices have been made, when cross-fertilization creates new associative paths.

It is here that the power of the exhibition lies, in how the curators bring together two forms of art that at first may seem irreconcilable: first, the social activist, as in the occupation of Kungstorget in 1976, when the Left and certain environmental movements protested against the rightwing proposal to build a parking space/

garage, using banners proclaiming "Mer Kurage, Inget Garage" [More Courage, No Garage], and second, artworks that revel in a picturesque escape from reality. But in this exhibition the agitatorial and the contemplative have been assigned to different spaces. In the large boiler room of Röda Sten, we can participate in a staged nature romanticism. The exhibition hall is dark. Slide projectors emit a sacred glow. Seated on a stand I can gaze at the panoramic shots of tourists by Ann Böttcher, alternately estranging and staging the experience of nature. How pathetic are they not, these tourists overlooking Yosemite — the untouched paradise of America — with its trees taller and more powerful than the columns of Greece and Rome, and its primordial nature so primordial that it does not even have space for its native populations? The images of Böttcher are in fact a deconstruction of the entire romantic discourse. First, they lay bare man's need of a metaphysical reality, of something greater than humanity itself, visually as well as conceptually; but then, in contrast to the images of Caspar David Friedrich, the identification with the sublime view of nature never fully takes place, and instead we encounter our own gaze.

The same is true of the work of Ibon Aranberri, *Exercises on the North Side*, a 16mm film that follows a small group of Marxist-Leninist mountaineers in the Pyrenees. In this case, as in Böttcher, the result is a kind of contract between the artist and the mountaineers, where the latter control all aesthetic decisions. At first the images are seductive, but then the structure of the scene and the codes for the building of a national identity begin to unveil an extremely tragicomic heroism.

The German Romantics, the flâneurs, the Situationists, and the Land artists all knew that wandering is itself a form of art, but also that the

immediacy of the experience of nature during the walk is beyond representation, no matter how much one tries to capture it. This moment of the sublime is rendered wholly problematic by Hamish Fulton. His images, accompanied by the measuring and documentation of the time span required to move from one place to another, are as close as you get to a disinterested meditation on nature. On his website he states the following: "Only art resulting from the experience of individual walks has a life of its own and does not need to be materialized into an artwork. An artwork may be purchased but a walk cannot be sold".

Fulton's text immediately reminds me of Goethe's legendary meditation on nature in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, where Werther is so overwhelmed by the divine beauty of nature that he resigns and accepts the impossibility of ever portraying it. "Oh, could I describe these conceptions, could I impress upon paper all that is living and so full and warm within me, that it might be the mirror of my soul, as my soul is the mirror of the infinite God! O my friend — but it is too much for my strength — I sink under the weight of the splendor of these visions!"

Early conceptual work like Fulton's demonstrates that art is not only to be found in the artifact, but also in the discovery that such experiences deny man the power of direct imitation. The meditation on nature no longer needs to get stuck in the mimetic model of the Master-Slave dialectic. Just as Kant said, any mediocre artist can portray a sunset, but the art of true genius lies in the ability to unite form and content, aesthetically pleasing forms and intellectually stimulating ideas. I would like to add one more criteria: the distanced staging and theatricality that ensures the distance between artist and audience, between us and them, between here and

there — in other words, the mechanisms of theatre. This is why social art needs theatrical forms and the divisions they produce; only in this way can it seduce and entice. A totalitarian artwork that engulfs everything, hides the conventions of staging, and demands a complete participation, is more excluding than a work that sometimes withdraws from the claims to transparency, participation, and universality contained in the "Right to Roam". Distance, as always, is what produces desire. ●

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The Art of Documentary Narratives

Karl Lydén

"We are victorious! The TV is with us!"
Videograms of a Revolution,
Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica

During the last two or three decades, a documentary mode has been increasingly visible in the realm of fine art, to the point where it has become one of its inseparable components. One can mention films like *November* by Hito Steyerl, where the artist's old feature film material is turned into documents, or the narrative nonfiction works by Matthew Buckingham, such as *Over the Sea* or *Muhheakantuck — Everything has a Name*. There is also the inversion of the ethnographic documentary tradition as performed by Trinh T. Minh-Ha, or the investigations of mov-

ing images made by Harun Farocki, such as his collaboration with Andrei Ujica in *Videograms of a Revolution*. The list could go on forever, but I will stop before it gets long enough to be excluding.

Instead, I will look at the documentary in terms of narrative and — by means of negative definitions, examples, and imitations — try to voice what I consider some of the most interesting possibilities of these works. I would like to consider this an essay, but "essay" in the original sense of the word: a try, an attempt, a proposal. And perhaps in this attempt, the voice of documentary possibilities also bears a wish for what Marguerite Duras describes in her introduction to *India Song*: "Voice 1 is in danger of being 'lost' in the story".

I

When examining this particular area of the documentary and looking into its discursive confines, you sometimes run into the notion of an opposition between art and documentary, and sometimes even an outright resistance towards the documentary influences in contemporary art. For example, look at the reception of one of the first major exhibitions to include a large share of documentary works, namely Documenta 11, curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2002. Despite the fact that art historiography can have a short and selective memory, and that Documenta 11 now often is seen as a successful and influential exhibition, it was at the time described as overly journalistic, excessively documentary, and humorless.[1] A New York Times review noted that: "making visually engrossing social documentaries [...] is honorable and difficult work. Making art, good art anyway, is something *else* that's difficult" ("Global Art Show With an Agenda"). Similarly, a critic at *Art in America* suggested that some of the more documentary works were valued "less for their intrinsic artistic merit than for the *evidence* they provide of the efficacy of collective organization".[2]

One would expect oppositions of this kind to be have been both dead and buried ages ago. After all, many things have been declared and accepted as art, and one wonders why the documentary of all things makes professional art critics talk about the "intrinsic artistic merit" of certain objects or practices, as if no urinal had ever become a fountain. Is the documentary too big a readymade? Is it because it is another artistic genre? I don't think so, considering how many artists have used poetry in their works. So why does an opposition of this kind, this anachronistic declaration of the documentary as non-art, which should be eliminated by the lessons of conceptual art and various acts of appropriation, why does it keep coming back? Perhaps one could say that there is something zombie-like about it, something like being dead — forever without will, and without speech — but still limping around the neighborhood in a very real way. Because if we look closer at this opposition between documentary and art, we see that it is

not only evoked by those who wish to criticize the use of documentary techniques, but also by those who advocate them. At the International Center for Photography last year, curator Maria Lind led a seminar called "Art versus Document: an (un)comfortable union?", a title that ended with a question mark.[3] Obviously Lind herself, curator of the Green Room, a recent exhibition and an ambitious long-term research project on "the documentary", does not believe it to be an uncomfortable union, but she raises the question — I guess — precisely because there is still something unarticulated about it. Well, I think a possible answer is hinted at if one looks back in time.

The supposed opposition between contemporary art and the documentary seems to mirror the distinct division that was being upheld in the late 19th and early 20th centuries between *document* — not documentary — and art in general. Consider, for example, Walter Benjamin's "Thirteen Theses Against Snobs" from 1925: a short text where he makes a sharp distinction between artwork and document, and where he states that "No document is, as such, a work of art".[4] The point is not so much his refusal to consider the document as art, but that this view was not long-lived — a few years later Benjamin had abandoned it himself, and in the period since we have seen an extensive use of documents in works of art — in written form, such as the contracts or instructions of early conceptual art, or in the form of photographs and film, for example in the documentation of performances.[5] This is exactly why I believe it to be a big mistake to conflate document and documentary, which by the way is not an uncommon thing to do. It is a conflation that leads you into an obsolete dichotomy.[6]

So if it is neither the document nor the documentation that puts the documentary in opposition to art, what is it? I would say that it is the documentary narrative: the inherently time-based and referential ordering of a sequence of events, the telling of a story with veridical claims. In most English dictionaries, among them the OED, "narrative" is sometimes said to be synonymous with "story", and sometimes with "the practice or art of telling stories". I would in fact

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Stills from William E. Jones' *Mansfield 1962*, 2006. Video, black and white, silent, 9,5 minutes. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

In 10 minutes we shall address an appeal to the people.

Now God has turned his face towards the Romanians again.

The dictator has fled.

We are victorious!
-The TV is with us!

Stills from Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica's *Videograms of a Revolution,* 106 minutes, 1993

The Contagious Documentary

William E. Jones: Time and Documentary Effect

Luigi Fassi

The cultural history of sexuality, ideologies of power, and strategies of social control are the main themes of the work of American artist William E. Jones. His work reflects the social history of the 20th century, investigating events that have fallen into oblivion through the use of visual materials and archival research. Pornographic films from the seventies, footage of judicial investigations and undeveloped photographic negatives all become the raw materials through which the artist undertakes his interpretative excavations, often by re-activating various forms of cultural documentation that are no longer considered relevant.

Tearoom (2006) consists of footage shot in the summer of 1962 by the police department of Mansfield, Ohio, with the aid of concealed video cameras. The resulting film, technically an *objet trouvé*, which is presented in its entirety by the artist, shows homosexual intercourse in public restrooms located under the main square of this Midwest American city. Depicting a pioneering experiment in social control by means of new technology, *Tearoom* displays strategies surrounding the criminalization of homosexuality in the America of the sixties, as a reflection on the repressive exercise of authority, and at the same time a fascinated and nostalgic portrait of homoerotic sexuality prior to the emergence of AIDS. Over thirty of the men captured by the television cameras were convicted of sodomy and consequently served terms of different lengths in various psychiatric hospitals, penitentiaries and judicial institutions. After 1963, when the legislation concerning homosexuality in Ohio was changed, most of the men were released. Created with the precise intention of investigative documentation, almost fifty years after its production *Tearoom* is still a cultural object that is difficult to fully grasp, a work full of ambiguity within the almost inexhaustible stratification of its meanings.

The almost violent sense of intrusion one might feel when looking at the images of *Tearoom* derives, perhaps, from the awareness that one is witnessing scenes of private pleasure that have been turned into public crimes by the hidden cameras, which in turn transforms the entire sequence into a time trap. The visual evidence of *Tearoom* was of course a disturbing image of sexuality to the politically conservative institutions of Mansfield; but one where sexuality also operated as a social coagulant, able to unite diverse men belonging to different social classes and groups, revealing alternative and subversive relationships in regard to the canonical relations of heterosexual society as a whole. The name *Tearoom* precisely indicates — according to an established tradition within American linguistic culture — a public bathhouse used as a place for rapid and impersonal sexual encounters between men of diverse social provenance. Thus, through the diversity of its protagonists, whites and blacks, young and older men, *Tearoom* outlines the complex social stratification of the *working* and *middle classes* evident within the masculine *Midwestern* aesthetic of the sixties. Simple jeans, white t-shirts, summer caps and work overalls alternate with the more selective elegance of jackets, bow ties, neckties, wide-brimmed hats and glasses with Bakelite frames. The artist has kept the footage unedited, with neither soundtrack nor comments, just moving the last image — that of the entrance to the underground restroom — to the beginning of the film, in order to provide the viewers with a clearer framework of the events to come. This lack of intervention generates a great multiplicity of readings, going beyond the film's factual nature to underline its quasi-narrative structure: a crescendo where the filmed interactions ultimately lead to a judiciary entrapment fated to destroy the lives of over thirty men.

The success of the sting operation carried out by the Mansfield Police Department led the same authority to reassemble some of the footage now constituting *Tearoom* to produce *Camera Surveillance*, a film which circulated as an instructional tool in law enforcement circles. This production shows how to set up a surveillance operation to film and arrest what were then called "sex deviants". William E. Jones found a version of the film on the Web and reedited it to make *Mansfield 1962*, a silent condensation of the original. Besides the technical arrangements accomplished by the policemen-cameramen in order to start the shooting in the restroom, and their selection of the recorded sex-scenes, this work provides other kind of materials such as the "mug shots" or identificatory pictures of the defendants taken right after their arrest. In this regard, the work conveys a clear sense of pride over the achievement of the crackdown and the convictions issued, as is also made evident by its quasi-cinematic closing credits in capital letters: "Presented by Police Dept., Mansfield, Ohio."

For a deeper understanding of *Tearoom* and its potential as a cultural and historical document,

go with both definitions combined, in line with both Tzvetan Todorov's and Gérard Genette's most basic definitions of narratives as story and discourse, where "story" means the events being retold, and "discourse" the telling of the story.[7] Literary scholar Dorrit Cohn thus defines the narrative of *fiction* as consisting simply of the interplay between story and discourse, as opposed to non-fictional and historical writing, in which the interplay is threefold: between story, discourse and reference.[8] The so-called reference is what I would call the veridical claims, comparable to film scholar Carl Plantinga's characterization of the documentary film as "asserted veridical representation" ("What a Documentary Is, After All", 105–117). So by documentary narrative, I simply mean the telling of a story, using some kind of documentation with an assertion of veridicality.

Having established the opposition between art and documentary as determined by what I have called the documentary narrative, I believe the matter becomes quite clear. As foundational as this division has been in Western culture, we can find it formulated already in what is perhaps the first attempt to theorize narratives: Aristotle's *Poetics*. "The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular".[9] In creating this distinction between the poet and the historian, between the general and the particular, it was thus Aristotle who created this figure that would transform into a zombie on its journey through Western thought.

II

In relation to this, I would like to say some things about Matthew Buckingham's *Over the Sea*. *Over the Sea* is not a film, but a work I still would define by its use or perhaps critique of documentary narratives. It is a work of text and image: the image is simply a photograph of an intensely blue seashell. It was published with the title *Ultramarine*

in *Cabinet Magazine* in 2003, but when I saw it installed in Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in 2007, the image of the seashell hung on the wall next to about twenty letter-sized paper sheets with text, forming a straight line. The first paper read:

6TH MILLENNIUM B.C.E.
Mining of lapis lazuli, a dark blue gemstone, begins in the Kokcha Valley in the Badakshan region of what is now northeast Afghanistan. Initially lapis is traded to India and Egypt, then to Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The gems are used in jewelry and sculpture. The Egyptians, who call it the "Sky Stone", consider lapis sacred and their imitation [of] lapis is the first synthetic color known to be produced in the world. With the market value rising, security is increased at the mines, where miners are routinely chained to the walls of the mineshafts while they work.

After this, a compelling account unfolds about this particular gemstone, which — imported to Italy during the Middle Ages and grinded as a paint pigment — came to be called Ultramarine by the merchants of Venice (ultramarine meaning "over the sea"). It is a factual and chronological narrative in the present tense, shifting from geopolitical to art historical perspectives, passing through Vermeer forgeries sold during the Second World War and Yves Klein's use of the pigment for his *International Klein Blue*, before ending in current global relations.

But the actual story is perhaps not of central importance here. Rather, it is how the text relates, or more accurately, does not relate, to the only image: a large photograph of a seashell. The image is obviously blue like the subject matter Ultramarine, and by way of the sea, it relates to the name; but that is basically it. Thus Buckingham does two things: he uses a narrative of the historical or documentary kind, a narrative with a reference; then he juxtaposes it with an image that simultaneously illustrates, upholds and tears down this referential relationship. In a play on the very distinctions between fact and fiction, art and documentary, Buckingham almost seems

to juxtapose the documentary narrative in its driest form (paper sheets recounting historical facts in an anonymous, dictionary-like account) with art itself, through the unexplained image of a seashell.[10] To me it almost seems like a joke, but a good joke, and a deliberate deployment of the zombie-like opposition between documentary and art, where Buckingham has the zombie drink tea, recite a historical narrative and eloquently defend its status as a work of art.

I should tell you that at a time when I already had started to think about this project, I happened to be sitting in a minivan just in front of Matthew Buckingham, going back to New York on a horribly bumpy and winding parkway. Despite the nausea, I turned around to ask him if he thought that one could establish a point in time when the first documentary film was exhibited as art. First, he said that he found the term "documentary" problematic, very much so as a label of his own work, but also to some extent when talking about the history of film and its relation to art. He preferred the term "non-fiction". Then he pointed out that a lot of artists were working with non-fiction film, even if the result wasn't necessarily exhibited as art. Similarly films were shown in museums but still not considered art. His somewhat evasive answer was of course far more informed, detailed and well put than my question had been, but I persisted, and reformulated the question to what he would say then was the first time a non-fiction film was presented by an artist, as a work of art in a fine art context. He remained silent for a rather long time. Then he said that the first he could think of was Andy Warhol's Sleep.

Let's try again.

The next time we met took place in a dream. I was on a bus with some friends passing through the Irish countryside, the two of us standing up in the front by the driver. He was as articulate and nice as ever, and seemed to be in a good mood. I was looking forward to the conversation that was about to start, and yet I couldn't really say anything, because the glances from the other people in the bus made me nervous. At this point, I realized that I was talking to the assistant of the artist, and not the artist himself. Or, possibly, I realized that it looked as if I didn't know that. Because

to me, that part never really mattered. Most people don't know this, but even if his assistant is a spot-on double of himself, they are both just as knowledgeable of the early history of film, and I could never tell them apart from their views on this matter. So even if this normally didn't bother me, this time I remained silent, even as the dream moved the two of us to a calm countryside porch. It seemed like he would say something, and we were still smiling at each other.

Now, I would also like to mention some things about Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica's *Videograms of a Revolution*. The film consists mainly of video footage and TV-images from the Romanian revolution in 1989 when Ceausescu was overthrown. Unlike *Over the Sea*, this is a compilation of documents where the point of reference is intact. Similar to *Over the Sea*, it seems to be about the conditions of documentation as much as about the events themselves. Put in a kind of internal or behind-the-scenes spectator's position, one sees what is aired on the Romanian National TV, but one also sees the off-air moments just after the poet Mircea Dinescu has announced the revolutionary success, when he signals cut, exhales heavily, and somebody comes up and kisses him. Rather than what happened and what was said, the videograms, in a sense, seem to be about how things were said, and how they were recorded, calling into question documentary and historical narratives in general.[11] As the occasional voice-over of the film puts it: "Since its invention, film has seemed destined to make history visible. It has been able to portray the past, and to stage the present. We have seen Napoleon on horseback, and Lenin on the train. Film was possible, because there was history. Almost imperceptibly, like moving forward on a Moebius strip, the side was flipped: we look on, and have to think: If film is possible, then history too, is possible".

III

So why is it that artists have used documentary narratives with such increasing frequency for the last two or three decades? What shaped this process that is making the opposition between art and documentary narratives as obsolete as

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The Contagious Documentary

Stills from William E. Jones' *Tearoom*, 2006. Video, color, silent, 56 minutes. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

it is essential to take into account some of the events that happened in Mansfield from 1962 to 1963 as a consequence of the footage. There is an ambiguous lack of visual pleasure in the film itself. Looking at the images, shot through a two-way mirror by policemen who spent three weeks hidden in a closet, one hardly notices any kind of pleasure or enjoyment in the gestures and faces of the men. While the awareness of acting illegally might have placed them in a continuous state of alarm and precariousness — as evidenced by their constant looking toward the entrance of the restroom — their expressions remain strikingly indifferent. Furthermore, there was a subsequent process of definition and identification which *Tearoom* seems to defy. During the judicial inquiries, according to official documents such

as newspaper articles and reports from the trials, it turned out to be impossible to condemn many of the participants in the filmed scenes as strictly "deviant", especially as they often proved to be married men and fathers when they appeared in court. Nevertheless, this evidence did not prevent the Mansfield authorities from convicting them (sexual deviants was the official definition and sodomy the charge), emphasizing an ideology repressing all non-conformity. In *Tearoom*, on the other hand, the visitors of the bathroom remain unclassified in terms of their "deviation": due to the relentless coming and going of men and the static focus of the camera, it often becomes impossible to clearly distinguish between those engaging in sexual intercourse and those who seem to have used the bathroom for

its officially designated purpose. Furthermore, the images provide evidence of individual men engaged in silent masturbation, devoid of any interaction, whose *voyeurism* or possible waiting or looking for partners also lingers in a state of legal indetermination. So whatever the cases and the personal backgrounds, the unfolding of the scenes seems to multiply uncertainty by raising questions and conjectures, instead of unraveling precise accounts. Therefore, besides being a telling work about gay life in America in the sixties, *Tearoom* makes a shift toward a deeper ambiguity regarding the nature of sexual identity within the personal and social realm. And perhaps this overt challenge to any clear definition of identity is what makes *Tearoom* an enduring fascination.

The work of William E. Jones activates a

conceptual filter between the present and the recent past, focusing on the semantic alteration of a pre-determined set of signifiers and defined opinions. The presentation by the artist of archival images and obsolete films brings an interpretative quality to such materials, to the point of releasing a temporal fracture before the eyes of watchful observers. Documentary productions and short fiction films both acquire an as yet unpublished and novel status within his work, freed of any previous functionality and thus opening up new imaginative possibilities. William E. Jones is thus offering us an outcrop of spontaneous contradictions, repressions and traditional beliefs by using historical distance as an instrument for ideological erosion and philosophical investigation.

previous oppositions? There are of course the usual after the fact explanations, describing every emerging expression as determined by the previous period, or by its material conditions. Thus, the use of documentary techniques has, for example, been suggested to be the logical continuation of relational aesthetics and as the material consequence of the new digital media that is cheap, lightweight, and easy to handle. But there are also more elaborate explanations. In the *Green Room* catalogue, literary critic Stefan Jonsson examines the interplay between the conformism of journalism and how literature and arts are politicized in certain historical periods, suggesting that "the Arts are compensating for the blind spot of journalism".[12] In the Documenta 11 catalogue, Boris Groys describes it as a mirror-like and mimetic counterforce directed against the dominant biopolitical technologies. He argues that since "the dominant medium of modern biopolitics is [...] bureaucratic and technological documentation, which includes planning, decrees, fact-finding reports, statistical inquiries, and project plans, it is no coincidence that art also uses the same medium of documentation". As opposed to the biopolitics that (according to Groys) turns the living into artificial, the narrative documentary practices transform "the artificial into something living [...]".[13]

My intention is not to contest any of these explanations, but simply to add another one, or rather, to suggest what I consider some very interesting possibilities. In Matthew Buckingham's film *Muhheakantuck - Everything has a Name* (2003), the voice-over at one point says: "The fiction of history is to imagine the real". This wonderfully paradoxical quote seems almost eternally open to different meanings, especially if you consider "history" as a possible signifier also of the documentary, and fiction not only as a signifier of non-truth, but also of something like a "storytelling function". But perhaps we could think of this fiction with the help of yet another quote. Jacques Rancière says in *Le spectateur émancipé*: "Fiction is not the creation of an imaginary world opposed to the real world. It is a work that operates multiple forms of *dissensus*, and that changes the forms of enunciation and the ways

in which the sensible is presented, by changing its very frames, scales and rhythms, turning them into new relations between appearance and reality, between the individual and the common, between the visible and its signification".[14]

In this sense, then, the fiction of history is what enables us to change the very foundations and conditions of society. Now, the philosophy of Rancière does not only take as its first principle a radical equality of anyone and everyone, but also a radical equality in terms of forms.[15] Whether it is text and image, fiction and non-fiction, artistic and non-artistic, there is no distinction when it comes to how they are reconfigured and how they in turn reconfigure our societies. Thus, it makes perfect sense to include documentary narratives — with its history of propaganda and political pathos, its tradition as a "truth-speaking medium", and its constantly ambiguous location between fiction and non-fiction — in works of art, as a way to examine how you construct truthful statements, how you write history, and how you produce the very conditions for politics.[16] Just like the striking scene of Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica's *Videograms of a Revolution*, where the exalted revolutionaries proclaim victory because the TV is with them, the use of documentary narratives in recent art seems to testify to the power of representation. Yet it's not only about taking over the TV or, consequently, taking control of representation; rather it's about changing and reformulating it while reshaping the very divisions and conditions of "the visible, the sayable and the doable"[17], that is, the conditions of politics. •

Notes

1. Michael Kimmelman, "Global Art Show With an Agenda", *New York Times* (2002-06-18), Henceforth cited as "Global Art Show With an Agenda"; Kim Levin, "The CNN Documenta", *The Village Voice*, 2002-07-02; Linda Nochlin, Tom Holert, Matthew Higgs, James Meyer, "Platform Muse: Documenta 11", *Artforum* 2 (2002)
2. Eleanor Heartney, "A 600-hour Documenta", *Art in America*, September (2002).
3. This seminar was given within the frame of the two-day conference *What Is Real? Photography and the politics of truth* (New York: International Center for Photography, December 12–13, 2008).
4. I would like to thank Sophie Hamacher for drawing my attention to this, and for letting me read her unpublished paper "On Benjamin and the Document".
5. This is somewhat similar to what Carl Plantinga singles out as the problem with certain definitions of the documentary as traces or photographic remnants; these definitions miss the point since a documentary could be constructed without one single photographic image of its subject. What makes it a documentary in these cases is the documentary narrative, or according to Plantinga, the asserted veridical representation.
6. Consider for example Carl Plantinga's critique of Gregory Currie and the latter's idea of the document as a trace: Carl Plantinga, "What a Documentary Is, After All", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Arts Criticism*, 63, 2 (Spring 2005), 105–117. Henceforth cited as "What a Documentary Is, After All" with pagina.
7. These distinctions naturally get more productive when collapsed (rather than upheld), which is done in both Todorov's and Genette's writings. See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Tzvetan Todorov, *Grammaire du Décameron* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969).
8. Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 119.
9. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Dover: Thrift Editions, 1997), ch. IX. However, Aristotle goes on to show that one can make use of the particular in expressing the general, or that one for example can use real persons in writing poetry: the distinction gets more detailed and complicated.
10. In relation to the art historical significance of seashells, one might think of the Salvodor Dalí painting *The average bureaucrat* where a man has a seashell in his empty head, and Germaine Dulac's surrealist film *The Seashell and the Clergyman* from 1928, shot one year before *The Andalusian Dog*, and therefore the first surrealist film. Formally, I also think that the mussel is an interesting choice: it can close and open; it is an animal that is virtually only a muscle and lacks brain, but most of all, it has a double shape. In other words, it almost seems like an illustration of a juxtaposition.
11. Through images from the many personal video cameras, *Videograms of a Revolution* seems to shift perspective, and by the inclusion of low quality images it not only foregrounds but makes visual concessions to *who* traditionally has the right to representation and the right to tell the story.
12. Stefan Jonsson, "Facts of Aesthetics and Fictions of Journalism", Maria Lind & Hito Steyerl (Eds.), *The Green Room* (New York: Sternberg Press/CSS Bard, 2008), 172
13. Boris Groys, "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation", *Documenta 11_Platform 5: Exhibition Catalogue* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 108–114.
14. Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé* (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2008), 72.
15. Concerning the presupposition of equality of anyone and everyone, see Jacques Rancière, *La Mésentente* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), 37. Concerning the equality of forms, see for example the discussion of image and text in "L'image intolerable", in *Le spectateur émancipé*, 105.
16. This is comparable to the discussion Hito Steyerl puts forth in "Documentarism as Politics of Truth", where a certain documentality is compared to Michel Foucault's governmentality and its connection to his politics of truth. See: Hito Steyerl, "Documentarism as Politics of Truth", republicart, 05 (2003) www.republicart.net/disc/representations/steyerl03_en.htm
17. *Le spectateur émancipé*, 84.

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The photographic negatives of *Killed* (2009), one of the artist's most recent works, derive from the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. and, more specifically, the archives of the Historical Section of the Resettlement Administration, better known as the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA was founded in the years after the Great Depression as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, and was active between 1935 and 1943. Its task was to realize a broad photographic documentation of the increasing poverty among the rural American society of those years, and to draw public attention to the dramatic proportions of the phenomenon. Several of the photographers who worked on this project were major figures of American photography in the 20th century, such as Walker Evans, John Vacon and Ben Shahn. The director of the project, Roy Emerson Stryker, was a social scientist and educator, who reserved the right to edit the images produced before sending them to Washington. Not only did he exclude the images he considered superfluous or unfit, he even went so far as to "kill" the discarded photographs by punching a hole in the center of any refused negative, making them unusable forever. The modified negatives were then filed and dismissed, and they remained unpublished until a selection was made accessible in digital form by the Library of the Congress.

Killed is William E. Jones's selection of the images discarded and obliterated by Stryker, consisting of rural and metropolitan scenes, both individual portraits and collective images. The work is thus a negative inventory of American society between 1939 and 1943, a collection of images cancelled by official historiography. What were the motives that induced Stryker to discard these specific images? Which were the specific elements that did not coincide with the ideological motivations of the FSA? This line of inquiry is left open and forms an integral dimension to *Killed*. William E. Jones bases his work on this frenetic editing, which removes the direct visibility and legibility of the images and

confines it to the realm of secondary intuition, by the dominant presence of the black hole in the center of each photograph. The primary fascination of *Killed* is exactly this hole of obliteration, a paradoxical element of signification through the means of cancellation, sparking an interrogative reflection on the practices of manipulation and censorship within all forms of social control.

Sailors, Pan, Orpheus (Frances Benjamin Johnston and F. Holland Day) (2009) presents five photographs by Frances Benjamin Johnston and F. Holland Day, two friends and leading figures of American photography at the beginning of the 20th century. The images come from the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., as do the images in *Killed*, and form a part of William E. Jones' aim to resurrect hidden images from American public archives. Over the course of his career, Holland Day took various shots of naked young men depicted in ecstatic scenes that recall the sylvan poses of the Greek god Pan and the portrayal of Orpheus as a celestial musician. William E. Jones, employing his usual essential grammar of re-contextualization, lightens the purity of Holland Day's young sailors with a subtle erotic fascination, activating a semantic shift that re-proposes the subjects of these images from a contemporary perspective. In this way, the original and private innocence of the images of the two American photographers becomes charged with a new look, slipping towards a stronger and more openly sensual dimension.

Thus, the artist underlines the interpretative possibilities provided by a historic distance to the visual documents of the past, stressing the ambiguity we have to see in the five pictures of *Sailors, Pan, Orpheus*. In fact, their representation stages the puzzle of a shift from the private to a public realm, determined exclusively by the changes of historical distance and the influence of social frameworks. As the artist points out, perhaps a hundred years ago F. Holland Day's photographs of young men in sailor suits looked perfectly innocent, but now they look transparently erotic. William E. Jones is therefore

acknowledging the culturally shifting nature of vision, which is inevitably subjugated to mutations within the historical context. The artist hints that only by recognizing the culturally relative nature of our locus of observation are we enabled to question our models of descriptions, drawing attention to the politics of power and signification established in public and private discourses. By revealing the sensual nature of our contemporary assessment of F. Holland Day's photographs, William E. Jones thus suggests a shift in the locus of observation from the photographer's time to ours and in this way opens up a new possible way of reflecting upon the history of the sexual imaginary.

Regarding the role of time as a philosophical tool to account for changes and shifts within the realm of culture at large, the artist stresses the dynamics of what he calls the "documentary effect", a constant and ineradicable process of erosion which established meanings undergo. In fact, as time passes by, visual materials such as films and fictions become documentaries themselves, a collection of images of passed people miming obsolete social mores in no longer existing spaces. This process can lead to a diegetic failure, when a film can become another object entirely, one superior to the object intended by its makers, taking on a whole new life and being available to our imagination in unexpected ways. I think this shifting process in the history of meanings and our perception of them also accounts for the sense of awe and ambiguity we experience by looking at a non-fictional document like *Tearoom*. What was a strictly functional investigation about law-breakers, as the policemen conceived of the scenes of *Tearoom*, gains unexpected narrative qualities, by conveying what appears to be an orchestrated sense of suspense and thrill. Moreover, and most importantly, still by means of its historical distance, the footage provides a palpable evidence of the changes within anti-gay jurisdiction and common politics toward sexual behaviors, accounting for the relative nature of laws, institutional

politics and allegedly traditional beliefs.

One of the strongest symbolic images of *Tearoom* is conveyed by the few scenes of the two policemen at the very beginning of the film. In white short-sleeved shirts they set up the shooting by getting acquainted with the spaces of the restroom. A factual record of events captured by a rudimentary fifties camera is about to start. By looking at the grainy frames of their film we see the moment when these policemen unconsciously triggered a philosophical documentary on both the potentially emancipatory and narrative role of time, allowing a dire story of oppression to turn into a tool for reflection. •

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Soviet Defectors: Reading Radiological Film

Susan Schuppli

Three days after the explosion and meltdown of Chernobyl's Nuclear Reactor Unit 4 on April 26 1986, filmmaker Vladimir Shevchenko was granted permission to fly over the 30-square km site known as the "Red Zone" in order to document the extraordinary efforts at cleanup by Ukrainian workers and volunteers.[1] When Shevchenko's 35-mm film footage was later developed, he noticed that a portion of the film was heavily pockmarked and carried extraneous static interference and noise. Thinking initially that the film stock used had been defective, Shevchenko finally realised that what he had captured on film was the image and sound of radioactivity itself. "This is how radiation looks".

Radiation is a fatal invisible foe. One that even penetrates steel plating. It has no odor, nor color. But is has a voice. Here it is. We thought this film was defective. But we were mistaken. This is how radiation looks. This shot was taken when we were allowed a 30-second glimpse from the armoured troop-carrier. On that April night the first men passed here — without protection or stop-watches, aware of the danger, as soldiers performing a great feat. Our camera was loaded with black-and-white film. This is why the events of the first weeks will be black and white, the colors of disaster.[2]

Upon projection small flares of light momentarily ignite the surface of the film, sparking and crackling they conjure a pyrotechnics of syncopated spectrality. An act of radiological recording whereby the radical imprint of the disaster was inscribed directly into the emulsion of the film as decaying particles moved through the exterior casing of the movie camera.[3] Not a representation of catastrophe, but an actual toxic event in which a lethal dose of radiation was ingrained within the molecules of each and every silver halide particle. Contamination in effect dissolved the limits between the documentary and its subject as the film was instantly converted into the very matter — the radiological event — that it set out to observe and record. Shevchenko's film *Chronicle of Difficult Weeks* thus transformed quite literally into the most dangerous reel of footage in the world and indeed Shevchenko did succumb to its lethal force in 1999.[4] Although the documentary provides us with an intimate view into the space of disaster, its pictorial mediation as filmic matter allows us to remain at a safe and objective distance to it. However the sudden distortion of its sound and image-flows by the Geiger-like interference of radiation displaces our initial confidence in its representational status as a fixed historical index or media artefact and installs in its place a sense of dread that what we are witnessing on film is in fact the unholy representation of the real: an amorphous and evil contagion that continues to release its lethal discharges into the present and future yet-to-come. As a radiological interface capable of conjoining bodily plasma with image matter, the damaged film footage hurls us, unwittingly, back into the contact zone of the event.

Conceptualising this unexpected filmic rupture as a "capture of the real" rather than an act of cinematic inscription forces a rethinking of the ontological nature of mediatic matter itself. Contrary to the well-known conceptualisations of film as "change mummified" or as death in the flickering guise of life, this particular sequence of irradiated film reminds us that the ontological moment cannot be fixed at 24 fps.[5] There is no ontological ground that we can return to in perpetuity, no film-substance to rewind and playback without loss or change, but only the movement, rhythm, and vibration of a topology of difference. An "ontology of the output" if you will, rather than one of beginnings, in which the lone condition of certainty is that of indeterminacy. Radiation induces the trembling dynamism of the future in the present as a kind of aberrant form of chemical and conceptual experimentation that can remix elemental histories and even transform the past. It enables us to consider the various ways in which the radiological event may be retroactively repotentialised and prospectively activated to author alternate stories and hopefully more complicated understandings of the unfolding actions of 1986.

The nature of being — mediatic matter's ontological core as a record and index of past events — is thus converted into a dynamic ontology of becoming as radiation exerts its modulating influences over time. Shevchenko's film itself becomes a machine for time-travel or as Gilles Deleuze invokes in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* an artefact for machining time in which the "paralysed, frozen, petrified instance" of the 35-mm film-frame becomes "embryonic" teeming with the hallucinogenic elixir of alchemical life.[6] "It is as if the past surfaces in itself but in the shape of personalities which are independent, alienated, off-balance, in some sense embryonic, strangely active fossils, radioactive, inexplicable in the present where they surface, and all the more harmful and autonomous" (*Cinema 2,* 113). Arguably Shevchenko's documentation of the objective material reality of Chernobyl by the cinematic apparatus (lens, camera, film stock) sets up a variant of the discussion around "the ontology of the image" if read entirely within the instrumental register of film's technical capacities for recording the images and sounds that stream "naturally" into the camera's receptors.[7] However to read his film radiologically, I argue, is to collapse the gap between representation and the real, form and content, signification and affect, so that the ontological dimensions of the film extend beyond their accepted role as indexical trace to enter into a feedback loop with the *actual* material residue of the world. The radical recoding of the film by way of the nuclear accident insists that an analytic pursuit of Shevchenko's film entirely within the field of

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The Contagious Documentary

The Ambivalence of Universalization in Albert Kahn's 'Archive of the Planet' (Notes Towards an Empirical Investigation)

Jakob Nilsson

The French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn created *Les Archives de la planète* between 1909 and 1912. This strikingly ambitious project was "documenting" and collecting visual material from all around the globe until 1929 when the financial crisis exhausted Kahn's fortune. The archive, which is considered to be the most important collection of early color photographs in the world, contains three different visual media: 72,000 "autochromes" (a color-photography process on glass plates, by then a new invention by Louis Lumière), over a hundred hours of film (183,000 meters) and 4,000 stereoscopic plates.

Apart from the central aim of bringing peoples and cultures together under an umbrella of universality, Kahn had a twofold agenda: "to capture and document what was new in the world, and to record what was in the process of vanishing", where the "very new and the very old are both vividly captured".[1] As part of being a sort of locus of the coming and vanishing, Kahn's project could also be read along with the then burgeoning processes of de-colonization. "In the interwar years", Jay Winter writes, "Kahn's photographers reached Africa. Some of his photographers […] handed their cameras to the locals; others stayed resolutely behind the lens. Kahn's was a kind of League of Nations mandate of *l'imaginaire*, pointing toward the end of Western rule and the end of the time when Europeans photographed Africans and Asians as we photograph animals in a zoo today" (*Dream of Peace,* 22). Perhaps, however, Kahn's practice and quest for universality was not as unambiguous in its progressivism as Winter has claimed, and perhaps it did not mesh easily with the French colonial project either, as most other Kahn scholars suggest. The archive points in several, and even opposite, directions at the same time.[2]

Where Kahn's Coming From

In Kahn's series of autochromes everyone is photographed equally — identical photographic techniques and framings are used, and there is a consistent general composition and aesthetics in most images — all for the benefit of peace under a flag of a universality of man.[3] This was a time of globalization of business — when a common market of labor, capital, and the exchange of goods was starting to develop — when war was still *bad* for business. Kahn also had idealistic motivations with roots in 19th century liberalism, which considered this axiom to work the other way around as well: good business is good for peace. In other words, along with his Victorian liberal counterparts, Kahn was a so-called "free trade pacifist".

Kahn had first built his fortune on the colonial exploitation of diamond mines in South Africa, but after acquiring his wealth, he appears to have gone through some sort of conversion. Whether it was a case of guilt, or an ideological operation aming to preserve the geopolitical structure that had made his fortune possible, is hard to know. Either way, he cannot be reduced to a caricature of a shrewd capitalist. As a thinker — and for instance a lifelong friend of Henri Bergson, who had also been his teacher — Kahn's idealism and quest for peace and understanding can hardly be *reduced* to an ideological veil for colonialist-capitalist exploitation (which is a more obvious way of analyzing the venture). His lofty idealism could, however, be accused of being naïve. "I am convinced", Kahn writes in one of his reveries, "there is a pattern to history, a pathway leading from narrow particularism to universality".[4]

Nevertheless, the converted Kahn tried to change what he recognized as a narrow-mindedness in European attitudes about the non-European world. At the end of the 19th century he started to sponsor a number of projects for "talented young men and women" who would grow up to be the "intellectual and moral elite of the nation", but who were "not old enough to have fixed ideas". This eventually grew into the photographic and cinematographic project that became the *Archive of the Planet*. Kahn, with a somewhat unrefined view also of technology, believed that the encounter between photographer and subject established a silent dialogue

representation must be set aside in favour of an engagement with the film as an actual "event", perhaps even *the* radiological event that now matters given its propensity for continuous deformation and thus entanglement with other nuclear occurrences. If Shevchenko's footage is Chernobyl's doppelgänger, radiation must be understood as the force that both invented the film and triggered the accident in Reactor Unit 4 at the V. I. Lenin Nuclear Power Plant near Chernobyl. Radiation always comes first and last.

Film theorist André Bazin intuits a similar shift in representation from an ontology of depiction to an ontology of the event when he discusses Thor Heyerdal's documentary chronicle of the *Kon Tiki* expedition from 1947 in which six Norwegians drifted from Peru to Polynesia on a crude wooden raft guided only by the ocean's currents. *Kon Tiki*, writes Bazin, "manages to be the most beautiful of films while not being a film at all" in that the cinematic document was an adjunct activity to the scientific purposes of the journey, but what it managed to capture were momentary glimpses of the real.[8] While most of the footage was shot as the sailors were floating in calm waters, when something of significance did occur the camera was quickly abandoned. Bazin focuses his discussion upon a short sequence of frames in which the camera unwittingly captured the reflection of a killer whale in the water as it lunged towards the raft, an almost imperceptible rupture in an otherwise extended tedium of benign footage. This disruption in the image-flow can be conceptualised as a kind of cut that transforms representation into sensation, but without the repatriating operations that have theorised the cut as a form of filmic suture. What came before is ontologically different in kind and not merely degree from that which follows. What we witness is no longer a picture of the expedition, but the "pro-filmic presence of danger".[9] Shevchenko's damaged film footage performs a similar ontological feat as the sudden appearance of radioactive fallout converts documentary images into energetic matter; an unleashing of spectral forces that augurs immanent peril. Instead of continuing to operate as an indexical sign the image is mutated becoming

itself an immanent part of the unfolding action or movement — in essence it becomes an event.

Does the killer whale, that we can barely see refracted in the water, interest us because of the rarity of the beast and the glimpse we get of it, slight as it is? Or rather because the shot was taken at the very moment when a capricious movement of the monster might well have annihilated the raft and sent camera and cameraman seven or eight thousand meters into the deep? The answer is clear. It is not so much the photograph of the whale that interests us as the photograph of *danger* ("Cinema and Exploration", 161).

Bazin's preceding remarks links several strands of this text in ways that are fatedly useful for my purposes. Not only does the unexpected intercession of the whale's emergence within the filmic regime activate its latent virtualities producing affects in the body of the viewer that short-circuit the conventional channels of spectatorship organised around signification and representation, but he also foregrounds the role that chance will play in merging image with event. It is the incidental capture of a few frames, whether the menace of the whale or the five seconds of irradiated footage that permanently alters the equilibrium of each documentary film. Without warning the "dangerous supplement" of affect plucks the image from its data-stream and plugs it into the connective tissue of the filmic assemblage. Sailors forget the camera in order to attend to the hazard of the whale; Shevchenko forgoes the examination of his rushes to scrutinize the alien markings that mysteriously appear. These disruptions in the normative workings of the cinematic apparatus shatter the distinctions between the picture-making capacities of the machine and the pure image-making capacities of the event.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze posits a distinction between bodies concerned with their "states of affairs" located in actual geometric space and present in time, and incorporeal beings, which he regards as "pure events" constrained neither by space nor time. The kinds of bodies

that manifest "tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions", that exist in space and are available in time, are also the kinds of bodies for whom other bodies are a matter of concern.[10] A tree being a cause for another tree in disseminating its seed for the purposes of growing a forest, or a cause for the bird that builds its nest within its sheltering branches, or for the human that seeks its shady arbour on a sunny day. "These *effects* are not bodies, but properly speaking, 'incorporeal' entities. They are not physical qualities and properties, but rather logical or dialectical attributes. They are not things or facts, but events. We cannot say that they exist, but rather that they subsist or inhere" (*The Logic of Sense*, 4–5).

One of the many examples that Deleuze offers to help us conceptualise the event is the seasonal change of pigmentation in a tree. Although we might logically be tempted to designate the status of the event to the tree's change in colour from brown to green, this is in fact contrary to Deleuze's conception, which is preoccupied with verbs (becomings) and not nouns (being). In spring we witness the tree becoming green, but this according to Deleuze is only a transitory surface effect, "an expression of the event's actualisation" induced by the conjunctive relations between climate, soil conditions, temperature, and the situation of its planting.[11] Rather than designating a quality in the thing by saying that "the tree becomes green" or is "now green" which only refers to its physical state of affairs as a qualitative predicate, if we say instead "the tree greens" we invoke an attribute that performs itself as a verb. To green is "the event expressed by the verb" (*The Logic of Sense,* 21). It is the becoming green of the tree that constitutes the event, rather than the quality green which is a mere actualization of the various conditions of growth that gather to express themselves as surface features.

Unlike other philosophers for whom the event represents a radical break in historical continuities, a fresh-start or the commencement of something altogether different, the event for Deleuze is not a new occurrence or beginning that cuts its ties with the past but rather a

"change in waves resonating through a series".[12] An event creates an alteration in a set of ongoing processes that allows it to trace many different pathways while still retaining certain resonances (conceptual and material) that enable linkages over time. Whereas for Alan Badiou (the other major philosopher of the event) who looks to set theory to formulate his conceptualisation of the event as a relationship between its situation and its site, only happenings such as May 1968 or the French Revolution can qualify as events because they "either rupture the site's being, the systems that preceded it, or they force the situation to reformulate itself, creating, in other words, a new set to which it belongs".[13] Even though major events such as the French Revolution are extremely multifaceted given the various heterogeneous elements that must necessarily come together in very particular ways in order to bring about an event like a revolution, Badiou still regards these events as a distinct "unit of one" (not as a modulation within an ongoing series of flows) because they include all the things related to this site as a set of multiple, coexisting entities, articulations, and processes that in turn make up its situation. The prevaricating nature of the event's attachment to its situation (according to Badiou) thus performs a "double function" as either that which "evokes the void" and destroys history or that which "interposes itself between the void and itself" and mediates history bringing about in both cases a new model or set from which history moves onwards again.

In contrast, Deleuze's contribution to rethinking the event is useful for my purposes because it emphasises the becoming of a different kind of event which is none the less still suffused by the chromaticism and rhythms of the past and even derives its momentum from these lingering resources. This is a reciprocal process in which the event both transforms the series that it courses through and is in turn affectuated by its encounter with these serial flows. The meltdown of the core at Chernobyl was not the start of a unheralded series of nuclear reactions, but rather a dramatic change in the energetic output between subatomic particles which had been previously been controlled and contained. The impact of

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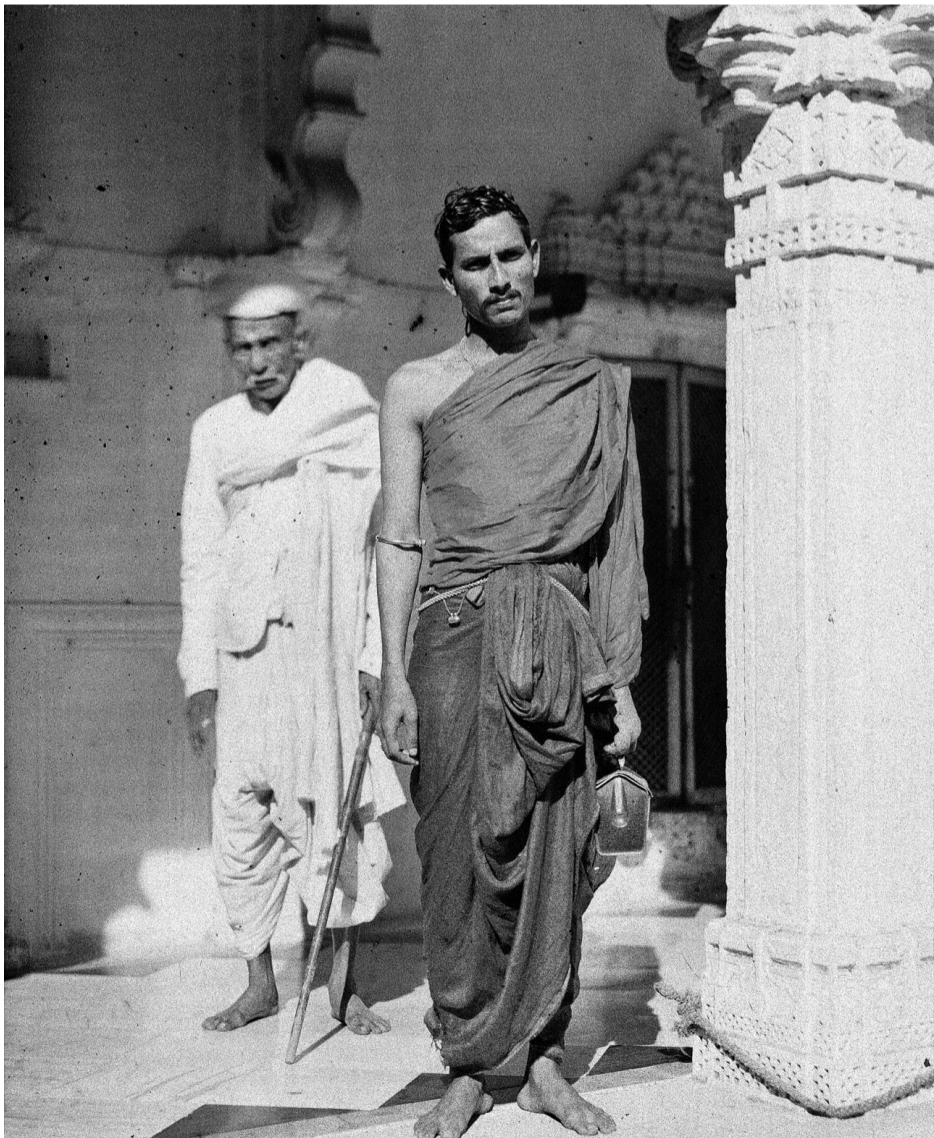
Autochrome (color) from Ahmedabad, India, 1913 (15×10). Photographs © Musée Albert-Kahn

between the two. He regarded it as a *human* encounter, reducing the camera to an objective tool of documentation. In contrast to the reality of the colonial ethnographic discourses of the times, Kahn meant that the person or group photographed in his project were not objectified, or treated as species or oddities; instead they were imprinted with the same humanity as those who would later come to *view* their images.[5]

Two Registers/Forces
In view of Kahn's claims of universalism, it can be argued that his practice contains two basic registers or forces. The first deals with the, fairly obvious, ways the archive can be seen as problematic from neo-Marxist and postcolonial perspectives. The second — which I will give a more speculative and detailed treatment — at *least* makes the whole venture more ambivalent, and will be dealt with through new — immanent and processual — ways of understanding normativity and universality as possible to affirm.

Register/Force 1: Comb-over Universalism
The simpler conceptions of human universality have of course been thoroughly deconstructed by now. We have learned, for instance, that the universal "we", who claims to be general, in fact also tends to hide the particular, i.e. a particularity of power and interests, and as such has throughout history often been a means of exclusion and domination. From the narrow perspective of Kahn as being a sort of "colonial" entrepreneur, we might be dealing with universalism exclusively as what could be called the consensus of a colonial-capitalist image of thought. This would comply with what many would call a "*false* universalism".[6] Seen from a Marxist perspective, such an image of thought reflects not only the ideology, but also the *concreteness*, of the world market. As such, however, as Etienne Balibar claims, it is "real" and "true", and "provides an ontological basis for the juridical, moral and political *representation* of equality".

This is an order that contradicts its own

egalitarian claims. That is, to generalize, it is a universalism that covers up the real power relations and inequalities in the distribution of wealth between the peoples and nations portrayed — particularly in Kahn's time, which largely coincided with the peak of colonialism and imperialism.[7] A cynical description would be that Kahn's teams traveled around the French colonies collecting cute postcards from the places France had brutally exploited.[8] In this sense, instead of making human and social conditions visible, it covers over everything that would compromise the dominant image of colonial-capitalist consensus.[9] And no matter how *anti*-Eurocentric Kahn's *own* intentions were, as a collection of visual knowledge of peoples, the gaze in at least some of the images cannot help but be read in relation to the discursive context of the era: the massive collection of "information" gathered by the colonial powers on the colonized. In other words, it relates to, rather than belongs to, the typical ethnographical racism of the times, which used photographic and cinematographic means.[10]

Register/Force 2: The Ambivalence of Universalization
When studying the actual artifacts of the archive, I was struck by how elusive they are in view of the discourses sketched out above. They do not fit particularly neatly into these — some of them by now fairly predictable — lines of reasoning. First of all, I would say that these images, generally, do not express the typical ethnographical racism and exotism of their times. Not only could some of the images be argued to convey an unusual and almost strangely forceful "dignity" (on the use of this word beyond humanistic clichés, see below), but the charges of exotism are also countered by the fact that Europeans — of all classes, both urban and exotically rural — were photographed with the same technological and aesthetic gaze. Although, of course, the comparison falters when one looks at how the different pictures strike different discursive

the accident rechannelling the nuclear pathways that the radiation took from self-contained micro-explosions or fission to its externalised macro-extensions as radioactive dust clouds. An event conceptualised as such doesn't refer to a de facto condition that operates exclusively on one register within delimited temporal boundaries (an incident that can be factually named and date-stamped) but to a change in the intensities of relations between elements that creates a relay connecting the whole to its parts. Radiation's almost infinite capacity for extension and duration stretches over Shevchenko's irradiated film-score to connect Chernobyl as an actual event with other atomic episodes, both retroactively repotentialising them and prospectively activating them. Each time we rescreen the damaged film sequence its pastness is repatriated as a form of continuous presentness that both supplements the original event and extends its radioactive reach into the future through its virtual amplifications.

Unlike other historical relics that can be coaxed into revealing the limits of what might have been thought at a given time, the radiological fossil (with its 10,000-year shelf life) does not require the mediating gestures of the living historian to ask the right or relevant questions about the past, to exhort the testimonial from the trace.[14] The radioactive does its work prospectively and if it leaves any evidentiary traces of its clandestine passing it only does so in times to come–when it is often too late to mitigate against its damaging effects. The meltdown of the reactor is not limited to the event space-time of the Ukraine in 1986 given that the radioactive, in transgressing the boundaries of nuclear containment, has the transmissional and chemical capacity to reactualise the catastrophic event over and over again for years to come. There is no event-horizon or point of no return for a nuclear accident. There is *only the return*. In this regard each nuclear accident is always-already preemptively inscribed within those event-making transmissions yet to come as well as those that have already perished. The future is contracted to the past by way of a radiological present, which brings the future-past into actualisation

as an ongoing-effect — a nuclear accident lying in wait.

In an uncanny premonition of things to come *Stalker* (released in 1980), the final film shot by Andrei Tarkovsky in the Soviet Union, stakes out the apocalyptic terrain that would become the "Red Zone" of Chernobyl a full six years prior to the actual meltdown of the reactor core. A mysterious breakdown at the fourth bunker is advanced as the cause for the bleak landscape of *Stalker's* Zone. Tarkovsky's cinematic treatment of the Zone is drawn from the rumour of an explosion at the Mayak nuclear waste facility near Chelyabinsk in 1957, which was said to have created a vast ecological nightmare. As was the case with Chernobyl, the Soviet leadership concealed evidence of the accident and denied reports of human casualties, but unlike the 19 day time-lag that attended Chernobyl's public confirmation by the Kremlin that a major nuclear accident had taken place, official corroboration of the chemical fallout at Chelyabinsk was only revealed in 1989: thirty-two years after the damaged landscape first testified to the presence of radionuclides in its water table and agricultural produce. *Stalker* is thus a visual interface between two virtualities, a psychic cinematic medium channelling two historic realities: that of Chelyabinsk as unsubstantiated rumour and that of Chernobyl as accident-yet-to-come. In a rather strange alchemical détournement, the illusory domain of film was once again transformed into the realm of the actual, in that it brought the virtual into presence as a felt-effect, whereas the two nuclear accidents that bracketed *Stalker* remained in a suspended state of latency, only to be actualised after the fact — after a time-lag of a certain duration. Although the industrial accident at Mayak had already taken place prior to the production of *Stalker* in 1979, the denial of its having ever happened by the Soviet government temporarily erased it from history as an actual event with real consequences. But of course thousands could intuit that something dangerous had happened in the vicinity, not by way of any direct or established knowledge of the incident but by means of its corporeal effects: physicochemical changes in bodily matter.

What is of parallel interest in back-spooling Shevchenko's documentary through the reels of Tarkovsky's science-fiction epic is not merely the prophetic account of nuclear disaster that arcs between the two (which certainly merits further investigation) but also the tale of defective film stock that afflicted them both. As the story goes Tarkovsky's German producer supplied him with a new kind of Kodak stock but then "disaster struck" when the artesian well-water required for the film's processing ran dry due to a malfunction at Mosfilm. Not only is his film stock prospectively entangled with the heavy-water chronicles of Shevchenko's documentary yet-to-come, but the technical breakdown at the pre-eminent Russian film studio gestures towards the future failings of technology that will result in the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Apparently *Stalker's* exposed materials languished in an unprocessed state for 17 days (unbeknownst to Tarkovsky) as its filmic matter rapidly deteriorated. "In a word, the whole material for the first part ended up on the scrap heap".

The review of the ruined footage ended in a scandal. Tarkovsky, Rerberg, the Strugatskys, and Tarkovsky's wife Larissa were all sitting in the projection room. Suddenly one of the Strugatskys turned towards Rerberg and asked naively: "Gosha, and how come I can't see anything here?" Rerberg, always considering himself beyond reproach in everything he did, turned to Strugatsky and said: "And you just be quiet, you are no Dostoievsky either!" Tarkovsky was beside himself with anger. But one can understand Rerberg. Imagine what it means for a cameraman to see the entire material turning up defective![15]

Threading both of these films through the narrative of "defect" exemplifies Paul Virilio's contention that there is no "accidental catastrophe" of a technical nature, which subsequently reveals an unattended error, programming glitch, or series of mishaps leading up to the 'improbable' event. Failure is preemptively encoded into any

machinic assemblage as its virtual double — its evil twin — the accident invented simultaneously with the invention.[16] The possibility that Shevchenko's film stock might also become "defective" was already incriminated within the virtual archives of those of *Stalker*, prior to him having ever loaded his film canisters and flown into the Red Zone. The very existence of a cinematic assemblage (camera, film, developing solution) is a prehension that a technical malfunction of a greater or lesser degree may occur at some point, which might in turn attach itself to a localised event-transmission — *Stalker* and/or *Chronicle of Difficult Weeks*. The accident as a possible event is always-already preprogrammed into any technical object as one of its latent capacities even though chance still has an important role to play in creating the necessary conditions for its emergence. However when circumstances conspire "accidents" can happen, but as both Deleuze and Virilio note they do not happen "accidentally". Standard maintenance protocols are processes, not for preventing, but for minimising the magnitude of the error dimension built into the technical machine. Data backup systems and software recovery programmes are sold not because of the unlikelihood of a fatal incident occurring, but because the accident exists as a statistical ontological reality. The virtual is always real. Nuclear disasters don't happen by mistake, they are inadvertently manufactured as one of the many consequences of harnessing of nuclear power. This is why the powerful myth of a fail-safe system still requires a series of back-up operations and contingency plans just in case that "unthinkable" future-event does arrive.

The voodoo-like force that enmeshes Tarkovsky and Shevchenko's films through the cinematic space-time of the "accident" is activated by a series of coincidences that bind the aesthetic malfeasance of chemistry with the politics of the nuclear. To suggest that the accident is always prefigured in the technical organisation of the system does tend to conjure a world of determinism where the disquieting strangeness of coincidence is diminished and rendered a de facto by-product of the machinic assemblage. Film is a particularly unique form

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Autochrome (color) from Shiraz, Persia, 1927 (15×10). Photographs © Musée Albert-Kahn

chords. That is, the pictures cannot be seen in isolation from the dominant ideas governing their time (or our time, for that matter), in which Europeans were of course coded very differently. When seen in isolation, however, or even sprung *out* from such contexts — and let's be open to the possibility of Kahn's archive having actually achieved something semi-autonomous in this regard — the images do point in other directions.

So how do the artifacts relate to Kahn's idealistic intention? Perhaps the reality of the artifacts themselves also constitutes a consistency that is neither a classical static universality (man), nor the ideological comb-over for colonial capitalism. At least some of the photos express a low-key, but curiously progressive, potency perhaps beyond the ideality of their intentions — see for instance

the weirdly non-orientalist dreamy force in the picture from Shiraz, Persia. Instead of *representing* a transcendent ideal, the images in this way constitute sense (if not "meaning") in themselves.

In light of the spontaneous judgments I made when first hearing about Kahn's intentions (more in line with the first "force" described above), there was a kind of clash when I actually started viewing the pictures. They do not lend themselves to any easy categorization. So what is there to say about the possibility of universalism here? Perhaps we are viewing something along the lines of a *creation* of a universal, a sort of visual *universalization*, but as such it is not a matter of a *representational* universalism: in the sense that the pictures *signify* the preexisting — or teleologically unfolding — universality of man,

which the camera only helps to discover (this is Kahn's own idea). Instead, the pictures can be seen as the production of a universal people that is photographical.

For Deleuze, the political function of art is to "invent a people" where the "people is missing". In the cinema, this concerns a type of storytelling and narration that does not purport to represent the truth (that is, to mirror an already existing actual state of affairs); rather it is about creation through mobilizing "the powers of the false". However, the "false" does not therefore mean the untrue or the imaginary, but that which creates or conditions *new* truths in the form of the non-representational.[11] Although Kahn's project moves more in the direction of a "molar" or actual people, instead of a "molecular" or virtual people (potentially spawning an actual people to come), the archive is still an *invention* of a "people", involving a certain (inadvertent) molecular fabulation. Kahn himself was a visionary who believed in the construction of a universal people, but not in this sense. He was a positivist, and wanted to produce and spread knowledge about a *preexisting* humanity through photographic documentation, but Khan, I argue, creates a (photographical) universal people, rather than making a preexistent universality visible, as if it were only laying there waiting to be objectively captured by Kahn's (of course, highly selective, subjective and creative) camera.

Through followers of Nietzsche like Deleuze and Foucault, we have in different ways learned to regard "universals" in general as immanent and singular *effects*. The universal — in a non-teleological sense — *comes last*. The universal, *even if it is fully real and true*, is not a preexistent foundation that explains the myriad that is the world, but is rather that which must be *explained*.[12] In other words, "universals" are in fact (more or less temporary) culminations of complex and heterogeneous processes — in *immanence*.[13] But, and this is important, this type of genealogical critique does not *necessarily* mean that the universal at hand is to be frowned upon. With genealogy comes *evalu-*

ation.[14] Through this conception of universals, as real creations, one *can* therefore come to evaluate them as defendable to some extent (even though the final aim is to open up the present in a way that can spawn a different future). In this way, we can recall Foucault's later phases in his analysis of power, where the disciplinary processes of subjugation/subjectivation are shown to be the very preconditions for what is also our modern state of freedom.[15] In other words, a critical genealogization of "universals" does not necessarily speak against them having value.

Liberalism From Behind
As a "universalizing practice", the universal "people" become a semi-divergent effect of Kahn's intentions. That is, the archive, when seen as the creation of a *new* universal (in contrast to representing a teleologically predicted or pre-existing one), is something that is more or less unintentionally achieved in and through the reality of the images themselves. But since this "universalizing *practice*" is nevertheless produced within the frameworks of Kahn's own liberal discourse, it might be interesting to extend the discussion of the relation between the liberal tradition of philosophy and Deleuze.

Daniel W. Smith's and Paul Patton's respective readings of Deleuze along with the liberal tradition are not about harmonizing the two, but rather staging an encounter in order to productively transform them both.[16] Their readings first of all emanate from trying to solve a problem in the political philosophy of Deleuze: how to bring it to concrete normative use in today's political landscape, with its concrete political problems (which are, furthermore, not fully the same as when Deleuze wrote most of his political works — this recognition is also in line with Deleuze's Marxist disposition where political philosophy always has to be readapted to a changing situation). The most central question asked — at least from the perspective of Kahn's practice — is the one about the relation between Deleuze and concepts of normativity. Along with other liberal
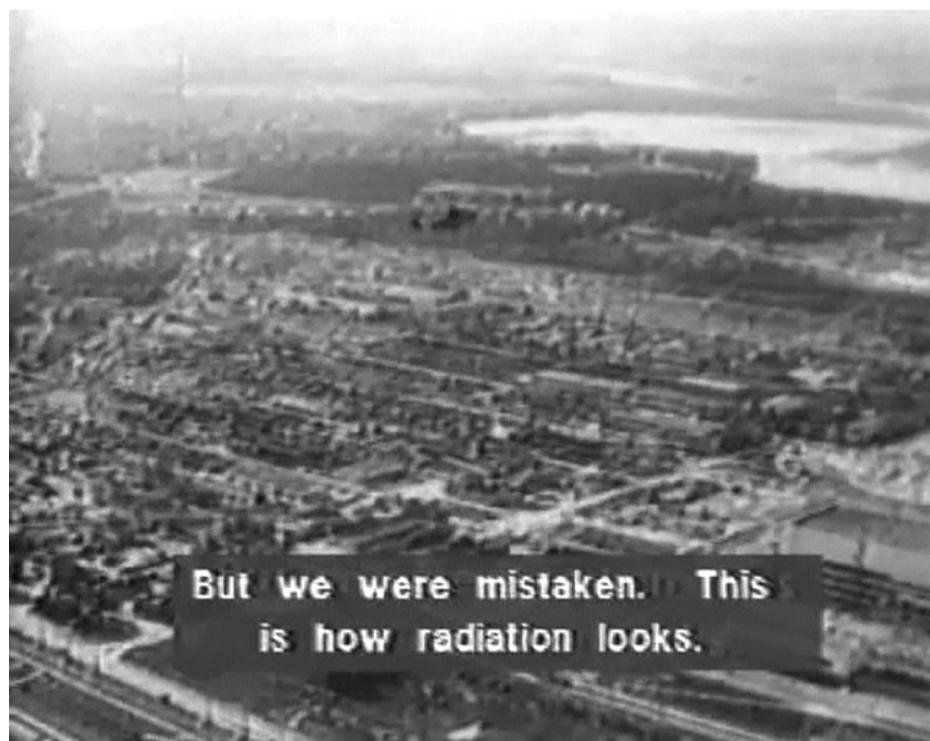
Stills from Vladimir Shevchenko's *Chronicle of Difficult Weeks*, 1986, 54 mins. Source: Russian Press Service

of preemptive technology because its functional capacity for machining narratives is one of its defining elements. Although *Stalker* reactivates events that have already passed and anticipates the coming of future events, it does more than simply orient itself by pointing towards — it actually pre-narrates the plot and develops the visual lexicon that will map itself onto future representations of the nuclear accident. As Laura U. Marks has suggested film is a fossil-like medium (a recollection-object) that "condenses cryptic histories" within each of its frames. Because it is spatially organised in terms of an encounter between a spectator and the screen, it is able to "translate" these "encoded" experiences over time. It is this space in-between that bestows onto film the power to represent and charges it

with meaning.[17] *Stalker* becomes, in effect, the encrypted virtual archive from which *Chronicle of Difficult Weeks* will derive many of its signifying resources. Machines for sonic and visual inscription are thus also technologies of the archive, machines for recording and retrieval, for travelling in time. While the archive narrowly conceived is likewise a preemptive technology, in that it organises its categories in advance of the selective entry of its artefacts and thus pre-narrates what stories can be told in the future, its archival documents can be resequenced to tell different versions of events. Analogue film's insistent linearity, the fixed sequence of its frames, would seem to disavow or at the very least severely limit such conceptual peregrinations. And yet even a tenaciously programmatic narrative can be

creatively reengineered to author other historical accounts and testify against its intended origins.

Arguably what is fascinating about Shevchenko's film is its transformation from a conventional documentary or benign media artefact into a radioactive fossil through the mysterious intercession of an invisible agent. The beneficence of sunlight that is necessary for film to register the passing of events overlaid with a malevolent subterranean light emanating from deep within the reactor core. Even when we are utterly aware of its horrific implications, we (as viewers) are transfixed by the strange markings and itinerant noise that suddenly emerge out of the depths of the image. The retroactive appearance of fallout on the film conjured by these radioactive ghosts still has the capacity to make us feel uneasy and

anxious in their presence; an apprehension that is enlarged by the ambiguous status of the film as it shifts from a state of indexical representation to an ontological expression of the real.

However, if we are ultimately to re-read Shevchenko's film against the exclusive grain of representation, which is to say, to read it radiologically, it must be understood as an early warning system for monitoring the incoming signals from the future-past with the notable exception that its filmic antennae are oriented not exclusively towards the eruptions coming from the future, but are also tuned into the tremors that still reverberate from the past.[18] As an ersatz radar system, Shevchenko's film transmits its radiological emissions out into the world, if some of these are perchance detected by

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concepts like freedom and judgment, Deleuze himself "shows an almost complete lack of engagement with the central problems and normative commitments of Anglo-American political thought".[17] It's easy to conclude that Deleuze regards these concepts as exhausted clichés that he leaves behind (or at best critiques, as in the case with judgment), favoring the invention of new political concepts (on a different plane of immanence of thought). And of course, this "complete lack of engagement" with the liberal tradition has to do primarily with "the fundamental shift in the status of the subject that is effected in Deleuze's philosophy", where "the subject itself becomes a secondary phenomenon, the product or the 'effect' of more primary sets of flows or *processes*", in contrast to the liberal tradition which presupposes "already constituted individuals as political subjects". ("Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition", 303) However, what Smith and Patton do is first of all attempt to make connections where certain notions of these liberal concepts can be shown to be at work in Deleuze in spite of all this — especially in Deleuze's later philosophy, which Patton describes as following a "normative" and "democratic turn", containing a much more affirmative view of "the institutions and practices of liberal democracy".[18] But more importantly– they attempt to demonstrate the reverse: how these extracted notions, turned *back* on the liberal tradition, fundamentally transform its concepts.

In Patton, these transformations are first of all made possible through a discussion of Deleuze's notion of the concept or virtual Idea beyond the actual state of affairs, based on Kant's distinction between the *concept* of the revolution, and how it actually turned out as an actualized event in history. That is, in Kant "the 'enthusiasm' of the Europeans, their becoming-revolutionary, is explicitly linked, not to the historical revolution as it unfolded before them in France, but rather to its *concept* [...] almost as if the revolution itself was something secondary" ("Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition", 304; cf. "Utopian Political

Philosophy", 43–44). Here we seem to encounter a problem in relation to Kahn's archive: its artifacts might be argued to belong purely to an actualized state of affairs, and not to some kind of virtual "Idea" of the universal.[19] But the point is that the "universality" of the archive can be argued to include both the actual and the virtual. The virtuality of the archive concerns at least three things: 1.) The discursive and technological process that is the practice of making the archive that then actualizes a virtual potential, which it also helps to *create*. 2.) The artifacts, seen as objects of art, make up a *consistency* of virtuality.[20] 3.) The virtual potentials in the archive as a whole could be differently actualized in constellations to come. The archive and the archival practice are therefore more than something merely actual. The "universalizing" process is not exhausted in the actuality of the artifacts, but belongs to a problematic Idea, which could also be re-articulated as new actualized formations in the future. All these levels point to a virtualization of the universal itself as a constant already there, and as such, it is also a *creation*.

According to Smith, a truly *normative* principle in Deleuze would have to entail a principle of *creation* as well as critique. First of all, one must not only provide norms or rights that critique abuses of power, but also critique norms which *themselves* have become abuses of power (which abstract, static universals tend to become, since they block or overcode the flows and singularities of life). What this disposition provides, then, is the need to produce new norms and new rights (new "universals"), as the political landscape constantly changes, and no norms are immune to themselves being turned into abuse. The normative must therefore be seen less as a search for a-historical norms so much as the production of new norms (or the reactivation of old potentials) in relation to a shifting — concrete, actual — situation, with the aim of drawing it in a "utopian" direction. This is not in the sense of an ideal utopia, but an open horizon, summoning forth a new earth, a new people. (In this sense,

any amount of progressivity in Kahn's specific type of visual creation of a "universal people" will of course have to be measured in relation to his own time and place.)

In what he states as a "contrast" to Foucault, Patton argues that Deleuze has an approach to power that is *explicitly normative* (*Deleuze and the Political*, 65, 49). Smith:

This is a somewhat surprising claim, since Deleuze is often condemned along with Foucault for neglecting (or avoiding, or refusing) questions of normativity. Indeed, one could imagine two possible Deleuzian responses to the criticism of non-normativity. One might ask if normativity is a good or rigorous concept, and proceed to criticize the concept from a Deleuzian viewpoint. In this case, one could argue that Foucault and Deleuze do not address issues of normativity because their work entails a critique of the very notion of normativity. Patton, however, follows the opposite approach. He takes the problem of normativity seriously, and argues that, despite appearances, one can find an explicit normative criterion in Deleuze's work. ("Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition", 306–7)

For Patton, this normative criterion is nothing less than *deterritorialization*. "If Deleuze's political philosophy", Smith explains, "effects a shift from subjects to processes, then the concept of normativity would have to be altered accordingly". For Patton, then, the notion of deterritorialization provides "a normative framework within which to describe and evaluate movements or processes". Evaluation, it seems to me, is the key for Patton's proposal to make more useful sense. That is, evaluation through distinguishing between *different* forms of deterritorializations as well as the different forms of reterritorializations that deterritorializations leads up to. (Here it is clear that we need to be careful to follow Patton's idea about a "turn" in the later Deleuze,

since it risks obscuring how Deleuze has always been normative in this sense. Deleuze & Guattari not only constantly remind us that the one does not exist without the other, but the point of affirming *deterritorialization* is how it can — constantly — condition and arrive at new *reterritorializations* in the future which are *different*, which are *better*.) For Deleuze, in practice, this means that "to analyze a social formation is to unravel the variable lines and singular *processes* that constitute it as a multiplicity: their connections and disjunctions, their circuits and short-circuits and, above all, their possible transformation" (*Difference and Repetition*, 260).

So what then is the place of the universal here, since, as Smith continues, they only serve to stop the (productive) processes of deterritorialization? The point here is to differentiate between the classical universals in the various senses of the, more or less timeless, *already there* (static/abstract/teleological), and universals as creations, that is, the temporary culmination of processes, and how the latter, as such, can be evaluated as defendable in certain cases. In other words, the concept of the universal, just as the concept of normativity, has to be "*altered accordingly*".

In relation to the traditional form of the universal, as a sort of illegitimate overcoding, the question for both Deleuze and Foucault is how it is possible to resist or find lines of flight that can transform the existing (static) norms in the present. But in this sense, as Smith describes, "neither Foucault nor Deleuze avoid the issue of normativity, they simply analyze it in terms of an *immanent process*". This means that "it is the process itself that must account for both the production of the norm as well as its possible destruction or alteration". In other words, what normativity, in this sense, means in Deleuze is analyzing and evaluating the various conditions for these very processes. Most importantly, the conditions for the creation of something *new* — and "one cannot have pre-existing norms or criteria for the new; otherwise it wouldn't be new, but already foreseen".[21] In this way, the

Tarkovsky for example, they are returned to us in the present where we experience them indirectly as "interference effects" or as pure events in the form of "actions and passions" (Deleuze). A kind of shiver that skims almost imperceptibly over our skin each time we view Shevchenko's film. But unlike conventional radar systems that try and eliminate interference and noise by focusing their transmissions upon specific "targets of interest", Shevchenko's film continually generates more interference, which in turn enables me to enlarge its transmissional field rather than isolating and tracking particular historical signals. Consequently each time Shevchenko's film is screened its toxic temporalities are transmitted into the multiple space-times of history, and although some are reflected back to us, others perish in their atmospheric transit. As radiological emissions and nuclear emissaries they warn us of potential hazards and the risks that come with speculative research, reminding us that the breach of the Sarcophagus is always-already contracted to the filmic space-time of radioactive becoming through the seepages of the virtual. *Chronicle of Difficult Weeks* is ultimately a long-range media machine and tracking device for jamming history, modulating its frequencies and rerouting its signals to actualise new radiological events. ●

Notes

1. *Chernobyl: Chronicle of Difficult Weeks*, dir. Vladimir Shevchenko, The Video Project, 1986. 35-mm. Studio, Ukrainian News and Documentary Film.
2. Transcription of film voice-over from *Chernobyl: Chronicle of Difficult Weeks*, dir. Shevchenko.
3. I'm indebted to Peter C. van Wyck whose brief citation of this filmic incident/accident provoked my search for the film footage and subsequent writing. Peter C. Van Wyck, *Signs of Danger: Waste, Trauma, and Nuclear Threat*, Theory out of Bounds, eds. Sandra Buckley, Michael Hardt and Brian Massumi, vol. 26 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 97.
4. Comment made by James Cahill & René Bruckner, editors at *Discourse*, 2008.
5. See André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image", *Film Quarterly* 13.4 (1960), 8. See also Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).
6. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 1989), 166. Henceforth cited as *Cinema 2* with pagina.
7. See Philip Rosen's discussion of the misreading of Bazin's ontology of the photographic image as one of "technological finality" in "Subject, Ontology and Historicity in Bazin", in Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 9–10.
8. André Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration", trans. Hugh Gray, in *What Is Cinema?*, ed. Hugh Gray, vol. 1 (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967). 160. Henceforth cited as "Cinema and Exploration" with pagina.
9. Comment made by James Cahill & René Bruckner, editors at *Discourse*, 2008.
10. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 4. Henceforth cited as *The Logic of Sense* with pagina.
11. See entry on the event by Cliff Stagoll in Adrian Parr, *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 87–88.
12. James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 1.
13. Slightly modified citation from Ross Hamilton, *Accident: A Philosophical and Literary History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6.
14. See Bernard Stiegler summing up one of Jacques Derrida's points in "Phonographies: Meaning — From Heritage to Horizon", in Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 100.
15. Stas Tyrkin, "In Stalker Tarkovsky Foretold Chernobyl", *Komsomolskaya Pravda* March 23 2001, 2.
16. See Paul Virilio, "The Primal Accident", *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, ed. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 212.
17. See discussion of fetishes and fossils in Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (London: Duke University Press, 2000), 89.
18. Radiological film reading is a technical term and form of diagnostic cryptography that refers to the practice of optically decoding the incandescent semiotics registered by processes of X-ray technology; a mode of radiographic literacy that is used to examine welds in reactor rods and search for signs of malignancy in flesh.

The Eichmann Trial as Film and Narrative

———

Rebecka Thor

"Butcher, butcher!" The words are heard before we see the man shouting. The film cuts to the audience. Two guards drag a struggling man out of the courtroom by his arms. A buzz spreads through the audience, all heads are turned towards him, a judge calls for order, and cut — the moment is over and a new scene begins. These few seconds in the very beginning of the film *The Specialist: Portrait of a Modern Criminal* (1999), directed by Eyal Sivan, exemplify the controversy that has followed the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. The trial itself has become emblematic for various reasons: it was the only time Israel convicted a high-ranking Nazi, it was the first time survivors publicly testified, and the entire trial was videotaped and broadcast on both television and radio around the world. The aftermath, too, has been marked by much contentiousness. Two years after the trial, Hannah Arendt published her account of the event in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), a book so at odds with official historiography that it was banned in Israel.

In April 1961, after a long series of interrogations, Adolf Eichmann was indicted on fifteen criminal charges, including crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people and war crimes. He pleaded "not guilty in the sense of the indictment" to each charge. The trial lasted four months and in May 1962, Eichmann was executed.

The idea to make the trial public came from the US, but in the Israeli court decision on the

structure of what normativity and universal mean is of course almost inverted, but only in relation to universal criteria which are molar, static, timeless, transcendent (or historically teleological, for that matter). And this is of course risky business, "since it involves leaving behind existing grounds of value, with the result that it is not always clear whether it is good or bad […]" (*Deleuze and the Political*, 87).

Interlude: Molecular Dignity

So let us briefly go back to the notion of dignity that I used above trying — fumbling for words — to describe the "progressive" force of some of the images in Kahn's archive. In using this word, am I not aligning myself with the very liberal discourse I've distanced myself from above? Dignity as a concept is of course deeply connected to clichés around humanism. An example: in a recent book of photography of peoples from around the world, called *The Power of Dignity*, the editor, in the preface, reflects on what he saw on his travels around the world: "I met people there [India and Bangladesh] who, under what we view as unbelievably difficult conditions, have quite obviously captured, like an inner treasure, the nature of humanness".[22] So is it possible to rescue the word dignity from such hackneyed hollowness? It seems to me that the notion of "dignity" in photography *could* undergo the same kind of transformation as normativity or the universal described above. The dignity expressed by the artifacts does not necessarily have to be the same as in the representational humanistic discourses that produced it. Also, dignity doesn't have to be regarded as an *illusion* altogether (although it can be critiqued from the perspective of register/force 1 described above). The concept can be understood in *other* ways, which then come to regard dignity as a usable word for what might be produced in and through *singular cases*.

### The Singular vs. the Particular: The Moving Images from Ethiopia

[A] singularity opposed to the particulars subsumed under laws, a universal opposed to the generalities which gives rise to laws.
Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 6

As a universalizing practice, despite being a quite singular and specific assemblage, Kahn's universalization is nonetheless fairly abstract and general (a universality of man), which in a certain sense seems slightly anathema to a Deleuzean view: abstract a-historical *laws* like "human rights" explain nothing because they do not automatically correspond with the *specificity* of singular cases. The more processual concept of *jurisprudence* therefore "provides Deleuze with a model for the creation of rights that are not universal, but always linked to a given assemblage, and the particularity of specific cases or singularities".[23] Even though Khan's archival practice could be argued to constitute such a concrete case in a specific time, I will not continue to discuss Kahn's collection in general, but instead narrow things down to the even more specific and singular: the moving images from Ethiopia in the archive. These images have a somewhat different status than the photographs discussed above. As a non-European country, Ethiopia was first of all not a French colony. Second of all, these images were externally acquired, that is, not produced by any of Kahn's own teams. To the extent that these images contain aspects of deterritorialization in relation to pre-existent givens, I will argue that they include *both* forces discussed above.

In a lot of ways the very addition of externally produced images into the archive underlines a curious relation between the concrete *facts* and *histories* of the respective countries and how they are subsumed under an over-arching concept of classical universality. This regards the archive as a power to dictate what is visible and audible inside this potentially all-inclusive generality

(archive of the *planet*). What is at stake, it could be asserted, is the relation between two different notions of what the universal is made of: (virtual and actual) singularities vs. the particular.

Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations and probably (competing only with Armenia) the oldest Christian nation in the world. Alongside the aspects of the country that are perfectly ordinary, Ethiopia also has other aspects that are singular more than particular. The problem with Kahn's framework, in view of the first register/force described above, is that in these images, Ethiopia's singularities tend to be subsumed under the umbrella of a transcendent general universal, which covers them over or turns them from the particular, relative to the general universality at hand. But why is this even a problem? Is this not an unavoidable part of the project? In Kahn's belief, direct experience is superior to books when it comes to acquiring knowledge. As he stated, "to see is to know". And as described above, the camera (and the whole photographic process involved) is not understood as an obstacle in this regard — to "see" is to know. So let us look at the images themselves. What is it we get to see and know here?

The moving images from Ethiopia were commissioned by the French Foreign Office as a part of an expedition that travelled across Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, mainly in order to verify how the railway linking Djibouti and Addis-Abeba worked.[24] These moving images, which are edited as a narrative and even contain inter-titles, are in that sense closer to the typical travelogues of the times more than the stunning autochrome-stills, but they are nonetheless respectful and "molecularly" dignified. One of three surviving films is called *Fête du couronnement de la Reine Zaouditou* (Addis Abeba, 1917), and shows the festivities around the coronation of emperor Makonnen 1916/1917. European and Ethiopian state officials intermingle. Yet again, what is visible and what is not here?

The medium of film came into being on a large scale at the peak of Western imperialism and

colonial racism. It is very much connected, in a lot of ways literally, with the colonial project: as infrastructure, ideology and discourse.[25] But even if these images from Ethiopia actually escape from such an established frame of analysis, Kahn's idea of making visible and the notion of "seeing is knowing", become curiously empty in relation to Ethiopian history. What is it that we actually learn from these images?

In the Albert Kahn Museum in Paris there is a digital map of the world in which you can click on a country and see the moving images taken from there. These images literally represent each particular country in the general universalist framework that is the archive. Sitting there clicking around, countries flash by. Look, there is Ethiopia, another colonized African country, right? Actually, that is not so (and I am now disregarding a brief but decisively damaging occupation by Mussolini later on around the Second World War). At the time when African territories became colonies and were brutally divided between the Europeans aggressors, Ethiopia not only remained autonomous but actually expanded its own territory. That is, Ethiopia was the only country that was not colonized during the Scramble for Africa at the end of the 19th century. Not because no one tried. In fact, Ethiopia won in battle over the Italian army, which was utterly humiliated. Curiously close to what is usually regarded as the birth of cinema, and sending a bit of a shockwave throughout all European imperialist nations, this is the famous "Battle of Adowa" in 1896.[26]

I say famous, but I suspect that most readers of this article have never heard of it. It might be one of those historical scenarios that do not neatly fit into the frameworks of what is visible or audible in the normative — classically "Universal" — writing of world history (although it was, of course, considered to be an important event throughout the black Diaspora at the time; and later on for the anti-colonial movement). The standard image is that when a country has not been subjected to the force of Europeans, it is because the Europeans
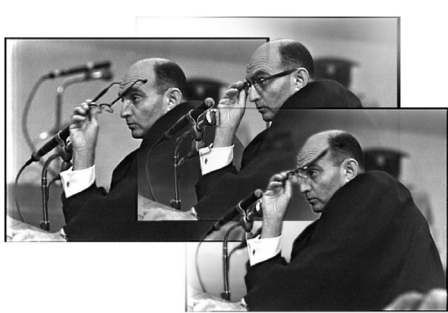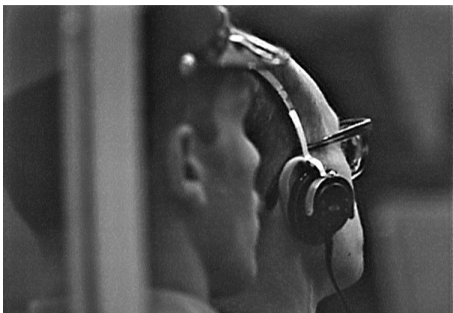
Stills from Eyal Sivan's *The Specialist*, 1999, 128 minutes

matter, the judges quoted the Jeremy Bentham: "where there is no publicity, there is no justice". The American company *Capital Cities Broadcasting Corporation* signed a contract with the Israeli state and hired the documentary filmmaker Leo Hurwitz — an American who had formed a part of the Workers' Photo League and was blacklisted by the FBI — to film the Eichmann trial. It was the first trial in history to be videotaped, and it was broadcasted on American television and in 37 other countries, but not in Israel, where national television was not yet running. Every day, clips of the trial were flown over the Atlantic and broadcasted the following day.

The judges who quoted Jeremy Bentham on the relation between publicity and justice did, however, demand that the recording of the trial not interfere with the proceedings. Hurwitz therefore placed four concealed cameras in the courtroom and connected them to a control booth across the street, from which he could instruct the camera operators and edit the footage in real time. He had four monitors screening the camera images and in accordance with his instructions, one camera was recorded on videotape, while the other three where not recorded at all. Hurwitz had to make instant decisions and, only being able to understand what was said when the trial was conducted in English since he spoke neither German nor Hebrew, his editing was dependent not on what was said, but on his understanding of the situation based on visual information. He shot up to 600 hours in this manner.

In accounts of the Eichmann trial, a recurrent undertone suggests that it could not have gone any other way — the trial was important because Israel would judge and punish a Nazi, not because his legal status was uncertain. The implication is not solely that one knew that he was guilty, but that the very act of putting him on trial was turned into a merely symbolic event, a process for the world to see. The show trial — similar to the notion of courtroom drama — is thus constituted by the importance of the proceeding as such, in opposition to a mere rendering of justice. In the context of the political aims of the trial, the event in the courtroom was maybe even more important than the act of judging and executing Eichmann. And what was the event? The main event was the vast amount of survivor testimonies. Thus, the trial did not simply aim to convict Eichmann — it provided a means for the Israeli state to form a historical narrative of the Holocaust, and thus claim a certain agency over its aftermath. The Israeli Prime minister at the time, David Ben Gurion, even stated after the trial that he wanted it to achieve three things: to inform the world's opinion about The Holocaust, to educate the unknowing Israeli youth, and to gain support for the Israeli nation-state. Whether or not all this was achieved remains to be investigated, but the trial created a foundation for Holocaust commemoration through survivors' testimonies, which subsequently became a conventional narrative, as in the case of Claude Lanzmann's film

Shoah or as in the Spielberg Archive's attempt to collect survivors' testimonies. The film *The Specialist* offers another stance in the discussions of Holocaust commemoration, as it follows in Hannah Arendt's footsteps.

The Specialist — Eyal Sivan's carefully edited work that has been exhibited at numerous venues, most recently at Okwui Enwezor's show *Archive Fever* (2008) — only uses a fraction of Hurwitz's filmed material. The narrative is constructed in a non-chronological order: scenes do not follow an apparent sequence. *The Specialist* is a suggestive account and the filmmaker does nothing to hide it; instead biases are reinforced by strong sounds and abrupt cuts. One of the film's most striking features involves its point-of-view: instead of giving place to the crucial testimonies, a great number of shots are focused on Eichmann: listening to translations, scribbling down notes, organizing his papers, or trying to answer questions posed to him. Besides Eichmann, the prosecutor, attorney general Gideon Hausner, plays a leading role and the film often returns to him, reacting to Eichmann's statements. The judges are frequently shown reprimanding witnesses and spectators. They provide a notion of a proper conduct and they appear to be the reason that the trial does not decline into total chaos. For the most part, the film moves rapidly, cutting quickly between perspectives and incidents, but unbroken shots lasting several minutes serve to give a few episodes special emphasis. Filmed material from

the camps flicker in the darkened courtroom during one long, uncomfortable sequence, and a few survivors give testimony in a series of short shots. At one point the viewer is shown witness after witness, thereby understanding the immense amount of painful accounts.

Obviously, Sivan did not edit the material with the sole aim of constructing a narrative. Besides making a new storyline, he manipulated the material heavily, both by traditional means of editing and by reinforcing shadows, adding reflections and sometimes by impairing the quality of the original images. Since the sound of the video was inferior, Sivan chose to work with the audio recorded for radio instead. The audio is not only synchronized with the images, but the voices are repeated at times, sometimes blurred, with some sounds even added at times other than when they originally appeared. In a similar fashion, the archive's imperfection is visible when three black frames with white text are inserted after each other, providing the viewer with three different dates of court sessions that seem to relate to one scene. What the audience does gain is a notion that we do not see everything and the film can be read as an excerpt of the archive that is an excerpt of the event. The use of archival imagery in the film serves to destabilize any truth claim rather than upholding or revealing one. In the context of the Eichmann trial, we know that only one out of four cameras was recorded, that the director was incapable of understanding what was said and thus edited based primarily

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Stills from *Fête du couronnement de la Reine Zaouditou* (Addis Abeba, 1917). Copyright © Musée Albert-Kahn

chose not to — it is a *moral* matter. The case of Ethiopia does not fully harmonize with this discursive regime, which tends to reduce it to a position of silence in the mainstream writing of world history, and, I might add, in Albert Kahn's archive.[27]

These quite polite moving images, in a sense, pan over Ethiopian territory with a gaze that covers over this decisive and symbolic historical event — and we should remember that the events of Adowa were not *too* far away historically when these images were taken, and the film crew could hardly have been totally unaware of them. Perhaps there is even a sense of Ethiopian territory being "colonized" by a specific image-regime, however respectful, that gazes over

just another timeless African country that lacks history (but where the natives wear beautiful clothing).[28] But at the same time, these images also constitute a progressive expression, expanding the regime of what can be seen, in ways that do not necessarily point back to the past (that is, the past in the sense of a more truthful depiction of the history of the country), but also sows virtual seeds for *possibilities* of things to come.

In *Fête du couronnement de la Reine Zaouditou*, French, English, and Italian representatives intermingle with the Ethiopian dignities and officials. The images display a general blending of Europeans and Ethiopians that seems un-dictated by power. This would have seemed false or contrived if Ethiopia was a colony (or a

former colony), but it wasn't. It was rather an autonomous state, and what is celebrated, by Ethiopians and Europeans alike, is the rituals of this autonomous state. In the middle of the film, a long cortege is shown where European soldiers intermingle with Ethiopian soldiers, both on foot and on horses. In this concrete case, then, the complex mixture of the two registers/forces described above becomes more apparent: in one sense, Kahn's Ethiopia is a-historical, a particularity subsumed under the general and preexisting universality of man. Although in many ways admirable, this general universality, then, performs a kind of silencing and covering over of some of the concrete, and politically important, singularities of the country. In another

sense, however, there is also an expression of a kind of autonomous, Ethiopian political subjectivity performed by these images. And presenting this, at this time, on a European stage might be said to constitute a *singular* event of making things visible — perhaps somewhere in line with a creation of new norms, specific to the era that was Kahn's. ●

▲
Still from Eyal Sivan's *The Specialist* (1999)

on sensory instinct and facial expressions. We also know that part of the filmed material still is missing. *The Specialist* evokes the notion that no exhaustive account can exist.

Since 1961 the trial has become a significant symbol of how historical accounts of the Holocaust are formed and communicated. The trial was the first instance in which survivors were able to give their testimonies. Of a hundred witnesses, ninety were survivors from the camps. Eichmann's trial can be understood as the beginning of the testimonial narration of the Holocaust. Since then such diverse institutions as Yad Vashem in Israel, the American Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, films like Lanzmann's *Shoah* and almost every museum dedicated to the Holocaust, have relied on collections of oral history as the major means to communicate the events. The trial functioned as a setting for such construction of a narrative of the Holocaust based on survivors' testimonies, and it can be read as a part of the formation of Israeli identity and collective memory, since the events hardly were discussed in Israel before the trial.

The Specialist can be understood as a reaction

against this tradition of testimonial representation created through the Eichmann trial. If the trial is a founding moment for the Israeli state as legitimized by the Holocaust, then the act of *The Specialist* is a questioning of that very legitimization. The use of the Holocaust as legitimating Israel in the trial is apparent if considering the following lines from Attorney General Hausner's opening speech:

When I stand before you here, Judges of Israel, to lead the Prosecution of Adolf Eichmann, I am not standing alone. With me are six million accusers. But they cannot rise to their feet and point an accusing finger towards him who sits in the dock and cry: "I accuse." For their ashes are piled up on the hills of Auschwitz and the fields of Treblinka, and are strewn in the forests of Poland. Their graves are scattered throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Their blood cries out, but their voice is not heard. Therefore I will be their spokesman and in their name I will unfold the awesome indictment.

Hausner, as a representative of the Israeli state, speaks in their name, and by that claims the agency as a voice of all Jews affected by the Holocaust. The remarkable tone and also the emotional sentiment it provokes seem suitable for Ben Gurion's aim of creating a history lesson rather than the setting for a trial. The rhetorical figures depicting the victims of the Holocaust lay the groundwork for the testimonies later in the trial — by those who are still able to stand and point an accusing finger. In stark contrast to this, the narration throughout *The Specialist* has an inherently clinical language, perhaps as a means to question representations relying on affect or to illustrate the bureaucratic aspect of the trial. The suggestion can be understood as a reaction to the testimonial narration of Holocaust events as being utterly dependent on subjective and affective accounts in the sense that these affective accounts of the victims perhaps run the risk of only being used as a contrast to the crimes, which then turn into a metaphysical and eternal evil.

The last image of *The Specialist* depicts Eichmann in his booth, and then the image zooms

in and item after item around him disappears, the guards, the glass cage, his papers and his desk becomes wider, taking the proportions of a business desk. The noise is turned into music. The black and white image turns into a colored image, and Eichmann appears in an office setting, sitting behind a dark wooden table, wearing a blue suit. The image removes Eichmann from the setting of the trial and back into the realm of bureaucracy. He is neither the accused nor a mere bureaucrat; he seems to be in charge, slightly reclined and a bit skeptical. In *The Specialist* Eichmann becomes something like a genocidal possibility of modernity, and the crime becomes a modern crime. Through this move the film depicts the trial not as a solely historic moment, but also as a possible present. And with this universalizing of the capacity for banal evil, Sivan exposes the even more fearsome notion that evil need not be profound. ●

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Notes

1. Jay Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 2006), 22. Henceforth cited as *Dreams of Peace* with pagina.
2. See the quotes from Paula Amad in notes 8 & 30, and Teresa Castro in note 8 below.
3. For a wider selection of the photos that will be discussed in this article, see David Okuefuna, *The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn: Colour Photographs from a Lost Age* (London: BBC Books, 2008) for more details on the technology of the autochrome, see specifically 321–23; and the BBC television series *The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn*.
4. Kahn Archive, typescript, 5 May 1933, 4–6; quoted in Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom*, 15.
5. The connection between early cinema and colonialism, with its "travelogues" and "ethnographical" films, needs, as film scholar Tom Gunning puts it, "no deconstructive analysis to be demonstrated". "The Whole World Within Reach: Travel Images Without Borders", *Cinema sans frontières 1896–1918 (Images Across Borders)*, eds. Roland Cosandey & Francois Albera (Québec: Editions Payot Lausanne, 1995), 25.
6. See for instance Alain Badiou's comments in Etienne Balibar, "Debating with Alain Badiou on Universalism", *Philosophie Française Contemporaine*, 25 12 2008. http://ciepfc.rhapsodyk.net/article.php3?id_article=171 The type of political universality proposed by Badiou will however not be discussed in this article.
7. "[W]hat was new in European colonialism was its planetary reach, its affiliation with global institutional power, and its imperative mode, its attempted submission of the world to a single 'universal' regime of truth and power". Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism, Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 15–16.
8. Kahn's archive depended on the very infrastructure of the colonial enterprise. As Kahn-scholar Paula Ahmad has pointed out, the archive in one sense "operated in the tradition of adventurer-geographer's mission (tied to colonial exploration)" and "the travelling and exploration needed to film many of the remote sites covered in the Archive (not to mention the original source of Kahn's fortune), were facilitated by French colonial, military and national connections". Paula Amad, "Cinema's 'sanctuary': From Pre-Documentary to Documentary Film in Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète (1908–1931)", *Film History*, Volume 13 (2001), 138–159. See also Teresa Castro's discussion of Kahn's cinematic venture in the terms of an *atlas* defined as a *dispositif* connected to the imperialist "mapping impulse" of the times. "Les Archives de la Planète: A Cinematographic Atlas", *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (No. 48, winter 2006).
9. Cf. Roland Barthes critique of the ideology of

humanism in a photo exhibition in Paris called *The Great Family of Man*, "The Great Family of Man", *Mythologies* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 100–2.
10. On the relation between power and this collection of "information" and creation of knowledge, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 40ff, 67. See also Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (London/New York: Verso, 1992), 99. On the relation between such ventures and the technology of the film camera seen as a tool that objectively gathers (scientific) information. See Fatimah Toby Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).
11. Deleuze, *Cinema II: the Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 133ff.
12. Deleuze & Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), vii. "[T]he universal comes at the end [...]", Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley; Mark Seem; Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum, 2004), 153.
13. Cf. Deleuze's radical immanence with its *immanent* conception of Ideas, and a type of transcendence, with its ideals, which are still there in Derrida however "impossible" it is for us to know them other than as a trace. See Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought", *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, ed. Paul Patton and John Protevi (London/New York: Continuum, 2003).
14. Within the heterogeneous processes analyzed — in the sense that they result in effects in the form of specific ideals or "universals" — one force is in every moment dominant, which determines the value of the value. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7–8.
15. This is the paradox of discipline: it is an exercise of domination and subjection, but this is only one side of the complexes of power. In Foucault's later phases the perspective will change to emphasize the other aspect (or rather, he changes his mind to some extent), i.e. power as the condition for what has created the "autonomous" and "free" Western individual (albeit with a degree of "freedom" confined to a liberal social framework). The "basis" from which such a freedom emanates is then not a pre-existing ground, but a created "universal", which is the modern (i.e. in relation to those periods that Foucault analyses, which are not necessarily the same as our present state) autonomous individual — which is then fully real as such. However, it seems open to interpretation if, or rather to what degree, this folding or invagination of outer forces that produce subjective interiority contain real autonomy

with respect to those forces. See Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of the Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom", *The Final Foucault*, ed. Bernauer and Rasmussen (Cambride, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 1–20; "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry* Volume 8, Number 4 (Summer, 1982), 777–795; *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 63–69.
16. Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition: Normativity, Freedom and Judgement, *Economy and Society*, Volume 32, Number 2, May 2003, 299–324. Henceforth cited as "Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition" with pagina. Smith's article is a creative reading, or rather underlining of this non-explicit aspect in Paul Patton's *Deleuze and the Political*.
17. Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 1. Henceforth cited as *Deleuze and the Political* with pagina.
18. See Paul Patton, "Becoming-Democratic", *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Nicholas Thoburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 178–195; "Utopian Political Philosophy: Deleuze and Rawls", *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh University Press), 41–59. Henceforth cited as "Utopian Political Philosophy" with pagina; *Political Normativity and Poststructuralism: The Case of Gilles Deleuze*, Vortrag ins Institutscolloquium des Philosophischen Institut der Freien Universität, Berlin, 2007.
19. Virtual Ideas in Deleuze are of course part of his contribution to a *reversed* Platonism — that is, the "Idea" is itself made up of "problematic structures" which are — immanent — determined relations of pure *differences*, see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 81, 203. Henceforth cited as *Difference and Repetition* with pagina.
20. "When it is claimed that works of art are immersed in virtuality, what is being invoked is not some confused determination but the completely determined structure formed by its genetic differential elements, its 'virtual' or 'embryonic' elements. The elements, varieties of relations and singular points coexist in the work or the object, in the virtual part of the work or object". *Difference and Repetition*, 260.
21. "Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition", 308. Here we need to add an important distinction to Smith's argument. The new is "a different question from that of the conditions of *change*, since the new, in order to be truly new, can be neither foreseeable nor conceptualizable nor even expected or hoped for" (311). What has to be added here is that this total unforeseeability only applies to the *actual forms* of the new (which per definition, in order to be *new*, cannot be predicted). Otherwise this argument

would be in direct opposition to Deleuze's notion of the virtual — which conditions the new — and of the concept: The role of creation in philosophy and art is to provide the "contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come" Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 32–3.
22. *Die Kraft der Würde — The Power of Dignity*, ed. Hans Reitz (Bielefeld: J. Kamphausen Verlag & Distribution, 2008), 9.
23. "Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition", 315. Deleuze: "Rights aren't created by codes and pronouncements, but jurisprudence. Jurisprudence is the philosophy of law, and deals with singularities, it advances by working out from singularities". Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 153.
24. No one knows exactly how Kahn got hold of these films, but they nevertheless became part of his Archive (as one of the exceptions of media artefacts which he did not produce himself). Martine Balard, *La Mission Charles Michel-Côte en Ethiopie et au Soudan anglo-égyptien en 1920*, Conference paper, 2007. I also refer to a mail exchange with Frédérique Le Bris from the Kahn Archive.
25. Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 100 ff; Ann E. Kaplan, *Looking for the Other* (New York/London: Routledge, 1997), 61f.
26. Greg Blake, "First Italo-Abyssinian War: Battle of Adowa", *HistoryNet — From the World's Largest History Magazine Publisher*, 2006. www.historynet.com/first-italo-abyssinian-war-battle-of-adowa.htm
27. Stuart C. Munro-Hay, one of the leading Western scholars on the history the country, recently referred to Ethiopia — and this of course refers to a much wider temporal scope (the last 2,500 years) than simply this specific battle some 115 years ago — as a blind spot in the writing of world history. See also his, *Ethiopia, the Unknown Land: a Cultural and Historical Guide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).
28. "Like the eye of some mechanical all-seeing God, Kahn's Archive observed the world from near and far, visually colonizing spaces still ripe for plundering by the camera's reach", Paula Amad, "Cinema's 'sanctuary': From Pre-Documentary to Documentary Film in Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète (1908–1931)", 142.

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