e-flux journal

issue #50

12/2013

e-flux Journal is a monthly art publication featuring essays and contributions by some of the most engaged artists and thinkers working today. The journal is available online, in PDF format, and in print through a network of distributors.

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Image Editor
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Distribution
Laura Barlow

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Jeff Ramsey

Layout Generator
Adam Florin

PDF Design
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PDF Generator
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For further information, contact **journal@e-flux.com**

www.e-flux.com/journal

Dear Readers, welcome to the fiftieth issue of e-flux journal. It marks our official five-year anniversary. It's hard to believe. To celebrate this, we invite all of you who happen to be in New York next Tuesday, December 17, to a party we are organizing at China Chalet. Join us for drinks and music, we will be there from 9pm until the night ends.

Editors

Editorial

Remember our first issue? Issue #0, November 2008. Thinking back to that moment immediately following the financial crisis of 2007–2008, we realize what a profound shift has taken place in the field of art since then, and how so many of those changes have been reflected in *e-flux journal*. Yes, many of the changes have been negative and have had instensely destabilizing effects on art institutions and the lives of artists. But at the same time, we can now see how they have meshed with and further radicalized a geographic dispersal in art that had been advancing for some years. It is something we thought about in our first editorial, and in the five years since then, we have witnessed the basic understanding of what art is, and what art is supposed to do, become completely unmoored from any formal or historical narrative.

We have to admit that we are inside an incredibly interesting moment, because, really, when were notions of art fully stabilized if not in the most conservative or idealistic-heroic times? Yes, of course, it would be much easier to return to the grand narratives of the twentieth century, and in many ways we are still completely addicted to a certain voice and mode of address that they produced—the humanistic idealism, the heroic gesturing, the radical ruptures, a certain hostility to the state and to power in the abstract, to fantasies of eternal repose in some modernist fortress, and so forth. Art spaces, artworks, the art market, art publications still reflect the legacy of the twentieth century, which is strange considering how completely embedded contemporary art has been in the very processes that are overwriting these twentieth-century ideals, for better or worse.

The liquidation of infrastructure and the defunding of public support throughout Western Europe and elsewhere has been deeply regrettable, but it has also forced the realization that artists make do with or without structural support, and they never really distinguished between the public sphere and the private sphere in the first place. But maybe it would be better if they did, because what was also fascinating to watch following the crisis was that, rather than a new Arte Povera, we got a booming market together with a slew of museums cropping up in finance-driven or oil-rich cities traditionally known for producing collectors more than artists or art publics. And while the staggering scale of budgets for acquisitions and

commissions in these areas of the world are instrumentalizing art and artists in completely new ways, the institutions are themselves subject to an art world that has already assumed the form of a planetary-scale abstraction that totally confounds methodologies for understanding art in terms of formal resemblances or historical continuities. If no formal regime can survive longer than a few minutes, all historical claims are up for grabs; in addition, the careful archiving and conservation of artworks becomes unnecessary or even impossible. Should a national or municipal museum even bother with an art collection anymore? Absolutely—you never know when you'll need to pawn some art to pay the rent.

At the entrance to the building where e-flux is located in New York, two workers are installing generators in the basement to accommodate the next disaster. Whether bracing for the failure of infrastructure from below ground in the power grid, or from above in the atmosphere, whether due to hurricane or tornado or terrorist attack, we can see the shape of a more pervasive condition: it is not only that we can no longer peg our fortunes to the grid, but that our notions of infrastructure, economy, history, and identity have become increasingly destabilized and even absurd. What happens to art under these circumstances?

Individual people have become more important than institutions. The stabilizing role of art institutions has been transferred to a growing class of professionalized artists, curators, and practitioners who hold the whole thing together. We are severely underqualified and overqualified at the same time, and we like it that way. We are underappreciated and mistreated because, on the one hand, we consider ourselves celebrities, and on the other, we are being used to test cutting-edge labor extraction schemes. But we also know that we can exploit the art world in return by using its bloat to host the burdens and extremely high expectations of so many brilliant people who wasted years gaining PhD-level expertise in political science, programming, journalism, international law, or ethnomusicology. We left those fields for art either because we couldn't find a job or because we wanted our work in those fields to actually make sense and have an audience or even a public. The art world does not always deliver on its promises, but that is absolutely fine considering that it does better than most governments. And this is probably why it has become a massive refuge for the dispossessed, overambitious, overcreative, undereducated prodigies of the planet to hang out, drink and smoke, and then try to decode the art world's assigned geopolitical task to navigate through the quagmire of post-infrastructure by identifying the forms that it simultaneously tries to renounce. We are completely inside some interconnected planetary financial-dementia machine defined by interruptions due to weird atmospherics and territorial warfare blending and meshing on a scale that surpasses representation, and we are here to represent it. It is a bit like meta-sculpture or a linguistic, semiotic origami that involves creating names for things that cannot be absorbed by capital flows, even while being absorbed by those very same flows. It sounds exhausting and it is. And that is why we are running on generators, and figuring out ways, as artists and thinkers, to homebrew and store our own energy in our own generators and in each other. What all this points to is information, energy, and vital life forces swirling around to become a new infrastructure defined by completely abstract flows. A certain purifying power that the white cube once commanded has withdrawn behind an economic realism that is totally fine with the sloppiness of the JPEG and the essayistic rant, and everything else that makes up the difference between the lightness of aura and the heaviness of a crate.

It is against this backdrop that so many of the essays published in *e-flux journal* have been commissioned, written, edited, and published. Art does not produce value so much as consciousness. From all of us at *e-flux journal*, thank you for reading over these five years, and hope to see you around somewhere very soon.

—Anton Vidokle, Brian Kuan Wood, Julieta Aranda

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Julieta Aranda is an artist and an editor of *e-flux journal.*

Brian Kuan Wood is an editor of *e-flux journal.*

Anton Vidokle is an editor of e-flux journal and chief curator of the 14th Shanghai Biennale: Cosmos Cinema.

Ursula K. Heise

From the Blue Planet to Google Earth

1. Vaster Than Empires

In her short story "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," science fiction novelist Ursula K. Le Guin describes the encounter of a group of humans with an ecosystem that cannot be understood as encompassing anything less than an entire planet. When a team of scientific explorers arrives on the planet called only World 4470, after a journey that has taken just a few hours in their personal time but 250 years in Earth time, they find all its continents inhabited exclusively by plants, from grass-like to tree-like species. Their scientific study of this world is from the beginning impaired by the peculiarities of their life as a group: since only psychologically or socially alienated individuals volunteer for a mission that will take them 500 years into the future (returning to Earth will take another 250), conflicts continuously erupt between the team members. One of the scientists, Osden, proves particularly problematic, as his "wide-range bioempathic receptivity," a psychological condition that enables him to "share lust with a white rat, pain with a squashed cockroach, phototropy with a moth," also leads him blindly to reflect back any human emotions he senses in his surroundings.[1] Since most of his colleagues approach him with suspicion or latent hostility, he cannot help but respond with scorn and hatred, which ends up estranging even the most patient and compassionate among them. To minimize the disruptive effects of this condition, he moves away from the team to take on the biological exploration of a nearby forest.

But the tension that Osden's presence had caused is soon replaced by a vague feeling of unease that most members of the group experience in and around this forest. Lingering apprehension erupts into crisis when Osden misses his radio transmissions, and is found bleeding and unconscious on the forest soil by two scientists who go out to search for him. As they pick him up, they are seized by an overwhelming and irrational fear that they hardly know how to control. When they discuss their experiences as Osden regains consciousness, it becomes clear that the plant life in the forest has some kind of sentience that he was able to identify mostly by its fear: "'I suppose I could feel the roots. Below me in the ground, down under the ground … I felt the fear. It kept growing. As if they'd finally *known* I was there, lying on them there, under them, among them, the thing they feared, and yet part of their fear itself. I couldn't stop sending the fear back, and it kept growing, and I couldn't move, I couldn't get away.'"[2] Several of the scientists contradict him by pointing out that the tree-like plants have no nervous system that would enable them to react to their surroundings in such a way. But others observe that all the plants are linked by an intricate root system and a network of epiphytes so as to create what might be a far-reaching web of connections. One of them argues, "'sentience or intelligence isn't a thing, you can't find it in, or analyze it out from, the cells of a brain. It's a function of the connected cells. It is, in a

sense, the connection: the connectedness.'" Osden sums up his experience of this utterly alien form of intelligence by characterizing it as "'sentience without senses. Blind, deaf, nerveless, moveless. Some irritability, response to touch. Response to sun, to light, to water, and chemicals in the earth around the roots. Nothing comprehensible to an animal mind. Presence without mind. Awareness of being, without object or subject. Nirvana.'"[3]

In such an ecosystem, the only agent that could have attacked Osden is another human, and one of the scientists finally admits that he mistook the psychological effect of the forest for Osden's influence and wanted to rid the mission of his interference. To break the impact of the alien forest, the crew decides to relocate their camp to another continent. But the same unease as before revisits them on a vast prairie covered with grass-like plants, forcing them to realize, as the team's biologist points out, that the entire planet's vegetation constitutes one large "'network of processes ... There are no individual plants, then, properly speaking. Even the pollen is part of the linkage, no doubt, a sort of windborne sentience, connecting overseas. But it is not conceivable. That all the biosphere of a planet should be one network of communications, sensitive, irrational, immortal, isolated.'"[4] Le Guin's title allusion to Andrew Marvell's well-known poem "To His Coy Mistress," with its reference to "vegetable love," is translated into "vegetable fear" as Osden infers that the planet's apprehension must have been triggered by its dawning awareness of other beings where there had never been anything but itself. As Osden and the other humans perceive and retransmit this fear to the alien intelligence, they are locked into a self-reinforcing feedback loop with their environment.

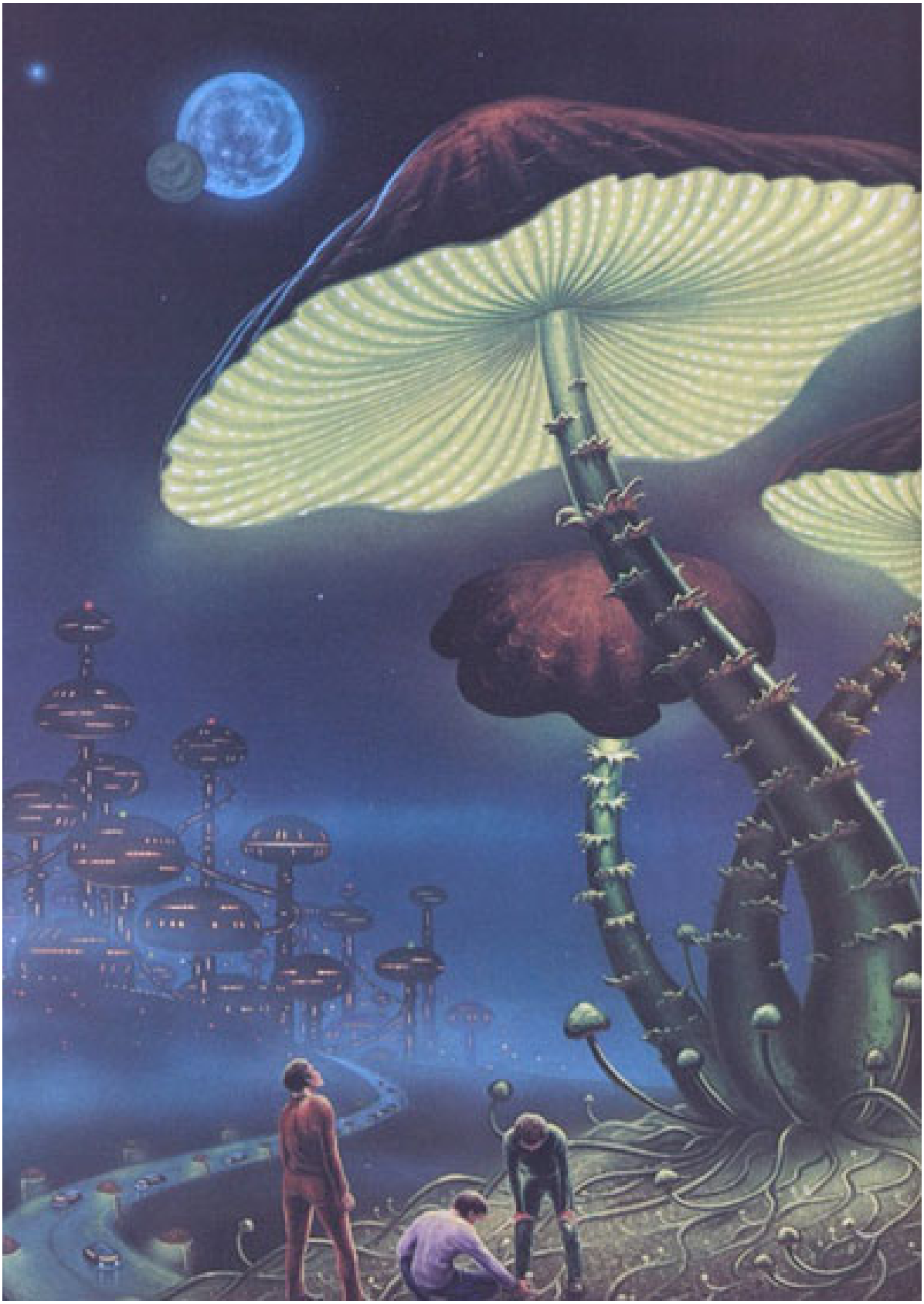
Humans' interaction with a global environment is here articulated through a series of conceptual tensions: the forest's contemplative immobility versus the humans' movements; its indifference to them as against their investigation of it; its unconcern over space and time, which contrasts both with the humans' separation from their own world and history, and their longing to overcome the limitations of their biological form; its silence as against their language; its total unity (signaled here by the pollen, which connects the plants even across oceans) versus their plurality and individuality. At the same time, the lyrical quality of the passage, which culminates in the quotation from Marvell's poem and echoes the story's title, also conveys the sense that the forest possesses a kind of being that humans have always aspired to: a collective experience of "world enough and time," where temporality and space are no longer issues of existential concern. Even as the scientists, like Marvell's lovers, cannot share this experience, they seem to participate in it temporarily by "walk[ing] under the trees"[5]: rootedness in its original, botanical sense and indifference to space coexist in the same experience.

Published in 1971, this short story articulates a vision of global ecology that had gained great popularity at the time. The idea that all the planet's life forms are linked in such a way that they come to form one world-encompassing, sentient superorganism echoes James Lovelock's well-known Gaia hypothesis, according to which Planet Earth constitutes a single overarching feedback system that sustains itself.[6] At the same time, the scientists' taxonomic approach to World 4470's biology—surveying the land, counting and identifying species, analyzing chemical processes—is complemented and in the end superseded by what the narrator calls Osden's "love," his willingness to merge physically and psychologically with the environment so as to communicate with it, in a transparent allusion to the holistic, synthetic modes of thought that were being advocated as superior to conventional, analytic science in the 1960s and 1970s. "Vaster than empires," this biosphere cannot be grasped in any of its parts unless their underlying planetary connectedness is understood first.

In asking how humans might be able to relate to such a planet-wide organic "network of communications," Le Guin responds to powerful allegorizations of the global in the 1960s, from the "global village" to "Spaceship Earth," and to some extent participates in their romanticizations of global connectedness as mergers with a technological or ecological sublime. Yet it is impossible to overlook that her short story also complicates such romanticizations, in that the global organism presents itself to the human observers as thoroughly alien, a world far from their own in both space and time. Osden's merger with it—enabled, it is worth noting, by psychopathology—comes at the price of his individual identity, while the other explorers remain just visitors who return to their own planets after a few months. Far from idyllic or utopian, the biosphere's total connectedness is what makes it even more strange than its remoteness or its unfamiliar species. Humans have no "natural" way of relating to such sentient connectivity, in whose context they themselves appear as alien Others. All the terms—cognitive, affective, and linguistic—by means of which they approach the planet have to be questioned as to whether they do not unduly project the terms of a quite different biological frame of reference, as one of the scientists implies when he refers to the tree-like plants of this "'totally alien environment, for which the archetypical connotations of the word 'forest' provide an inevitable metaphor.'"[7] Rather than describing awareness of the global biosphere as a reassuring (re)turn to Mother Earth, Le Guin's story portrays it as a difficult and thoroughly mediated step for the human imagination.

2. Sense of Planet

In spite of their conceptual differences, what all of these ecological allegories share in common is a sense that the Earth's inhabitants, regardless of their national and cultural differences, are bound together by a global ecosystem whose functioning transcends humanmade



David A. Hardy, Fairyland of Fungi from the illustration series “Galactic Tours,” 1981. Gouache on illustration board. Image courtesy of the author. This illustration originally prompted a short story by science-fiction writer Bob Shaw.

A geodesic greenhouse dome is featured in the environmentally themed sci-fi movie Silent Runner, 1972. In the film, all plant life on Earth has become extinct and the remaining species have to be grown in outer space.

borders. It is easy to see how such a conception of ecology, derived from an attempt to practice science in a more synthetic and holistic fashion, lent itself to extrapolation into the political and social sphere. Countercultural aspirations toward global peace and the "brotherhood of man" could effortlessly be associated with the image of the Blue Planet and indeed be understood to derive directly from the planet's ecological functioning. Ecological systems, in this understanding, are naturally balanced, harmonious, and self-regenerating, and much of the utopian energy of the 1960s derived implicitly or explicitly from the inference that sociocultural systems might also return to such a state if they were freed from artificial constraints and distortions. Whatever the critiques one might want to formulate vis-à-vis this understanding of ecology and its sociocultural ramifications from the perspective of current cultural theory—justifiably much more suspicious of such notions of the natural—one cannot underestimate the galvanizing influence such thinking exerted on the burgeoning environmentalist movement, as well as on other new social movements in the 1960s.

But as Garrett Hardin's 1963 warning about the possible "tragedy" of the global commons already indicates, visions of global connectedness did not always entail utopian sociocultural projects. Paul R. Ehrlich's *Population Bomb,* Donella and Dennis Meadows's *Limits to Growth,* and Lester Brown's *Twenty-Ninth Day,* on the contrary, emphasized the possibility of catastrophic collapse on a planetary scale if contemporary trends in demographic growth, resource use, and pollution continued. The widespread use of apocalyptic narrative in environmentalist rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s is well documented,[8] as is the transfer of Cold War language to environmentalist scenarios in Ehrlich's metaphorization of population growth as a "bomb" or Rachel Carson's description of chemical pollution as a "grim specter stalk[ing] the land."[9] Environmentally oriented science fiction stories, by both scientists like Paul Ehrlich himself and literary authors, similarly portrayed global agricultural landscapes gone so toxic they could only be worked by robots (as in Brian Aldiss's 1967 *Earthworks),* nightmarish urban crowding, food riots, and famine (in a multitude of texts and films), or the entire planet laid to waste in misery, pollution, and disease (as in John Brunner's 1972 novel *The Sheep Look Up).* As Killingsworth and Palmer have pointed out, the horror of such millennial scenarios was in many cases intended less as a probable assessment of things to come than as a means of driving home the urgency of the environmentalist call for social change [10]; the presentation of collapse as global rather than local or national functioned as one important way of conveying the deadly seriousness of the crisis.

If nuclear fear and environmental concern shared such narrative patterns, derived in the last instance from biblical apocalypse, a more subtle but no less terrifying vision of global connectedness emerged from fears of corporate conspiracy that had circulated since the 1950s and made themselves explicit in the countercultural resistance to "the Man" or "the System." While social critics in earlier decades had emphasized the dangers of totalitarian states that might expand to worldwide rule, from the 1950s on, transnational corporations became the prime suspects of aspirations to global hegemony. Anticipated in novels such as Cyril Kornbluth and Frederik Pohl's *Space Merchants* (1953), this fear found its most influential cultural expression in the indictments of the corporate "moloch" and characters' persistently paranoid states of mind in the poetry and fiction of Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and above all, Thomas Pynchon. As a form of resistance to capitalism and specifically to the mass consumerism that escalated in scale and scope after 1945, this paranoid vision of a global corporate conspiracy aiming to control the lives of individuals, communities, and nations, up to and including the triggering of world wars, was not in its original formulations specifically environmentalist. But it made its way into environmental rhetoric in the 1970s, when it surfaced in, for example, Edward Abbey's ecoclassic *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), whose protagonists struggle against what they perceive as a "megalomaniacal megamachine":

> U.S. Steel intertwined in incestuous embrace with the Pentagon, TVA, Standard Oil, General Dynamics, Dutch Shell, I.G. Farben-industrie [sic]; the whole conglomerated cartel spread out upon half the planet Earth like a global kraken, pan-tentacled, wall-eyed and parrot-beaked, its brain a bank of computer data centers, its blood the flow of money, its heart a radioactive dynamo.[11]

Part of today's antiglobalization rhetoric, with its

allegorization of villainous transnational corporations, descends directly from this corporate conspiracy discourse of the 1960s and 1970s. This intensely ambivalent legacy of global visions may help explain why the environmentalist movement today is uneasily extended from organizations that operate internationally and regularly make their voices heard in global political affairs using the diplomatic, economic, legal, and social languages of international institutions, all the way to a fervently antiglobalist wing of activists who demonstrate in the streets against the actions of precisely such institutions. The current political influence of international environmental nongovernmental organizations depends on their willingness to engage in and shape global processes in view of environmentalist goals, while the running battles of activists against the police at the Seattle World Summit in 1999 and the G8 Summit in Genoa in 2001 reflect a different assessment of globalization as dominated by corporate interests and therefore in need of being vigorously resisted. While the term "antiglobalization movement" has become popular in the media, many activists prefer the terms "anti–global capitalism movement" or "global justice movement," as they seek to foreground their opposition to the way politics has been dominated by transnational corporations.

But while this ambivalence of engagement in and resistance to the global, as I have shown, has a history that is several decades old, both the apocalyptic and the utopian dimensions of environmentalist visions of the planet have substantially weakened. Frederick Buell has persuasively demonstrated how the expectation of future collapse, prevalent in the 1960s, has transmuted into an awareness of ongoing crisis in the present.[12]Instead of anticipating disaster, he argues, most populations have learned to live with, and sometimes to accommodate to, a multitude of daily ecological risk scenarios. Utopian hopes have diminished along with all-encompassing millennial visions. Attempts to project a future course for the planet under the label "sustainable development," widely discussed since the 1987 Brundtland Report, and more recent revisions of the development philosophy that undergirded this notion in the context of "environmental justice," are themselves contested and have not to date generated the kind of powerful images that dominated the debates of the 1960s and 1970s.[13] To the extent that most environmentalists see the world as unified today, it is either as a world dominated by corporate capitalism or as a world at risk.

3. Localism and Modernity: The Ethic of Proximity

Environmental justice activists have often taken issue with the underlying assumptions of race, class, and gender that tend to be taken for granted in the environmental ethics of white, male, middle-class writers, including Wendell Berry and Scott Russell Sanders. They have rightly emphasized not only that the privileges of encounters with nature as well as the risks associated with some branches of agribusiness and industry are unevenly distributed but that in fact this uneven distribution has in some instances helped to perpetuate environmentally unsound practices whose consequences have often not been suffered or even noticed by the middle class.[14] Given the environmental justice movement's leftist, antihegemonic, and radical political rhetoric, it comes as somewhat of a surprise to find one environmental justice ecocritic deploring how "globalization ... alters traditional values of place, life, and meaning" and "trigger[s] ... chaos,"[15] as if tradition and order were self-evidently worth perpetuating, and to see others relying on conceptions of place-based identity that do not differ from those of the white, male, middle-class environmentalists they criticize as much as one might expect. [...]

I would argue, then, that in spite of significant differences in social outlook, certain features recur across a wide variety of environmentalist perspectives that emphasize a sense of place as a basic prerequisite for environmental awareness and activism. Many of them, as I have attempted to show, associate spatial closeness, cognitive understanding, emotional attachment, and an ethic of responsibility and "care." Put somewhat more abstractly, they share what philosophers Hans Jonas and Zygmunt Bauman, as well as the sociologist John Tomlinson, have in a broader context called an "ethic of proximity." As Bauman puts it,

> the morality which we have inherited from pre-modern times—the only morality we have—is a morality of proximity, and as such is woefully inadequate in a society in which all important action is an action on distance ... Moral responsibility prompts us to care that our children are fed, clad and shod; it cannot offer us much practical advice, however, when faced with numbing images of a depleted, desiccated and overheated planet which our children, and the children of our children will inherit and have to inhabit in the direct or oblique result of our collective unconcern.[16]

Bauman sums up the dilemma that this approach to ethics raises in an increasingly global context by claiming that

> the cancelling of spatial distance as measured by the reach of human action—that sometimes applauded, but ever more often bewailed feat of modern technology—has not been matched by the cancellation of moral distance, measured by the reach of moral responsibility; but it should be so matched. The question is, how this can be done, if at all.[17]

Ad campaign against pollution evoking American Indians as environmentally conscious. This campaign was notorious for featuring "Iron Eyes" Cody, a Hollywood actor of Italian origin who was frequently cast as an American Indian.

This skepticism as to whether an ethical code based on what is geographically or socially nearby will be able to cope with larger contexts such as the nation or the transnational realm is echoed by many environmentalist thinkers. The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, for example, a highly influential figure for American environmentalism, declares categorically that "the nearer has priority over the more remote—in space, time, culture, species."[18] His call for "a coherent, local, logical, and natural community"[19] assumes, as do many other celebrations of the sense of place, that sociocultural, ethical, and affective allegiances arise spontaneously and "naturally" at the local level, whereas any attachments to larger entities such as the nation or beyond require complex processes of mediation.

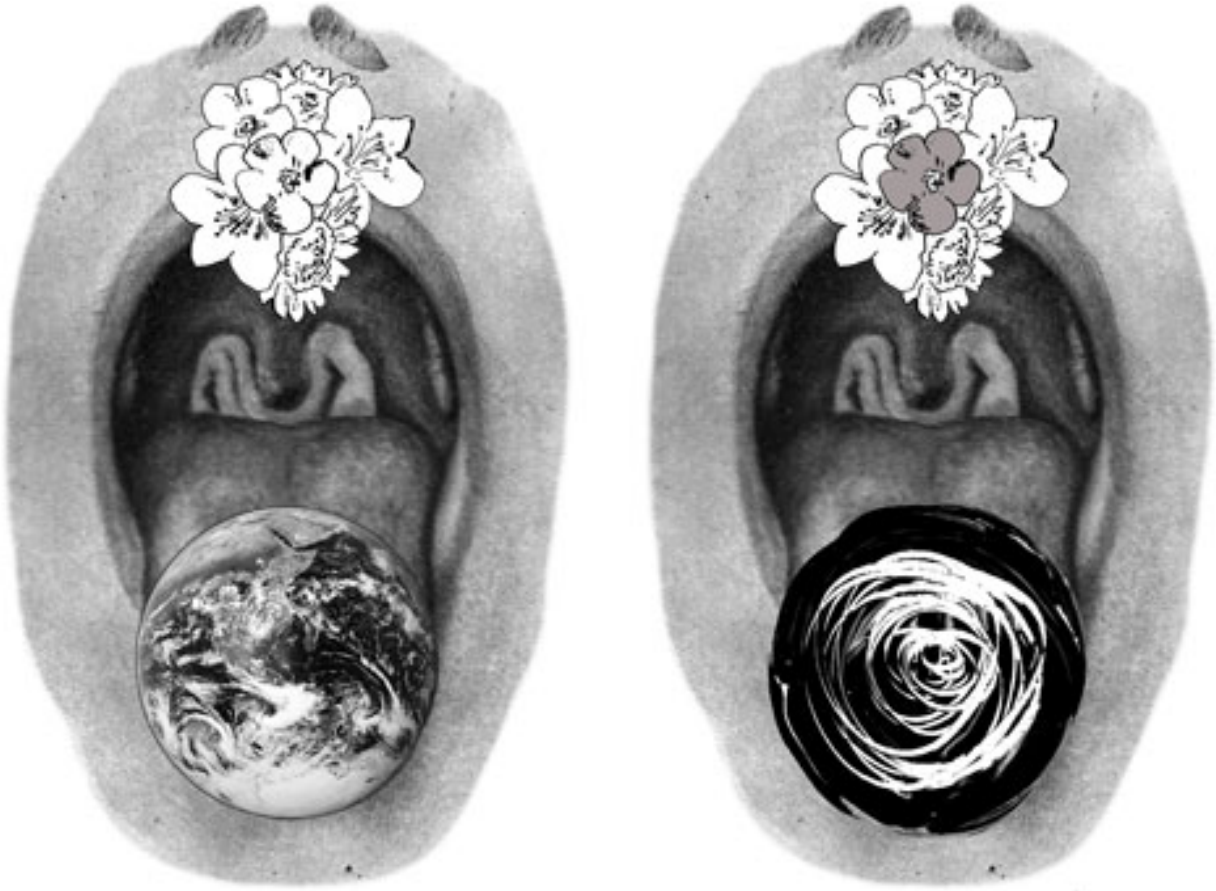
Frequently, the assumption that there can be no compelling ethical interpellation other than that of proximity becomes the foundation for a more general critique of modern sociopolitical structures in environmentalist thought, a deep-seated skepticism vis-à-vis the long-distance, mediated, and abstract structures and institutions that shape modern societies. Naess himself is quite explicit about his rejection of social modernity: "Locality and togetherness in the sense of community are central key terms in the deep ecological movement. There is, so to say, an 'instinctive' reaction against being absorbed in something that is big but not great—something like our modern society."[20] For this reason, the bioregionalist movement, which is heavily indebted to Naess, has consistently advocated a geographical, political, and economic reorganization of nations into bioregions whose boundaries would follow ecological dividing lines like climate zones, species distribution, watersheds, or mountain ranges. Such a reorganization, according to prominent bioregionalist Kirkpatrick Sale, would liberate people from the large-scale social structures that interpose themselves between people's actions and the visibility of their consequences:

> The only way people will apply "right behavior" and behave in responsible ways is if they have been persuaded to see the problem concretely and to understand their own connections to it directly—and this can be done only at a limited scale ... People will do the environmentally "correct" thing not because it is thought to be the *moral,* but rather the *practical,* thing to do. That cannot be done on a global scale, nor a continental, nor even a national one, because the human animal, being small and limited, has only a small view of the world and a limited comprehension of how to act within it.[21]

Sale's central idea, that the ecologically right course of

action will impose itself as the obvious one at the local but not at larger levels of scale, may seem something short of compelling to anyone who has ever engaged in local politics (a point I will return to later). What persuasive power it has surely derives from its widely shared mistrust of the large-scale, abstract, and often invisible networks of authority, expertise, and exchange that structure modern societies.[22]

citizenship, far from coming naturally, is painstakingly established and safeguarded through a multiplicity of political, social, and cultural practices and procedures. As anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has argued, this is even and especially the case in premodern tribal communities: against a view of such communities as more spontaneously and directly bonded to place than modern societies, Appadurai insists that on the contrary, elaborate rituals of home building, gardening, or initiation can all be



Robert Sandler, Presque Vu, 2012.

4. Sense of Place

The idea of the "cultural construction" of place similarly revolves around the assumption that places are not simply given in advance of human understanding, but its emphasis lies more on the cultural practices of particular communities in creating them than on the mechanisms of capitalist economies. Both the characters of particular places and the modes of belonging to them are defined by human intervention and cultural history more than by natural processes, cultural constructionists argue; local

read as strategies to define an always uncertain and embattled local citizenship rather than as signs of its self-evidence and stability.[23] More broadly, the basic goal of work in cultural studies for the last twenty years has been to analyze and, in most cases, to dismantle appeals to "the natural" or "the biological" by showing their groundedness in cultural practices rather than facts of nature. The thrust of this work, therefore, invariably leads to skepticism about the possibility of returning to nature as such, or of the possibility of places defined in terms of

their natural characteristics that humans should relate to.

A somewhat different, but related, set of criticisms has emphasized not so much the difficulties of defining the local as the ambivalent ethical and political consequences that might follow from encouraging attachments to place. In the passage quoted earlier, for example, Kirkpatrick Sale assumes that at the local and regional level, environmentalist considerations will simply impose themselves as the most "practical" course of action because people will be directly aware of and affected by the consequences of their decisions. But it remains unclear why this would be the case. Surely in a local or regional context, decision-makers have to weigh different kinds of "practicalities" against each other just as those in national or transnational contexts do: the interests of different social groups, short-term versus long-term practicalities, the interests of present versus future generations, diverging predictions of what consequences a particular course of action might entail, competition between different interests the community holds in common (e.g. the need for access to transportation vs. the interest in preserving natural areas), and so on. Since many such decisions depend on value judgments about the kind of community and environment that are considered most desirable, and on courses of action whose outcome cannot be predicted with complete certainty, "practical" reason of the kind Sale postulates cannot function as an unambiguous guide for how communities should reconnect to nature. A change in scale from large to small entities, therefore, does not in and of itself guarantee anything in the way of more ecologically sustainable modes of living. The history of environmental politics includes many examples of local communities voting in favor of their own economic interest and against environmental preservation, decisions that have sometimes been overruled by a national community with fewer direct gains to hope for from development or exploitation of local resources. Similarly, supranational entities such as the European Union have in some cases passed environmental laws whose stringency exceeds national and local ones.

As quite a few critics of deep ecology have pointed out, in addition, one of the risks in attempting to derive political and ethical norms and imperatives directly from nature is that of underestimating the diversity of political projects at whose service such derivations can be put. The most extreme and frequently quoted example is no doubt the National Socialist rhetoric of Germans' natural connectedness to "blood and soil" (Blut und Boden), which helped legitimate fascist political structures, military expansion of the "life space" (Lebensraum), and unprecedented violence both within and outside what was claimed to be Germans' legitimate space of domination in the 1930s and 1940s.[24] But there is no need to rely only on this in many ways extraordinary case to argue that a sense of place can lend equal support to both conservative and progressive politics. [...] The political consequences of encouraging people to develop a sense of place, therefore, are far from straightforward and predictable, and environmentalists need to be aware that place awareness can be deployed in the service of political ideals they may not judge desirable. There is nothing in the idea of localism itself that guarantees its connection with the grassroots-democratic and egalitarian politics that many environmentalists envision when they advocate place-based communities.

5. Deterritorialization and Eco-Cosmopolitanism

In the later 1990s, as discussions of globalization spread from the social sciences to the humanities, studies of the relationship of identity to various kinds of space also shifted in emphasis to concepts such as "transnationalism" or "critical internationalism." Theorists from a variety of fields, at the same time, began to recuperate the term "cosmopolitanism" as a way of imagining forms of belonging beyond the local and the national. Philosophers Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum, anthropologists James Clifford and Aihwa Ong, sociologists Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Ulf Hannerz, and John Tomlinson, political scientists Patrick Hayden, David Held, and Anthony McGrew, as well as literary critics such as Homi Bhabha, Pheng Cheah, Walter Mignolo, and Bruce Robbins, among others, have all engaged with this notion in the attempt to free it from the connotations of social privilege and leisure travel that accompanied it in earlier periods. While there are considerable differences in the way these theorists rethink cosmopolitanism, they share with earlier theorists of hybridity and diaspora the assumption that there is nothing natural or self-evident about attachments to the nation, which are on the contrary established, legitimized, and maintained by complex cultural practices and institutions. But rather than seeking the grounds of resistance to nationalisms and nation-based identities in local communities or groups whose mobility places them at the borders of national identity, these theorists strive to model forms of cultural imagination and understanding that reach beyond the nation and around the globe. In one way or another, all of them are concerned with the question of how we might be able to develop cultural forms of identity and belonging that are commensurate with the rapid growth in political, economic, and social interconnectedness that has characterized the last few decades.

Cogent as this reasoning is in its search for new forms of transnational cultural identity, it has not gone unchallenged. Historian Arif Dirlik, literary critic Timothy Brennan, and other theorists have recently reemphasized the value of local and national identities as forms of resistance to some dimensions of globalization. Critiques of the "essentialism" of local identities and of national belonging, Dirlik and Brennan argue, omit consideration of the ways localism and nationalism can serve progressive

political objectives and legitimate emancipatory projects, especially in the developing world and in a context of rapid economic globalization.[25] Several recent anthologies—Prazniak and Dirlik's *Places and Politics in the A g e of Globalization,* Mirsepassi, Basu, and Weaver's *Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World,* or Jasanoff and Martello's *Earthly Politics,* for example—all seek to revalidate local and national foundations of identity as a means of resisting the imperialist dimensions of globalization.

With this wave of counter-critiques, the theoretical debate has arrived at a conceptual impasse: while some theorists criticize nationally based forms of identity and hold out cosmopolitan identifications as a plausible and politically preferable alternative, other scholars emphasize the importance of holding on to national and local modes of belonging as a way of resisting the imperialism of some forms of globalization. Fredric Jameson sums up this quandary when he highlights how local and regional identities used to be pitched against the homogenizing force of the nation, only to point out that

> when one positions the threats of Identity at a higher level globally, then everything changes: at this upper range, it is not national state power that is the enemy of difference, but rather the transnational system itself, Americanization and the standardized products of a henceforth uniform and standardized ideology and practice of consumption. At this point, nation-states and their national cultures are suddenly called upon to play the positive role hitherto assigned—against them—to regions and local practices ... And as opposed to the multiplicity of local and regional markets, minority arts and languages, whose vitality can certainly be acknowledged all over the world uneasily coexisting with the vision ... of their universal extinction, it is striking to witness the resurgence—in an atmosphere in which the nation-state as such, let alone "nationalism," is a much maligned entity and value—of defenses of national culture on the part of those who affirm the powers of resistance of a national literature and a national art.[26]

This conflict between a conceptualization of national identity as either an oppressive hegemonic discourse or a tool for resistance to global imperialism, and of local identity as either an essentialist myth or a promising site of struggle against both national and global domination, leads Arif Dirlik even more pointedly to declare a theoretical stalemate. He acknowledges the

> intractability of the problem ... with existing discussions of place/space in which the defense and the repudiation of place both carry considerable theoretical plausibility and for that same reason seem in their opposition to be confined within a theoretical world of their own out of which there is no exit that is to be revealed by theory.[27]

If Dirlik falls prey to a rather comical non sequitur by following up this categorical rejection of a theoretical solution with a sustained theoretical defense of place—against his own suggestion that the entire discussion should be shifted to the level of specific case studies—he and Jameson nevertheless accurately pinpoint the conceptual contradictions in many current discourses about place. It might be more useful to think of such contradictions as a starting point for reflecting on the kinds of categories and abstractions that are commonly used in cultural theory than to reject them wholesale, since such rejection would presumably lead back to the theory resistance and hyper-specific analyses of detail that were already rehearsed (and later abandoned) in cultural studies in the early 1990s. But Dirlik is surely right that no obvious theoretical solution presents itself to the conceptual dilemmas in current theories regarding the relationship of identity and place.

Such problems in rethinking the relation of local inhabitation to global citizenship are by no means limited to environmentalist rhetoric but have surfaced in a variety of fields from identity politics to globalization theories. Several waves of debate about notions involving rootedness in the local or the nation on the one hand and concepts such as diaspora, nomadism, hybridity, *mestizaje,* borderlands, and exile on the other have led to an impasse, where advocacies of local and of global consciousness have achieved equal plausibility when they are formulated at an abstract theoretical level. It no longer makes sense to rely mechanically on a particular set of terms with the assumption that it always describes the ideologically preferable perspective: for example, the frequent assumption that hybridity is inherently preferable to claims to cultural authenticity, that an emphasis on migration and diaspora is superior to one on rootedness or, conversely, that nomadism is destructive while place attachments are not. But acknowledging this impasse does not imply that such arguments no longer make sense or that they have become superfluous in specific political and discursive contexts.

In Le Guin's "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," Osden, after becoming enveloped by World 4470's "vegetable fear," realizes the only way to break the humans' self-sustaining feedback loop with their new environment is either to leave the planet and thereby abort the mission or self-sacrifice. He chooses the latter, venturing into the forest on his own with a conscious effort to absorb rather than reflect back its fear, and to transmit the humans' absence of hostility. Doing so implies that he has to disrupt the psychic mechanisms that have allowed

him to survive in human company, and he therefore remains in the forest when the rest of the expedition returns to Earth, merging with an intelligence that, in his perception, "'know[s] the whole daylight ... and the whole night. All the winds and lulls together. The winter stars and the summer stars at the same time. To have roots, and no enemies. To be entire ... No invasion. No others. To be whole.'"[28] The team members, for the rest of their stay, live immersed in this sentient environment whose planet-encompassing existence is unimaginably alien to their own:

> The people of the Survey team walked under the trees, through the vast colonies of life, surrounded by a dreaming silence, a brooding calm that was half aware of them and wholly indifferent to them. There were no hours. Distance was no matter. Had we but world enough and time ... The planet turned between the sunlight and the great dark; winds of winter and summer blew fine, pale pollen across the quiet seas.[29]

X

This text is an edited excerpt from the chapter "From the Blue Planet to Google Earth: Environmentalism, Ecocriticism, and the Imagination of the Global" in Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Ursula K. Heise is a Professor of English at UCLA and a faculty member of UCLA's Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IoES). She is a 2011 Guggenheim Fellow and was President of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) in 2011. Her research and teaching focus on contemporary environmental culture, literature and art in the Americas, Western Europe and Japan; theories of globalization; literature and science; and the digital humanities.

1
Ursula K. Le Guin, "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," in *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences* (New York: Plume, 1987), 97.

2
Ibid., 113.

3
Ibid., 118.

4
Ibid., 122.

5
Ibid., 127.

6
In the 1987 introduction to the story, Le Guin does not mention Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis explicitly but does refer to "Deo, Demeter, the grain-mother, and her daughter/self Kore the Maiden called Persephone" as ancient mythological paradigms for envisioning humans' relationship to the plant world. See ibid, 83.

7
Ibid., 115.

8
For detailed analyses of this rhetoric, see Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 85–107; Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 280–308; Jimmie M. Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, "Millennial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from Silent Spring to Global Warming," in *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* , eds. Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); and Frederick Buell, From *Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 177–208.

9
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 3.

10
Killingsworth and Palmer, "Millennial Ecology," 41.

11
Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (New York: Perennial, 2000), 167, 172. Shell and IG Farben also figured prominently in Pynchon's vision of corporate conspiracy in *Gravity's Rainbow* , published only two years before *The Monkey Wrench Gang* .

12
Buell, From *Apocalypse to Way of Life* , 177–208.

13
For a more detailed summary of the debates about the notion of human and/or economic development that surround these terms, see Patrick Hayden, *Cosmopolitan Global Politics* (Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), 121–51.

14
See T. V. Reed, "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism," in *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy* , eds. Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 151.

15
Julie Sze, "From Environmental Justice Literature to the Literature of Environmental Justice," in *The Environmental Justice Reader* , 168.

16
Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, 217–18.

17
Ibid., 219.

18
Arne Naess, "Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological NAttitudes," in *Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Tobias (San Diego: Avant Books, 1985), 268.

19
Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* , trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 144.

20
Ibid.

21
Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land* , 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 53.

22
This opposition to modernity as a general sociopolitical structure is also clearly articulated by some environmentalist thinkers who draw on more leftist traditions of thought. British philosopher Mick Smith argues that "radical environmentalism is engaged in a fundamental critique of modernism; its alternative culture challenges modern life to its very core." (Smith, *An Ethics of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity, and Social Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, 164–65). Yet in Smith's thought, "place" is quite deliberately used as an ambiguous concept that sometimes refers to actual localities (as in his discussion of the British antiroads movement) and sometimes to a more general reliance on the concrete rather than on abstract categories.

23
Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 183–86.

24
Janet Biehl, "'Ecology' and the Modernization of Fascism in the German UltraRight," in *Society and Nature* 1 (1993): 131–33; Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, Ecofascism: *Lessons from the German Experience* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995); Anna Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's "Green Party"* (Bourne End, Buckinghamshire, England: Kensal Press, 1985).

25
Arif Dirlik, "Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place," in *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization* , eds. Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 35–42; Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 44–65.

26
Fredric Jameson, "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," in *The Cultures of Globalization* , eds. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 74–75.

27
Dirlik, "Place-Based Imagination," 23–24.

28
Le Guin, "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," 123.

29
Ibid., 127.

Boris Groys

Entering the Flow: Museum between Archive and Gesamtkunstwerk

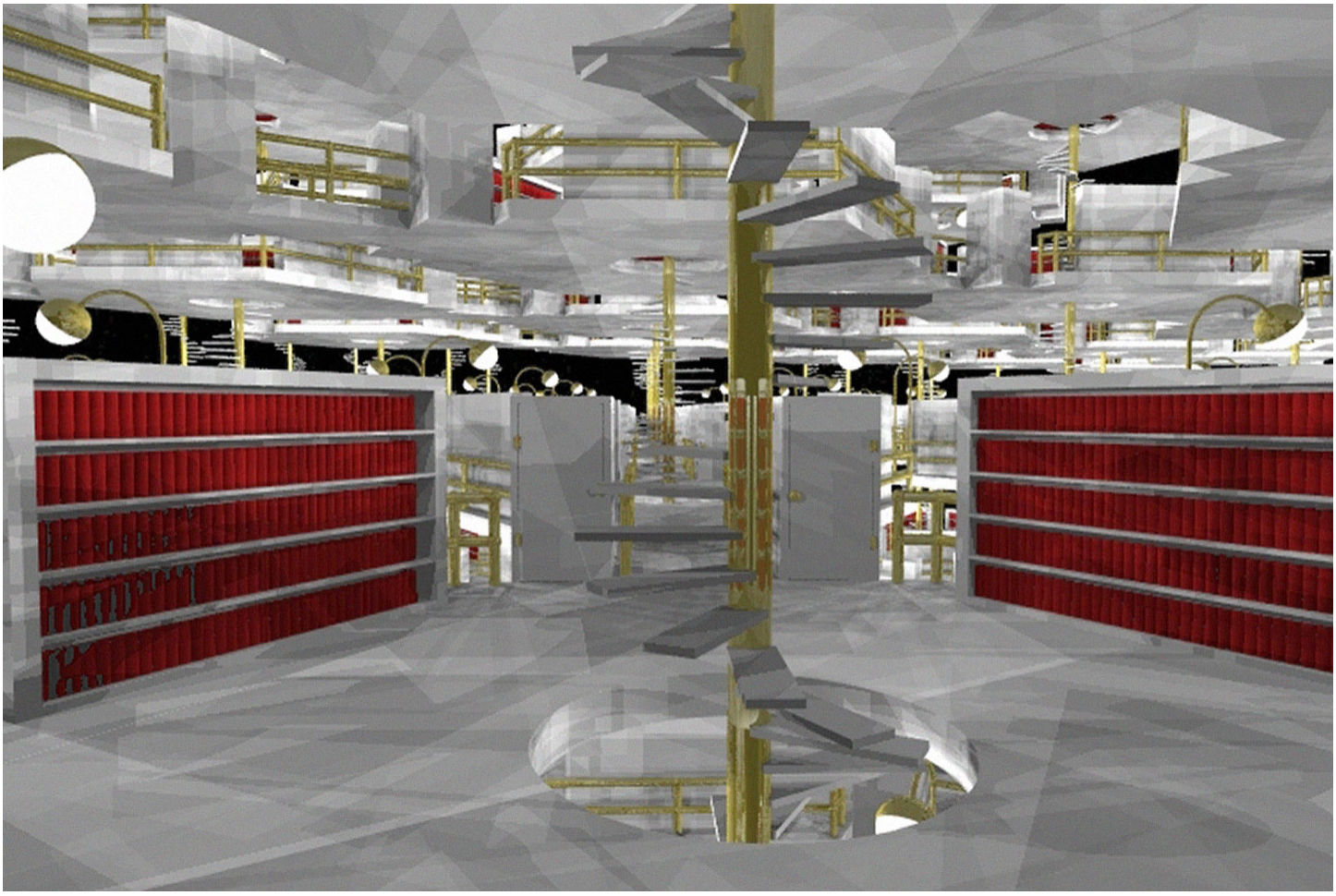
Traditionally, the main occupation of art was to resist the flow of time. Public art museums and big private art collections were created to select certain objects—the artworks—take them out of private and public use, and therefore immunize them against the destructive force of time. Thus, our art museums became huge garbage cans of history in which things were kept and exhibited that had no use anymore in real life: sacral images of past religions or status objects of past lifestyles. During a long period of art history, artists also participated in this struggle against the destructive force of time. They wanted to create artworks that would be able to transcend time by embodying eternal ideals of beauty or, at least, by becoming the medium of historical memory, by acting as witnesses to events, tragedies, hopes, and projects that otherwise would have been forgotten. In this sense, artists and art institutions shared a fundamental project to resist material destruction and historical oblivion.

Art museums, in their traditional format, were based on the concept of a universal art history. Accordingly, their curators selected artworks that seemed to be of universal relevance and value. These selective practices, and especially their universalist claims, have been criticized in recent decades in the name of the specific cultural identities that they ignored and even suppressed. We no longer believe in universalist, idealist, transhistorical perspectives and identities. The old, materialist way of thinking let us accept only roles rooted in the material conditions of our existence: national-cultural and regional identities, or identities based on race, class, and gender. And there are a potentially infinite number of such specific identities because the material conditions of human existence are very diverse and are permanently changing. However, in this case, the initial mission of the art museum to resist time and become a medium of mankind's memory reaches an impasse: if there is a potentially infinite number of identities and memories, the museum dissolves because it is incapable of including all of them.

While the museum emerged as a kind of secular surrogate for divine memory during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, it is merely a finite material object—unlike infinite divine memory that can, as we know, include all the identities of all people who lived in the past, live now, and will live in the future.

But is this vision of an infinite number of specific identities even correct, e.g., truly materialist? I would suggest that it is not. Materialist discourse, as initially developed by Marx and Nietzsche, describes the world in permanent movement, in flow—be it dynamics of the productive forces or Dionysian impulse. According to this materialist tradition, all things are finite—but all of them are involved in the infinite material flow. So there is a materialist universality—the universality of the flow.

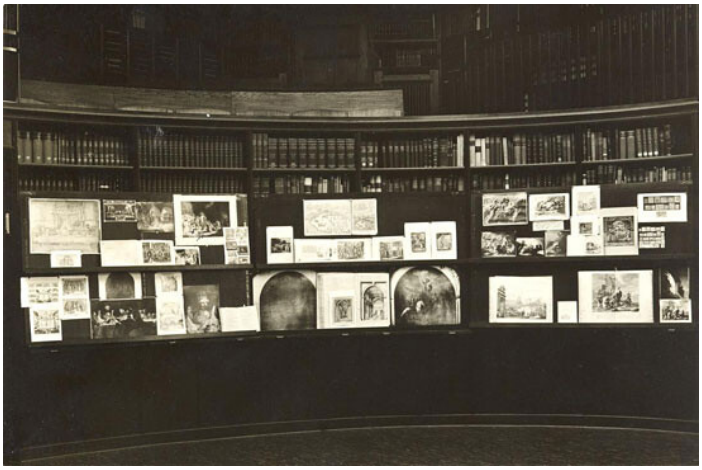
However, is it possible for a human being to enter the flow, to get access to its totality? On a certain very banal level



This illustration depicts Jorge Luis Borges's short story "The Library of Babel," which was originally published in Spanish in the collection of stories El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan (The Garden of Forking Paths), 1941.

the answer is, of course, yes: human bodies are things among other things in the world and, thus, subjected to the same universal flow. They become ill, they age, and they die. However, even if human bodies are subjected to aging, death, and dissolution in the flow of material processes, it does not mean that their inscriptions into cultural archives are also in flow. One can be born, live, and die under the same name, having the same citizenship, same CV, and same website—that means remaining the same person. Our bodies, then, are not the only material supports of our persons. From the moment of our birth we are inscribed into certain social orders—without our consent or often even knowledge of this fact. The material supports of our personality are state archives, medical records, passwords to certain internet sites, and so forth. Of course, these archives will also be destroyed by the material flow at some point in time. But this destruction takes an amount of time that is non-commensurable with our own lifetimes. Thus, there is a tension between our material, physical, corporeal mode of existence—which is temporary and subjected to time—and our inscription into cultural archives that are, even if they are also material, much more stable than our own bodies.

Traditional art museums are a part of these cultural archives—even if they claim to represent the subjectivity, personality, and individuality of artists in a more immediate and richer way than other cultural archives are capable of doing. Art museums, like all other cultural archives, operate by restoration and conservation. Again: artworks as specific material objects—as art bodies, so to speak—are perishable. But this cannot be said about them as publicly accessible, visible forms. If its material support decays and dissolves, the form of a particular artwork can be restored or copied and placed on a different material base. The history of art demonstrates both these substitutions of old supports by new supports and the efforts of restoration and reconstruction. Thus, the individual form of an artwork insofar as it is inscribed in the archives of art history remains intact—only marginally affected by material flux, if at all. And we believe that it is precisely this form that, after the artist's death, somehow manifests his or her soul—or at least a certain zeitgeist or certain cultural identity that has disappeared.



A photograph of Aby M. Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas features the Boards of the Rembrandt Exhibition, 1926.

We can thus say that the traditional art system is based on desynchronizing the time of the individual, material human existence from the time of its cultural representation. However, the artists of the historical avant-garde and later some artists of the 1960s and 1970s already tried to resynchronize the fate of the human body with the mode of its historical representation—to embrace the precariousness, instability, and finiteness of our material existence. Not to resist the flow of time, but to let it define one's own artwork, to pursue a certain self-propelled fluidity, rather than trying to make the work, or oneself, into a self-eternalizing being. The idea was to make the form itself fluid. However, the following question emerges: What is the effect of this radicalized precariousness, of this will to resynchronize the living body with its cultural representation within the relationship of artists to art institutions?

I would suggest that the relationship between these entities went through two different periods: the first is enmity on the part of the artist against the art system and, especially, art museums, complete with attempts to destroy them in the name of living art. The second encompasses the slow morphing of museums themselves into a stage, on which the flow of time is performed. If we ask ourselves what institutional form the classical avant-garde proposed as a substitute for the traditional museum, the answer is clear: it is the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In other words, the total art event involving everybody and everything—as a replacement for a totalizing space of trans-temporal artistic representation of everybody and everything.

Wagner introduced the notion of the Gesamtkunstwerk in his programmatic treatise "The Art-Work of the Future" (1849–1850). Wagner wrote this text in exile, in Zurich, after the end of the revolutionary uprisings in Germany in 1848. In this text he develops a project for an artwork (of the future) that is heavily influenced by the materialist philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach. At the beginning of his treatise, Wagner states that the typical artist of his time is an egoist who, in complete isolation from the life of the people, practices his art exclusively for the enjoyment of the rich; in so doing he follows the dictates of fashion. The artist of the future, says Wagner, must become radically different: "He now can only will the universal, true, and unconditional; he yields himself not to a love for this or that particular object, but to wide *Love* itself. Thus does the egoist become a communist."[1]

Becoming communist, then, is possible only through self-renunciation—self-dissolution in the collective. Wagner defines his supposed hero as such: "The last, most complete renunciation [*Entäusserung*] of his personal egoism, the demonstration of his full ascent into universalism, a man can only show us by his *Death*; and that not by his accidental, but by his *necessary* death, the logical sequel to his actions, the last fulfillment of his being. *The celebration of such a death is the noblest thing that men can enter on*."[2] Admittedly, there remains a difference between the hero who sacrifices himself and the performer who makes this sacrifice onstage (the Gesamtkunstwerk being understood by Wagner as a musical drama). Nonetheless, Wagner insists that this difference is suspended by the Gesamtkunstwerk, for the performer "does not merely *represent* in the art-work the action of the fêted hero, but *repeats* its moral lesson; insomuch as he proves by this surrender of his personality that he also, in his artistic action, is obeying a dictate of necessity which consumes the whole individuality of his being."[3] In other words, Wagner understands the Gesamtkunstwerk precisely as a way of resynchronizing the finiteness of human existence with its cultural representation—which, in turn, also becomes finite.

All the other performers achieve their own artistic significance solely through participating in the hero's ritual of self-sacrifice. Accordingly, Wagner speaks of the hero performer as a dictator who mobilizes the collective of collaborators, with the exclusive goal of staging his own sacrifice in the name of this collective. In the sacrificial scene, the Gesamtkunstwerk finds its end—there is no continuation, no memory. In other words, there is no further role for the dictator-performer. The artistic collective dissolves, and the next Gesamtkunstwerk is created by another artistic collective, with a different dictator-performer in the main role. Here the precariousness of an individual human existence and the fluidity of working collectives are artistically embraced, and even radicalized. Historically, we know that many artistic collectives followed this model: from Hugo Ball's Cabaret Voltaire to Andy Warhol's Factory and Guy Debord's Situationist International. But the contemporary name for this temporary and suicidal dictatorship is different: the "curatorial project."

Harald Szeemann, who initiated the curatorial turn in

Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Celebration? Realife Revisited, 1972-2008, Mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view, FRAC Bordeaux. Courtesy Cabinet, London and the artist.

contemporary art, was so fascinated by the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk that he organized an exhibition called "The Tendency to Gesamtkunstwerk" ["Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk"] (1984). Considering this historical show based on the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, it becomes necessary to ask: What is the main difference between a traditional exhibition and a modern curatorial project? The traditional exhibition treats its space as anonymous and neutral. Only the exhibited artworks are important—but not the space in which they are exhibited. Thus, artworks are perceived and treated as potentially eternal—and the space of the exhibition as a contingent, accidental station where the immortal artworks take a temporary rest from their wanderings through the material world. In contrast, the installation—be it artistic or curatorial—inscribes the exhibited artworks in this contingent material space. (Here one can see an analogy between this shift and the shift from theater actor or cinema actor to the director of theater and cinema.)

The curatorial project, rather than the exhibition, is then the Gesamtkunstwerk because it instrumentalizes all the exhibited artworks and makes them serve a common purpose that is formulated by the curator. At the same time, a curatorial or artistic installation is able to include all kinds of objects: time-based artworks or processes, everyday objects, documents, texts, and so forth. All these elements, as well as the architecture of the space, sound, or light, lose their respective autonomy and begin to serve the creation of a whole in which visitors and spectators are also included. Thus, stationary artworks of the traditional sort become temporalized, subjected to a certain scenario that changes the way they are perceived during the time of the installation because this perception is dependent on the context of their presentation—and this context begins to flow. Thus, ultimately, every curatorial project demonstrates its accidental, contingent, eventful, finite character—in other words, it enacts its own precariousness.

Indeed, every curatorial project necessarily aims to contradict the normative, traditional art-historical narrative embodied by the museum's permanent collection. If such a contradiction does not take place, the curatorial project loses its legitimation. For the same reason, the next curatorial project should contradict the previous one. A

Poster for the exhibition Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk: Europäische Utopien seit 1800 (Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk: European Utopias since 1800), Zurich, Markus Raetz and Albin Uldry, designers, 1983. The Getty Research Institute, 2011.M.30. Copyright: 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ProLitteris, Zurich.

Man Ray, Waking Dream Seance, 1924.

new curator is a new dictator who erases the traces of the previous dictatorship. In this way, contemporary museums continually morph from spaces for permanent collections into stages for temporary curatorial projects—temporary Gesamtkunstwerks. And the main goal of these temporary curatorial dictatorships is to bring art collections into the flow—to make art fluid, to synchronize it with the flow of time.

As previously mentioned, at the beginning of this process of synchronization, artists wanted to destroy art museums. Malevich offers a good example of this in his short but important text "On the Museum," from 1919. At that time, the new Soviet government feared that the old Russian museums and art collections would be destroyed by civil war and the general collapse of state institutions and the economy. The Communist Party responded by trying to secure and save these collections. In his text, Malevich protested against this pro-museum policy by calling on the Soviet state to not intervene on behalf of the old art collections, because, he said, their destruction could open the path to true, living art. In particular, he wrote:

> Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy, one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of life that is born within us. In burning a corpse we obtain one gram of powder: accordingly thousands of graveyards could be accommodated on a single chemist's shelf. We can make a concession to conservatives by offering that they burn all past epochs, since they are dead, and set up one pharmacy.

Later, Malevich gives a concrete example of what he means:

> The aim [of this pharmacy] will be the same, even if people will examine the powder from Rubens and all

> his art—a mass of ideas will arise in people, and will be often more alive than actual representation (and take up less room).[4]

It is obvious that what Malevich proposes here is not merely the destruction of museums but a radical curatorial project—to exhibit the ashes of artworks instead of their corpses. And in a truly Wagnerian manner, Malevich further says that everything that "we" (meaning he and his artistic contemporaries) do is also destined for the crematorium. Of course, contemporary curators do not reduce museum collections to ashes, as Malevich suggested. But there is a good reason for that. Since Malevich's time, mankind has invented a way to place all artworks from the past on one chemist's shelf without destroying them. And this shelf is called the internet.

Indeed, the internet has transformed the museum in the same way that photography and cinema transformed painting and sculpture. Photography made the mimetic function of the traditional arts obsolete, and thus pushed these arts in a different—actually opposite—direction. Instead of reproducing and representing images of nature, art came to dissolve, deconstruct, and transform these images. The attention thus shifted from the image itself to the analysis of image production and presentation. Similarly, the internet made the museum's function of representing art history obsolete. Of course, in the case of the internet, spectators lose direct access to the original artworks—and thus the aura of authenticity gets lost. And so museum visitors are invited to undertake a pilgrimage to art museums in search of the Holy Grail of originality and authenticity.

At this point, however, one has to be reminded that according to Walter Benjamin, who originally introduced the notion of aura , artworks lost their aura precisely through their museumification. The museum already removes art objects from their original sites of inscription in the historical here and now. Thus for Benjamin, artworks that are exhibited in museums are already copies of themselves—devoid of their original aura of authenticity. In this sense, the internet, and its art-specialized websites, merely continue the process of the de-auratization of art started by art museums. Many cultural critics have therefore expected—and still expect—that public art museums will ultimately disappear, unable to compete economically with private collectors operating on the increasingly expensive art market, and be replaced by much cheaper, more accessible virtual, digitized archives.

However, the relationship between internet and museum radically changes if we begin to understand the museum not as a storage place for artworks, but rather as a stage for the flow of art events. Indeed, today the museum has ceased to be a space for contemplating non-moving things. Instead, the museum has become a place where things happen. Events staged by museums today include not only curatorial projects, but also lectures, conferences, readings, screenings, concerts, guided tours, and so forth. The flow of events inside the museum is today often faster than outside its walls. Meanwhile, we have grown accustomed to asking ourselves, what is going on in this or that museum? And to find the relevant information, we search for it on the museums' websites, but also on blogs, social media pages, Twitter, and so forth. We visit museums far less often than we visit their websites and follow their activities across the internet. And on the internet, the museum functions as a blog. So the contemporary museum does not present universal art history, but rather its own history—as a chain of events staged by the museum itself. But most importantly: the internet relates to the museum in the mode of documentation, not in the mode of reproduction. Of course, the museums' permanent collections can be reproduced on the internet, but the museum's activities can only be recorded.

Indeed, one cannot reproduce a curatorial project; one can only document it. The reason for this is twofold. First, the curatorial project is an event, and one cannot reproduce an event because it cannot be isolated from the flow of time. An artwork can be reproduced because it has an atemporal status from the beginning, but the process of the production and exposure of this artwork can only be documented. Second, curatorial and artistic installation is a Gesamtkunstwerk that can be experienced only from within. The traditional artwork is perceived from an outside position, but an artistic event is experienced from a position inside the space in which this event takes place. In this way, visitors to a curatorial or artistic installation enter the space of the installation and then begin to position themselves inside this space, to experience it from within rather than from without. However, the movement of a camera can never fully coincide with the movement of an individual visitor's gaze—as the position of a painter or a photographer making a reproduction of a painting coincides with the gaze of an average spectator. And if any form of documentation attempts to reconstruct the inner view and experience of an art event from different positions, it necessarily becomes fragmentary. That is why we can re-cognize the traditional reproduction of an artwork but are never able to fully re-cognize the documentation of an art event.

Nowadays, one speaks time and again about the theatralization of the museum. Indeed, in our time people come to exhibition openings in the same way as they went to opera and theater premieres in the past. This theatralization of the museum is often criticized because it might be seen as a sign of the museum's involvement in the contemporary entertainment industry. However, there is a crucial difference between the installation space and the theatrical space. In the theater, spectators remain in an outside position vis-à-vis the stage, but in the museum

This film still shows the author and narrator John Berger, from the TV series Ways of Seeing, 1972.

they enter the stage, and find themselves inside the spectacle.

Thus, the contemporary museum realizes the modernist dream that the theater itself was never able to fully realize—of a theater in which there is no clear boundary between the stage and the space of the audience. Even if Wagner speaks about the Gesamtkunstwerk as an event that erases the border between stage and audience, the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth that was built under the direction of Wagner did not erase this border but, rather, radicalized it. Contemporary theater, including Bayreuth, uses more and more art, especially contemporary art, on stage—but it still does not erase the difference between stage and audience. The inclusion of contemporary installation art remains inscribed in the traditional scenography. However, in the context of an artistic and curatorial installation, the public is integrated into the installation space to become part of it.

The same can be said about mass entertainment. A pop concert or a film screening creates communities among those in attendance. However, mass culture itself cannot make these communities self-reflective—cannot thematize the event of building these transitory, precarious, contingent communities. The perspective of the audience during a pop concert or movie screening is too forward-directed—to the stage or screen—for them to adequately perceive and reflect upon the space in which they find themselves, or the communities to which they temporarily belong. That is the kind of reflection that advanced art installation allows us to achieve. To borrow Marshall McLuhan's vocabulary, the medium of installation is a cool medium—unlike the internet, which is obviously a hot medium, because it requires users to be spatially separated and to concentrate their attention on a screen. By cooling down all other media, contemporary art installation offers visitors the possibility of self-reflection—and of reflection upon the immediate

Two Boys, an opera by Nico Muhly, attempts to portray a murder in cyberspace.

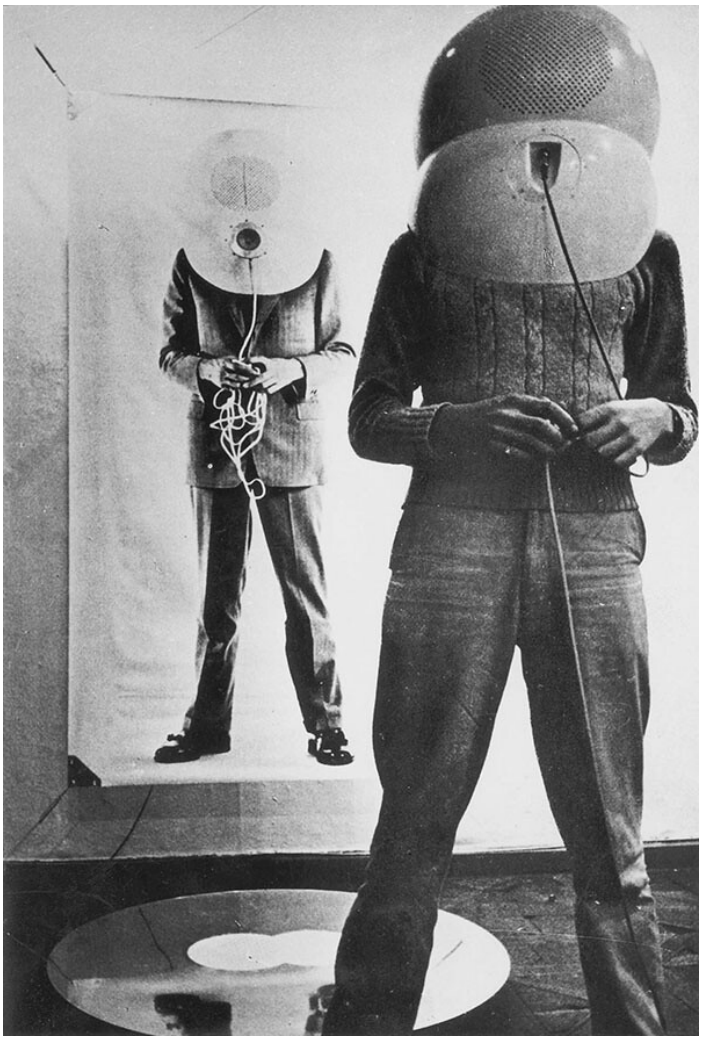
event of their coexistence with other visitors and exhibited objects—that other media are unable to offer to the same degree. Here, individual human beings are confronted with their common fate—with the radically contingent, transitory, precarious conditions of their existence.

Actually, the traditional museum as a place of things, and not events, can be equally accused of functioning as part of the art market. This kind of criticism is easy to formulate—and it is universal enough to be applied to any possible artistic strategy. But as we know, the traditional museum did not only display certain things and images; it also allowed theoretical reflection and analysis of them by means of historical comparison. Modern art has not merely produced things and images; it has also analyzed the thingness of things and the structure of the image. In addition, the art museum does not only stage events—it is also a medium for investigating the event, its boundaries, and its structure. If classical modern art investigated and analyzed the thingness of things, contemporary art begins to do the same in relation to events—to critically analyze the eventfulness of events. This investigation takes different forms, but it seems to me that its focal point is reflection on the relationship between event and its documentation—analogous to the reflection on the relationship between an original and its reproduction that was central to the art of modernism and postmodernism. Today, the amount of art documentation is permanently growing. One also begins to document performances, actions, exhibitions, lectures, concerts, and artistic projects that become more and more important in the framework of contemporary art.

One begins also to document the work of artists who produce artworks in a more traditional manner because they increasingly use the internet, or at least a personal computer, during their working process. And this offers the possibility of following the whole process of art production from its beginning to its end, since the use of digital techniques is observable. Here the traditional boundary between art production and art display begins to be erased. Traditionally, the artist produced an artwork in his or her studio, hidden from public view, and then exhibited a result, a product—an artwork that accumulated and recuperated the time of absence. This time of temporary absence is constitutive for what we call the creative process—in fact, it is precisely what we call the creative process.

André Breton tells a story about a French poet who, when he went to sleep, put on his door a sign that read: “Please, be quiet—the poet is working.” This anecdote summarizes the traditional understanding of creative work: creative work is creative because it takes place beyond public control—and even beyond the conscious control of the author. This time of absence could last days, months, years—even a whole lifetime. Only at the end of this period

of absence was the author expected to present a work (maybe found in his papers posthumously) that would then be accepted as creative precisely because it seemed to emerge out of nothingness.



Walter Pichler, Small Room (Prototype 4), 1967. The image features a prototype of a wearable TV helmet.

However, the internet and the computer in general are collective, observable, surveillable working places. We tend to speak about the internet in terms of an infinite data flow that transcends the limits of our control. But, in fact, the internet is a machine to stop and reverse data flow. The unobservability of the internet is a myth. The medium of the internet is electricity. And the supply of electricity is finite. So the internet cannot support an infinite data flow. The internet is based on a finite number of cables, terminals, computers, mobile phones, and other equipment. Its efficiency is based precisely on its finiteness and, therefore, on its observability. Search engines such as Google demonstrate this. Today, one hears a lot about the growing degree of surveillance, especially online. But surveillance is not something external to the internet, or merely a specific technical use of its services. The internet is, in its essence, a machine of surveillance. It divides the flow of data into small, traceable, and reversible operations, thus exposing every user to surveillance—real or potential. The internet creates a field of total visibility, accessibility, and transparency.

If the public follows my activity all the time, then I do not need to present it with any product. The process is already the product. Balzac's unknown artist who could never finish his masterpiece would have no problem under these new conditions—documentation of his efforts would comprise this masterpiece and he would become famous. Documentation of the act of working on an artwork is already an artwork. With the internet, time became space indeed—and it is the visible space of permanent surveillance. If art has become a flow, it flows in a mode of self-documentation. Here action is simultaneous with its documentation, its inscription. And the inscription simultaneously becomes information that is spread through the internet and instantly accessible by everybody. This means that contemporary art work can produce no product—yet it still remains productive. But again: if the internet takes over the role of the museum as the place of memory—because the internet records and documents the activities of the artist even before his or her work is brought into the museum—what is the goal of the museum today?

Contemporary museum exhibitions are full of documentations of past artistic events, shown alongside traditional works of art. Thus, the museum turns the documentation of an old event into an element of a new event. It ascribes this documentation a new here and now—and as such gives it a new aura. But, unlike reproduction, documentation cannot be easily integrated into contemporaneity. The documentation of an event always produces nostalgia for a missed presence, a missed opportunity. It does not erase the difference between past and present, as reproduction tends to; instead, it makes the gap between past and present obvious—and in this way thematizes the flow of time. Heidegger described the whole world process as an event staged by Being. And he believed that we can get access to the eventfulness of this event only if Being itself offers us this possibility—through a clearance of being (*Lichtung des Seins*). Today's museum is a place where the clearance of being is artificially staged.

In a world in which the goal of stopping the flow of time is taken over by the internet, the function of the museum becomes one of staging the flow—staging events that are synchronized with the lifetimes of the spectators. This changes the topology of our relationship to art. The traditional hermeneutical position towards art required the gaze of the external spectator to penetrate the artwork, to discover artistic intentions, or social forces, or vital

energies that gave the artwork its form—from the outside of the artwork toward its inside. However, the gaze of the contemporary museum visitor is, by contrast, directed from the inside of the art event towards its outside: toward the possible external surveillance of this event and its documentation process, toward the eventual positioning of this documentation in the media space and in cultural archives—in other words, toward the spatial boundaries of this event. And also towards the temporal boundaries of this event—because when we are placed inside an event, we cannot know when this event began and when it will end.

The art system is generally characterized by the asymmetrical relationship between the gaze of the art producer and the gaze of the art spectator. These two gazes almost never meet. In the past, after artists put their artworks on display, they lost control over the gaze of the spectator: regardless of what some art theoreticians say, the artwork is a mere thing and cannot meet the spectator's gaze. So under the conditions of the traditional museum, the spectator's gaze was in a position of sovereign control—although this sovereignty could be indirectly manipulated by the museum's curators through certain strategies of pre-selection, placement, juxtaposition, lighting, and so forth. However, when the museum begins to function as a chain of events, the configuration of gazes changes. The visitor loses his or her sovereignty in a very obvious way. The visitor is placed inside an event and cannot meet the gaze of a camera that documents this event—nor the secondary gaze of the editor that does the postproduction work on this document, nor the gaze of a later spectator of this document.

That is why, by visiting contemporary museum exhibitions, we are confronted with the irreversibility of time—we know that these exhibitions are merely temporary. If we visit the same museum after a certain amount of time, the only things that will remain will be documents: a catalogue, or a film, or a website. But what these things offer us is necessarily incommensurable with our own experience because our perspective, our gaze is asymmetrical with the gaze of a camera—and these gazes cannot coincide, as they could in the case of documenting an opera or a ballet. This is the reason for a certain kind of nostalgia that we necessarily feel when we are confronted with documents of past artistic events, whether exhibitions or performances. This nostalgia provokes the desire to reenact the event "as it truly was."

Recently in Venice, the exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form" was reenacted at the Fondazione Prada. It was a very professional reenactment—and so it provoked a new and even stronger wave of nostalgia. Some people thought how great it would be to go back to the 1960s and breathe the wonderful atmosphere of that time. And they also thought how awful everything is at the Biennale itself, with all its fuss, compared to the sublime askesis of "When Attitudes Become Form." At the same time, visitors from a younger generation found the exhibition unimpressive, and liked only the beautiful guides in their Prada clothes.

The nostalgic mood that is inevitably provoked by art documentation reminds me of the early Romantic nostalgia towards nature. Art was seen then as the documentation of the beautiful or sublime aesthetic experiences that were offered by nature. The documentation of these experiences by means of painting seemed more disappointing than authentic. In other words, if the irreversibility of time and the feeling of being inside rather than outside an event were once the privileged experiences of nature, they now became the privileged experiences of contemporary art. And that means precisely that contemporary art has become the medium for investigating the eventfulness of events: the different modes of the immediate experience of events, their relationship to documentation and archiving, the intellectual and emotional modes of our relationship to documentation, and so forth. Now, if the thematization of the eventfulness of the event has become, indeed, the main preoccupation of contemporary art in general and the museum of contemporary art in particular, it makes no sense to condemn the museum for staging art events. On the contrary, today the museum has become the main analytical tool for staging and analyzing the event as radically contingent and irreversible—amidst our digitally controlled civilization that is based on tracking back and securing the traces of our individual existence in the hope of making everything controllable and reversible. The museum is a place where the asymmetrical war between the ordinary human gaze and the technologically armed gaze not only takes place, but also becomes revealed—so that it can be thematized and critically theorized.

Ai Wei Wei tweeted this image of himself in bed after suffering a hemorrhage caused by police aggression. Ai Wei Wei is the second most followed artist on Twitter, despite Twitter being illegal in China.

X

This text was originally presented as a lecture at Museo Reina Sophia, November 8, 2013.

Boris Groys (1947, East Berlin) is Professor of Aesthetics, Art History, and Media Theory at the Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe and Global Distinguished Professor at New York University. He is the author of many books, including *The Total Art of Stalinism, Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment*, *Art Power*, *The Communist Postscript*, and, most recently, *Going Public*.

1
Richard Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works* , trans. W. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1993), 94.

2
Ibid., 199.

3
Ibid., 201.

4
Kazimir Malevich, “On the Museum,” in Kazimir Malevich, *Essays on Art* , vol. 1 (New York: George Wittenborn, 1971), 68–72.

Shezad Dawood

Towards the Possible Film (A Script with Some Notable Interruptions)

ITERATION 1: QUETZALCOATL—MY ANGEL!

FRAME 1

Cross-fade of jaguar with Canary Wharf pyramid by night.

FRAME 2

Flickering multi-colored monochromatic text on black

ABOLISH THE LABYRINTH

FRAME 3

Reclining female astronaut on monochrome backdrop with images projected on glass of helmet. (Mechanical)

The old sense of alienation is no longer possible. When individuals identify with a lifestyle imposed on them, and through it experience gratification and satisfaction, their alienation is subsumed by their own alienated existence.

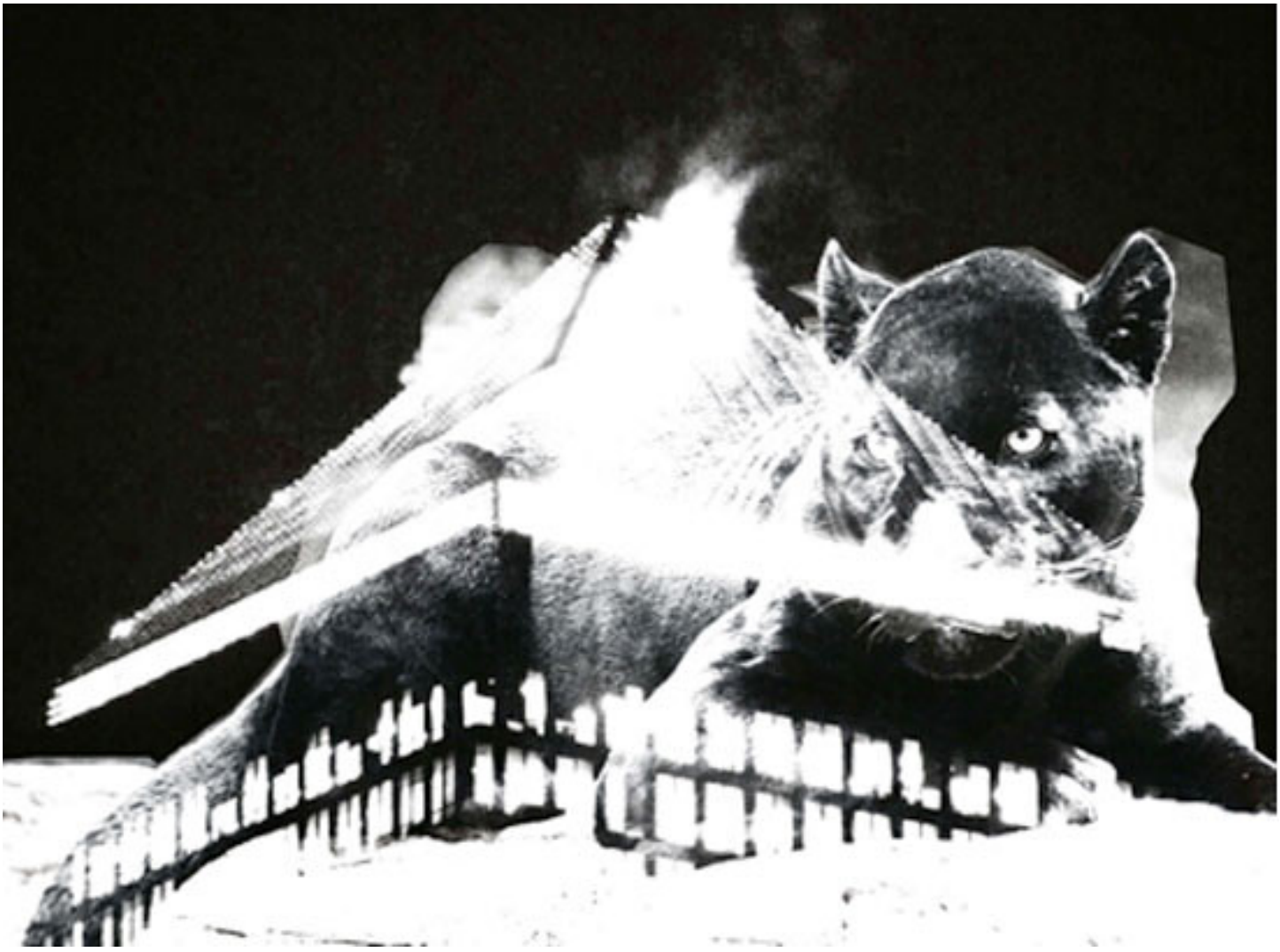
Early esoteric or hermetic thought contends that the visible world is no more than a projection of consciousness, a hologram if you will, and has no more substance than air. In fact it is through piercing the rent in this veil of consciousness that we start to perceive the true structure of things. This idea of the hologram is often referred to by Robert Anton Wilson, and forms the basis of much of the late fiction of Philip K. Dick (subsequent to his own Gnostic epiphany). Parallels also exist in the 10,000 things of Daoist thought, which are the myriad distractions of the material world.

Green/blue-skinned gods occur in various contexts in antiquity, from Osiris, god of the afterlife in Ancient Egypt, to Krishna in Hindu mythology and Quetzalcoatl in Aztec cosmology. Robert Anton Wilson in his Schrodinger's Cat Trilogy *(New York: Dell, 1979, p. 526) playfully combines ideas of future-past with conspiracies relating to alien visitors at the dawn of humanity (and racial theories to boot):*

> *A brutal group of Cro-Magnons came over the hill and began clubbing Ancient Astronauts to death. The Cro-Magnons were tall, blond, and Aryan; the Astronauts had the blue skin of Krishna and Quetzalcoatl.*

FRAME 4

INT. FLOTATION TANK IN EMPTY "DESIGNER" ROOM. (IMPRESSION OF BEING WITHIN CANARY WHARF PYRAMID.)



Jaguar pyramid, cut-out collage, where mystical totem meets commerce (black pyramid).

Whale noise comes through voice-over.

The Dogon people, believed to be of Egyptian descent, lived in Libya for a time before settling in Mali, Western Africa, bringing with them astronomical knowledge dating back to before 3200 BCE. They believe this knowledge was given to them by the Nommos, advanced amphibious beings from the star Sirius:

The Nommo divided his body among men to feed them; that is why it is also said that as the universe had drunk of his body, the Nommo also made men drink. He gave all his life principles to human beings.

The Nommo was crucified and resurrected and in the future will again visit the earth, this time in human form. Later he will assume his amphibious form and will rule the world from the waters.

Particularly curious about the astronomical awareness given them by the Nommos is the fact that it contains centuries-old knowledge of the existence, character, and trajectory of the white dwarf star Sirius B, which is so difficult to observe, even with a telescope, that the first photograph of it was only taken in 1970. In addition, they were also aware of Saturn's rings, Jupiter's four major moons, and the fact that the planets revolve around the Sun, rather than vice versa, centuries before modern science "discovered" these facts.

FRAME 5

Stills of cruise liner with white flash cuts

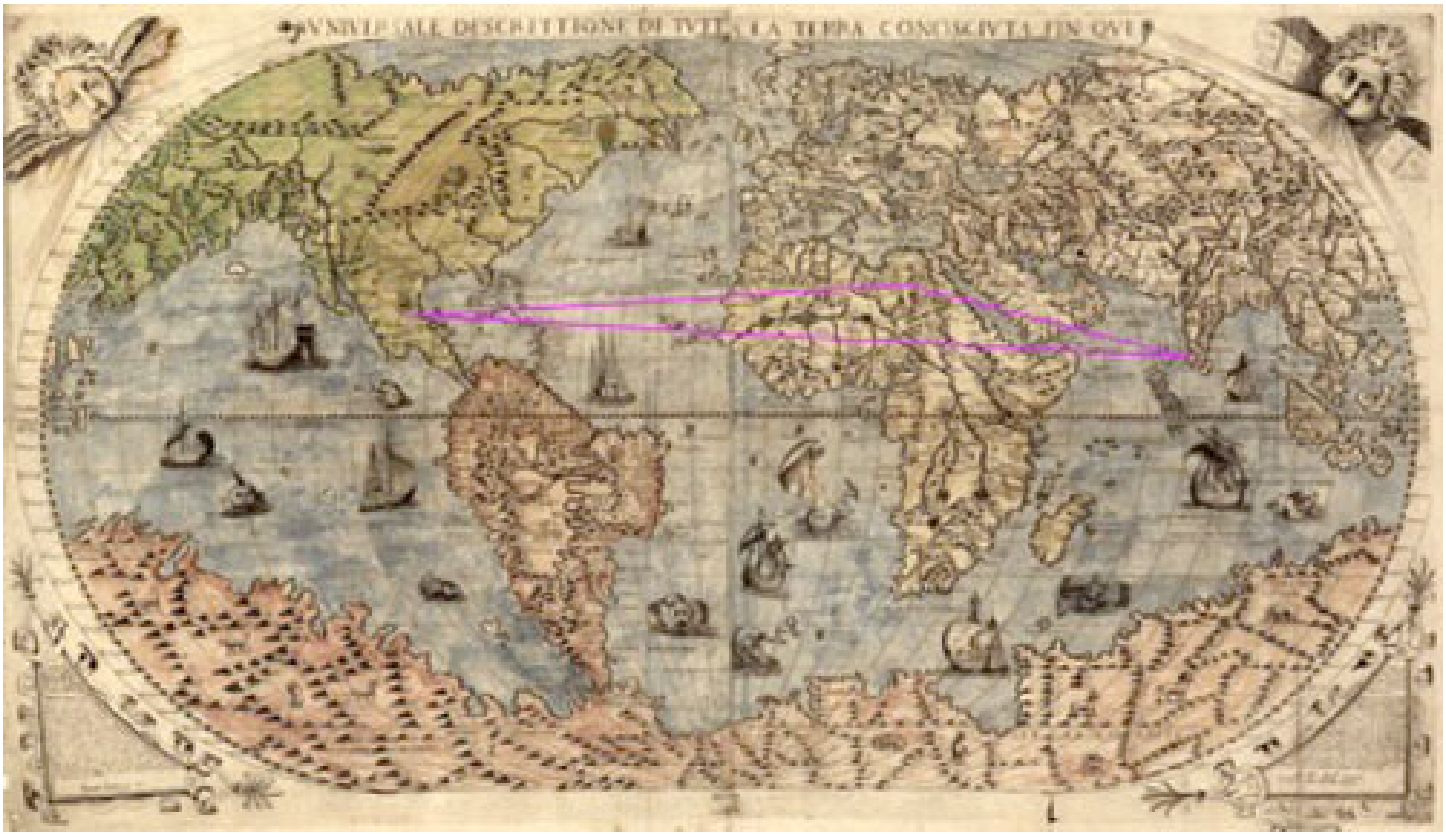
FRAME 6

EXT. MAYAN TEMPLE

In December 2011 I travelled to the Caribbean coast of Mexico with what I term a "prepared" 16mm camera. By blocking the spools you get a "dragged" image as below. Although you can never be certain of the results, I was

This world map was made by Moroccan cartographer Al-Idrisi for King Roger of Sicily in 1154. Thinking of cartography as various attempts at a universalizing fiction over time led me to an interesting eighteenth-century attempt to map the various belief structures of the world into a Bermuda triangle of sorts. The dubious "Baron D'Harcanville," who was associated with and collected antiquities for Richard Payne Knight (1751-–-1824), William Hamilton (the British ambassador in Rome, 1730–1803), and later Charles Townley (1737–1805), seem to have drawn the conclusion made from correspondences between statuary from India, North Africa, and Central America of a single, universal religion of antiquity, that was then brought to Greece by the Phoenicians and Etruscans by way of earlier Orphic initiatory cults.

open to how it might provide an alien POV-thinking of the flashback sequences in The Man Who Fell to Earth.



A triangle overlaid on this world map from the 1500s shows the nexus between India, North Africa, and Central America, and the speculative path of the Phoenician vessels supposed to connect the three.

FRAME 7

Flash—flame—cut

FRAME 8 (V.O.)

Sea as pyramid

At the small dock of X lay beached the giant cruise liner ...

FRAME 9 (V.O.)

... disgorging its cargo of human carrion. Venturing ever ...

Flashing text

LEVIATHAN

FRAME 10

Lemon rind in seaweed as visual metaphor for carrion and continuation of "yellow" as signifier.

Carrion, or roadkill, as well as being an important part of a healthy diet for a number of carnivores and omnivores, is fast becoming the subject of economical or low-impact human diets in an uncertain future. Additionally, it operates as an alternative to processed meat and the widespread use of steroids and other additives. It is also a useful metaphor for our own uncertain future, if we remain at a lower level of awareness and do not see beyond the veil of appearances.

FRAME 10 (V.O.)

... further in their viral penetration of the osmotic ...

FRAME 11 (V.O.)

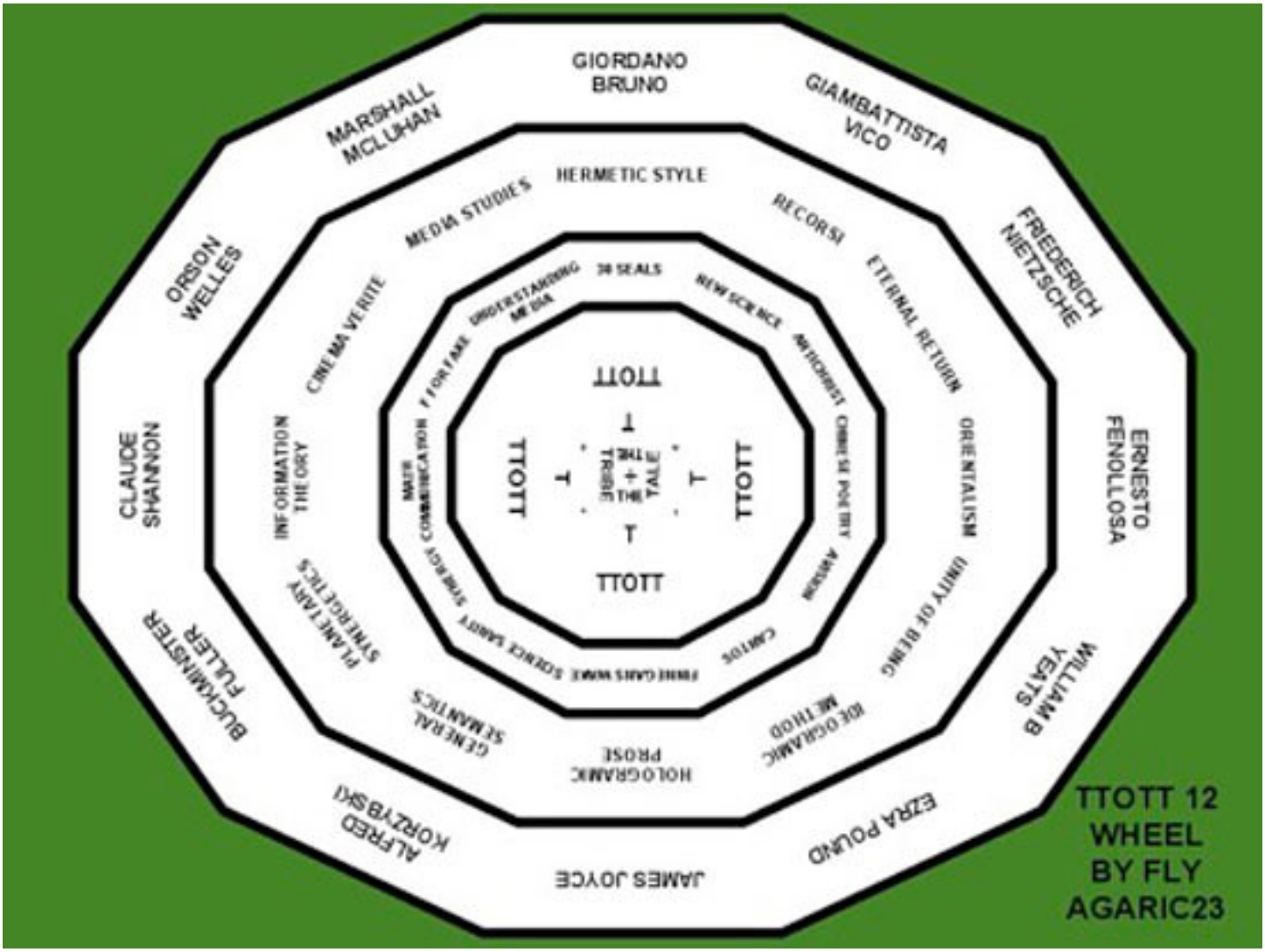
EXT. COAST

... divide between phalanx: non-phalanx, repeating and reproducing their superior insect strain ...

FRAME 12 (V.O.)

Two figures emerge from the sea

... by blending with the locals and strewing their debris like droppings for flies ...



October 2013: Pre-production workshop with choreographer Salima Moumni (Les Pieds Nus), on location in Sidi Ifni, looking for a way of activating body and site in relation to one another. What if the body contains the landscape? And how to manifest via the body a choreography of sea and sand—what are the elemental properties proper to each element? And how do they confront each other when they meet? These and other questions were proposed at an event held at Witte de With (25/7/2013) to discuss the project, under the title, "How can violence function as an act of resistance?"

FRAME 13

EXT. JUNGLE

FRAME 14

EXT. CLIFFS

FRAME 15

Two astronauts

Ancient Astronaut Theory—often associated with controversial Norwegian writer Erich Von Daniken, author of the bestseller Chariots of the Gods (1968)— *looks at traces of visits by beings from other planets at pivotal moments in human history and civilization, including the Maya and the Renaissance. Doris Lessing explores similar themes in her quintet of novels collected under the umbrella title* Canopus in Argos, *and begun with* Shikasta (1979), *although claiming greater influence from mystical tropes in Sufism, and in particular the writings of Idries Shah.*

FRAME 16 (V.O.)

Footprints in the sand

I walked on when the footsteps grew fainter

FRAME 17 (V.O.)

EXT. CLIFFS AND BEACH

I had a curious feeling that I was living on
several planes simultaneously; the overlapping of these planes was confusing …

At a round-table discussion that Omar Berrada and I had initiated at Dar Al Mamun in February 2013, Morad Montazami suggested channeling Jean Rouch's animist camera within the film as a way of bringing the landscape to bear as a protagonist in and of itself. This image is a test on location using a Multivision filter to try and find one or more ways to do this.

FRAME 18 (V.O.)

Close-up of one of the astronaut's faces encased in a helmet.

… Huge rounded boulders as big as houses, [*pause*]

Frame 19 (V.O.)

Close-up of a caveman's face

… resembling the heads of decapitated giants, were lying near …

FRAME 20 (V.O.)

Geometric promenade with ghost ship in distance (barely moving locked off shot).

… where they had fallen long ago from the mountainside.

Leviathan—depicted here in The Avengers comic book—is a sea monster referenced in the Tanakh, or the Old Testament. The word has become synonymous with any large sea monster or creature, or unwieldy system of governance. In literature it refers to great whales, and in Modern Hebrew simply means "whale."

FRAME 21

Cave people gather at top of rock formation holding wooden and stone clubs.

The atlatl, *or throwing spear, of the ancient peoples of the American Southwest represented a major technological development, allowing for greater accuracy and force in the deployment of a projectile, with less effort. In thinking of the possible weaponry to be carried by the cave people or hunter-gatherers of the piece, this and the Inuits' harpoon with line of the seem like possible items that might have been constructed from driftwood and may have stone arrowheads or possibly metalwork, depending on what time period I wish to suggest.*

FRAME 22 (V.O.)

EXT. SUFI SHRINE GHOSTING INTO MAYAN PYRAMID ...

(flashing bursts 2-3 seconds)

Music, as paradoxical as it might seem ...

I'm interested in this idea of both music and film as scores, which also measure the transition of time (daylight), and therefore turn about the axis of the world. In this there is a relationship to Sufi and Islamic practices of circumambulation:

> *"And He made dark its night and brought out the light of its morning."*
> *(Qur'an: Surat An-Nazi'at, Verse 29)*

FRAME 23 (V.O.)

EXT. MAYAN SCULPTURES

... is the result of thought. It is thought perfected ...

A dead opossum lies in the road in Kansas City, Missouri.

FRAME 24 (V.O.)

Cavemen spot the aliens and move towards them.

... at its most empirical, i.e. as attitude, or stance. Thought is largely conditioned by ...

For me there is a correspondence between this work and Pierre Clastres's controversial statement regarding indigenousness/non-indigenousness in Archaeology of Violence *(Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2010 [1980], p.63):*

But it is not the Yanomami who desecrate boulders this way; they do not know how to work with rock. From time to time, they will find a polished hatchet in the forest or at the river's edge, and think it is the work of the spirits of the sky. They will use it to crush ebena seeds against the bottom of a clay pot. Who were these patient polishers? We do not know. In any case, they were former occupants of current Yanomami territory and have disappeared, probably centuries ago. All that remains are the traces of their labor, scattered throughout the region.

Re-reading Clastres, and thinking of both Ancient Astronaut Theory and quantum mechanics, has led me to rethink the cave people who appear in the script. What if they come not from humanity's distant past, but from humanity's future, where low-impact hunter-gatherer lifestyles have been adopted as being more sustainable?

FRAME 25 (V.O.)

Sun, flare, and reflection of thoughtful caveman in helmet

... reference, or speculation against references which ...

FRAME 26 (V.O.)

The caveman attacks (nude descending staircase … slow-mo-like photogram)

… are largely arbitrary.

I have always found it interesting that Duchamp's nudes descending staircases pre-date Boccioni's Unique Forms of Continuity in Space *by only a year. As both seem to deal with the expansion or simultaneity of the body in space, there is an interesting parallel with the development of quantum mechanics by Max Planck (who went on to win the Nobel Prize in 1918) and Albert Einstein. And perhaps more importantly, Erwin Schrodinger would not publish what became known as the* Schrodinger Equation *(although first developed in 1922) until 1926, articulating wave mechanics and the possibility of a particle extending in space but operating independent of time.*

FRAME 27

Overlay of bat on Mayan pool structure—draining of blood = Night.

(Black and White?) (Moon)

FRAME 28

EXT. THE IMPLACABLE SOLAR LORD

Astronaut kneels on cliff edge cradling the body of other astronaut

Camera pans around into extreme close-up

Rock Carving of the Solar Lord (sun as divinity) in the Yagour Plateau of the High Atlas Mountains, Morocco. Rock carvings on the plateau date back up to 8,000 years, and have been used as a source for the Tifinagh script, which after much debate was recently adopted as the written form of the Berber dialect Tamazight—now an

official state language of Morocco. In an interesting twist, Tifinagh was adopted ahead of Arabic or Latin script, even though it has been out of common use for approximately 1,000 years. The entire dialogue for the film will be spoken in Tamazight, and then it will appear in various translations depending on where it is being presented. It is worth noting that Tamazight is one of six main Berber dialects, but is increasingly being adopted as a standardized form (not without its advocates and opponents).

Famous Berbers through the ages include: Saint Augustine of Hippo, the medieval explorer Ibn Batutta, and contemporary footballer Zinedine Zidane.

Tamazight/Tifinagh symbol representing the letter "z" but also "freedom," and used by the Kabyle (another dialect of Berber) liberation movement in the Maghreb. The etymology of Tamazight (the Berber language) derives from Amazigh: "a Berber," plural: i-Mazigh-en, meaning : "free people" or "free and noble men," and has its parallel with the ancient Greco-Roman name for the Beber people: "Mazices."

FRAME 29

Gap in time (section through cave)

This is an image I took on a research trip to Easter Island in 2010. It was also a working "drawing" for the idea of animism and the cult of the grotto, which occurs in both Morocco and Easter Island. Thor Heyerdahl, in his book: Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island (1958), *speaks of myths relating to guardian spirits of sacred family caves. A similar strain of animism persists from pre-Islamic Berber culture in terms of sacred spirits inhabiting caves in Morocco (cf. Henri Basset*, Le Culte des Grottes au Maroc*, , Editions Carbonel, 1920). Like the eighteenth-century " Baron D'Harcanville" before him, Heyerdahl also hypothesized a transatlantic link between Egypt and Central America*.

FRAME 30

Suburban swimming pool—implicit structural critique

Will the suburban swimming pool, much like the golf course in its excess water consumption and private access, become a totem of excess consumption and the inequity of resource distribution—as well as representing the diminishment of communal activity and shared space?

FRAME 31

FIN

TEXT/AUTHORS

FRAME 2:

Alfred Bester, *The Demolished Man*

FRAME 3:

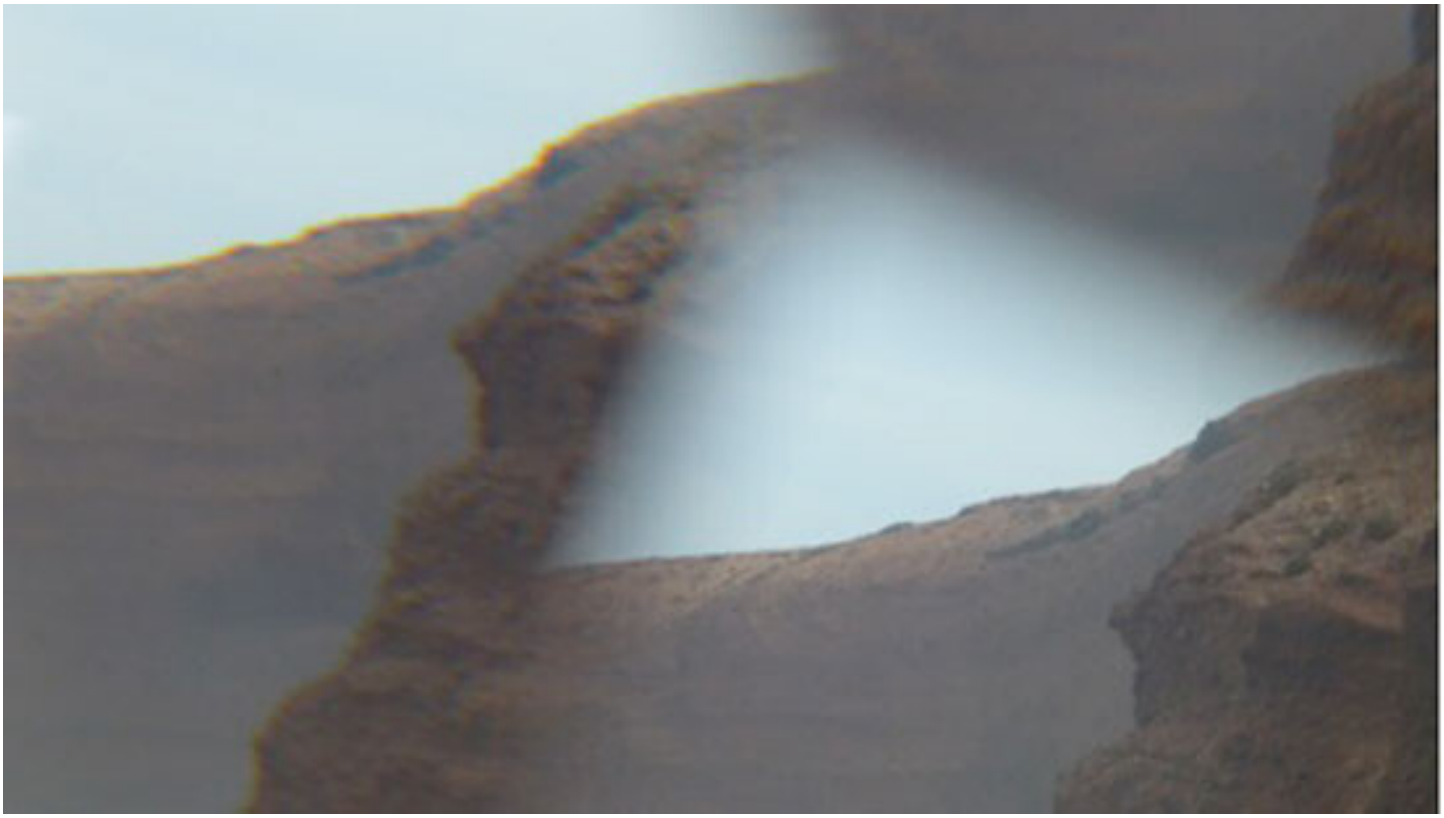
Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (quoted in Marco Ferreri's *Dillinger is Dead)*

FRAME 9:

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

FRAME 8-12:

Shezad Dawood



FRAME 16-20:

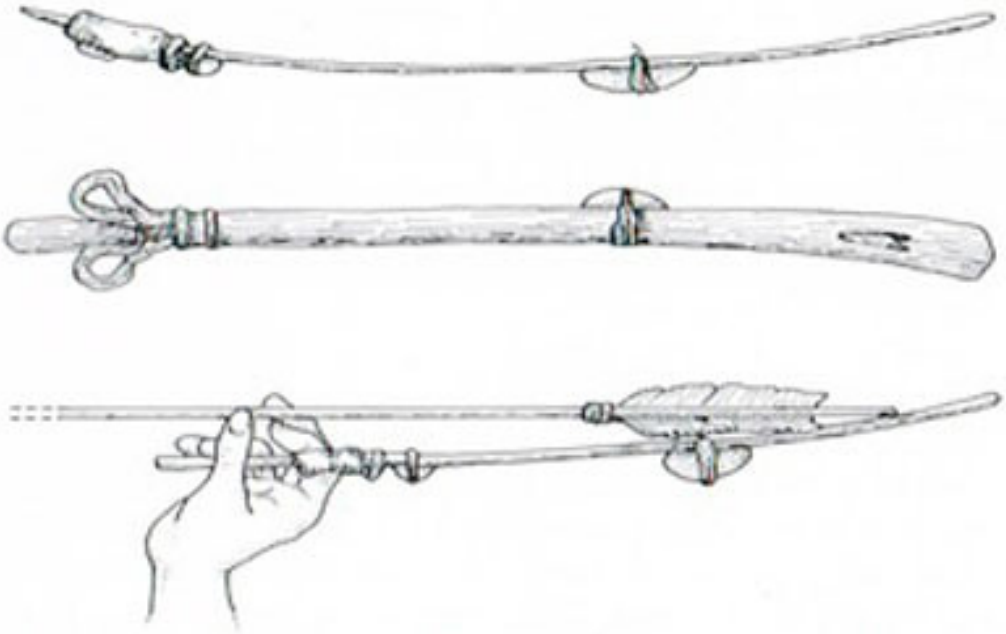
Anna Kavan, *Ice*

FRAME 22-25:

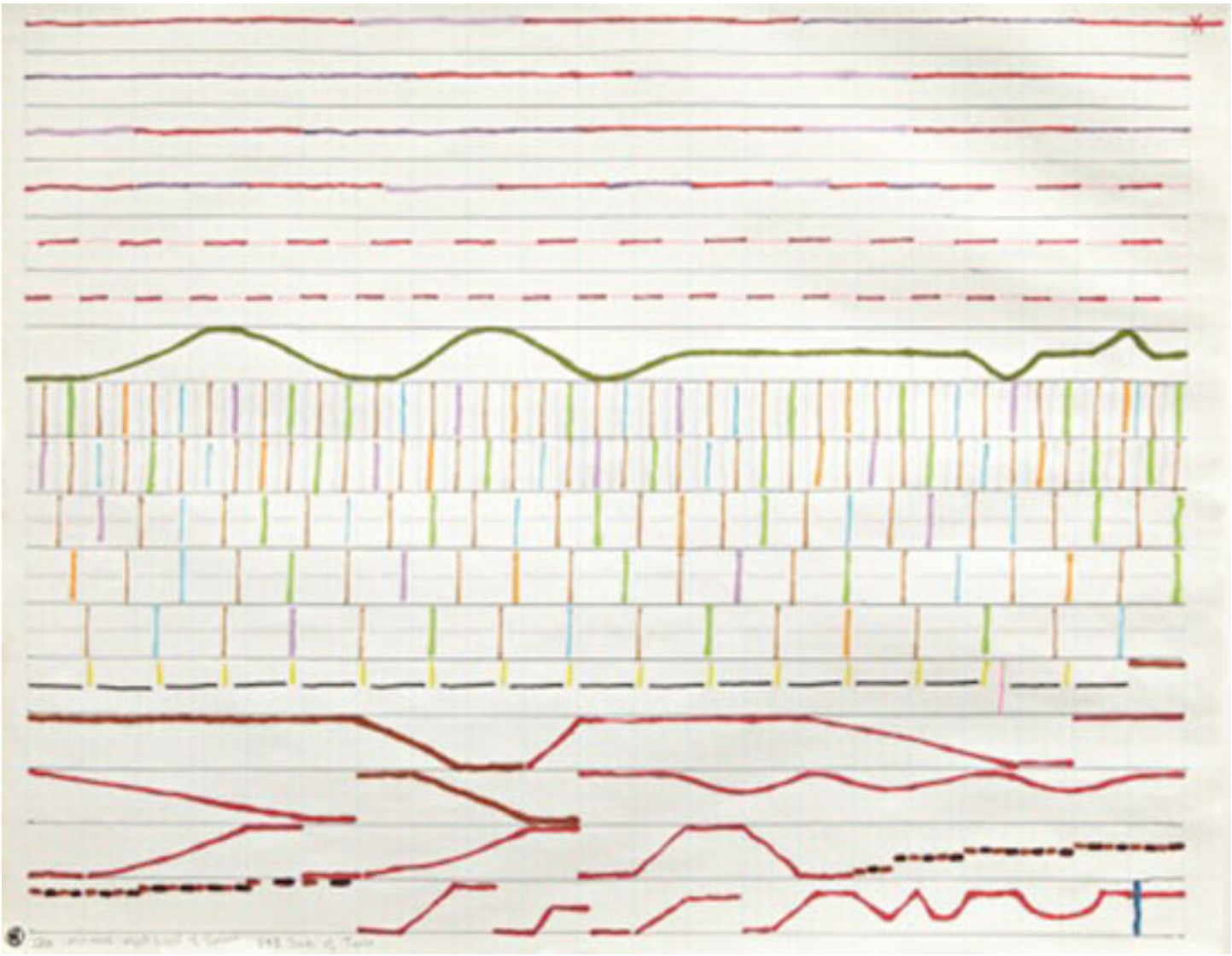
Amiri Baraka, " *Swing—from Verb to Noun*," from *Blues People.*
The writings of Robert Anton Wilson, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, and Pierre Clastres have also been essential in the development of this text/script.

Legzira Beach, Sidi Ifni is the location for the film, and is the capital of the Ifni territory in Southern Morocco. The Ifni War between Spain, the Saharawi population, and the newly independent Morocco took place between 1956 and 1969, after which Spain returned Ifni to Morocco.

PALEO-INDIANS: EARLY HUNTERS AND GATHERERS



35 Side (upper drawing) and top (middle drawing) views of an *atlatl* or spear thrower from Broken Roof Cave in northeastern Arizona. The *atlatl* was made of oak with finger-loops of animal hide. A groove or notch in the end of the *atlatl* (middle drawing) helped to hold the spear in position and the stone added weight and increased the force of the throw. The lower drawing shows how the *atlatl* was held in the hand.



Paul Sharits, 27A Continues: White Light of Tunisia, 27B Souk of Tunis, 1980s. Colored felt tip pen on paper.

Juan Downey, Yanomami Healing I, 1977, 51'27". This scene depicts two Yanomami with CCTV.

Marcel Duchamp, Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2, 1912.

X

Shezad Dawood, born in 1974 in London, trained at Central Saint Martins and the Royal College of Art before undertaking a PhD at Leeds Metropolitan University. One of the winners of the 2011 Abraaj Capital Art Prize, Dawood's work has been exhibited internationally, including in Altermodern, 2009, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, at Tate Britain, the 53rd Venice Biennale, 2009, and the Busan Biennale, 2010. Recent projects include a solo touring exhibition that opened at Modern Art Oxford in April 2012. He currently lives and works in London.

Jalal Toufic

If You Prick Us, Do We Not Bleed? No

Dedicated to the living memory of Gilles Deleuze, a non-revengeful philosopher

Have we *not eyes*? No: "He [a Japanese man]: 'You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.' She [a French woman visiting the city]: 'I saw *everything*. *Everything*.... The hospital, for instance, I saw it. I'm sure I did....' 'You did not see the hospital in Hiroshima. You saw nothing in Hiroshima.' ... 'Four times at the museum in Hiroshima.... I ... looked thoughtfully at the iron ... made vulnerable as flesh ... [at] anonymous heads of hair that the women of Hiroshima, when they awoke in the morning, discovered had fallen out....' 'You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.'"[1] (Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*) (Ludwig Wittgenstein: "If a blind man were to ask me 'Have you got two hands?' I should not make sure by looking. If I were to have any doubt of it, then I don't know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn't I test my eyes by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? What is to be tested by what? [Who decides what stands fast?])"[2] Have we *not hands*[?] No—the man without hands in Patrick Bokanowski's *L'Ange*. *Organs*[?] No—Daniel Paul Schreber: "I existed frequently without a stomach; I expressly told the attendant M., as he may remember, that I could not eat because I had no stomach. Sometimes immediately before meals a stomach was so to speak produced *ad hoc* by miracles. This was done particularly by von W.'s soul, which in at least some of its forms sometimes showed a friendly spirit towards me. Naturally this never lasted long; the stomach which had been produced by miracles, in any case only an inferior stomach, was usually removed again miraculously by v. W.'s soul during the meal 'because of a change of mind'; great changeability is a marked feature of the soul-character, absolutely divine rays perhaps excluded. Food and drink taken simply poured into the abdominal cavity and into the thighs, a process which, however unbelievable it may sound, was beyond all doubt for me as I distinctly remember the sensation. In the case of any other human being this would have resulted in natural pus formation with an inevitably fatal outcome; but the food pulp could not damage my body because all impure matter in it was soaked up again by the rays. Later, I therefore repeatedly went ahead with eating unperturbed, without having a stomach ... Of other internal organs I will only mention the *gullet* and the *intestines*, which were torn or vanished repeatedly, further the *pharynx*, which I partly ate up several times."[3]

Dimensions[?] Not if one is subject to "the Alice in Wonderland syndrome, [which is] named for Lewis Carroll's titular character, [and which] is a disorder

characterized by transient episodes of visual hallucinations and perceptual distortions, during which objects or body parts are perceived as altered in various ways (metamorphopsia), including enlargement (macropsia) or reduction (micropsia) in the perceived size of a form. Such episodes are of short duration (generally less than an hour), variable frequency (up to several times per day), and unpredictable onset."[4]

Senses[?] Not if one is a yogi who has achieved *pratyahara* (Sanskrit: "withdrawal of the senses"), "in the Yoga system of Indian philosophy, fifth of the eight stages intended to lead the aspirant to *samadhi*, the state of perfect concentration. The goal of *pratyahara* is to arrest the reaction of the senses to external objects, thus helping to isolate and free the mind from the involuntary intrusions caused by sensory activity. The mind does not cease to experience external phenomena but merely experiences them directly through its own intensified powers of concentration instead of through the mediation of the senses."[5]

Affections[?] No—the Septimus of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* "had gone through the whole show ... European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in tubs, little tables in the open, daughters making hats, and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him—that he could not feel. For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. He could not feel."[6]

Passions[?] Not if we have achieved Spinoza's third kind of knowledge: "This kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things. So ... we readily conceive how effective against the emotions is clear and distinct knowledge, and especially the third kind of knowledge whose basis is the knowledge of God. Insofar as they are passive emotions, if it does not completely destroy them, at least it brings it about that they constitute the least part of the mind" (*Ethics*, Part II, Scholium 2, and Part V, Proposition 20, Scholium).[7]

Fed with the same food[?] No: "All painted buddhas are actual buddhas.... Because the entire world and all phenomena are a painting, human existence appears from a painting, and buddha ancestors are actualized from a painting. Since this is so, there is no remedy for satisfying hunger other than a painted rice-cake" (Zen Master Dōgen, "Painting of a Rice-cake").[8]

Hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means[?] No, Daniel Paul Schreber was hurt by the voices ("To be torn from the cell in the middle of the night in order to be drowned was another terrifying possibility which occupied my imagination, indeed was forced on to me by what was said by the voices"[9]; "there had been times when I could not help myself but speak aloud or make some noise, in order to drown the senseless and shameless twaddle of the voices, and so procure temporary rest for my nerves"[10] ...), and asserted in his memoirs, "Even now I am convinced that I am immune to all natural disease influences; disease germs only arise in me through rays and are removed again in the same way by rays,"[11] and, "One distinguished 'searing' and 'blessing' rays; the former were laden with the poison of corpses or some other putrid matter, and therefore carried some germ of disease into the body or brought about some other destructive effect in it. The blessing (pure) rays in turn healed this damage."[12]

Warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? No: "Junkies always beef about *The Cold* as they call it, turning up their black coat collars and clutching their withered necks ... pure junk con. A junky does not want to be warm, he wants to be Cool-Cooler-COLD. But he wants The Cold like he wants His Junk—NOT OUTSIDE where it does him no good but INSIDE so he can sit around with a spine like a frozen hydraulic jack ... his metabolism approaching Absolute ZERO"[13] (William S. Burroughs). *If you prick us, do we not bleed?* No, or at least not necessarily because of the prick. Was my video *'Āshūrā': This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 1996, with its documentation of ritualistic bloodletting, a demonstration that Shi'ites too can bleed? If indeed a demonstration, it would be one only for the benefit of the Israelis, so that they would be able to ascertain that Shi'ites too bleed without having to bombard us in south Lebanon. With my affinity to Shi'ism, I certainly do not need such a demonstration since, irrespective of any wounds suffered in my life (whether as a result of bombardments or otherwise), I already feel even the blood in my veins to be spilled blood, that is, that I am bleeding in my veins. But *'Āshūrā': This Blood Spilled in My Veins* is not really a demonstration that if pricked, Shi'ites bleed: I am not a revengeful person. A disturbance is introduced in the ostensibly rhetorical question, "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" by those who, although they bleed, do so without being pricked or wounded: the stigmata of some saints and of some hysterics of the psychosomatic type; the blood spilled *in* my veins, someone affined to Shi'ism. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the lawyer informs the Jew Shylock, a revengeful person (Salarino: "Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take / his flesh: what's that good for?" "... If it will feed nothing else, / it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and / hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, / mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my / bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine / enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew" [Act 3, Scene 1]), that he is indeed permitted by the contract signed by his debtor Antonio to cut one pound of flesh from the latter's body, but that he has to do so without spilling one jot of blood, otherwise he

would be persecuted for the attempted murder of a Christian. Did I need to reach the latter part of the discourse of Portia-as-lawyer when she lists all the punishments that Shylock is to suffer to know that she is a revengeful person? Was it not enough her implying to Shylock during her defense of Antonio: "If you prick us [Christians], do we not bleed?"? Shylock's desistance from making an incision in Antonio's flesh to take one pound of it—for fear of spilling blood and of possibly causing the death of a Christian—is still a revengeful gesture. Could not only revenge but also revengefulness have been stopped? Had Shakespeare's play proceeded not with the lawyer's refusal of Shylock's belated proposal to settle for money, and the subsequent revengeful long list of punishments, ranging from religious—conversion—to financial, imposed on him by the lawyer; but, to everyone's surprise, including still untouched Antonio, with the latter's sudden bleeding—whether in a saintly manner (along roughly the same area that was pierced by a lance in crucified Jesus' body) or hysterically—at the precise contours of the area specified in the contract, revengefulness on both sides could possibly have been stopped. Untouched Antonio's bleeding at the precise contours of the specified area for the incision would have provided Shylock with the opportunity to take revenge, since he could then have cut the pound of flesh and nothing would have incontestably proven that the spilled blood is from the wounds inflicted by him (in this play where a woman and her maid assume the role of a male lawyer and his subordinate, where Shylock's daughter disguises herself as a man, etc., the blood from an externally inflicted wound in Antonio's side would have been indiscernible from blood seeping psychosomatically or in a saintly manner [from the same area that was pierced by a lance in crucified Jesus' body]). Untouched Antonio's bleeding at the precise contours of the specified area for the incision would have made apparent to all those present, including Shylock and the lawyer, that when pricked Antonio does not bleed *as a result of that*. Such bleeding would have provided Shylock with the opportunity to take revenge while taking away from him the revengeful logic of similarity. Would psychosomatic bleeding have stopped the Christian Phalangists, and their accomplice, the Israeli army, from massacring the Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps? *If you tickle us, do we not laugh?* I, for one, don't, and not because I am depressed, but because I find this historical period largely so laughable that were I to start laughing I am afraid I would not be able to stop. I remember how when high on marijuana my ex-girlfriend would giggle virtually at everything on and on. I never had this kind of extended laughter on the few instances I smoked pot. Yet I am sure that were I to start laughing in my normal state of consciousness, my laughter would certainly surpass hers. As for her, there was no danger of her starting laughing and not managing to stop, dying of it: she did not find present-day societies that laughable. All I ask of this world to which I have already given several books is that it become less laughable, so that I would be able to laugh again without dying of it—and that it does this soon, before my somberness becomes second nature. This era has made me somber not only through all the barbarisms and genocides it has perpetuated, but also through being so laughable. Even in this period of the utmost sadness for an Arab in general, and an Iraqi in specific, I fear dying of laughter more than of melancholic suicide, and thus I am more prone to let down my guard when it comes to being sad than to laughing at laughable phenomena. The humorous thinker Nietzsche must have been living in a less laughable age than this one for him to still afford the sublimity of: "To see tragic natures sink and *to be able to laugh at them*, despite the profound understanding, the emotion and the sympathy which one feels—that is divine." In a laughable epoch, even the divinities are not immune to this death from laughter: "With the old gods, they have long since met their end—and truly, they had a fine, merry, divine ending! They did not 'fade away in twilight'—that is a lie! On the contrary: they once—laughed themselves to death! That happened when the most godless saying proceeded from a god himself, the saying: 'There is one God! You shall have no other gods before me!'" (Nietzsche, "Of the Apostates," in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).[14] At this point in history, can one still laugh on reading Nietzsche, Beckett, Thomas Bernhard? Has this age not deprived us of a major facet of these works: their humor? Can present-day humorous people still find Richard Foreman's work, or for that matter my early work humorous—without dying of that? All funny people in laughable periods are not humorous enough; to find the most humorous people in such a period one has to look among the serious, who *need* this seriousness not to expire in laughter. In this respect, I reached a critical point on June 20, 1996. I was standing in a fairly long line at a checkout counter at the Ralphs supermarket on Wilshire and Bundy, Los Angeles. Amidst the many magazines on the adjoining rack, I saw the current issue of *Time*. Its cover story was: "America's 25 Most Influential People." Flipping through the pages to get to the section in question, I was suddenly seized by an apprehension verging on anxiety: that starting to laugh on reading some of the listed names I would not be able to stop, even my aroused seriousness proving this time inadequate to do the job as a defense mechanism. Four months later, I still do not know whether the intense apprehension I felt then was warranted. But from that day on an even more heightened vigilance against starting to laugh has become one of the salient features of my life.[15]

If you poison us, do we not die? No, we cannot die absolutely from poisoning, whether because we have unfinished business (in a restrained perspective: treacherously murdered King Hamlet; or an extended one: the death and rebirth cycles of Hinayana Buddhism); or because we have become fundamentally liberated from any unfinished business, and now when in life are fully in life, when in death are fully in death, life not leading to death, death not leading to life (Zen Master Dōgen: "It is a mistake to suppose that birth turns into death. Birth is a

phase that is an entire period of itself, with its own past and future ... Death is a phase that is an entire period of itself, with its own past and future. ... In birth there is nothing but birth and in death there is nothing but death" ["Birth and Death" (*Shōji*)]). Were we only the living, who at some future date simply biologically die and are no more, there would be only the revengeful morality of identification (don't we too cry, laugh, biologically die, etc.?) to prevent us from murdering others and to prevent others from murdering us. What should persuade us against murder is rather that we are mortals, hence already undead even as we live, and that as undead we undergo *every name in history is I*. The question that directly follows the preceding ones from *The Merchant of Venice* is: *and if you wrong us shall we not revenge?* How insightful of Shakespeare to have detected and intimated that such a manner of thinking that dwells on similarity is a revengeful one. It is revengeful neither simply because one can take revenge only on what has senses, affections, etc., i.e., on one who can be affected by the revenge; nor just because revenge is one more similarity (*if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that* [Act III, scene I]); but as such. Yes, ultimately, every discourse that invokes a fundamental similarity is a revengeful one, is a discourse of revenge. Nietzsche wrote: "A little revenge is more human than no revenge at all"[16] ("Of the Adder's Bite," in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Wouldn't that be also because humanism (don't we too reason,[17] weep[18] ... ?) is revengeful, regardless of any wrong suffered, and even or especially when it invokes a tolerant coexistence based on a fundamental similarity? And aren't many of the aforementioned manners of saying No to such revengeful questions experiments in evading or undoing the generalized revengefulness around[19] —unfortunately, in some instances failing and resulting in yet other, novel kinds of revenge.[20]

X

This is a revised version of an essay originally published in Jalal Toufic's *Forthcoming* (Berkeley, CA: Atelos, 2000); the 2nd edition of *Forthcoming* is scheduled to be published by e-flux in 2014.

Jalal Toufic is a thinker and a mortal to death. He was born in 1962 in Beirut or Baghdad and died before dying in 1989 in Evanston, Illinois. Many of his books, most of which were published by Forthcoming Books, are available for download as PDF files on his **website**. He was most recently a participant in the Sharjah Biennial 11, the 9th Shanghai Biennale, Documenta 13, *Art in the Auditorium III* (Whitechapel Gallery ...) and *Six Lines of Flight* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). In 2011, he was a guest of the Artists-in-Berlin Program of the DAAD.

1
Hiroshima Mon Amour , text by M arguerite Duras for the film by Alain Resnais, translated by Richard Seaver; picture editor: Robert Hughes (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 15–18.

2
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* , ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright; trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), #125.

3
Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* , introduction by Rosemary Dinnage; translated and edited by Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter (New York: New York Review Books, 2000), 144–145. From the quote, it looks like Schreber, who, according to Dr. Guido Weber's report of 1899, "thought he was dead" (ibid., 328) and believed that "he is called to redeem the world" (ibid., 333), intuitively attempted to actualize what Antonin Artaud would demand years later: placing man "again, for the last time, on the autopsy table to remake his anatomy.... / Man is sick because he is badly constructed.... / there is nothing more useless than an organ. / When you will have made him a body without organs, / then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions ..." ("To Have Done with the Judgment of God," in Antonin Artaud, *Selected Writings* , edited, and with an introduction, by Susan Sontag; translated from the French by Helen Weaver; notes by Susan Sontag and Don Eric Levine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)), 570–571).

4
Kathleen Brumm, Matthew Walenski, Frank Haist, Shira L. Robbins, David B. Granet, and Tracy Love, "Functional MRI of a Child with Alice in Wonderland Syndrome During an Episode of Micropsia," *Journal of AAPOS* 14, no. 4 (August 2010): 317–322, see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2928409/ .

5
"Pratyahara," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* , see http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/474079/pratyahara

6
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, foreword by Maureen Howard (San Diego: Harcourt, 1981), 86–87.

7
Spinoza, *Complete Works*, translations by Samuel Shirley; edited, with introduction and notes, by Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), 267 and 373.

8
Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen , ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi; trans. Robert Aitken (et al.) (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), 136 and 138.

9
Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* , 99.

10
Ibid., 128. While through its incorporation of noise, chance procedures, and screaming, fine experimental music often liberates inhuman forces and sides of the human listener, it is still addressed to a human audience. Orpheus' music was not merely human not only because it liberated inhuman forces and sides of the human listener but also and mainly because it was addressed not only to human ears (in whom it produced a hushing of the interior monologue), but also to animal ears ("and it so came to pass that not from fear / or craftiness were they (animals) so quite then / but to be listening" (Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*), and even to objects ("Another (of the female Bacchanals), for a weapon, hurls a stone, / Which, by the sound subdu'd as soon as thrown, / Falls at his feet ..." (Ovid's *Metamorphoses)* —"to be listening"). Even more impressive than the hushed silence of the objects was that of *the voices*, which proved sensitive to Orpheus' music. While Orpheus played his music in the underworld, the undead were relieved of the voices that tormented them.

11
Ibid., 145.

12
Ibid., 95.

13
William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch: The Restored Text* , ed. James Grauerholz and Barry Miles (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 208.

14
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One* , translated with an introduction by R. J. Hollingdale (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1961), 201.

15
It is still unclear to me why it was that this apprehension of dying of laughter was triggered in this case and not, say, in response to the news that following the massacre on February 25, 1994, by Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish extremist, of tens of praying Palestinians in the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron (aka, al-Khalıl) in the West Bank, a curfew was imposed on the city's Palestinian population of 130,000 rather than on the 450 Israeli Jewish settlers in their midst (arguably to guard against potential reprisals by the Palestinians); or on coming across an article in the *Baltimore Sun* of September 3, 1996, titled, "Saddam Hussein Again Iraq's machinations: Invasion of Kurdish Zone Must Be Met with U.S. Response," and a September 28, 1996, article in *Slate* magazine, "The Kurds," that starts with: "Early this month, the United States bombed Iraq in retaliation for Saddam Hussein's invasion of the Kurdish city Irbil" (see http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_gist/1996/09/the_kurds.html)—as far as I know Erbil was then and still is one of the cities of Iraq.

16
Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One* , 94.

17
See Aristotle's influential definition of man as a rational animal.

18
"For others too can see, or sleep, / But only human eyes can weep" (Andrew Marvell, "Eyes and Tears").

19
Here's a dialogue from *Sylvie and Bruno* , a book written by an author who could have answered the seemingly rhetorical question, "Have we not dimensions?" with a No, at least during one of his migraine episodes ("Migraine is a well-known cause of visual hallucinations.... Patients who have migraines may experience every variety of hallucinatory image from simple unformed lines and spots to highly complex, formed scenes. Visual distortions, including macropsia and micropsia, may also occur. Such sensory distortions have been called the 'Alice-in-Wonderland' syndrome, after the tale by Lewis Carroll who called on his own migraine experiences to describe Alice's dramatic changes in size" (Jeffrey L. Cummings and Bruce L. Miller, "Visual Hallucinations: Clinical Occurrence and Use in Differential Diagnosis," *Western Journal of Medicine* 146, no. 1 (January 1987): 47–48, see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1307180/): "'What *are* you doing there, Bruno?' I said. 'Spoiling Sylvie's garden ... The nasty cross thing—wouldn't let me go and play this morning—said I must finish my lessons first ... I'll vex her finely, though!' 'Oh, Bruno, you shouldn't do that!' I cried. 'Don't you know that's revenge? And revenge is a wicked, cruel, dangerous thing!' 'River-edge?' said Bruno.... 'No, not river-edge,' I explained: 'revenge ... Come! Try to pronounce it, Bruno!' ... But Bruno ... said he couldn't; that his mouth wasn't the right shape for words of that kind.... 'Well, never mind, my little man! ... I'll teach you quite a splendid kind of revenge! ... First, we'll get up all the weeds in her garden. See, there are a good many at this end—quite hiding the flowers.' 'But *that* won't vex her!' said Bruno. 'After that,' I said, without noticing the remark, 'we'll water this highest bed—up here. You see it's getting quite dry and dusty.... Then after that ... the walks want sweeping a bit; and I think you might cut down that tall nettle—it's so close to the garden that it's quite in the way—' 'What *is* oo talking about? ... All that won't vex her a bit!' 'Won't it?' I said, innocently. 'Then, after that, suppose we put in some of those coloured pebbles—just to mark the divisions between the different kinds of flowers, you know. That'll have a very pretty effect.' Bruno turned round and had another good stare at me. At last there came an odd little twinkle into his eyes, and he said, with quite a new meaning in his voice, 'That'll do nicely....' '... and then—what kind of flowers does Sylvie like best?' ... 'Violets' ... 'There's a beautiful bed of violets down by the brook—' 'Oh, let's fetch 'em!' ..." *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll* , with an i ntroduction by Alexander Woollcott; illustrations by John Tenniel et al. (Ware, Hertfordshire, England: Wordsworth Editions, 2008), 352–353.

20
Heeding the chapter's title, "Bruno's Revenge," and the symptomatic "At last there came an odd little twinkle into his eyes,

and he said, with quite a new meaning in his voice, 'That'll do nicely....'" in response to his interlocutor's "my little man! ... I'll teach you quite a splendid kind of revenge! ... First, we'll get up all the weeds in her garden ..." should the quote from *Sylvie and Bruno* be placed here, as an example of a subtler kind of revenge, rather than in the previous footnote as an example of evading or undoing the generalized revengefulness around (the latter interpretation is supported by: "'Revenge ... Come! Try to pronounce it, Bruno!' ... But Bruno ... said he couldn't; that his mouth wasn't the right shape for words of that kind....")?

Continued from "Captives of the Cloud, Part II"

A Massive, Expanding Surveillance State With Unlimited Power And No Accountability Will Secure Our Freedom by Hans Christian Andersen.
—twitter.com/pourmecoffee[1]

Violence arms itself with the inventions of Art and Science in order to contend against violence.
—Carl von Clausewitz[2]

Infrastructure is the technology that determines whether we live or die. Your infrastructure will kill you—if it fails, you fail.
—Smári McCarthy[3]

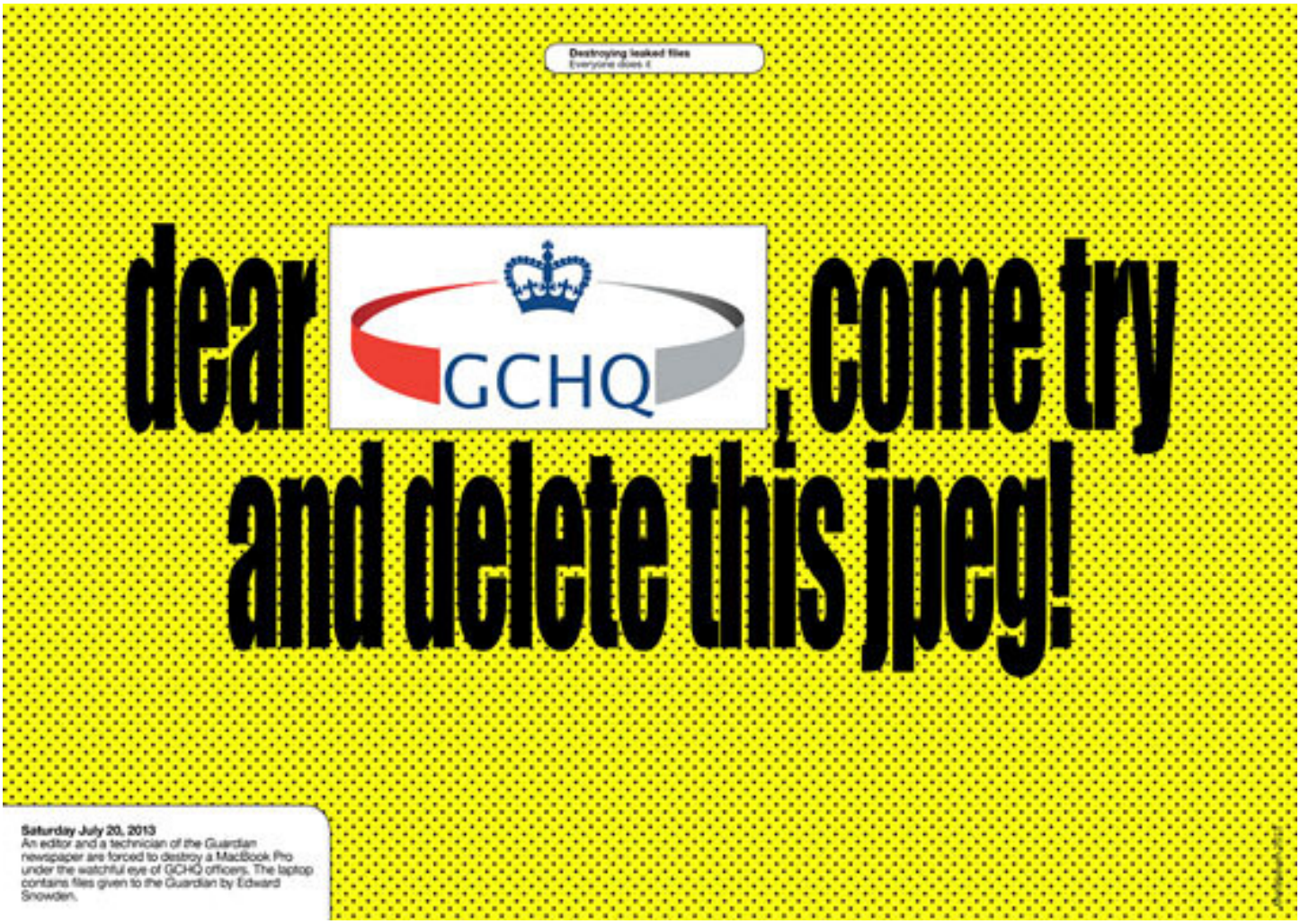
Metahaven

Captives of the Cloud, Part III: All Tomorrow's Clouds

The internet began as a place too complicated for nation-states to understand; it ended up, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, as a place only nation-states seem to understand. This has left omnipresent cloud giants Google and Yahoo!, in their own words, "outraged." They are helpless bystanders to US spy agencies as they extraterritorially, without permission, and aided by the Brits, break into data center cables just to find out if the next Bin Laden is out there posting kitten videos on YouTube. In response, Germany and Switzerland cash in on "secure" clouds; Russia fortifies its digital walls, incarcerates Pussy Riot, and offers asylum to Edward Snowden. Ecuador, which hosts Julian Assange in its London Embassy as a political refugee, is to rebrand itself as a "haven for internet freedom."[4] These recent developments show the deep divide between the perspectives of various governments often claiming to restore national sovereignty over data space, and the very nature of the network itself, which is by definition transnational and borderless.

Internet and Society: The Dots Fight Back

General Keith Alexander is the director of the US National Security Agency. In his previous position as the head of the US Army Intelligence and Security Command, Alexander had an architectural firm decorate his so-called "Information Dominance Center" to look like the Starship Enterprise control room. This helped him gain political enthusiasm for spying. As *Foreign Policy* notes, "Lawmakers and other important officials took turns sitting in a leather captain's chair' in the center of the room and watched as Alexander, a lover of science-fiction



"Dear GCHQ, come try and delete this jpeg!" Saturday, July 20, 2013. An editor and a technician of the Guardian newspaper are forced to destroy a MacBook Pro under the watchful eye of GCHQ officers. The laptop contains files given to the Guardian by Edward Snowden.

movies, showed off his data tools on the big screen."[5] At the time of this writing, Alexander is to step down from his position after a taxing year at the helm of the spyboat. Before Edward Snowden gave thousands of the agency's top-secret documents to the press, Alexander used to publicly appear in full military attire. Sometimes he tried to win sympathy by taking the stage in a black t-shirt. In Las Vegas in 2012, Alexander urged digital troublemakers to join the NSA; he also pleaded that his agency operated lawfully and transparently. "We are overseen by everybody," he said.[6] But that was 2012. There were Patriot Act abuses, National Security Letters, and overzealous US prosecutors going after The Pirate Bay, Megaupload, WikiLeaks, and Chelsea Manning. As early as 2002, Mark Klein, an AT&T technician, witnessed an NSA-controlled wiretapping room in full operation in a data center in San Francisco. Later, a handful of US Senators warned the media about a secret interpretation of the Patriot Act.[7] Nobody listened.

Then came Edward Snowden. As the magnitude of the NSA's surveillance of global internet and phone communications systems was being revealed, Keith Alexander changed his public relations tactics accordingly, appearing as an obedient, invisible bureaucrat. At Def Con 2013, Alexander presented his mission: "connecting the dots." Hoovering up everything from everyone up to three degrees of separation, or "hops," away from a known suspect in order to avert the next 9/11.[8] Columbia University law professor Eben Moglen called it, plainly, "spying on humanity."[9] Alexander was simply following an organization-wide, 9/11-centered PR memo given out as a script to its representatives.[10] Meanwhile, the NSA boasted that its surveillance had thwarted fifty-four terrorist attacks. However, that number lacked a real basis in fact, as the website ProPublica concluded after research.[11]

Keith Alexander's spaceship-style ops room sparks the same dark pleasure as the happy smile that sits on a hand-drawn NSA diagram about infiltration into Google and Yahoo![12] Alexander—the man who plotted to ruin the

reputation of islamic "radicalizers" by publicly revealing their porn site visits—is, after all, the pseudo-amicable human incarnation of neo-Stalinism. [13] The NSA uses corruption with martial agility. "Overseen" by opaque FISA courts, whose deliberations and decisions are secret, it has built a giant, data-slurping behemoth facility in Utah: a Wal-Mart holding everyone's indeterminate digital past. Lost in a Berlusconian *bunga bunga* party, the NSA dreamed that its operations could go unseen forever. When asked by Congress if the NSA collected data on millions of Americans, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, politely replied under oath: "No, sir ... not wittingly."[14] Clapper later apologized for misleading Congress by giving the "least untruthful answer."[15]

In one cunning operation, the NSA wielded its power to influence the technical standards on which the internet itself relies, including the pseudo-random number generators that occupy our computers' microchips. As Yochai Benkler asserts, the NSA "undermined the security of the SSL standard critical to online banking and shopping, VPN products central to secure corporate, research, and healthcare provider networks, and basic email utilities."[16] Jennifer Granick calls the NSA "an exceedingly aggressive spy machine, pushing—and sometimes busting through—the technological, legal and political boundaries of lawful surveillance."[17] Half-hearted attempts by the Obama Administration to curb the agency's powers do little to reverse the situation. A newly appointed oversight committee is, as Benkler notes, stocked with insiders of the national security shadow world, even as the President claims, in awe-inspiring legalese, that it consists of "independent outside experts." Surprise: the Obama-appointed chief curator of the committee is James Clapper himself.[18] According to *Slate*, the proposed post-Snowden NSA reform bill, spearheaded by Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein, "for the first time *explicitly authorizes,* and therefore entrenches in statute, the bulk collection of communications records, subject to more or less the same rules already imposed by the FISA Court. It endorses, rather than prohibits, what the NSA is already doing."[19] Showing his deep understanding of the privacy concerns of ordinary people, President Obama ordered an end to the NSA's spying on the IMF and the World Bank.[20]

Global Standards

Initially known for its quirky minimalism and math, Google has been working hard on its emotional impact on the public. Its vice president for marketing said in 2012 that "if we don't make you cry, we fail. It's about emotion, which is bizarre for a tech company."[21] Free email, chat, and social networking are the Coke and McDonalds of the internet. But they don't promise Americanness. They promise connections. The largest cloud services are global standards. They are "natural," thus dominant, focal points in the network, offering the largest potential social reward and likelihood of connection. "Network power" obscures less popular alternatives. The ultimate container of network power is the mobile app, which bypasses the shared internet and its protocols entirely. Instead, users are permanently within the corporation's digital walls rather than in and out of it through their web browser.[22]

Google's top executives Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen published *The New Digital Age,* a trailblazing book about their political ideas, and how Google interacts with American power abroad. WikiLeaks's Julian Assange finds that in this paper-bound TED speech, a

> liberal sprinkling of convenient, hypothetical dark-skinned worthies appear: Congolese fisherwomen, graphic designers in Botswana, anticorruption activists in San Salvador and illiterate Masai cattle herders in the Serengeti are all obediently summoned to demonstrate the progressive properties of Google phones jacked into the informational supply chain of the Western empire.[23]

Indeed, every transaction on a Google server is an event under American jurisdiction.

Solutionism

The seizure of the internet by public-private technocrats, cloud providers, and secret services is an example of what Evgeny Morozov calls "solutionism."[24] Solutionism takes problems from social and political domains and recalibrates them as issues to be dealt with by technology alone. It brings them under the control of programmers, systems managers, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, and their political avatars. Privacy and civil liberties are brushed aside: technological bypasses to political, social, and legal problems present themselves everywhere as progress. Who rules the internet on whose behalf, as ridiculously archaic as the question may sound, is a political and legal issue highjacked by solutionism. Milton Mueller phrases it slightly differently, as "who should be 'sovereign'—the people interacting via the Internet or the territorial states constructed by earlier populations in complete ignorance of the capabilities of networked computers."[25]

It is uncertain whether sovereignty is attainable at all; whether it, *as a concept*, holds up against the network, with its winner-takes-it-all technologies. Security expert Bruce Schneier says we must "take back" the internet: "Government and industry have betrayed the internet, and us ... We need to figure out how to re-engineer the internet to prevent this kind of wholesale spying. We need new techniques to prevent communications intermediaries

"Connecting the Dots: Keith Alexander" Before Edward Snowden gave thousands of the agency's top-secret documents to the press, Alexander used to publicly appear in full military attire. Sometimes he tried to win sympathy by taking the stage in a black T-shirt. In Las Vegas in 2012, Alexander urged digital troublemakers to join the NSA; he also pleaded that his agency operated lawfully and transparently. "We are overseen by everybody," he said.

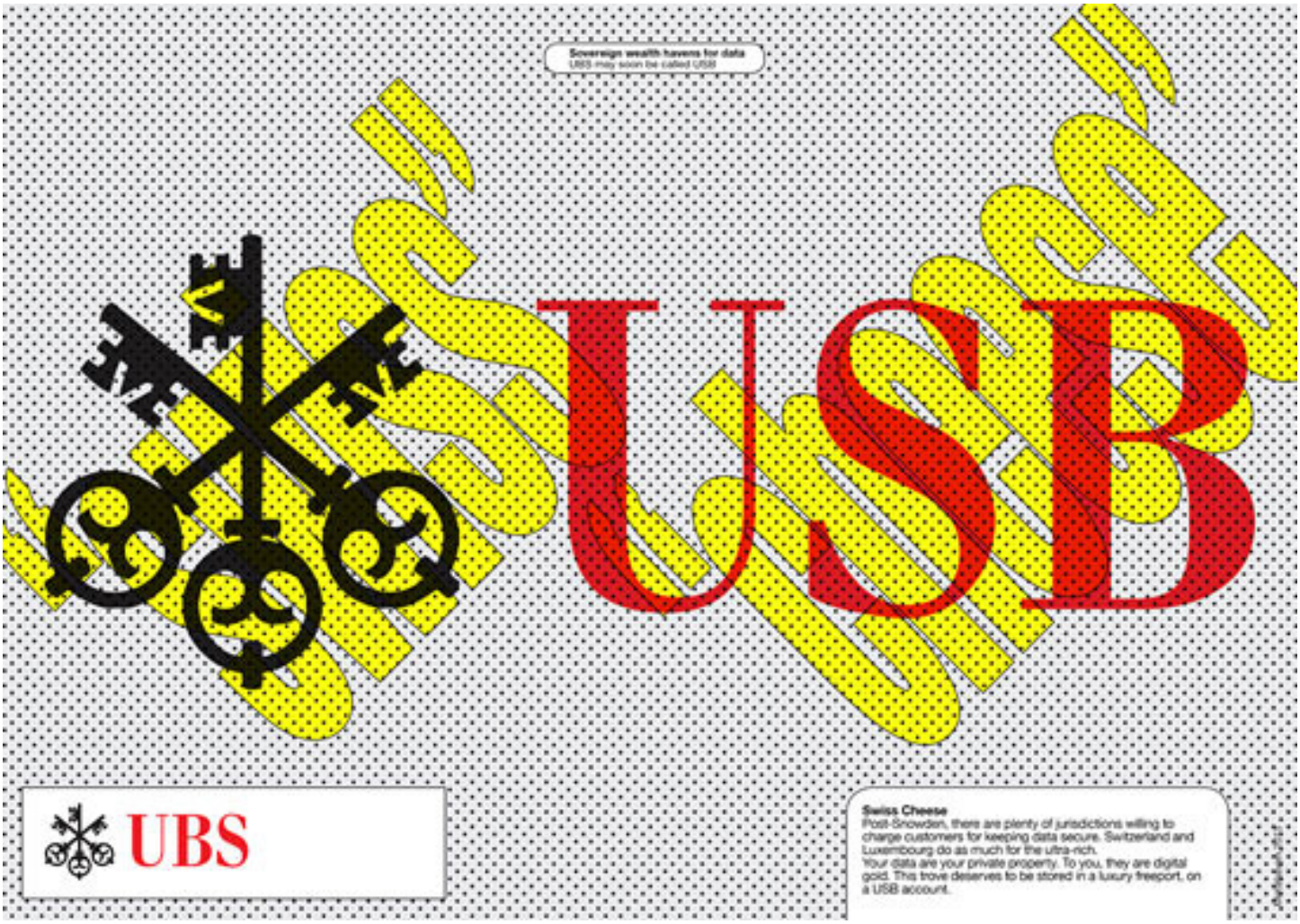
from leaking private information."[26]

"No Water = No Data Center"

Infrastructure gets political when things don't work. As long as they do, no questions are asked. Drinking water is instantly political when nothing comes out of the faucet. Scarcity is a big politicizer. The broken internet grapples with an opposite problem: it bathes in an overabundance of apps and services, which thrive on the deterritorialization, expropriation, and extortion of life and data. Benjamin Bratton calls this "microeconomic compliance."[27] It is probably the most convenient model of exploitation that has ever existed.

The people on the internet live in territories. They have citizenship. But this feedback loop doesn't activate political agency. What, after all, really *is* the connection between these things—"indifference, weariness and exhaustion from the lies, treachery and deceit of the political class" perhaps, as Russell Brand aptly stated?[28] Snapchat and Instagram are vehicles of social (and geopolitical) lure, endlessly more attractive than our tacit complicity with the machinery of representative politics. No one talks about political revolution, but the "Twitter Revolution" makes headlines in mainstream media. The only problem with our digital tools is their underlying standardization. We have an exhausted political machine on the one hand—"citizenship" forced into tiresome, backward rituals of participation. And on the other hand, we have the splendor and immediacy of love, friendship, connection, and technology built on microeconononomic and geopolitical compliance. It seems an all too easy win for the latter. People have not considered the internet as a democratically governable structure. Decisions on the internet are delegated to a giant "don't be evil" mix.

Carne Ross, a former British diplomat and founder of

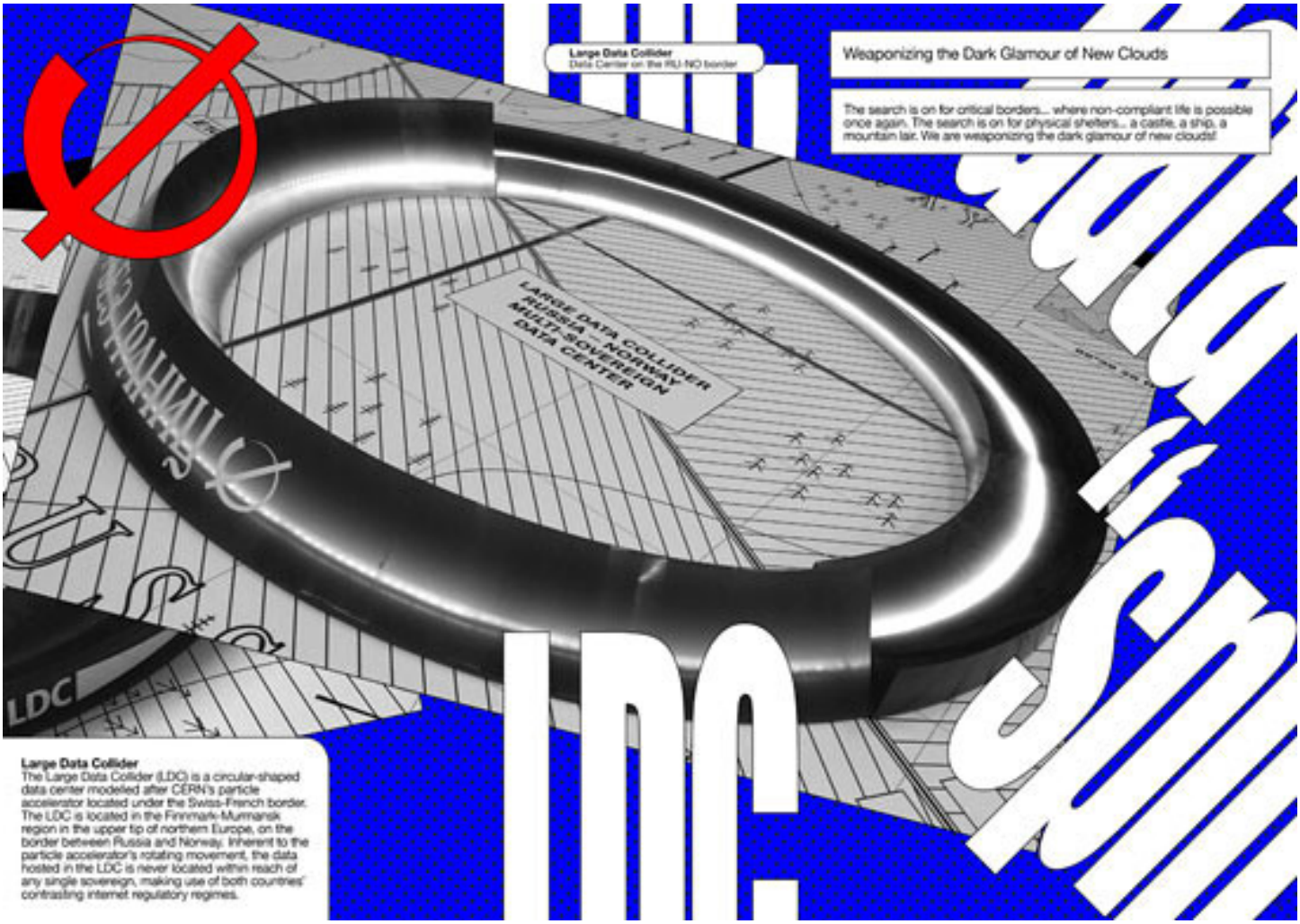


"UBS becomes USB" Post-Snowden, there are plenty of jurisdictions willing to charge customers for keeping data secure. Switzerland and Luxembourg do as much for the ultra-rich. Your data are your private property. To you, they are digital gold. This trove deserves to be stored in a luxury freeport, on a USB account.

Independent Diplomat, is looking for a solution beyond technology. "The balance between the individual and state needs to be more fundamentally altered," argues Ross. "New rules, in fact new kinds of rules, are needed. What is required is nothing less than a renegotiation of our contract with the state, and with each other."[29] Ross's proposal is not technical or bureaucratic. It is political in the most personal sense. Its problem is that it draws on decision-making and enforcement structures which don't yet exist. People can look out for their common good only when they share common space and interest. They can work out their own polity better than central governments can, as Ross argues in his book *The Leaderless Revolution,* which promotes benign anarchism. Indeed, it is unclear how a renegotiation of the internet's social contract might be achieved without a unifying political mechanism for those on the network who can't bargain with the status quo. For those forced into compliance with its already dominant standards. Or for those who don't yet know the faces of their friends.

Some version of a social contract between citizens and governments (and corporations) was demonstrated in 2012 when citizens across the world successfully prevented the Stop Online Piracy Act and the Protect IP Act from coming into effect.[30] "Social contract" here means the possibility for people to bargain with the powerful about measures that threaten the common good. Major websites like Google and Wikipedia sided with the protesters against SOPA/PIPA, which somewhat nuances the familiar picture of "evil corporations." However, this type of legislation tends to silently return in a different guise, most recently with the highly secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. The Intellectual Property portion of this agreement was leaked to WikiLeaks in November, 2013.[31]

A social contract for the internet requires governments and corporations to welcome its political inconveniences. It requires them to radically cut back on surveillance. It requires them to unambiguously legalize leaks,



"Weaponizing the Dark Glamour of New Clouds" The search is on for critical borders... where non-compliant life is possible once again. The search is on for physical shelters... a castle, a ship, a mountain lair. We are weaponizing the dark glamour of new clouds! The Large Data Collider (LDC) is a circular-shaped data center modelled after CERN's particle accelerator located under the Swiss-French border. The LDC is located in the Finnmark-Murmansk region in the upper tip of northern Europe, on the border between Russia and Norway. Inherent to the particle accelerator's rotating movement, the data hosted in the LDC is never located within reach of any single sovereign, making use of both countries' contrasting internet regulatory regimes.

cyberprotests, and online civil disobedience as legitimate political expressions. As noted in Part II of this essay, in 2010 and 2011 UK- and US-based hacktivists used DDoS attacks to target private corporations that imposed a corporate embargo against WikiLeaks. The hacktivists responsible were hunted down and tried as criminals; the analogy between hacktivism and nonviolent civil disobedience was lost on the system and its judges. Cyberprotests express the *absence* of any verifiable and binding agreement between the system and its users. Digital equivalents to strikes and blockades are framed as crimes against property and profit.

The activist group NullifyNSA has taken on the task of disabling the NSA by shutting off the water supply to its data centers. The fascinating proposition is a stark reminder that the ability to spy and to store data is ultimately dependent on electricity and cooling. Thus, any "internet" operation is ultimately dependent upon the living environment and its resources. Michael Boldin, executive director of the Tenth Amendment Center and a NullifyNSA representative, explains that

> In Utah, the new data center is expected to need 1.7 million gallons of water per day to keep operational. That water is being supplied by a political subdivision of the state of Utah. Passage in that state of the 4th Amendment Protection act would ban all state and local agencies from providing material support to the NSA while it continues its warrantless mass surveillance. No water = no data center.[32]

NullifyNSA is politically on the libertarian-conservative Right. Its ideas are, as Boldin says,

> backed up by the advice of James Madison. The Supreme Court has repeatedly issued opinions over the years backing it up in a widely accepted legal principle known as the anti-commandeering doctrine. The cases go all the way back to the 1840s, when the court held that states couldn't be forced to help the feds carry out slavery laws. The latest was the Sebelius case in 2012, where the court held that states couldn't be compelled to expand Medicaid, even under threat of losing federal funding.[33]

NullifyNSA has all of the Right's typical rigor and determination even while it, as Boldin summarizes, seeks to be "transpartisan" in its efforts:

> Our goal is single-minded—stopping NSA spying. It's a long haul, and it's going to take significant effort and resistance from groups and people not used to working together. But the time is now to set aside differences for the liberty of all.[34]

The group explains the interdependency between the digital and the physical domains accurately and plainly. Almost no one on the Left seems to have talked about data centers quite like this. Boldin points out the ecological disaster that is the NSA, adding that "a state like Utah is in a state of near-constant drought. The fact that all these precious resources are being used to spy on the world should be disgusting to nearly everyone."[35] He goes on to analyze the NSA's distribution of data centers and its implications for the organization's own perception of its vulnerabilities:

> Back in 2006, the NSA maxed out the Baltimore area power grid. Insiders were very concerned that expansion of the NSA's "mission" could result in power outages and a "virtual shutdown of the agency." In reading their documents and press releases over the years, we know that a prime motivation in expanding their operations in Utah, Texas, Georgia, Colorado and elsewhere was to ensure that loads of resources like water, electricity, and more, were distributed. That means they know they have an Achilles heel.[36]

After all, the NSA's weak point may be its insatiable appetite for electricity rather than its breaches of the Constitution. NullifyNSA, a group of conservatives with a practical bent, hints at the under-investigated relationship between data centers and their physical geographies.[37]

The Possibility of an Iceland

"Data sovereignty" is a phrase of recent coinage describing two distinct trends in internet hosting. The first is the increasing tendency of nation-states to make networks that fit within national borders so they can completely control what goes on inside the network. Russia and China both have their own Facebook and Twitter, controlled at all times by the state. The only advantage of these networks is that they are not under the auspices of the NSA. Boutique data sovereignty is a viable economic strategy in the wake of global surveillance. Secure "email made in Germany" is now hot; user data are protected by supposedly watertight German privacy laws.[38] Swisscom, Switzerland's telecommunications company, which is majority-owned by the government, is developing a secure "Swiss cloud" aspiring to levels of security and privacy which US companies can't guarantee.[39] Luxembourg and Switzerland's recent wealth havens, or freeports for property in transit—mostly expensive art—also offer data storage.[40]

The second definition of "data sovereignty" is personal. Every internet user should "own" all of his or her online data. Jonathan Obar critiques the idea, but for the wrong reasons. He claims that personal data sovereignty is fallible because we have now "big data":

> Recent calls for personal data sovereignty, or the ability for a single individual to have control over all of their personal data, represent a similar fantasy. Had we the faculties and the system for enabling every digital citizen the ability to understand and continually manage the evolving data-driven internet, to control the data being collected, organized, analyzed, repurposed and sold by every application, commercial organization, non-commercial organization, government agency, data broker and third-party, to understand and provide informed consent to every terms of service agreement, and privacy policy—would we have time to actually use the internet? To work? To have a family? To do anything else? This is the fallacy of personal data sovereignty in a digital universe increasingly defined by big data.[41]

The saying goes that if your only tool is a hammer, all problems look like nails. Data may need to be prevented from becoming "big" in the first place. Obar inadvertently shows the conceptual similarity of "big data" to bad financial products that no one understands. Personal data

"Weaponizing the Dark Glamour of New Clouds" Large Data Collider: The Large Data Collider (LDC) is a circular-shaped data center modelled after CERN's particle accelerator located under the Swiss-French border. The LDC is located in the Finnmark-Murmansk region in the upper tip of northern Europe, on the border between Russia and Norway. Inherent to the particle accelerator's rotating movement, the data hosted in the LDC is never located within reach of any single sovereign, making use of both countries' contrasting internet regulatory regimes.

have become the credit default swaps of the cloud, building a bubble economy as unsustainable as the subprime mortgages that triggered the 2008 financial collapse. The NSA participates in this corporate feeding frenzy as much as cloud providers do. There is, in this light, nothing strange about wanting more personal control over one's personal information. A clear model for it is still missing, but a 2011 paper by US Naval Graduate School students notes that "data sovereignty provides an explicit tool to break a level of abstraction provided by the cloud. The idea of having the abstraction of the cloud when we want it, and removing it when we don't, is a powerful one."[42] To break down the abstraction of the cloud, the internet needs to be more localized.[43]

An example of the boundaries between nation-state politics and online politics being traversed is Iceland—a sparsely populated island nation in the North Atlantic that has come to be one of the rare places in the West where political alternatives get a chance. On July 5, 2008, John Perry Barlow gave a speech at the Reykjavík Digital Freedoms Conference. The talk was titled "The Right to Know."[44] Barlow took his audience on a journey that began with the wordless prehistory of *homo sapiens;* he ended by pitching a somewhat unexpected update of the "data haven"—an offshore sanctuary for information prefigured by cyberpunk science fiction. Iceland, Barlow said, could become a "Switzerland of Bits"—a haven for digital freedom, a safe harbor for transparency, a sanctuary for the Enlightenment. Cyberspace, for Barlow, was both global and local, and "the more local it becomes, the more global it becomes."

A mere three months after Barlow's talk, Iceland's banks collapsed. Relative to country size, it was the largest banking crisis ever suffered by a single state.[45] Iceland's recovery from the banking crisis became an opportunity for national democratic and ethical reforms. A

twenty-five-strong Constitutional Assembly rewrote the constitution, and a crowdsourcing effort introduced thousands of comments and hundreds of concrete proposals from citizens directly into the legislative process.[46] On June 16, 2010, Iceland's parliament cast a unanimous vote for IMMI, the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative. IMMI combined a "greatest hits" of freedom of speech and libel protection laws that existed in various other countries.[47] And while the idea for the Switzerland of Bits came from Barlow, a cofounder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, WikiLeaks also had an influence on IMMI's legal architecture: Assange's whistleblowing platform ran separate hosting agreements with ISPs in various countries, benefiting from their laws.

The internet activist, software developer, and writer Smári McCarthy is IMMI's executive director. Much of the organization's impact depends on Iceland's ability to influence new international standards, and to attract companies and organizations to host data.[48] At the same time, McCarthy is involved in the development of MailPile, a secure email application and collective decision-making software that is in the political lineage of "liquid democracy"—a form of delegative democracy. A founding member of the Icelandic Pirate Party, much of McCarthy's work takes place on the cutting blade of law and code.

McCarthy describes IMMI as an "NGO somewhere half-way between a think tank and a lobby group." Can IMMI transform Iceland into a Switzerland of Bits? McCarthy is unambiguous in his answer: "Yes. And not just Iceland." He explains: "Look through the legal code, the social structure, and pretty easy entry points start to become obvious. Treat society as a Wiki—a publicly editable social space—and be bold."[49]

James Grimmelmann, who is a Professor of Law at the University of Maryland, comments:

> I think Iceland's plans are viable and well-considered. They are using Iceland's legal sovereignty, real-world isolation, global connectedness, and stable political system to advance a series of pro-expression policy goals. They're doing so in ways that don't fundamentally alter Iceland's nature as a modern democratic state, but rather play to the theoretical and practical strengths of that model. And McCarthy shows a good understanding of what the limits to this strategy are, in terms of effects beyond Iceland's borders.[50]

In Iceland, the classical data haven has evolved into a more advanced combination of policy, software, coding, and advocacy, removing itself from the anarcho-libertarian free-for-all. The internet, here, is an experiment with democracy. The development of online communication and coordination tools certainly falls within IMMI's scope. The organization's technical director, Eleanor Saitta, explains its larger democratic vision:

> The Internet is an $11 trillion economy, globally. It's a largely post-national economy (to a degree that quantizing it in the currency of a single nation feels mildly ridiculous), but the effects of that economy touch specific people, on specific pieces of ground. What Iceland is becoming is a nation deeply integrated with the internet at an economic level. There are ways in which that resonates strongly and typologically with the notion of the "island"—it's a resonance we use at IMMI, sometimes, to explain our work. However, the fact that it's happening in a Scandinavian country also makes a big difference. Iceland has obviously seen its economy turned upside down by the massive financial looting of the past decade, but the fundamental collectivist nature of the country remains. This stands in stark contrast with the hyper-libertarian, "damn anyone who can't keep up" attitude common among crypto-anarcho-capitalists.

> Building a data haven means something very different when you do it in a place where people live and have lived for centuries, in a place where it is a national project, not an also-ran that at best injects a little cash and at worst exists only as network colonialism. The notion of resilience is critical here, too. While some large hosting companies are tentatively approaching sustainability as a concept, they're doing so to get punishing energy budgets down to something manageable and to comply with regulatory forces. Resilience is much more than sustainability; it meshes very closely with left-information politics, and in doing so, combines to provide a basic political platform much stronger than each alone. Hence in Europe, the limitations of the Pirates as (until their recent initial steps) a single-issue party; likewise, the Greens, mostly working from a relatively obsolete sustainability-only platform.[51]

Saitta sees the networked politics of the near future to be strongly interconnected with locality, so that the outcome is neither a purely nation-state-based affair nor commitment-free internet clicktivism. Such politics spring from a space of exception created both within the context of Iceland as a community and within the internet as a human network:

> As translated into the material context of neoliberal capitalism, this provides guidance for some specific

> corporation to decide where they wish to host servers, but the creation is an act of the commons … Now, as to how network culture can create its own room in which to breathe, I think that's a much more interesting question, one where I think we will see networked post-institutional political non-state actors continuing to take a lead, to see that their politics leaks out from the internet into the real locality in which they may live. In creating room for themselves, they are in part looking at their place in the web of mutual obligation and stepping up to take their part in the deeper polis as much as they are drawing on and reinforcing the obligations of their localities to them.[52]

The design agenda for the future of the internet seems straightforward: become a networked, post-institutional, non-state actor and start right where you live with political reform. The idea of a "localized internet" anticipates increasing overlaps between digital and physical social structures. Eventually, all social structures take on physicality. Saitta:

> I joke that my ten year stretch goal is to kill the nation state, but really, I don't think that's particularly necessary. There will always be territorial organizational structures, but they're only one possible structure among many that can interact. I favor building up new alternatives, starting now. If we somehow magically did manage to destroy the nation state before there was anything to replace it, we'd all, quite frankly, be fucked. I'm a road fetishist. I really like roads. And power. And food. Those are all currently mostly provided by or coordinated through the state. Kill the state now, and life looks grim. That said, waiting until you've got a fully functional alternative before taking any kind of political action aimed at common emancipation is equally dumb, as is investing more effort in actively hostile systems when you can't actually change them. I'm a realist, in the end. I want less suffering, for everyone, in both the short and long term, and that doesn't come out of the barrel of any one ideology, just as surely as it isn't going to come by sticking to the straight and narrow of our status quo handbasket.[53]

Servers in the Clouds

The possibility for a network—centralized, decentralized, or distributed—to override jurisdiction and state power is a foundational dream of the internet, as well as a perpetual mirage shaped and inspired by science fiction. What was once thought to be "the internet"—a deterritorialized space amongst a world of nation-states—is known today to be incredibly saturated with the spatial implications of borders, jurisdictions, and sovereignty. New approaches to guaranteeing internet freedoms are increasingly becoming premised on literally eluding these spatial implications of a (perhaps always) reterritorialized internet.

The Pirate Bay is a famous Swedish-based P2P BitTorrent sharing service. Recently, access to its service was blocked in various countries and the site's three founders were sentenced on charges of enabling the violation of intellectual property by facilitating illegal downloads. At the time of this writing, the final sentences are still pending in Sweden, where the case has been brought to the Supreme Court. Apart from being a file sharing site, the Pirate Bay is also a kind of living manifesto for the cyber-anarchic internet; it has issued various memes, it had plans to buy the Principality of Sealand, and in March 2012, it issued an unusual announcement that detailed the next possibility for evading jurisdiction. The Pirate Bay announced that it would start hosting content on airborne drones, evading law enforcement and copyright claims.[54] The Pirate Bay's own tagline was: "Everyone knows WHAT TPB is. Now they're going to have to think about WHERE TPB is." While clearly part of the Pirate Bay's amazing array of publicity stunts and memes, the plan is not technologically impossible. In the same month, the website TorrentFreak interviewed Tomorrow's Thoughts Today, an organization exploring "the consequences of fantastic, perverse and underrated urbanisms," which has built a set of wirelessly connected drones operating like a mobile darknet.[55] These machines constitute what the organization says is "part nomadic infrastructure and part robotic swarm":

> We have rebuilt and programmed the drones to broadcast their own local wifi network as a form of aerial Napster. They swarm into formation, broadcasting their pirate network, and then disperse, escaping detection, only to reform elsewhere.[56]

Though some of the Pirate Bay's servers reportedly now operate out of a secret mountain lair,[57] its proposed Low Orbit Server Stations (LOSS) would host servers that redirect traffic to a secret location. Though the plan is, conceptually, a call for a deterritorialized internet space, it seems somewhat oblivious to the lingering legal implications of having a localized server. Tomorrow's Thoughts Today's *Electronic Countermeasures* project, on the other hand, is based equally on deterritoriality as well as locality. Liam Young, cofounder of Tomorrow's Thoughts Today, reflects:

> As a culture we are having to come to some kind of collective agreement about what copyright means in a

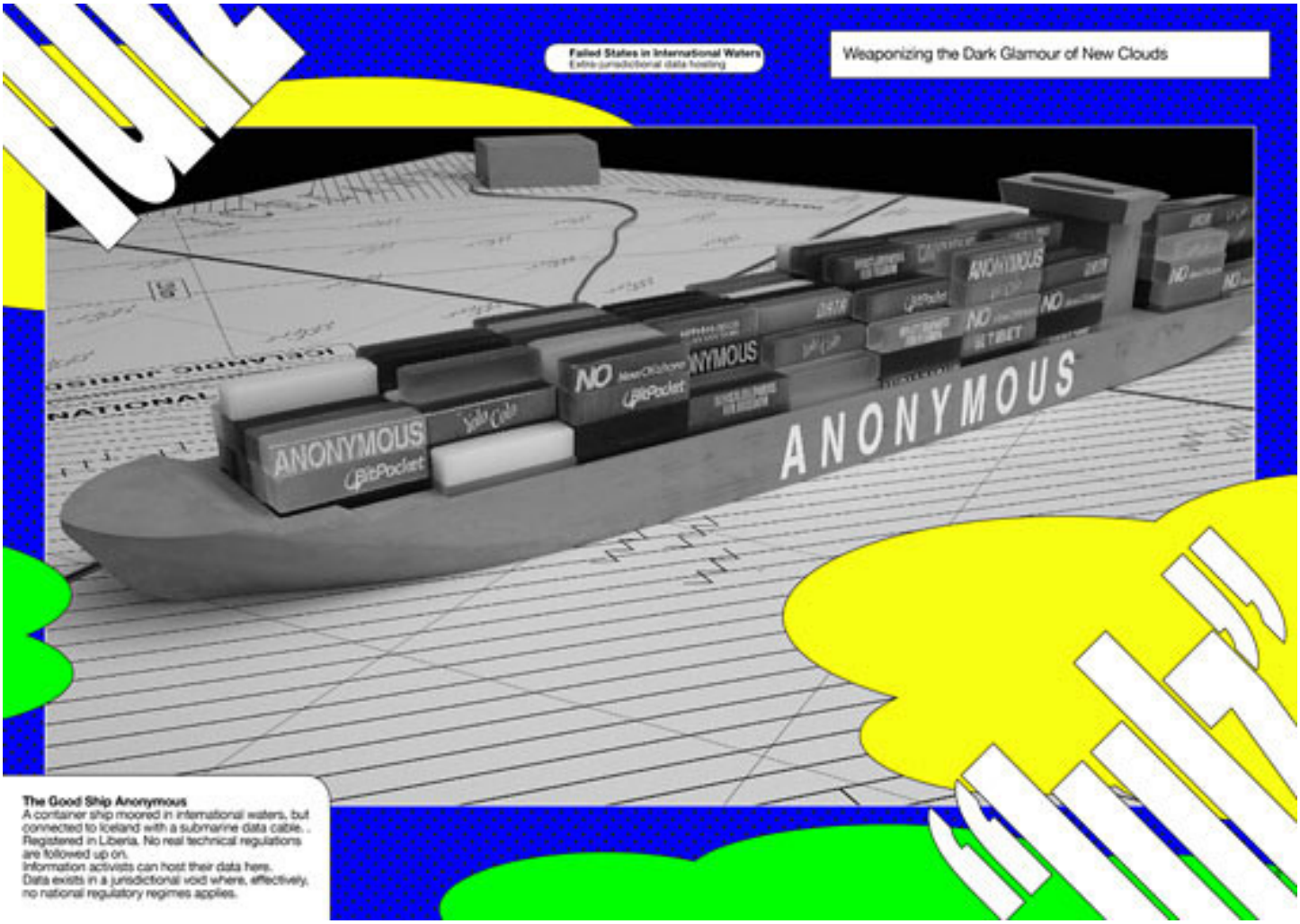
"Weaponizing the Dark Glamour of New Clouds" The Good Ship Anonymous: A container ship anchored in international waters, but connected to Iceland with a submarine data cable, registered in Liberia. No real technical regulations are followed up on. Information activists can host their data here. Data exists in a jurisdictional void where, effectively, no national regulatory regimes applies.

digital age. Who owns information as it becomes a digital commodity. Industries and governments are too slow to adapt and projects like Electronic Countermeasures or The Pirate Bay drone servers are imagined for the purposes of examining these issues and speculating on new possibilities. The privatization of knowledge is something we all need to be thinking about. Moves toward the storage of all our data in the cloud, a cloud managed by private companies or nation states, is potentially very dangerous. Even if this drone network isn't implemented as a practical solution we would be just as interested if the work made us question what is happening and what alternatives there may be in data distribution.[58]

Young's "nomadic speculative infrastructures" are relatively harmless in areas that are already heavily covered by regulations. But in less regulated areas, they might become something more.

Failed States in International Waters

An island can be created either by expressly carving out law, or by not legislating at all. State power works both ways; negatively, some jurisdictions on the world map lack control over their borders and have no centrally administered rule of law—they are "'lawless' zones in various states of anarchy, poverty, decay and crime."[59] In international relations it has become customary to apply a set of rules to define statehood; a state needs to have control over borders, a centrally administered rule of law (even if a dictatorship), and to a considerable extent, it needs to comply with customary practices in "international society" or "the international system." As a normative categorization, this presupposes the institutional characteristics of Western statehood as the one legitimate



"Weaponizing the Dark Glamour of New Clouds" The Good Ship Anonymous: A container ship anchored in international waters, but connected to Iceland with a submarine data cable, registered in Liberia. No real technical regulations are followed up on. Information activists can host their data here. Data exists in a jurisdictional void where, effectively, no national regulatory regimes applies.

form to which all states should aspire.

The term "failed state" was introduced in Western foreign policy to signify any state authority not substantially fulfilling either one of these criteria. Since the introduction of the term, various failed states have emerged, many of them in Africa: Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, and Mali are but a few examples. The designation of "failure" seems legitimate when applied to raging civil wars, violent conflicts, and their fallout. But it also points back to the political process, ideology, or entity that hands out the designation. In other words: one man's failed state is, potentially, another man's utopia. As Pierre Englebert and Denis M. Tull assert in their study on failed states and nation building in Africa:

> The goal of rebuilding collapsed states is to restore them as "constituted repositories of power and authority within borders" and as "performers and suppliers of political goods." Almost all African states, however, have never achieved such levels of statehood. Many are "states that fail[ed] before they form[ed]." Indeed, the evidence is overwhelming that most of Africa's collapsed states at no point in the postcolonial era remotely resembled the ideal type of the modern Western polity.[60]

Failed states can be seen as their own political model; a "failure" to produce outcomes compliant with accepted norms can be seen as a "success" in arenas where such norms are disputed. Failed states don't govern, don't hold a monopoly of violence, don't control borders, and don't enforce a rule of law. They are at the outer borders of the international system and the world political map. Insofar as they are still, partially at least, inside that system, they may present new opportunities for internet practice, new sovereignties for hosting, and new areas for nomadic

infrastructure. James Grimmelmann outlines some of the complications that this model faces:

> The problem that failed states face is that it's difficult to create telecommunications infrastructure without security and a functioning economic system. They have domains that may not be effectively under their control and are backed up by an international body. Their internet infrastructure frequently relies on technological providers who operate from out-of-state; what is available is often of limited connectivity and quite expensive. *De facto*, these places of weak enforcement may tend to function as data havens—particularly when there are many of them—but the reliability of provisioning any specific content is low.[61]

A country like Cameroon presents a borderline case. There is digital infrastructure in the country, but its statehood appears to descend into failure anyway. In 2008, Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu warned that in his country, "unless there is clear political reform that will allow citizens to finally enjoy basic civil liberties—including full freedom of expression, free elections and the rule of law—a crisis is inevitable."[62] About a year later, internet security firm McAfee revealed that Cameroonian websites were the most dangerous in the world for their users—even more than Hong Kong websites. McAfee found that Cameroon boasts a shadow industry of "typo-squatting" domains. Typo-squatting exploits users who mistype a popular URL, leading them to a scam website. Cameroon's domain name extension (".cm") differs but one character from the ubiquitous ".com"—hence Cameroon's success in building popular Potemkin destinations based on typos. Facebook.cm, apparently, leads to a highly offensive porn ad.[63] Is the boom in "cybercrime" from countries with weak oversight some sort of data haven byproduct? Grimmelmann comments: "Yes, you could put it that way: I'm reminded of the Eastern European virus-writing 'industry.'"[64]

People before Clouds

In *The Truman Show*— with Jim Carrey starring as Truman, the unwitting protagonist of a real life sitcom—the series director, or "Creator," makes an emotional appeal to Truman in an attempt to convince him that reality *out there* is no better, and no more real, than reality *inside* the giant suburban Biosphere that was built for him. Truman's world is a world without visible signs of government; there are only signposts, and warnings, and red tape, at the *edges* of its liveable reality.

Government, for Truman, is the drone-like perspective of the series director. Isn't the point of view offered by NSA Director Keith Alexander similarly comforting? Keith Alexander begins almost every other sentence with the phrase "from my perspective." He won't really ever refer to anyone else's perspective, but it sounds as if he could. "From my perspective" sounds almost *modest*. Alexander has innumerable grandchildren and their love for iPads illustrates, for the General, the countless possibilities and threats of the "cyber." Alexander's NSA is about "saving lives," as if it were a virtual ambulance rushing to rescue the digitally wounded. He brags about his agency's "tremendous capabilities" as if he were a middle-aged computer room systems manager boasting about the robustness of his Apache server. How do we best escape the custody of this virtual father figure, and others standing in line to take over once he steps down? How do you liberate a society that has the internet?

No one really knows, but to begin with, we need to get rid of the deceptive gibberish of technocracy. We have become the enslaved consumers of nonsensical abstractions. No one has ever seen the cloud, or its main tenant, "big data." These are objects of ideology and belief, and at times, treacherous harbingers of Big Brother. Those who argue that we need new tools to fix the broken internet are right, but they shouldn't forget that we also need the right polities to use them. The spectacle of technology needs to be unleashed to further the ends of those who wish for a way of their own, rather than rule over others. People are real. Clouds aren't.

Reformist and legislative currents in the ongoing surveillance drama have put their stakes in institutions that are themselves the repositories of vested interests. This bureaucratic apparatus is incapable of reform, because it can't fire itself from the job it has done so badly for so long. Shielded from the most basic democratic accountability, an opaque data orgy plays out inside the boardrooms, spy bases, and data warehouses of surveillance.

Those who promote that we should, in response, encrypt all our communications, seem to have a strong point. Anonymizing technologies and other protections bring to mind the sort of privacy that was once expected from a sealed envelope or a safe. Yet on the other hand, the very argument for total encryption is the flipside of solutionism; it seeks for technology to solve a political problem. Encryption can't, by itself, heal the internet.

Separate from these two strands is a third possibility: a localized internet, one that wields the double-edged sword of political and technological reforms, and saves the network from being a looming abstraction manipulated by Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. We should be able to explain the network to each other in the simplest possible terms, in mutual agreement. We should not need to be under the gray cloud of a super-jurisdictional, abstract *Totalstaat.* We deserve to wake up from the dreamless lethargy that is induced by the techno-managerial matrix, and look each

"Weaponizing the Dark Glamour of New Clouds" Nomadic Data Center: The Sheikh Al-Skype is a mobile data center. Using the ungoverned spaces of "failed states," it addresses possibilities for setting up temporary internet infrastructure beyond the critical borders of the international system.

other in the eye.

New polities, new technologies, and new jurisdictions are needed—all three of them, in abundance. Democracy and people need to forever come before clouds. Drinking water needs to always be prioritized over spying. Life itself is the enemy of surveillance.

X

To be continued in Captives of the Cloud IV (slight return): Fix My Geopolitics!

Written by Daniel van der Velden, Vinca Kruk, and Alysse Kushinski (research assistant).

Metahaven is an Amsterdam-based design collective on the cutting blade between politics and aesthetics. Founded by Vinca Kruk and Daniel van der Velden, Metahaven's work—both commissioned and self-directed—reflects political and social issues through research-driven design, and design-driven research. Research projects included the *Sealand Identity Project*, and currently include *Facestate,* and *Iceland as Method*. Solo exhibitions include *Affiche Frontière* (CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, 2008) and *Stadtstaat* (Künstlerhaus Stuttgart/Casco, 2009). Group exhibitions include *Forms of Inquiry*(AA London, 2007, cat.), *Manifesta8*(Murcia, 2010, cat.), the *Gwangju Design Biennale 2011* (Gwangju, Korea, cat.), *Graphic Design: Now In Production* (Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2011, and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York, 2012, cat.) and *The New Public* (Museion, Bolzano, 2012, cat.). Metahaven's work was published and discussed in *The International Herald Tribune*, *The New York Times, Huffington Post*, *Courrier International, Icon, Domus*, *Dazed*, *The Verge*, *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and *Mute*,

among other publications. Vinca Kruk is a Tutor of Editorial Design and Design Critique at ArtEZ Academy of Arts in Arhem. Daniel van der Velden is a Senior Critic at the Graphic Design MFA program at Yale University, and a Tutor of Design at the Sandberg Instituut Amsterdam. In 2010, Metahaven released *Uncorporate Identity*, a design anthology for our dystopian age, published by Lars Müller.

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Grant Kester

The Device Laid Bare: On Some Limitations in Current Art Criticism

> Monologism ... denies that there exists outside of it another consciousness, with the same rights, and capable of responding on an equal footing ... the other remains entirely and only an *object* of consciousness and cannot constitute another consciousness.
> —Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1961)[1]

1. Criticism and Monological Thinking

For several years now I have written about a new area of dialogical artistic practice, in which the conventional relationship between art and the social world, and between artist and viewer, is being transformed.[2] Frequently collaborative in nature, this work is being produced by artists and art collectives throughout the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. While otherwise quite diverse, it is driven by a common desire to establish new relationships between artistic practice and other fields of knowledge production, from urbanism to environmentalism, from experimental education to participatory design. In many cases it has been inspired by, or affiliated with, new movements for social and economic justice around the globe. Throughout this field of practice we see a persistent engagement with sites of resistance and activism, and a desire to move beyond existing definitions of both art and the political.[3] How do these practices redefine or transform our understanding of aesthetic experience? And how do they challenge preconceived notions of the object of art? I have identified this work with an underlying paradigm shift in the nature of contemporary art practice, in which norms of aesthetic autonomy are undergoing a process of renegotiation. These shifts have significant implications for the critic or historian who writes about this work as well. In particular, they require new methodologies and new ways of thinking through modes of reception and production. I've found that it's often difficult for conventionally-trained critics to address what we might broadly term social or engaged art practice with any analytic clarity. In this essay I want to explore several features of contemporary art critical discourse that have prevented a deeper understanding of this work. I will also suggest some ways in which in which we might reframe critical discourse in response to the particular challenges that it poses.

I'll begin by outlining some more general considerations related to the status of theory within contemporary art criticism. In its most familiar form, the art critic or historian today takes on the role of a "subcontractor," in Sylvia

Jack Lang and philosopher Jean-François Lyotard attend the opening of "Les Immatériaux," curated by the latter, Centre Pompidou, 1985. Copyright: Centre Pompidou.

Lavin's memorable phrase, importing theories developed by scholars from very different intellectual traditions into the analysis of specific works of art.[4] While this can, on occasion, be accomplished with some nuance and sophistication, the more typical approach involves a straightforward exegesis, in which a given theory, reduced to a set of notional principles, is simply juxtaposed with a given work of art, as if their sheer coexistence within the space of the essay constitutes meaningful evidence of their analytic co-relevance. While the proper names vary over time, the gesture has remained remarkably consistent for the nearly three decades of my own involvement in contemporary art criticism. Because the art critic or historian can typically claim no substantive expertise in the area of theory they invoke, this material often comes to function as a kind of master discourse. They rarely subject the theory itself to any significant interrogation, nor can they challenge the foundational premises or the interpretations of earlier philosophical works presented by the theorist in question. As a result the critic simply and unproblematically reiterates the key points of a given theory, eliding the deeper textures of thought, as well as any engagement with the contradictions and tensions of the theory itself. The theory functions as a self-contained and self-evident apparatus, which can be brought onto the scene of critical engagement to perform the work of deep analysis or political demystification.

At the stylistic level this approach involves variations on the same basic grammatical structure, familiar to us from countless art reviews, exhibition catalogs, and books in which the phrase "According to Zižek," (or Badiou or Deleuze or Rancière or Nancy or Agamben or Derrida) is followed by the recitation of some pithy truth about the inherent evil of collective forms of identity, the limitless capacity of an undifferentiated state or capitalist system to co-opt dissent, or the intrinsically transgressive nature of ambiguous or indeterminate forms of meaning. What had once been cathartic insights into the contingency of transcendent knowledge have been reduced to a kind of catechism, to be repeated as an article of faith, regardless of context or relevance. The effect is to promote a model of art criticism in which primary importance is assigned to the ability to explicate theoretical texts in more simple or accessible terms than those in which they were originally conveyed. I give as an example a recent essay in Art and Education's online journal devoted to Tania Bruguera's *Immigrant Movement International* project in Corona, Queens. Over half of the essay is taken up with a description of Wendy Brown's analysis of "rights" discourse in political theory.[5] Because Bruguera's project engages with the discourse of rights and addresses the legal and political status of immigrants, it is thereby exposed as complicit with a broader logic of subjugation described by Brown. Here the artist can be shown to have naively wandered into vexed political waters, doing more harm than good in her simpleminded attempt to help immigrants, but inadvertently supporting the iron logic of neoliberal humanism.

While the writer bases her reading of the *IMI* project entirely on Wendy Brown's theoretical work, she fails to meaningfully engage with the numerous criticisms of this work (they are cited only in passing), presenting it instead as a heuristic *fait accompli* that can be applied without question. There is more to be said about the specific form of these criticisms, and the bearing they have on any potential analysis of Bruguera's work, but I want to focus on a second issue that is more directly related to questions of research methodology. Thus, while the writer spends several paragraphs explicating Brown's theory, she never, in the course of her essay, provides a substantive account of Bruguera's actual work. The fact that Bruguera's project employs the terminology of rights in its descriptive language is taken as sufficient evidence of its failure in the terms outlined by Brown's theory. It may well be that Brugeura's work *does* succumb to forces that can be accounted for by a critique of rights, but we have no way of knowing this in the absence of a detailed explication of how Bruguera's work functions as a practice. The author's research, such as it is, consists entirely of excerpts from statements posted on the *IMI*

website, along with a single anecdote, gleaned from a public lecture in which Bruguera discusses a cab ride she took to Queens. Certainly this material is part of the work of *IMI*, but in no way does it provide a meaningful indication of the nature of the project as a whole.

Instead of taking the time to examine the *IMI* project in some detail, observing the changes that occurred in the social organization of the project over time, the modulations of agency, the moments of creative insight and stasis, and the ways in which the participants accommodated or challenged the authority of state or public agencies and Bruguera herself, the critic reduces the critical act to a kind of syllogism (Brown tells us that rights-based language is problematic, Bruguera uses the concept of rights, therefore her project is problematic). As a result, she ignores the complexity of what happens at the site of practice when a set of abstract propositions associated with the condition of immigrants take physical, social, and institutional form; when they become answerable as actions rather than simply asserted as axiomatic statements (about rights, immigration, and so forth). It's possible that the members of the *IMI* project addressed at least some of the issues raised by Brown in their deliberations and dialogues, thus evincing the self-reflective capacity that the critic herself hopes to provide. It's also possible that the actual performance of this project, as it evolved over many months, engaged issues that extended well beyond the sphere of "rights," in ways that transcended the artist's intentions and expectations. In either case we have no way of knowing, since the critic's knowledge of the project itself, as represented in this essay, remains superficial. I present this less as a criticism of a specific writer (as critics and historians it's not always possible for us to personally witness every project we write about) but as a reflection of a certain problematic within the conventions of art criticism when applied to dialogical practices. In writing about object-based practices the critic need simply be present before the work of art for a limited period of time (a few hours, a day) in order to acquire at least a basic understanding of it. At the very least, one can easily enough find a high-resolution reproduction of a given painting or sculpture that captures something of the nature of the actual work. Complex, long-term projects like the *IMI* require a different, and more extensive, form of research if they are to be engaged with any clarity.

2. New Criteria

The quasi-transcendent power attributed to theory in contemporary art criticism can be traced in part to the founding of *October* magazine in 1976. As described in its editorial mission statement, *October* sought to provide a forum for "intensive critical discourse" with a "strong theoretical emphasis." It presented itself as a rebellious, even revolutionary, outsider, challenging the hegemony of insufficiently rigorous art criticism found in

Judy Olausen, Rosalind Kraus, c. 1978.

over-specialized journals such as *Artforum*. According to *October*'s editors, existing art magazines had sacrificed their "intellectual autonomy" to a form of "pictorial journalism" characterized by "lavish illustrations" (hence the austere, picture-less expanses of *October*'s page layouts). It is also symptomatic that *October*'s editors, in their mission statement, sought to distance themselves from overtly activist art practices, which they equate with the worst excesses of Stalinism and "Socialist Realism." Specifically, they cite an antiwar mural produced in New York City by an artist who had the misfortune to be both white and liberal, as evidence of the dangers posed by works of art that take as their frame of reference the surrounding social world, rather than the conventions of art itself.[6] Here, at the *locus classicus* of what would become contemporary academic art criticism, we are presented with a characteristically modernist opposition between an autonomous, quasi-aesthetic critical agency and the corrupting influence of capitalism (or advertising) on one hand, and activism (or political propaganda) on the other. Only an unbending commitment to critical theory, combined with a strict proscription of imagistic pleasure, would prevent backsliding into the dismal swamps of Mary Boone advertisements and reactionary muralism.

The *October* brand achieved its apotheosis during the 1980s, with the publication of Krauss's *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* and *The Anti-Aesthetic* anthology, by Krauss's student Hal Foster.[7] The coterie associated with the early days of *October*, which included other Krauss students such as Benjamin Buchloh and Craig Owens, did much to establish the particular relationship between art criticism and critical

Cover of Artforum, February 1964. This cover features artwork by Tony DeLap, titled Milo, from 1963.

theory that continues to define academic writing on contemporary art in the United States to the present day. It's less a question of specific influences (although these have remained remarkably consistent), than the broader sense of a discipline in crisis and dependent on the insights provided by continental philosophy for new inspiration. Krauss captures this emblematic moment in her bellwether 1980 *October* essay on the "Paraliterary," in which she defends Barthes and Derrida against the uncomprehending conservatism of Morris Dickstein and other cranky guardians of traditional literary criticism. The new paradigm of postmodern literature, in Krauss's words, "is the critical text wrought into a paraliterary form," dedicated not to revealing layers of meaning but to opening up the play of interpretation ("drama without the Play, voices without the Author, criticism without the

Argument").[8] For Krauss the key move, necessary to restore some theoretical gravitas to art criticism, was to transpose the paraliterary as a form of hermeneutic undoing associated with writing onto the work of visual art, which would constitute a kind of physical embodiment of the poetic/theoretical text (laying bare the apparatus, making strange, and generally confounding closure, stasis, and fixity in all their many guises).

The enduring influence of this textual paradigm is evident in Krauss's most recent book (*Under Blue Cup*), in which she acknowledges the central role played by the Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in her own intellectual development.[9] As *October*'s mission statement suggests, any artistic practice that participates in concrete forms of political resistance will inevitably be subsumed into a debased, propagandistic cultural form. As a result, contemporary art can maintain its purity and autonomy only by confining its critical powers to a virtualized field of resistance that is protected from the deforming political and social forces that operate beyond the gallery walls. Krauss, evoking Greenberg, calls this field the "technical support." As she notes in a recent interview, "My whole concept of technical support, relates to Shklovsky's concept of 'laying bare the device'."[10] The immanence of Greenbergian formalism (which sought to identify a condition intrinsic to modern art that could differentiate it from kitsch and propaganda) was thus linked with a new mission, derived from literary theory.

For Shklovsky, of course, the act of laying bare entailed a reconstruction of poetics as a form of counter-hegemonic de-naturalization. This view was based on the assumption that poetic (and, we might say, aesthetic) forms have as their job the deferral and disruption of normal cognition through the thickening and opacity of language. In the presence of a poetic text the reader comes to realize that the device of language is not simply a neutral medium for the transmission of an *a priori* truth about the world, but in fact produces its own, new, meaning. Now art (and theory itself) would inherit this poetico-critical capacity, and a hidebound Greenbergian formalism would be re-infused with revolutionary vigor. This self-reflexive capacity, the discourse of disclosure and revelation, would easily enough migrate beyond the formal constitution of art genres or media and re-engage with the world at a second order. For many *October*-supported artists during the 1980s, the new device to be laid bare was identified with the mass media's construction of gender, the truth of the photographic image, or norms of authorship and self-expression in the arts.

This would prove to be a decisive shift in the evolution of contemporary art and art theory. It replaced the idea of a formal art medium (as the resistant field against which the artist works within the technical apparatus of painting, sculpture, and so forth) with the idea of an *ideological* medium defined by a set of rules that constrain and predetermine the consciousness of individual viewers without their knowledge.[11] The ability to engage creatively with the boundary conditions of a given art form is replaced by the ability to comprehend, and reveal, the existence of this ideological apparatus to an unwitting audience. The artist stands at a critical remove, safely protected from the forms of compromise and complicity that would result from any more direct engagement with mechanisms of social change or resistance. And the autonomy of art is preserved because the artist only ever addresses the social world second hand, through a critique of the (underlying, implicitly hidden) mechanisms of ideological control. Moreover, these interventions were staged within art world institutions and for art world audiences. Once the artist wandered too far beyond the protection of this contextualizing field, the authenticity of their work as art was at risk, as we see with the purging of Douglas Crimp from *October*'s editorial board in 1990, due to his interest in art associated with AIDS activism.[12]

The influence of *October* was, in many ways, empowering. It brought a much-needed infusion of intellectual energy to art criticism during the 1980s. At the same time, as I've suggested, it became conventionalized in turn, and would eventually exercise a stultifying effect on art critical discourse. What had been a necessary and invigorating challenge to the norms of art criticism became over time a set of conventions, to be taught and codified in art history graduate programs around the world. The underlying assumptions of this model have become almost entirely naturalized in contemporary art practice and criticism. Its constituent elements are quite familiar to us: the viewer who enters the gallery space to be confronted by a work that challenges his or her normative assumptions about the world, and the artist who possesses a singular ability to recognize and lay bare the hidden ideological devices which govern our routine lives without our knowledge. Because both artists and critics are often working within the same pre-conscious horizon, any detailed investigation of the actual experiences of specific viewers or audiences can easily enough be dispensed with, and the meaning of the artwork simply read off this pre-established script. At the same time, the hermeneutic labor previously performed by the critic or historian through a close reading of the work of art was increasingly off-loaded to the theorist. There are two variants of this approach. In its sympathetic form a given artistic practice is justified on the basis of its capacity to illustrate a specific theoretical brand concept ("states of exception" in Agamben, the "Sinthome" in Lacan, the partition of the sensible in Rancière, "Minor" literature in Deleuze, "signature" in Derrida, and so on). And in its critical variant, the work of art is read symptomatically, as the merely epiphenomenal expression of some broader discourse of power, which can only be revealed via the proper theoretical tool (as in the reading of Tania Bruguera's work I introduced above).

Tania Bruguera, Immigrant Movement International (IMI), ongoing project. Photo: Latoya Ruby Frazier.

3. Duration and Finitude

While the critical approach I've outlined here may have certain limitations, it has the virtue of being methodologically consistent with conventional artistic practices in which the work of art, whether a performance, object, image, or installation, is developed by the artist independently and then presented in a gallery, museum, or other exhibition space. The act of production in this case is distinct and clearly separate from the subsequent reception of the work by viewers, during which the artist is often not present. The critic's task in this case often entails a speculative, quasi-philosophical engagement with the propositions presented by the artist through a given work.[13] These propositions (for example, arguments about the value of human life and labor in Santiago Sierra's work) are not meant to be tested per se, but rather, are offered in the form of hypothetical statements about the world, embodied in physical and spatial form. The creative work occurs before the exhibition opens, when Sierra first plots out a particular affect generation scheme, via the planned deployment of bodies in the gallery space. My potential reactions (philistine outrage or guilty reflection in the case of Sierra) are already anticipated by the behavioral apparatus of the piece itself. In addition, the work is finite: the object or event has a clearly demarcated beginning and end in time and space. It is meant to be complete within itself, and its form remains fixed at the moment of its initial conceptualization by the artist (i.e., the script governing the disposition of bodies in a Sierra performance, like the physical form of a sculpture, is predetermined).

With the development of participatory and collaborative art practices, especially with their exponential growth over the past decade, we begin to see a fundamental disconnection between the conventions of art criticism and a form of artistic production that challenges many of the conditions I've just described. The most threatening aspect of this work involves the decision of a growing number of artists and art collectives to deliberately engage publics, and institutional networks, well beyond the confines of the conventional art world. The result has been a series of largely unproductive debates over the epistemological status of this work, most of which entail variations of the same simplistic opposition between a

naive social art practice, associated with the evils of humanism or pastoral sentimentality, and a theoretically rigorous, politically sophisticated avant-garde artistic practice. These debates are typically conducted at a high level of abstraction, and rely on an *ad hominem* defense of a generalized concept of aesthetic value, which is in danger of being heedlessly cast aside by an equally vague concept of engaged art.

One of the main problems with these debates, from my perspective, is that they've been conducted with almost no reference to the specific conditions of the art practice itself. And this brings us back to the question of art criticism and its limitations. I want to identify two related problems posed by the textual paradigm outlined above, when applied to collaborative or dialogical art practices. First, it conceives of the work of art as a behavioral apparatus, based on a highly mechanistic view of human cognition. So long as we think of the work of art as a monological proposition or expressive statement in the space of the gallery, this is less significant. But when we are dealing with projects in which the viewer or participant answers back and in which those responses have the potential to reshape and transform the work itself over time, we require a more nuanced understanding of reception.[14] This leads to the second, related problem with this model, which is its reliance on a form of ventriloquism, in which the critic imagines the effect of the work on the consciousness of a hypothetical viewer, attributing to them various mental states, capacities, and responses. This is typically expressed through a semantic structure in which the work of art is endowed with the capacity to reveal some discursive system that was previously hidden by the mechanisms of ideology.

A recent essay in the journal *Ephemera* on Santiago Sierra's work provides a useful example of the kind of shorthand, intentionalist art criticism that many writers, myself included, can lapse into on occasion.[15] According to the critic, Sierra's installations "problematize assumptions," "question logic," "reveal conditions," "highlight traces," and "make evident imbrications" of, variously, "capital," "capitalist interests and desires," "capital exchange," "practices of individual subjugation," "economic marginalization," and, finally, the "prevailing economic system." All this, it should be noted, in an essay that never offers a substantive definition of capitalism, or even a frame of reference within which the author's use of the term can be fully understood. In each case we have a process of disclosure that is intended to link an often amorphous referent ("interests," "desires," "exchange," "practices," and so forth) with an equally abstract viewer ("reveal conditions" *to whom*?). While I have no doubt that Sierra intends for his work to provide some form of revelation, this description tells us very little about the complexities and contradictions of its actual performance as a work of art. The act of laying bare the device implies an audience for whom the device was already concealed: a viewer who would be made suddenly aware of the existence of some structuring ideological mechanism that regulated what was previously experienced as his or her autonomous thought and action in the world . Thus, for Sierra, there must always be a viewer who is prepared to be surprised by the violence of capitalist exploitation. But this viewer is, as I've suggested, necessarily hypothetical.[16] The responses of actual viewers may bear little or no resemblance to this perceptual schema, nor does the critic or artist feel obliged to demonstrate the efficacy of this revelatory act for individual viewers.

In dialogical practice production and reception co-occur, and reception itself is refashioned as a mode of production. As a result, the moment of reception is not hidden or unavailable to the artist, or the critic. Moreover, the experience of reception extends over time, through an exchange in which the responses of the collaborators result in subsequent transformations in the form of the work as initially presented. Thus, we require new models of reception capable of addressing the actual, rather than the hypothetical, experience of participants in a given project, with a particular awareness of the parameters of agency and affect. What is the relationship between language, utterance, physical gesture, and movement in these encounters? This would also necessitate an analysis of the gathering together and disaggregation of bodies within a given project, and the ways in which these varying proximities inflect the meaning of the work and the consciousness of the participants. And this requires, in turn, new research methodologies and what I've described as a field-based approach, in which the critic inhabits the site of practice for an extended period of time, paying special attention to the discursive, haptic, and social conditions of space, and the temporal rhythms of the processes that unfold there.[17]

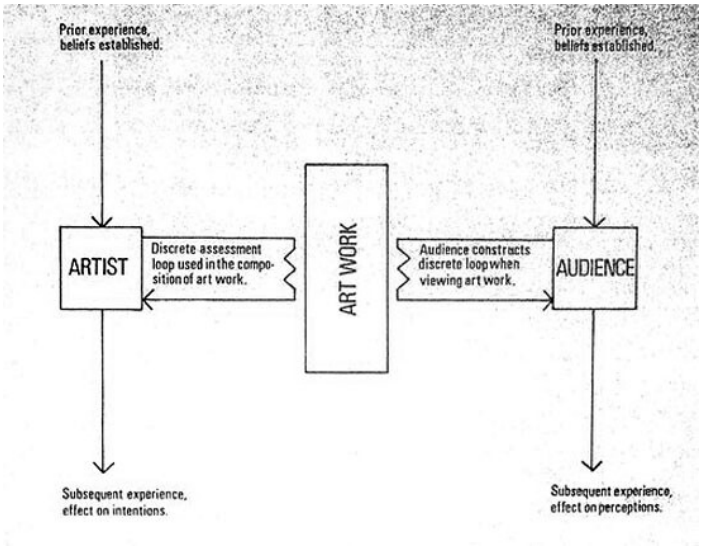
A second set of concerns, which I've alluded to already, has to do with the perceived spatial and temporal limits of the work of art. Textual or object-based practices are clearly finite; they exist for a fixed period of time (the duration of an exhibition or commission, for example), and then end. Moreover, the spatial field for such practices is also, generally, fixed (the space of the gallery, for example, or a series of discrete stations or sites organized through the commissioning process). Because the boundaries of the work are finite, and often predetermined by the particular limitations of a given exhibition space or venue, the critic can easily enough identify the object of analysis (an installation, painting, or performance which begins and ends at clearly marked points in time). Dialogical practices, on the other hand, can unfold over weeks, months, and even years, and their spatial contours or boundaries typically fluctuate, expand, and contract over time. As a result, this work confronts the critic with a very different set of questions. When does the work begin and when does it end? What are the boundaries of the field within which it operates, and how were they determined? At the most basic level, can we even agree as to what constitutes the object of criticism? Because we are dealing with an

unfolding process, rather than, or in addition to, a discrete image, object, or event defined by set limits of space (the walls of a gallery) or time (the duration of a performance or commission), these questions become decisive in the analysis of the work. The unfinalizable quality of dialogical production requires us to understand the bounded-ness of the field of practice, and how these boundaries have been produced, modified, and challenged. This would include an analysis of the artist or art collective's entry into, and departure from, the field itself, as well as the decisions that led them to define a given social context as a field of practice in the first place.[18]

This work also requires a very different understanding of duration in aesthetic experience. The critique of Bruguera's work I presented earlier tells us nothing about how the project evolved over time, how the perceptions of the various participants and Bruguera herself were altered, and how they responded to moments of resistance, antagonism, or conciliation. Time, in the textual model I've discussed above, is always synchronic; new insight is transmitted to the viewer through a singular and a-temporal moment of shocked recognition (the decisive moment at which the device is laid bare). This model of reception assumes a viewer who is operating under the enforced thrall of an imposed ideological system, which can only be broken by a countervailing moment of homeopathic violence. As a result, there is no understanding of receptive time beyond the moment of disruption itself, no account of the sustainability of this transformed consciousness of the world. With dialogical art practices, temporality is both extensive and irregular, marked by a series of incremental subdivisions within the larger, unfolding rhythm of a given work. As a result, it's necessary to develop a system of diachronic analysis and notation that can encompass the project as a whole in its movement through moments of conflict and resolution, focusing on the productive tension between closure and disclosure, resistance and accommodation.

Conclusion: Consciousness and Action

I want to conclude by drawing together a set of three observations regarding the position of the critic relative to dialogical and collaborative art practices. The first concerns the status of theory. While I've expressed some skepticism about the role played by theory in current art criticism, this certainly doesn't mean ignoring the many profound insights that various forms of critical theory can provide into the operations of language, consciousness, and art itself. However, I do believe there has been a gradual drift away from closer engagement with the materiality of art practice as a result of the often-programmatic manner in which theory has been applied by many critics and historians. Too often critics use theory simply to provide intellectual validation for relatively unremarkable concepts or ideas that are already



Stephen Willats's Model of an Existing Artist-Audience Relationship, 1973 was published in the book The Artist as an Instigator of Changes in Social Cognition and Behaviour (London: Occasional Papers, 2010 (1973), 28.

widely accepted within our discursive field, and which add little to our understanding of a particular project or work. I'd advocate here a more reflective and reciprocal understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in art criticism. I'd like to see the theorist treated as a genuine interlocutor in the unfolding of a given work, rather than a gray (or perhaps more accurately, white) eminence. In this scenario theory can bring insight, but it can also be challenged in turn, perhaps by the very experience of practice itself. The second observation concerns the issue of reception. I want to encourage critics of this work to remain open to the possibility that a given project will enact forms of reception that don't conform to existing models, which are typically based on the individual viewer's experience of a static or fixed object. Insight is generated in many different ways in artistic practice, aside from the established schema of singular disruption and simultaneity. This open-ness is all the more necessary in the case of dialogical works in which the processes set in motion by a given project can't be anticipated in advance by the artist, and which may move in directions quite different from those implicit in the original organization of a piece.

Finally, I want to note that dialogical practices suggest a very different understanding of the relationship between consciousness and action within the aesthetic. As I've noted above, it is a commonplace to criticize social art practices for sacrificing an authentically aesthetic (albeit hazily defined) experience to a reductive concept of political efficacy. But all modernist art, even that which most violently rejects any demand for utility, is functional, whether as a protest against the very utilitarianism of modern society, or as a repository of specific

quasi-spiritual values that are associated with an intellectual or creative resistance to capitalism. The operative question is, how, and at what scale, this efficacy is enacted. In the conventional view, art can retain its cultural authority only so long as it operates through the incremental (and privatized) transformation of a single consciousness, in confrontation with a work of art. Once we attempt to extend this process (to make it social, as it were), to understand the aesthetic as a form of knowledge that can be communicable within and among a larger collective, or in relationship to a set of institutions, rather than a single, sovereign consciousness, the autonomy of the aesthetic is endangered, and art is subsumed into its degraded kitsch-like variants. This is why we so often see theorists imposing a firewall between the experience of the individual viewer and any subsequent (practical and therefore non-aesthetic) action, which might be informed by this encounter in some way.[19] Aesthetic experience, understood in these terms, is essentially monological. It seems to me that both of these constraints are being challenged by new forms of social art practice, in which we find a commitment to a broader, social articulation of aesthetic experience, and an interest in the creative, transversal relationship between consciousness and action in the world. At the theoretical level we might say that these groups and artists are less concerned with locating the generative potential of aesthetic undecidabilty in the tension between the pure and the impure (art vs. activism, ethics vs. aesthetics, and so forth), than in the relationship among and between what had previously been seen as disconnected and singular aesthetic encounters—that is, in the social or collective form taken by aesthetic experience itself.

X

Grant Kester is Professor of Art History in the Visual Arts department at the University of California, San Diego. His publications include Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage (Duke University Press, 1997, editor), Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art (University of California Press, 2004) and The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context (Duke University Press, 2011). He's currently finishing work on Collective Situations: Dialogues in Contemporary Latin American Art 1995-2010, edited with Bill Kelley.

1
Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 293.

2
See *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004) and *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

3
It is perhaps not coincidental that this work has emerged at approximately the same time as an unprecedented expansion in the global market for contemporary art, and the monetization of contemporary art as a key site of capital investment for the upper class, especially among the newly rich of China, Russia, and Eastern Europe. This economic infrastructure sustains an interlocking network of major collectors, biennials, galleries, critics, curators, magazines, and art consultants invested in the validation of contemporary art. For many younger artists, the idea that the "art world" described above can offer any meaningful form of aesthetic or critical autonomy is less and less tenable.

4
Sylvia Lavin, "The Uses and Abuses of Theory," *Progressive Architecture* 71:8 (August 1990): 113–114, 179.

5
Ellen Feiss, "What is Useful? The Paradox of Rights in Tania Bruguera's 'Useful Art'." See http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/what-is-useful-the-paradox-of-rights-in-tania-brugueras-useful-art/

6
"'October' is a reference which remains, for us, more than exemplary; it is instructive. For us, the argument regarding Socialist Realism is nonexistent. Art begins and ends with a recognition of its conventions. We will not contribute to that social critique which, swamped by its own disingenuousness, gives credence to such an object of repression as a mural about the war in Vietnam, painted by a white liberal resident in New York, a war fought for the most part by ghetto residents commanded by elements drawn from the southern lower-middle-class ... Long working experience with major art journals has convinced us of the need to restore to the criticism of painting and sculpture, as to that of other arts, an intellectual autonomy seriously undermined by emphasis on extensive reviewing and lavish illustration. *October* wishes to address those readers who, like many writers and artists, feel that the present format of the major art reviews is producing a form of pictorial journalism which deflects and compromises critical effort." The Editors, "About OCTOBER," *October* 1 (Spring 1976): 4–5.

7
Hal Foster's Seattle-based Bay Press, which published *The Anti-Aesthetic* anthology, played a key role during this period. For a revealing, albeit brief, history of Bay Press, see Charles Mudede, "The Mysterious Disappearance of Bay Press," *The Stranger* (January 24–30, 2002) http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/the-mysterious-disappearance-of-bay-press/Content?oid=9829

8
Rosalind Krauss, "Poststructuralism and the 'Paraliterary'," *October* 13 (Summer 1980): 40.

9
Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011). In particular, Krauss employs Shklovsky's concept of the "Knight's move" to justify her analysis of art as a system of rule-based norms, against which any creative action must be waged. This gesture, of course, assigns a decisive authority to the critic or historian who is in a position to define precisely what those norms might be, and to differentiate properly productive artistic activity from random and aesthetically meaningless experimentation. This is an authority that Krauss is not shy to embrace. *Under Blue Cup* begins with her announcement that the book was "incited by over a decade of disgust at the spectacle of meretricious art called installation ..."

10
Yve Alain-Bois, "Rosalind Krauss with Yve Alain-Bois," *The Brooklyn Rail* (February 1, 2012) http://www.brooklynrail.org/2012/02/art/rosalind-krauss-with-yve-alain-bois .

11
The textual paradigm is premised on an underlying contradiction between an immanent formalism, as promoted by Greenberg, and a formalism that encompasses a range of ideological systems beyond the visual arts, which threatens to reduce art to a generic form of counter-hegemonic critique. This tension is evident in *Under Blue Cup* , where Krauss extends the repertoire of "devices" to be laid bare by art to accommodate such oddly dissimilar entities as "cars" and "photo-journalism." Here the concept of art as defined via a self-reflexive relationship to a specific set of rules or norms becomes so capacious as to threaten precisely the kind of disordered, non-aesthetic chaos that she finds so disgusting in much installation art.

12
These tensions first came to a head around the special issue of *October* that Crimp edited on AIDS activism in 1987 (#43, Winter 1987). He left *October* in 1 990. Crimp discusses the climate at the journal at that time in a 2008 interview with Mathias Danbolt. See Mathias Danbolt, "Front Room – Back Room: An Interview with Douglas Crimp," *Trikster* 2 (2008), see http://trikster.net/2/crimp/4.html

13
The tendency to associate creative agency primarily with an *a priori* (and usually solitary) process of conceptual ideation, rather than the activation of a given concept in and through practice, links two such disparate figures as Sol Lewitt and Thomas Hirschhorn, suggesting the ongoing influence of the Conceptualist paradigm:

14
Issues of reception, of course, are a point of significant tension in theories of avant-garde art. Adorno, for example, was notoriously hostile to any effort to understand the responses of actual viewers to a work of art. In "Theses on the Sociology of Art" (1972) and *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1976) Adorno critiques the sociological "effects research" of Alphons Silbermann, who interviewed audience members regarding their feelings about specific works of art. Adorno argues that any attempt to understand the responses of actual viewers or listeners to a work of art will, inevitably, diminish its "aesthetic" value, which can only ever be pre-figurative—projected into a future in which society has overcome its subordination to administrative rationality. In this respect Adorno's aesthetic philosophy follows a familiar trajectory already established by Kant and Schiller, in which art is ultimately intended for a "viewer yet to be" rather than the viewer here-and-now. See Andrew Edgar, "An Introduction to Adorno's Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 30:1 (January 1990): 46–56.

15
Andrés David Montenegro Rosero, "Locating Work in Santiago Sierra's Artistic Practice," *Ephemera* 13:1 (2013) http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/locating-work-santiago-sierra%E2%80%99s-artistic-practice . Sierra, in common with a number of successful contemporary artists, has developed his practice along two complementary axes. The first is a series of performative actions, usually provocative or nominally antagonistic in nature, produced in conjunction with a sponsoring museum, gallery or biennial. The documentation generated by these actions can then be marketed commercially (in Sierra's case, in the form of limited edition photographs that sell for up to 50,000 Euros each). His work is thus defined by two temporalities. The first involves the initial moment of presentation in a gallery or biennial, while the second, and more enduring, entails its after-life in the commercial market for contemporary art (where works of art are, increasingly, bought and sold primarily as financial instruments). It goes without saying, of course, that the dramatic expansion in the sale of contemporary art as a form of investment is a direct byproduct of the increasing concentration of wealth globally, which Sierra ostensibly deplores.

16
I examine a variant of this displaced form of reception in the essay "Rhetorical Questions: The Alternative Arts Sector and the Imaginary Public," published in the journal *Afterimage* (January 1993). The essay was reprinted in *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 103–135.

17
We are in the early stages of developing a set of protocols devoted to a field-based approach

to the analysis of social art practice at UCSD. The term "field" reflects two main concerns. First, it indicates our interest in a body of artistic production that engages the broadest possible range of social forces, actors, discursive systems, and physical conditions operating at a given site. And second, it signals a concern with the questions that these projects raise about the "proper" field of art itself, as it engages with other disciplines and other modes of cultural production.

18
It can be helpful here to differentiate between projects commissioned by biennials, in which many of the key decisions (regarding space, duration, and so forth) are predetermined by the sponsoring institution or curator, and artist-generated projects, in which the temporal and spatial parameters of the field of practice are fluid and indeterminate.

19
Even an artist as securely established in the art world firmament as Thomas Hirschhorn still feels compelled to reassure critics that his work is "pure art," rather social work. See Peter Schjeldahl, "House Philosopher: Thomas Hirschhorn and the Gramsci Monument," *The New Yorker* (July 29, 2013): 76.